Cultural constellations: communities and publics in the Union Street area of Plymouth

Cultural Constellations

Communities and Publics in the Union Street area of Plymouth

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This research is dedicated to the memory of Sarah and David Mulhall

Abstract

My research aims to understand how various forms of national and local discourse constitute the interactions between communities of cultural practice in the Union Street area of Plymouth. I ask how rhetorical uses of language found in planning and policy discourses feed, stimulate or hinder interaction in the area. I focus on the period between 2010 and 2022 because of the significant shifts the area saw in this decade, including the formation of Nudge, a community benefit society, and the opening of KARST, a contemporary art gallery.

Through three phases of practice-based, participatory research, including participatory diagrams, a focus group, and feedback filmmaking, I reflexively investigate the relationships between a range of people who work in art, culture, and community orientated fields. My objective is to understand how these people interact, as well as to understand how factors external to Union Street and Plymouth, such as Arts Council documents such as *Let's Create* from 2020, can affect, negatively or positively, such a cultural dynamic. By focusing on a specific location, this research aims to understand how various national and local discourses affect a specific urban context, and how cultural policy and local cultural practices affect a specific public.

Through a practice-based methodology informed by feminist ordinary language philosophy, I develop two concepts that assist me in the description, interpretation, and analysis of the discourses I encounter. Firstly, I use a constellatory frame, where I connect groups of people through similarity and dissimilarity in their uses of language. Secondly, I approach the research with an emphasis on feedback, that is, I feed the outcome of my methods back to research participants so that their interpretations become part of the process. Importantly, this included critiques of my research methods.

I have chosen Union Street because I am from Plymouth and have seen first-hand significant changes taking place. Union Street and the surrounding area are notorious in Plymouth for low economic status and as an erstwhile nightlife hub. Although there are still social and economic issues, the area has changed dramatically over the last decade and a half. Here, I determine how such shifts interact with the rise of art and community spaces activating a range of cultural activity in the area.

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List of Evidence of Practice

The following material documents the various practice-based aspects of this research in the following order:

- Sixteen Participatory Diagrams produced between October 2020 and January 2021 – page 233.
- A seventeen-page Keyword booklet hand printed and bound with local Plymouth artist, printmaker and journalist Alan Qualtrough produced between May and July 2022 – page 243.
- Photographic documentation of the Peltz Exhibition held between January and March 2024 - page 249.
- *Permissive Space,* a 30-minute film available at the following link: www.vimeo.com/906715716?share=copy [password for access: Peltz2024]

All images of participatory diagrams and keyword booklet are my own. All images of the Peltz exhibition are by Lucy Dawkins.

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1. Introduction

In the year 2000 the Theatre Royal in Plymouth put on a community theatre show called *Union Street*. Though not directly related to my research, it seemed worth familiarizing myself with a past community-focused project because it was created by an Arts Council England national portfolio organisation interacting with Union Street community members. When I opened a box of archival material, the first thing I saw was a letter from a good friend's dad saying how much he had enjoyed the experience of participating in the project. In the 2000s I would be *out* in nightclubs on Union Street often, with that same friend, but I had no idea about the theatre project or my friend's dad's involvement. Funded community cultural projects were not on my radar. I was only familiar with a very specific aspect of past Union Street culture, the hold of which has eroded over the course of this research, giving way to a complex picture that extends well beyond the former night-time economy. Finding that letter is one of many instances during this research where my academic focus has come across an intermingling of personal history, local culture projects, and national policy.

This practice-based thesis explores the cultural politics of communities and publics as they relate to Union Street – an area of Plymouth that has had a complex relationship to wider urban redevelopment processes and cultural policy intervention from the mid-2000s on. Focusing specifically on developments since the 2010s, I address intersections between culture and policy discourse, and how related forms of abstraction interact with lived experiences, histories and cultures. By doing so, I ask how language use and policy discourse are implicated substantively in the area's redevelopment, and in the professional and personal practices, identities, and self-understandings of those working in its arts, cultural and community organisations. The various ways in which professional and personal aspects of life interact have emerged as a core theme throughout this thesis – directly connected to another core theme, that of the public. Established, liberal, normative notions of publicness have instilled a separation between public and private areas of life (Habermas, 1989). For feminists such as Nancy Fraser (1997) and Seyla Benhabib (1992) such separations are detrimental to the political potency of publics and have significant effects on access to justice. They argue that predetermined demarcation between what is considered of public interest and of common concern is a chimera; how are we to know what is of common interest before public deliberation has taken place (Fraser, 1997)? The genesis of my

interests in concepts of publics and publicness, and how they relate to my creative practice, feeds into how and why I conducted this research.

I moved away from Plymouth in 2003 and after some twists and turns, went to London Metropolitan University's Cass Art School (2007-2011) where I developed a lens-based practice. A few years later I did an MA in Visual Culture at Goldsmiths (2014-2016). While doing my BA I did an internship and then worked at a commercial gallery. During my MA I volunteered at a larger publicly funded art centre, going on to work in their development department. I also briefly worked at a non-profit arts/film production organisation. While at art school the unhelpful notion of artists as distinct and separate from wider society was prevalent – something like the idea that artists are bohemians who *see* differently. Also, while working in arts organisations, the bureaucracies of funded art spaces became apparent. In the larger publicly funded organisation, there was a range of public programs, from skills-based workshops to talks and presentations and educational programs where artists worked with children to engage them in the main exhibitions. There were departments that had different relationships to publics: education (skills workshops and schools); a curator that worked with residency artists and developed one-off talks or presentations for a more pointedly contemporary arts audience; the main curators that planned the bigger exhibitions in the main galleries, often years in the making; the development team where I worked.

Development means fundraising and was divided into people who wrote funding bids to public funding bodies such as ACE and those that courted patrons, or philanthropic members of the public. I found the exchange of language between these departments fascinating. The main curators gave the development team the words to describe why the artist on show was interesting and worth funding; The education team would tell the development team how many children had engaged in the exhibition on show and why that was important. The development team, and some freelance bid-writers, would take this information and format it in a way that was suitable for whatever funding bid was coming next. I found it striking that all the activities apart from the main exhibitions were seen as secondary – it all started with the big artist on show and trickled down from there, even though the other activities were what, in theory, kept the place open.

Throughout these experiences, the pedagogic potential of art became a core interest of mine; not only what an arts education had done for me, but what art practices could do with and for a wider public. Despite the best intentions of many of the staff within the arts organisations I had worked with, the publics engaged through various projects were either school children, highly specific marginalised groups or bourgeois art audiences. As Malcom Miles (2005) says, these art publics were "rendered passive receivers of culture rather than being empowered to shape cultures" (p.896). Art seemed to be deployed to people who *needed help* or to people who wanted intellectual/cultural gratification. In my experience, Plymouth's cultural scene was far more limited than London's so I wondered what kind of critical engagement could Plymouth public(s) expect from their art spaces?

In retrospect, I can see concerns and frustrations from undergraduate to master that have been worked through in this thesis. Although I was passionate about cameras (particularly black and white darkroom practices) I was not patient enough to refine my final images. My main interest was in the performance of documenting and in the investigatory potential of image making rather than any final output. I was also intrigued by other people's practices. Group crits, where everyone tried to explain what and why they were doing what they were doing seemed so important to me. I did not know Erving Goffman's work at the time but in retrospect, the *presentation of self* in these pedagogical moments fascinated me. I was interested in how people did their work, the nuances of other people's creative actions, and how they framed these actions for themselves and others. My MA dissertation looked at neoliberal reforms in universities that emphasised a provider-consumer dynamic. I theorised that the implementation of metric-based feedback between teachers and students would limit free conversation in the pedagogic relationship. Through my burgeoning interest in language-based philosophy, I posited that conversation is essential for the development of creativity. In 2017, just before starting my PhD research I did a residency at Central House, the London Metropolitan building where I had done my BA. Ben Cain, my former lecturer had been organising residencies for artists in the building. He invited me and a friend to do the last one before the building closed (it had been sold to developers). We invited back other graduates to do a large group exhibition of alumni and staff. My contribution (beyond curating) was asking current students to teach me how they made their work. I documented this to develop a mock curriculum for the building. I became convinced that just talking was essential for arts pedagogy and production. However, when art was presented to an audience or a public, the language used by artists and curators did

not only inhibit people from engaging in contemporary art but also alienated potential art publics.

When I first started formulating this research project, such arguments were at the forefront of my thinking. Theories of publics, with their combination of discourse, culture and politics seemed to have an urgency in relation to art spaces claiming to engage publics. Galleries producing public programmes, and community engagement projects seemed to offer a fertile ground to critique the politics of participation as well as what a public or community might be in the first place. There seemed to be a mismatch between how words like community or public are ordinarily used and the professionalised or political discourses that adopted them. I wanted to combine by practical interest in documenting social performance with a critical engagement with the ways language interacted with art spaces and the publics and communities they (tried to) engage.

Before they passed away, my parents lived about 200 metres from Union Street. One night in 2016, when walking back from a restaurant together, we happened to pass KARST, a contemporary art gallery formed in 2012 and a key example throughout this thesis. We then turned down into Union Street, a former hub of nightlife but now a strip of mostly derelict nightclubs. In a matter of 10 minutes (my parents moved slowly) we had passed a contemporary art gallery, George House (a homeless hostel), a new art focused academy, Plymouth School of Creative Arts (now closed), and a community centre called Union Corner run by Nudge Community Builders (another organisation that will feature heavily in the forthcoming discussion). Art, culture, and community practices were actively developing and professionalising fast in an area where I used to go clubbing. An ecology of community and cultural spaces were in close proximity to an area that had changed dramatically since I went there as a teenager. With this proliferation of organisations, Union Street and its surrounding area was the perfect location to research the interaction between art spaces and arts policy, communities and community action, and the various publics that form and interact with each. I conduct this thesis using a practice-based methodology informed by feminist ordinary language philosophy and a series of practice-based methods: participatory diagrams, keyword booklets, and a documentary feedback filmmaking practice. I use these methods to create a space for the exchange of various voices, and to theorise the functioning of language and cultural policy discourse. Through this methodology I addressed the following questions:

1. What forms of language use constitute the interactions between communities of cultural practice in Union Street?
2. To what extent do rhetorical uses of language found in planning and policy discourses feed, stimulate or hinder language use in the Union Street area?

These questions allow me to frame a specific area – Union Street – through language use, and to understand how this specific context is affected by wider cultural concerns. The language I am concerned with is not always about Union Street but stems from the people who work there. Part of the reason I frame my research through these questions is to understand what kind of communities of practice are operating in the first place, foregrounding my research in cultural specificity, rather than broader policy and theoretical abstractions.

Union Street has a long history of being the centre of Plymouth nightlife. In my teenage years my friends and I went to many of the nightclubs on a regular basis. I have visceral memories of the area. By the mid-2000s most of the nightclubs were gone, leaving the street largely derelict and in economic decline. When I started my PhD in 2018, some of the buildings had been put back into use by Nudge who want to "provide spaces for local people to grow and make connections [and] build a strong local community and economy" (Nudge, 2016). Nearby, exhibitions that question the "real and synthesised sensations of the energy and substances which drive our perception and connectivity" (From *Meta-Matter*, 2017 group show: KARST, 2020) were taking place. The Millennium building (formerly Gaumont Palace cinema) and many other disused buildings across Plymouth were being used for public art events. *We the People Are the Work* (2017) aimed to ask how "we as individuals, and collectively as 'the public', get our voices heard within, or even against, the structures of power that govern our lives and claim to speak for us" (Morrissey, 2017). *The Atlantic Project* (2018) wanted to "test out the elements that will make up a potential new 'biennial' festival in the UK" (Trevor, 2018) developing both an international reach for Plymouth as well as catering for a localised audience. Such an array of discourses could not have been further from my own experience of drinking, dancing, flirtatious encounter, and threats of violence that I associated with Union Street nightlife.

Considering the above, I begin this thesis by contextualising my own experiences of Union Street with more recent activities in the area. In chapter 2 I offer a timeline of relevant events and policies implicated in my research. I start by surveying a selection of writing on communities (Anderson, 2006; Kelly, 2023; Tanesini, 2001; Young, 1986) and publics (Arendt, 1958; Warner, 2002; Zerilli, 2016, 2005) that help frame my forthcoming investigation. I then turn to my memories of the street. I use Stephen Lyng's (2004) notion of edgework, in combination with Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) theory of the carnivalesque to theorise the corporeal and bacchanalian activities that used to take place on Union Street. This offers a way to think about publics beyond a notion of rational, consensus-driven exchange, but also to theorise my own experiences and bring them into focus. I then look at a major urban planning initiative, David Mackay's (2003) *A Vision for Plymouth,* that is still reshaping the areas surrounding Union Street and was part of a nexus of policies that contributed to the decline of the area's night-time economy. I then turn to discourses regarding arts management, particularly in relation to how a professionalised field of people (arts managers) has developed and how they sit between cultural policy and the audiences, communities and publics that are the target of such polices. Discourses regarding creative placemaking then allow me to connect urban development to themes established in relation to arts management: the interaction of various groups (artists, art managers, community representatives) interacting as distinct fields to affect change in a given urban context. Finally, I turn to a key arts policy document for this research, *A Public Art Plan for the City of Plymouth* (Doherty, 2016) that connects national arts policy promulgated by Arts Council England and more abstract notions of public space, publics and the role artists can play in the animation and activation of such spaces.

After framing my research context, I take a step away from Union Street to contextualise my practice-based approach through looking at three artists' filmic practices. Jill Craigie's *The Way We Live*, a post-war reconstruction film that she made in 1946, follows my discussion of planning policies that have affected Plymouth. Craigie's combination of dramatic and documentary filmic approaches investigates the rebuilding of Plymouth after WWII. She not only addresses the interaction of national planning policy with local concerns but does so through a combination of professional actors and Plymothians playing themselves. Through an innovative methodology, Craigie documents a public's involvement in the top-down management of public space whilst forming a public through the production itself. I then look at a more contemporary example, that of artist Artur Zmijewski's film *Them* (2007)

which brought together factions from Polish political life and asked them to produce a series of national flags. From this basic premise, chaos ensues. Zmijewski's use of a limited frame, a controlled context wherein anything might happen, informed my use of a focus group format in this research. Although Zmijewski's seeming lack of ethical concern is problematic, I found the use of creative methods to stimulate social interaction to be a useful strategy in my own work. Finally, I turn to Darcy Lange's *Work Studies in Schools* (1976), a video practice characteristic of a feedback approach to filmmaking. His work was the only practice I knew in detail before starting this research and his attention to documenting social performance was key to the development of my practice-based approach. For example, I documented a social situation, and then showed the participants their own filmed performances, filming their reactions. In Lange's films, we see teachers giving lessons and then we see the teachers watching themselves and reacting to their own performances on the screen. This approach offered the participants a way to reflect and critique themselves, and places Lange's filmic approach as a subject for scrutiny as well.

Part of my interest in publics is their inherently discursive nature. I have a longstanding interest in ordinary-language philosophy and have been frustrated by its relative absence from art and cultural theory. Two major figures in ordinary-language philosophy are Stanley Cavell and Ludwig Wittgenstein. When discussing Wittgenstein's comments on seeing-aspects which dominate the second half of *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), Cavell (1979) says we experience the aspects of a word, but that "words have a life and can be dead for us… the topic of our attachment to our words is allegorical of our attachment to ourselves, and to other persons" (p.355). For me, ordinary language philosophy is useful because it shows the ways we live in and through language, as our means to relate to our own and other people's worlds. Differences in a public's mode of conceptualisation bring out "the plurality of perspectives on the same object [which is] crucial to our sense of realness and thus to the common world" (Zerilli, 2016, p.29). Part of the reason Wittgenstein is not used much in cultural theory is his apparent apolitical nature. Hanna Pitkin (1972) writes it is not necessary for those interested in politics and society to worry about philosophy, nor that they have "anything to learn from an obscure, misanthropic, enigmatic philosopher like Ludwig Wittgenstein" (p.1). Yet, by looking through a more contemporary feminist lens, ordinary language philosophy can take on "fundamental significance for social science or political theory" (Pitkin, 1972, p.1).

This brings me to a group of thinkers I will refer to as feminist ordinary language philosophers. The term does not signify a definitive field of academic study, rather it describes a collection of writers that inherit the philosophical approach characteristic of Wittgenstein, J.L Austin, Cavell and Gilbert Ryle (Moi, 2017; Zerilli, 2015), and applies these methods to politically salient areas. Toril Moi, Linda Zerilli and Nancy Bauer all acknowledge a "feminist ordinary language reading group" in their works *The Revolution of the Ordinary* (2017), *A Democratic Theory of Justice* (2016) and *How To Do Things With Pornography* (2015), respectively; Alice Crary, Sarah Beckwith and Sandra Laugier are also mentioned as part of this group. It is significant that these thinkers come from a range of academic disciplines such as theatre, literary criticism, political theory, and philosophy. I too have approached this research with an interdisciplinary spirit that focuses on the overlap and differences between specific moments of articulation, rather than generalisations across cases (Moi, 2017).

There are two central concepts that assist me in framing, interpretation, and analysis of the various discourses I encountered throughout this research. Firstly, I use the frame of *constellation*, where I connect groups of people through similarity and dissimilarity in their uses of language. This notion stems from Wittgenstein's aforementioned writings on seeing-aspects, particularly through Zerilli's (2015) discussion of this in terms of the *as-structure* of words. This means we experience a word, gesture or object *as* something, under a certain conceptual light. Smiles are not just mouths held in certain shapes, "we see the friendliness of the gaze as immediately as we see the color of the eye" (Zerilli, 2015, p.274) and we do this through our interpretations of certain aspects. I adopt this notion to highlight how one person's words and actions, when considered in a constellation of other words and actions can inflect meaning onto those produced by others. I will call this *constellatory thinking,* which consolidates my approach practically and theoretically. Secondly, I approach the research with an emphasis on feedback. As discussed above in relation to Lange, this is a process of feeding back documentation from participants, back to participants. Through feedback I include participants' interpretations of their own performances within a research frame, as well as my research methods themselves. A feedback approach allows a zooming in and out of the research context which links to Brechtian ideas of distanciation wherein theatrical techniques move an audience from emotional to political interpretations of a performance. By presenting a representation of a context to participants and asking them to

critique that representation, I aim to highlight that certain pictures of a context might be holding us captive (Wittgenstein, 1953).

The COVID-19 pandemic erupted just as I was about to start conducting research with participants. I had to rethink my in-person approach and developed a participatory diagramming method to respond to the situation. To construct these diagrams, I used a website called Graph Commons to visualise all the connections I could find using publicly available information on artists, arts organisations, community groups and funders that have a connection to Union Street. My intention with this method was to allow the people depicted on the diagram to edit, add, change, or mess up the diagram in whatever way they saw fit. I invited 43 people to take part and I received 16 edited diagrams. This process also led to 10 Zoom conversations about the diagrams. The diagrams were designed to illustrate the complexity of a situation and to offer a more nuanced perspective of the Union Street context. Taken together, they visually display a range of perspectives on the cultural ecosystem of Union Street and illustrate how participants responded to the research method itself.

From the diagram process I developed a set of keywords, named after Raymond Williams' (1976) work of the same name. He found that, through looking at contested words, we could see "different formations and distributions of energy and interest" (Williams, 1976, p.11). I extracted the seven most used words - community, infrastructure, local, organisation, partnership, people, and relationship- from the diagramming process, either from the diagram interventions themselves or from Zoom conversations with participants about the diagram method. I then used the keywords to filter through six policy documents published between 2010 and 2021 including Arts Council documents and Plymouth specific texts. The selected policy texts offered a horizon of arts policy discourse that the various organisations and people involved with my research have been working under or within. Using these quotes, I produced a booklet that served as an important facilitation tool in later stages of research, specifically, a set of focus groups with five people who were also identified as relevant from the diagram process.

With this group of five participants and keyword booklet in hand, I organised two focus groups with people who self-described as the founder and director of a contemporary arts space, a community artist and organiser, an artist and general art professional, the co-

founder of a Community Benefit Society, and the head of an arts and cultural organisation. I used the keywords to facilitate conversations between the group. Both sessions were filmed. The second meeting was facilitated by the participants watching edited footage from the first and, following the feedback film method characteristic of Lange, they became co-interpreters of their own performances. My intention was to give the participants a voice within the research process, to “address power relations that construct the research relationship" (Mannay, 2016, p.22). Editing the focus group footage became a significant aspect of my analytic approach. I devote chapter 5 to editing as analysis. A major part of my practice-based submission is a film called *Permissive Space* which is comprised of edited documentation from the focus groups. Editing helped construct the analysis section of my thesis; in this sense, editing resembled the process of thinking (Dziadosz, 2014).

Documenting the performances by participants, and the filmed analysis and reaction participants gave to documentation, offered the central analytic frame of this thesis. I also learned from watching myself, seeing ways I could bring in specific comparison rather than generalised questioning - that is to say, I enacted my own constellatory methodology. For example, in the first focus group I asked direct questions about public space on Union Street which did not produce much from the participants. In the second focus group, through asking for comparisons between community spaces and public spaces, a far more nuanced set of articulations were voiced by the group. Further to this, through listening to how they themselves and others articulated on a given subject via the feedback film method, participants made connections between language and practice. Part of what makes publics politically salient is the positioning of acknowledgment over knowledge; our value judgements on a given subject such as a piece of arts policy “make a legitimate claim on the agreements of others” (Zerilli, 2016, p.10). Developing a nuanced voice within a certain context is the essence of one’s abilities to perform in a public context. A key contribution of this thesis is my feedback approach because of its ability to incorporate notions of publicness within it. I have researched a public through the practical formation of a public.

Throughout this text I will signpost to the reader which moment would be most suitable to review the documentation of the practice-based components of this thesis. It should be noted that photographic documentation does not always do justice to the objects because the booklets were made to be handled and the diagrams to be seen collectively. However, the photographs give a sense of what was made and engaged with by participants through

the research. I include photographic documentation of my participatory diagrams, the keyword booklet, and texts and installation photographs of an exhibition of work at Birkbeck's Peltz Gallery. As you will read, I included two films by other people in the Peltz exhibition (these cannot be shared as part of this thesis due to copyright restrictions). The evidence of practice for this thesis includes photographs of the diagrams and keyword booklet, documentation of the exhibition and a film called *Permissive Space,* which is available to view via a Vimeo link (instructions for viewing can be found in the list of evidence of practice and at the appropriate moment of the thesis).

My analysis is split into two chapters based around terminology derived from the focus groups: **'**DIY' and 'Values'. I then turn to a third term, 'The People' as way of conclusion. Each theme comes from the editing of footage for the production of *Permissive Space*. Each serve as a constellatory moment where conversations converged around a given subject. At times it may seem that Union Street as a physical space drops from view during the analysis, but due to the involvement of the focus group participants with Union Street, the above terms are articulations coming from the street as much as about it. The voices of participants contribute to the construction of Union Street as a conceptual space and the physical space of the street influences participant voices. As mentioned above, this does not imply agreement among the group; rather, each theme serves as a nexus of discourses that bring out aspects of each other through their proximity. Chapter 6 looks at 'DIY', a term that seemed collectively appealing to the focus group but also hides discrepancies in their political outlooks. After offering a review of how DIY is used in various fields, I turn to concrete articulations of each focus group participant to sketch their individual positions to two seemingly related ideas regarding developments on Union Street: non-permission-led action and the creation of permissive spaces. Broadly speaking, these two positions map onto a liberal conception of creatively driven urban development (Florida, 2003; Landry, 2000) and more mutually supportive notions characteristic of anarchism. All members of the group appreciate the term DIY, but it seems to occlude their divergent notion of individual freedom and the possibility of shared values driving Union Street's development. Through a feminist reading of both liberal and anarchist theory, Susan L. Brown (1993) brings liberal and anarchist conceptions of freedom together. Brown's writing helps me analyse how individual uses of a term like DIY can overlap while still framing divergent political attitudes.

From DIY, chapter 7 moves to a focus on shared values because it was introduced by a participant in the second focus group. She felt values captured a current running through the conversation. David Graeber's (2013, 2001) work on value was useful to think through some of the implications of the participants' use of value as an umbrella term. He says "the realization of value is always, necessarily, a process of comparison [where] for the actor, that's all that 'society' usually is" (Graeber, 2001, p.87) In this sense, value is inherently a public matter. I use a lens of values to look at the practical process of valuing in cultural production – evaluation. I then compare the approaches to evaluation adopted by ACE to non-art funders. I suggest that the different professional fields represented in the group instil a different approach to evaluation in each, and therefore a divergent understanding of the practical implications of values among the group and in the cultural, artistic and community practices of Union Street.

In conclusion I turn to 'The People' a term used in *A public Art Plan for the City of Plymouth* (Doherty, 2016) that provoked participants in the first focus group. I used the term in the second meeting to ask the group about their positions within the Union Street community and cultural dynamic. The group's problematisation of that category in application to themselves leads to my characterisation of them as exemplary representatives of a Union Street public. I propose this characterisation not by virtue of their professional statuses but by their insistence that they were each more than their professional roles. The rejection of exemplarity in professional terms by some members of the group suggests an impossibility of seeing themselves as only professional roles, partly because they have been brought together with others who do not share their professional standing and allegiances. In this way, the participants' rejection of being only professional figures, or members of a collective understood as 'The People' opens-up a more plural notion of what an expert or professional can be. Their rejection has implications of what a public based around cultural and community production might look like and how it might leverage its voice to wider policy concerns. Sandra Laugier (2020, p.26) frames an ordinary ethics of care that emphasises a mutual dependence, vulnerability and bases ethics on what people care about in practice. For each participant, care for their work is entwined with care for the people who live in the area and for Plymouth as a whole. In this sense, care based on vulnerability brings forth a commitment to a specific place. With this idea in view, I now turn to my own teenage experiences of living in Plymouth to begin my delineation of the 'cultural constellations' that constitute it.

2. From Memories to Publics and Policies

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Growing up in Plymouth, I always had a sense of remoteness from the rest of the country. This feeling was based less on geographic distance than to a conceptual notion of Plymouth as behind the rest of the country in terms of culture. The image of remoteness and being left behind was intensified in an area like Union Street. My impression of the street was of an area left behind in a city left behind. When I started my research in 2018, I knew the street had changed but a sense of its marginality was still my prevailing image. I had first-hand experience of its former nightlife, but very little knowledge of what had brought it all to a close; even less of how art in the city was now being deployed in the area, and if and how this bore any relation to urban development. My aim in this section is to reconcile a series of factors that affected my understanding of Union Street up until the point I started researching in 2018 and to construct a timeline of events that affect both my previous conception of the street and its contemporary cultural context.

Here I gather a series of perspectives that disclose an overview of Union Street as a position from which to start analytically, towards my subsequent delineation of constellatory thinking. My own lived perspective is as much a factor here as texts that document other perspectives from certain times and places. In terms of understanding and interpreting complex realities relating to policies, Frank Fischer (2003) says “the framing of an issue supplies guideposts for analysing and knowing, arguing and acting” (p.143). Following Yanow (2000), Fischer (2003, p.147) asks what the interpretive communities and artefacts that carry significant meaning for the conception of a given policy could be. Using a series of sources, including my own memories of nightlife, I track the evolution from vibrant and infamous nightlife to economic decline, then to arts policy contemporaneous to my research that looks at a moment that starts around 2009 and ends in 2022. Moving from memory to policy will allow me to frame a series of theorisations of publics, problematising the notion of ‘public’ as well as designating the way I am going to conceptualise the term throughout this thesis.

I start by framing the two key terms for my overall thesis: communities and publics. I problematise the notion of community having a stable meaning or defined boundary; for example, a nation could be framed as a community (Anderson, 2006), as could an interest group such as Goths or Ravers (both relevant to bygone Union Street venues). Either way, there are implications for how the notion of community is deployed within arts policy, by artists, and by communities themselves. Through the work of Michael Warner (Warner, 2002), Hannah Arendt (Arendt, 1958) and Linda Zerilli (Zerilli, 2016, 2005) I conceptualise a notion of publics based on the reception and circulation of discourse: publics formed by their performative activities of acknowledging, judging, and re-articulating. Next, I turn to my own personal experiences of Union Street's bygone nightlife that characterised my primary impressions of the location before I started researching. Then, using several urban planning documents, primarily the Mackay Plan from 2003, I trace the decline of the night-time economy. Moving from nightclub closures to more recent development, I offer a timeline of events that begins with the first Union Street Party in 2009 and takes the reader up to 2018 when I started my research. This period saw major shifts in Plymouth's arts ecology, with grassroots events such as *Plymouth Art Weekender* (2015-2020) starting up, to national arts events such as The *British Art Show* (2011 and 2022), *We the People Are the Work* (2017)*, and The Atlantic Project* (2018) all taking place in Plymouth. Organisations that are central to my research such as Nudge, KARST and Plymouth Culture all open in this window as well. I then move on to situate this research within wider discourses relating arts management and its development as a distinct field restricted within arts policies. Arts managers are framed as people who sit between two worlds, that of artists and management (Chong, 2010; Stalling Walter, 2015). I also highlight the neoliberal evaluative frameworks arts managers are impelled to work within. Arts management as a district field leads me to debates regarding creative placemaking – often cited as a combination of people and practices who come together to change a place. Arts managers often take part such dynamics. These discussions help me lead into an important arts policy document for my research. The *Public Art Plan for the City of Plymouth* (PAP) published in 2016 by Plymouth Culture. This will contextualise my research subject while also laying some important theoretical groundwork.

2.2 COMMUNITIES

The idea of community is not always positive and can be deployed ambiguously. Although often considered in hyper-local terms, Benedict Anderson (2006) uses the idea of community to describe the imaginary boundaries which maintain a sense of national identity. For him, nation "is imagined as a *community,* because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 2006, p.7). For Anderson (2006), community is a theoretical construct used to smooth over inequalities and draw a hierarchical social structure together. Brexit, for example, highlighted significant divides in the UK[1], forming deeply partisan divisions based on notions of community and identity (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020). To describe such divisions, Sobolewska and Ford (2020) use the term ethnocentrism "a technical term for a persistent tendency to see the social and political world as a battle between groups, pitting the familiar 'us' against the unfamiliar 'them'" (p.6). As Sobolewska and Ford (2020) point out, ethnocentrism has a significant effect on political formations which is, "at root, about group identities and group boundaries" (p.16). Through their study of Brexit demographics, Sobolewska and Ford (2020) highlight that notions of authentically rooted communities and inauthentic transient communities are not as simple as many would like to describe (p.17). Iris Marion Young (1986) highlights the insider/outsider dynamic inherent in many ideas of community which resonates with the dynamics that Sobolewska and Ford describe. She says "the ideal of community implies subjects that are present to themselves. A set of people who understand one another as they understand themselves" (Young, 1986, p.1-2). Her critique is of the homogenising effect of 'the ideal of community'; if we are similar, we are connected. She continues to highlight that community is generally structured around opposition. For example, between individual and community, "in this opposition each term comes to be defined by its negative relation to the other" (Young, 1986, p.6). For Young (1986) in ordinary speech, community is a normative grouping based on membership of a neighbourhood, a church, a school, or a specific heritage, they entail **"**an oppositional differentiation from other groups, who are feared, or at best devalued" (Young, 1986, p.12). Young emphasises how community is used in ordinary speech, with the implicit suggestion that acknowledgment is necessary for

[1] Plymouth voted 59.9 % leave in the EU referendum: www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results/local/p.

community to be formed, even if in her example community structures tend towards conservatism. While there is theoretical consensus that communities draw boundaries, the oppositional, exclusionary nature of such formations is not a given. Similarly to Young, Alessandra Tanesini (2001) recognises that “every attempt to bring some people together in a community inevitably marks others as outsiders who are to be excluded” (p.13). Communities come about by the drawing of limits, through boundaries and frontiers (Tanesini, 2001, p.13). However, “in our ordinary commerce with words the speech act of saying ‘we’ is not always akin to drawing a boundary with ‘them’ on the other side of the limit” (Tanesini, 2001, p.18). Rather than a homogenising step, a “we” can be an act of acknowledgment where we can **“**test and realize the depth and breadth of our attunement in words, emotions and reactions” (Tanesini, 2001, p.18). This frames participation or membership in community as potentially productive through shared but sometimes surprising uses of language.

Owen Kelly (2023) offers a useful distinction when defining different forms of community in relation to cultural production. He follows Andre Gorz’s (1999) distinction between constitutive and associative community. If people have chosen to have something in common, like an interest or shared endeavour it is called an associative community, whereas when a group has something in common by birth like language, or area they grew up, he calls it a constitutive community. (Gorz, 1999, p.117; in Kelly, 2023). In both cases, “communities require work from their members if their members wish them to continue” and they depend upon “processes of mutual recognition” (Kelly, 2023, p.109). Kelly (2023) goes on to link the distinction between constitutive and associative to matters of cultural production and reception. For him, constitutive communities generally try and preserve traditions: “they sustain their community’s contribution to the human story, a contribution that needs its own language to voice” (Kelly, 2023, p.109). This is contrasted with associative communities that “revel in creating new forms of expression” (Kelly, 2023, p.110). Such a distinction is complicated when practically applying it to cultural movements which may move between these categories as groups form and constitute themselves over time.

In terms of cultural production and policy, community is often referred to as a group with which artists or researchers should work to produce ethically sound projects (Banks et al., 2019; Goodson and Phillimore, 2012). When project development or research is done

ethically with communities "co-production, equality and democracy are intertwined" (Banks et al., 2019, p.5). In this sense, there is generally a positive light surrounding the complex notion of a community when referenced in socially-oriented artistic and academic production. When writing about participatory community-based research, Goodson and Phillimore (2012) do not try and define what a community is, accepting that communities form across a range of geographies and shared interests (p.4). They say community research is a "collaboration between professional social researchers, funding agencies and the group or organisation being researched, to utilise community-based knowledge" (Goodson and Phillimore, 2012, p.4). There is a characteristic separating effect in this statement; even if community-research is conducted with the aim of *creating* knowledge and action within the given community, there is an implicit divide created between professionals and community members who may be experts, but in the context of research, only within their community (otherwise why would the professionals be called in?). Throughout this thesis, I intend to draw out some of the ways the above literature intersects with how people who work in art, culture, and community in Union Street talk about their work and relationships. This is less to glean "community-based knowledge" (Goodson and Phillimore, 2012, p.4) and more to determine how acts of judgement and acknowledgment of those judgements might form a community in the first place.

2.3 PUBLICS

Moving now to the theme of 'publics', I follow Warner (2002) in saying "publics have become an essential fact of the social landscape; yet it would tax our understanding to say exactly what they are" (p.65). The word public has many uses, making it difficult to define what might be meant by terms such as "public programme", "public facing" or "public intellectual". A key reference point in the academic literature about publics and their social history is Jurgen Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), which gives a detailed account of the emergence and then transformation of Western modernity's bourgeois public sphere. His work offers a "strong normative idea of publicness" (Calhoun, 1992. p.42). Three significant factors are worth highlighting in Habermas' conceptualisation of publics. Firstly, exchange takes place through spoken dialogue to reach a consensus over matters of common importance. Secondly, in employing their critical reasoning all members of a public stand on an equal footing. Thirdly, there are physical as well as textual spaces

such as coffee houses and newspapers where these exchanges can take place and did in the eighteenth-century historical context of the emergent public sphere (Habermas, 1989). Habermas' ideas have been critiqued significantly by feminists who question the notion of an equal footing for discourse and consensus as possible or desirable, and on the grounds of exclusion due to identity (Benhabib, 1992; Fraser, 1997; Mouffe, 2013, 2005). My research proceeds from this latter standpoint, where consensus is less important than a practice of acknowledging other people's perspectives. My aim is to understand how varied judgements can inflect new perspectives in public life, rather than flatten them through collective agreement.

Warner (2002) and Arendt (1958) offer complementary theorisations of publicness. Both outline the double nature of publicness; read together they highlight the collective and encompassing nature of publicness while also highlighting the importance of the individual within the collective. The public is "a kind of social totality" (Warner, 2002, p.65), with Arendt (1958) even proposing there is a sense in which the public denotes the world as such. For Arendt (1958), "the presence of others who see and hear what we see and hear assures us the reality of the world for ourselves" (p.50). For Warner (2002), a public is "a concrete audience… witnessing itself in visible space, as with a theatrical public" (p.66). Warner (2002) frames a public as active and although he talks about a public as having blurred edges, they are also knowing, "assembled in common visibility and common action" (p.66). Publics "exist by virtue of being addressed" (Warner, 2002, p.67) which holds significance as "everybody sees and hears from a different position" (Arendt, 1958, p.57). Publics are created by the circulation of speech, text, and artefact with the potential for infinite address, acknowledgment, judgement, and readdress (Warner, 2002, p.91). It gathers us together but also holds us at a distance through the necessity of judgement in the face of address (Arendt, 1958, p. p.52-3). For Arendt (1958) publics are constituted by the fact that everyone comes to a public space from a different conceptual perspective. This is important as it "gathers us together and yet prevents us from falling over each other" (Arendt, 1958, p.52); we are related but separated by the different perspectives and modes of judgement we bring to public participation. We are collected in and through our reaction to things such as films, books, cultural policy, and regional public art strategies. This is not to say we must have reactions to every object that is thrown at us, but for publics to exist, there needs to be the capacity to receive and judge cultural, political, and economic discourse. Publics are culturally and politically significant not so much due to the subjects or

interests they engage with but because of the "world-building practice of publicly articulating matters of common concern" (Zerilli, 2005, p.22). Publics are active, not passive.

What is at stake in these conceptions is not only the idea of a plural social and political discourse, but the capacity to take matters of political concern, and cultural artefacts into account, "to acknowledge them as potentially revealing of something in the world, then forming one's own opinion or judgement" (Zerilli, 2016, p.141). To understand a given public, we must look to the cultural forms and discourse that address them (Warner, 2002, p.72). To do this we are required to try and see what others see in those cultural forms, to be open to how others interpret a cultural context or object. This is to employ representative thinking where we strive

> for validity by taking account of plural ordinary perspectives that alone give us a sense of an objective world that we have in common and on whose basis we can move from knowing that something is the case to acknowledging it to be the case-acknowledging it publicly (Zerilli, 2016, p.141).

As will become evident throughout this thesis, Zerilli's approach of feminist ordinary language philosophy will offer a significant philosophical framework to my methodology that looks at how the people who operate art and cultural spaces and community groups in the Union Street area interact through their use of language. Here, I highlight the significance of her ideas relating to the construction of publics. Rather than what people *know*, it is their judgements shared with others, and their acknowledgments of others' judgements that form publics. In this framework, discourse, policy, and artefacts are active and performed – these public performances of judgement are world-building (Zerilli, 2005). The possibility of publicly performed judgments opens the door to ideas of counterpublics where a subset can position itself against more dominant public (Warner, 2002, p.118). A counterpublic maintains an "awareness of its subordinate status. The cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public but a dominant one" (Warner, 2002, p.119).

To form a counterpublic there needs to be a dominant public to react against. To form groups within bigger more powerful groups, subverting the power discourse to local, specific, idiosyncratic means is to question the very idea of a single world view. A difference between a community and a public could be framed through my personal participation in former Union Street activities. I was present in public space as part of a public, but I was not part of any community that had specific cultural allegiances to the venues in the area - I was not part of the Goth or Rave communities, for example, that gathered at spots like JFKs, Dance Academy, and Warehouse. In the next section, I will use my experiences as part of a public that participated in bygone Union Street nightlife to further elaborate on these ideas of public, community and their intersections.

2.4 IMPRESSIONS OF THE STREET

Between the ages of 14 and 18 (approximately 1998 to 2002) I would 'go downtown' most weekends, often multiple times a week. Union Street, or more specifically the stretch between the nightclubs Millennium and Dance Academy, was the primary location for anyone going to nightclubs or night-time drinking establishments. The venues were known for DJs, cheap drinks, dancing, flirtatious/sexual interactions, excitement, drugs – all the things that are associated with UK nightlife. Another important feature of going to Union Street at this time was the threat of violence. Fights regularly broke out in some venues, and the street itself was notorious for fracas when the venues started throwing people out at closing time. Plymouth has a strong military presence, which in local Plymouth terminology would be called Matlows (Navy) and Squaddies (Army) to Bootnecks (Marines); it seemed that the presence of these groupings added to the tension and possibility of violence. I moved away from Plymouth in 2003, after I had stopped going 'downtown' as much. I left with an understanding of Union Street as fun, tacky, and tense. To put these aspects in analytical terms, as a public space Union Street was known for both the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984) and for edgework (Lyng, 2004). I will discuss what each term means in relation to my impressions of Union Street before outlining how these notions problematise and counter dominant conceptions of publicness.

2.4.1 CARNIVALESQUE

Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, developed in *The Problem of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* (1984) is used to reconcile a notion of primordial, festive exuberance in a structured and classed society (p.122). Bakhtin (1984) emphasises that the notion of carnival has various "nuances depending on epoch, the people, the individual festivity" (p.122), and that it is played out in a language of "symbolic concretely sensuous forms" (p.122). He recognised that any location that serves as a meeting or contact point "for heterogeneous people" (p.128) like streets, pubs and clubs can be the site for carnival type interaction. In the case of Union Street, although there are individual characteristics, the human interaction, on a symbolic level, bears similarities to other times and places that are the site of the carnivalesque. He describes a theory of events that are chaotic and sensuous, but also ritualistic and therefore repeatable. This brings to mind not only the habitual binge drinking on Union Street that centred around rituals of excess, but also the uniform way I and others dressed. All the men I knew, without exception, wore a button-up shirt, jeans, and shoes (not trainers, the clubs would not allow it). I often bucked the normative trend by wearing shirts that were darker and sometimes not made of cotton.

An important aspect of the events on Union Street was their containment within a specific spatiotemporal frame. For the most part, the drinking and dancing was for Fridays and Saturdays (occasionally other days during holidays), also Union Street was basically where everyone I knew went, every week. For Bakhtin (1984), during the carnival moment people and things that are kept at a distance through social norms and barriers, distance created by a "hierarchical worldview [is] drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations" (p.123). On a Friday or Saturday night on Union Street "polls of change" (p.126) such as sober/drunk, reserved/extrovert, young/old were turned on their head. Through this "violation of usual and the generally accepted, life [was] drawn out of its usual rut" (p.126). The carnivalesque is permitted within contained times and locations where social hierarchy is subverted, only to return once the party is over.

Bakhtin is writing as a literary critic when he says in the carnival we see a dissolved barrier between performer and spectator, where "all *distance* between people is suspended [and] free and familiar contact among people" is permitted (Bakhtin, 1984, p.123); he is discussing literary characters. However, through his notion of speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986) he

connects literary concerns to that of life outside the text. He says, "language is realised in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in various areas of human activity" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.60). Through these concrete uses of language, "spheres of communication" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.60) form with their own distinct styles and performances attached, but "each sphere in which language is used develops its own relatively stable types of utterance. These we may call speech genres" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.60). He sees a link between the carnivalesque public square of the Middle Ages, filled with ridicule and abuse, to the modern speech-life of the European public square as a carnivalesque speech genre (Bakhtin, 1986, p.130). My teenage experiences of Union Street are carnivalesque, and my visceral experiences of Union Street relate to a conception of publicness as a space where people address each other in poetic forms (Warner, 2003). The silly, insulting, funny, creative, and gross ways people behaved and spoke had a world-building character. To find a joke funny or not and to respond accordingly, to down a drink or not, requires an act of public judgement. Collective bad judgement is still public judgement.

2.4.2 EDGEWORK

Edgework is a theory found in criminology that describes risky and perhaps illegal behaviour performed for thrills. (Lyng, 2004; Newburn et al., 2016) This notion is useful for me to theorise elements of the Union Street experience such as fighting and drug use. For Lyng (2004), the pleasure seeking and risk taking associated with breaking the law are forms of corporeal empowerment that subvert "regimes of work, consumption and communication that deny the creative possibilities of [workers] bodies" (p.360). These criminal "distinctly embodied practices" are a feature of living in an advanced capitalist society (Lyng, 2004, p.362). Edgework is embodied through the image of military personnel getting into fights on Union Street. Almost by definition, military bodies are highly disciplined and constantly subject to a higher authority. Historically, alcohol has always been strongly associated with the British armed forces, both to develop strong social bonds between soldiers and to deal with the stresses of military service (O'Connor and Dickson, 2008; Osborne et al., 2022). Anne Fox (2008) suggests alcohol is used from the outset in military training practice to form social bonds and to separate work and play. She goes as far as suggesting,

> In pre-home-leave pep talks, it was common to hear a training corporal encouraging the recruits to get as drunk as possible, sleep with as many women as possible, and 'show the civilians what soldiers are made of' (Fox, 2008, p.7)

This statement does not set military personnel apart but frames them as embodying masculine practices that were common for nights out on Union Street. In terms of edgework, these nights out offered subversive release where overbearing rules and restrictions were suspended through the chaotic interactions between bodies that could not control the other bodies they interacted with (Lyng, 2004).

Lyng suggests that the body can be "a locus of political meaning, a site of both political repression and liberation" (Ferrell and Sanders, 1995, p.314. cited in Lyng (2004)). With this framing of embodiment in view, the physical, possibly violent, or sexual interactions found on Union Street might be interpreted as a form of political expression. Lyng (2004) uses this notion to rethink Habermas' idea of publicness based on communicative action (Habermas, 1992) He says:

> By substituting the notion of 'corporeal transaction' for Habermas's 'communicative action' in the action-theoretical framework, life-world analysis can be expanded beyond the exclusive focus on symbolic interaction to consider other bodily transactions involved in production, consumption and social interaction (Lyng, 2004, p.336)

For Habermas, publics are interactions between rational people in space trying to find consensus through speech, but for Lyng, the problem with this is that it does not consider the interaction between bodies and how they feel things in the world beyond a structured set of criteria. With the overexertion of male bravado that comes along with "banter", heavy drinking, and displays of "hardness" people are structuring a public through acts of acknowledgment and judgment which do not rely on a dominant conception of rational behaviour. Both edgework and the carnivalesque allow me to move from a space of bodily memory and anecdotal evidence to a theoretical and analytic space without disregarding my own corporeal and performed experiences. This is significant for my understanding of Union Street, as the spaces that allowed this behaviour were about to close.

In 2006 one of Union Street's most iconic nightclubs, Dance Academy (formerly Palace Theatre) was shut down following a police drug raid. Due to its association with dance music culture, it was commonly known that Dance Academy housed lots of drug use. However, I was unaware of a connection between property consultants and the timing of the police investigation into drugs, reported journalistically 10 years later. In a piece for *The Herald*, Carl Eve (2016) recounts instances of the former owner being approached by property consultants that wanted to develop the building in line with David Mackay's 2003 regeneration scheme which I go on to discuss below. According to Eve (2016), in 2004 the owner had cooperated with property consultants King Sturge on a building surveyor's valuation report to assess the viability of acquisition. Whether, as Eve (2016) reports, this valuation was undertaken for council chiefs as described by the owner, or done for South West Regional Development Agency and English Partnerships as described by the council in 2008 (Eve, 2016), there was evidently interest in the mid-2000s in developing Dance Academy. In 2005 the owner said he would be happy for the building to be restored but he had invested too much money to let the building go at a low price, also pointing out that if he had not maintained the building it would have collapsed because it has been "left to rot by people in Plymouth" (Eve, 2016). This dilapidation perhaps added to the sense of excitement associated with Union Street and the edgework its nightlife venues made possible. The idea that venues on Union Street has been allowed to dilapidate and that the nightclub closures, even if coincidental, connected to urban planning initiatives beyond Union Street seem to follow on from with David Mackay's *A Vision of Plymouth* commissioned in 2003. I will now outline how this plan affects the contemporary urban geography of the Union Street area.

2.5 A VISION FOR PLYMOUTH: MACKAY'S PLAN

In 2003 Plymouth City Council and MBM Arquitectes with AZ Urban Studio published *A Vision for Plymouth.* The lead architect, David Mackay, was known for his work on Barcelona's port area and their Olympic Village. *A Vision for Plymouth* was colloquially known as the '*The Mackay Plan*' (I will refer to Mackay as the author of the document). I was 20 at the time it was published, and I remember my parents' enthusiasm over the possibility of some well needed regeneration and revitalisation in the city. In this section I will describe

what the vision entailed and outline its intersections with the physical and conceptual space of Union Street.

After signalling the collaboration between many Plymouth citizens and relevant council offices (Mackay, 2003, p.1) the document goes on to set out its task of:

> delivering the highest possible quality buildings and public spaces to attract and sustain the highest quality business, education, living, and recreation opportunities for citizens, investors, and visitors alike (p.4).

From the outset, the rhetoric found in the document relies on an abstract concept of *quality*, one that is not clearly defined or assigned to any group or person. The reader is not offered an empirical example of what high or low quality is. The plan is not only for citizens but also investors and visitors. The plan is designed to increase economic appeal as much as raise the quality of living standards, and these two concerns are presented as intrinsically linked in the text.

Mackay critiques the post WWII reconstruction plan of Sir Patrick Abercrombie (1943) that was commissioned to rebuild Plymouth after heavy bombing during the Blitz. Following the thinking at the time, this plan separated various facets of life into geographically zoned sections like leisure, living, shopping, education etc. (Atkinson, 2015; Pendlebury et al., 2015). Union Street sat outside of the shopping and leisure zones that dominate the city centre and was generally ignored in the original 1943 plan. Roads were understood as undesirable but necessary to connect these various zones of use, and their design had a particular impact in organising the social and material space of the city. Union Street is an important connecting road, named “Union” because it connected the three original towns that comprise the modern-day city: Devonport, Stonehouse, and Plymouth. For Mackay (2003), these zoning arrangements were physically exclusionary – with for example major roads blocking off housing estates from the main shopping areas. Consequently, according to Mackay, Plymouth city centre needed “the right instruments to repair [its] urban environments and these are now being found in looking again at the quality of [its] public space” (p.5). Mackey’s report notes that Union Street itself feels excluded from the centre

by Western Approach, part of the “triangular traffic collar [preventing] the economic, social and cultural energies to circulate through the body of the city” (Mackay, 2003, p.22).

2.5.1 A CONNECTED WATERFRONT

The majority of Mackay’s plan is based around maintaining the original central elements of the 1940’s Abercrombie plan while adding significant access and emphasis on connecting various parts of the waterfront. He says, “the whole waterfront can achieve a critical mass that both defines and drives the vitality of the city centre” (Mackay, 2003, p.19). Since 2003, when I left Plymouth, there have been significant developments along the waterfront. Moving from West to East, The Royal William Yard, a former naval victualling yard was developed by Urban Splash in 2008; a series of developments around Millbay umbrellaed under the title ‘Millbay Masterplan’ (Vision for Millbay, 2006), which also got underway in 2008. Areas of waterfront with historic significance such as The Hoe and Barbican, have always been popular destinations, but to the east Queen Anne’s Battery Marina has seen significant change with the neighbouring Alma Yard completing this line of development to connect the waterfront from the west to the east of the city. Millbay, just south of Union Street, is an awkward moment in this route due to its varied buildings that included many light industrial units and disused harbour areas. Millbay has seen the most significant shift in character. Although geographically next to each other, Millbay and Union Street do not have the same character. Union Street separates the largely residential South Stonehouse from Millbay which is best described as an extension inwards from a series of docks. Millbay was best known for the site of Brittany Ferries dock. In terms of nightlife, Union Street holds a somewhat iconic history of clubs etc. while Millbay Road is predominantly known for sex work. Also, Millbay’s light industrial buildings have never been public venues akin to those found on Union Street. Figure 1. below with Union Street highlighted in yellow shows Plymouth’s central waterfront. Moving from east west to east is the Royal William Yard, Millbay, the Hoe, the Barbican and Sutton Harbour – an unbroken line between these locations was central to Mackay’s vision.

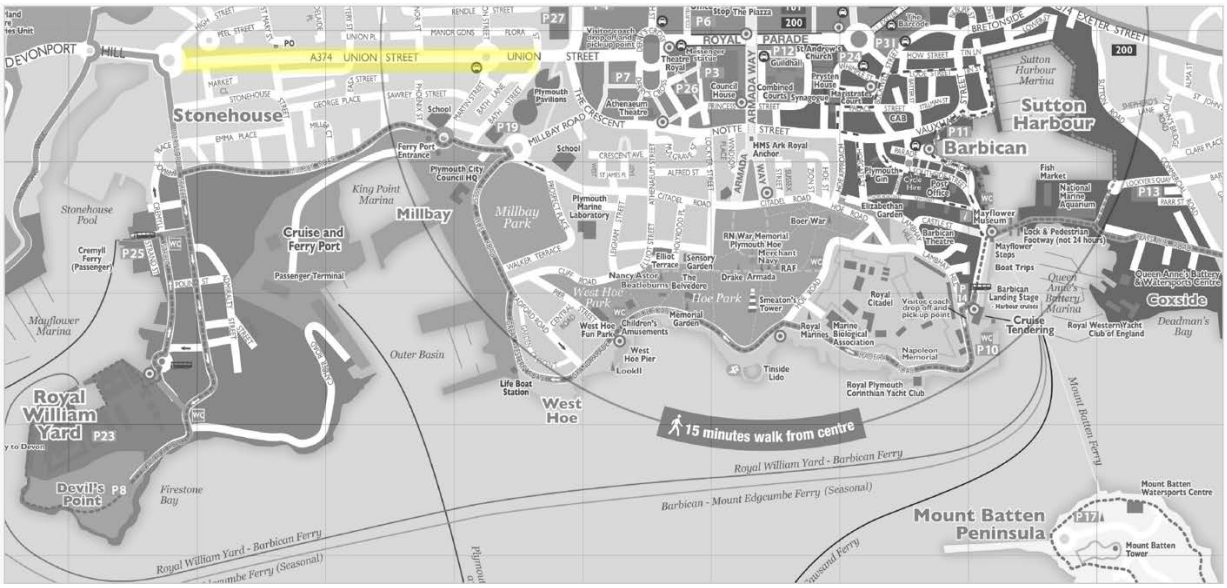


Figure 1. Map adapted from a Visit Plymouth map, 2021.

Mackay (2003) frames the ability to walk around as key to defining and developing public space (p.20). For the plan to achieve its vision of a vibrant public realm, people need to be able to walk the city on foot. This meant that Millbay would need to be developed as it was an area taken up by light industrial use that blocked a passage from the Royal William Yard to the rest of the city and waterfront. It should be noted that Union Street, although away from the water, already provided a route from west to east. Millbay Boulevard[2], completed in 2020 could be seen as a spatial workaround to connect other developments in Millbay to the city centre, avoiding Union Street. Although, as evidenced above, there had been interest in developing sites such as Dance Academy, there has been no significant capital investment directed towards Union Street in the same way as there has to Millbay.

Mackay's plan was not implemented directly but rather through smaller offshoot schemes such as The Millbay Master plan, a collaboration between The English Cities Fund, Homes England, Legal & General and Muse (Vision for Millbay, 2006). The council, after Mackay's vision, designated the area as "one of the greatest opportunities for transformation" (PCC Department of Development, 2003, p.22). It is described as:

> one of the largest regeneration projects in the south of England and is creating a vibrant new waterfront quarter for Plymouth [combining] residential, leisure,

[2] For more information see: www.awpexeter.com/news/millbay-boulevard-plymouth.

business and retail development, with high quality public spaces and direct access to the waterfront (Vision for Millbay, 2006).

The area offered space to develop without the need to renovate older listed buildings such Dance Academy/Palace Theatre found on Union Street, while also allowing for a less broken path along the sea as per the Mackay Vision. As previously mentioned, although venues such as Dance Academy and Millennium were popular venues, they were still falling into significant disrepair. I have little memory of the area before it was developed but Millbay Road was heavily associated with drugs and prostitution which was framed as a major reason for reducing the night-time economy on Union Street (Department of Development, 2006). In two council documents from that period (Department of Development, 2006; Plymouth City Council, 2005), the Union Street area is characterised as having significant issues relating to drugs, violence, and poor housing. The preferred solution to this problem seems to have been to shut down or curb the night-time economy rather than look to any root causes to such problems.

In 2003, central government published a report into night-time economies (ODPM, 2003). While it acknowledges that pubs, clubs and bars offer economic income to cities, "spontaneous, unplanned growth focussed around a heavy drinking culture can have a negative effect, creating crime and disorder" (ODPM, 2003, p.8-9). The report suggests the UK look to mainland Europe for inspiration where city centres hold a range of activities for all ages, whereas in the UK they are focused on young people drinking (ODPM, 2003, p.3). The report frames public activity as a series of economic exchanges rather than a set of cultural interactions. Young people "drink standing up, in crowded, bustling environments where music is played at high volume" (ODPM, 2003, p.7). This then leads to clubs, more drinking and later, takeaway food (ODPM, 2003, p.7). Older people avoid city centres due to this behaviour (ODPM, 2003). Although my own experiences of Union Street were predominantly of young people gathering, I also knew that friends' parents went to the same clubs. Binge drinking was part of a certain UK culture and happened in parks and people's homes as much as in city centre venues. The report frames a problematic aspect of British public life as simply a planning and licensing issue.

2.5.2 OVERALL VALUES – PUBLIC REALM

Mackay (2003) adopts a language that describes cities as entities that are passed down between generations through civic involvements as well as through the visions of past planners (p.12). Following Camillo Sitte, he says urban planning is an artistic and technical task that considers "the city as a work of art [that is] repeated by critics and commentators every now and again" (Mackay, 2003, p.12). Moving from Lewis Mumford, a key influence on post-WW2 planning, to Abercrombie, to himself, Mackay presents his ideas as part of a chain of experts, all of whom are men, who act as arbiters of the urban landscape.

The main thrust of the plan's rhetoric is to enhance the public realm in Plymouth (Mackay, 2003; PCC Department of Development, 2003). The public realm is described as a space for free association and "unexpected encounter [between] those that belong there with those that pass through" (Mackay, 2003, p.10). For Mackay, however, this also involved conflict. He says, "to remove conflict, and its opportunity for tolerance, is to strike a death blow to the vitality of the street" (Mackay, 2003, p.7). This has strong similarities to Chantel Mouffe's (2013, 2007, 2005) ideas of an agonistic public sphere. Mouffe sets herself against Habermas by dismissing the hope that rational public discourse leading to consensus is achievable, or that we should even strive for such consensus. She claims that an avoidance of agonistic exchange insulates politics from the effects of pluralism (Mouffe, 2005, p.93). However, it is in ideas of *everyday urbanism* (Crawford, 2004, 1999) that this notion becomes more significant, and which resonates with Mackay's position.

For Margaret Crawford (1999), urban planning should consider everyday space as important and must start with an understanding and acceptance of the life that takes place there. Mackay's (2003) "unexpected encounter" (p.7) is reminiscent of Crawford's (1999) discontinuous and spontaneous moments that "provide the key to the powers contained in the everyday and function as starting points for social change" (p.13). Rather than looking to past plans and planners, she advocates that "the utterly ordinary reveals a fabric of space and time defined by a complex realm of social practices-a conjuncture of accident, desire, and habit" (Crawford, 1999, p.8). As I have already mentioned, plans for Plymouth seem to respond to economic aims as much as existing practices. Although the Mackay Plan was published in 2003, there has been a slow implementation spanning the financial crisis and

the subsequent introduction of austerity policies that is still taking place at the time of writing in 2023. It coincides with the closure of Union Street's nightclubs, to money spent on the Millbay plan, and very little money spent on the crumbling Dance Academy along with other clubs along the street. To return to the text by Eve, as the former Dance Academy owner claimed, Union Street was "left to rot" (Eve, 2016). Union Street had seen no investment and as the clubs closed and the local economy declined, it left many empty spaces and a void of activity in the area.

2.5 TIMELINE OF EVENTS

In the early days of this research in the late 2010s, I returned to the old night clubs on Union Street where city-wide art events were exhibiting international artists. Events such as *We the People are the Work* (2017) and *The Atlantic Project* (2018) both marked a change in my perception of Union Street and Plymouth. In the 12 years after Dance Academy closed and the Millbay Master Plan had been proposed there had been a significant shift on Union Street. This was a nine-year period that saw the development of many city-wide cultural initiatives and Union Street specific events which I outline here. By placing localised Union Street community-led projects, Plymouth-wide initiatives, national arts events and policies in a linear fashion, the complexities that have affected my research context become easier to digest and offer foregrounding context to the wider thesis.

2009

2009 saw the formation of Plymouth Visual Arts Consortium and the first Union Street party. This year is key as it marks two directions of action that affect Union Street - a Plymouth-wide push for national arts funding and a localised community action-led initiative to change the character of Union Street.

Plymouth Visual Arts Consortium (PVAC) was a funding group made up of the University of Plymouth, Art College, Plymouth Art Centre (funded by ACE), and Plymouth City Museum. There is little information available on this organisation, but Companies House says it was a Community Interest Company (CIC) that was incorporated on 20 May 2009 and dissolved on 20 October 2015. The head office was in the University of Plymouth's art department. The British Art Show 7 catalogue says the exhibition's "presentation is underpinned by the focus

and commitment of [PVAC]" (Le Feuvre et al., 2010, p.8), and the group's aim to "raise the profile of contemporary art in Plymouth and across the South West" (p.8). The timing of its formation and closure, along with its members suggest that it contributed to the formation of Visual Arts Plymouth and Plymouth Culture.

The first Union Street Party was organised by Stonehouse Action, a progenitor to Nudge, a key organisation in my research. Stonehouse Action (2021) say they are a "supportive environment for projects, ideas and activities to develop and make connections that benefit the local community". They say the street party is "a space for local people to try new things, test ideas and make new connections" (Stonehouse Action, 2021). The street party has continued every year since and in 2021 I volunteered with its set-up.

2010

This year saw the Cameron–Clegg coalition government come to power and the start of austerity measures. The department of Culture, Media and Sport budget was cut from £1.4 to £1.1 billion and there were significant reductions in local authorities' ability to fund culture (Rex and Campbell, 2022). In this year ACE publish *Achieving Great Art and Culture for Everyone,* a 10-year strategy that directs arts policy for the bulk of my research timeframe. The document highlights ACE's commitment to excellence, with the chair of ACE, Dame Liz Forgan, defining this as "the bravest, most original, most innovative, most perfectly realised work of which people are capable" (ACE, 2010, p.2). The document acknowledges the pressure felt by funding cuts while also celebrating a "golden age for the arts" (ACE, 2010, p.6), but to sustain this golden age of excellence arts and culture must look to a "mixed economy of funding from public and private sources, where public investment is made to work hard" (ACE, 2010, p.7). The document outlines five key goals for the following 10 years:

1. Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated.
2. More people experience and are inspired by the arts.
3. The arts are sustainable, resilient, and innovative.
4. The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled.
5. Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts. (ACE, 2010, p.12)

The document asks that excellence is maintained and more people have access to arts but also highlights that "for arts organisations to thrive in a mixed economy, they will have to be even more enterprising" (ACE, 2010, p.33). This could be read as a call to do more with less, or at least less from ACE. The emphasis on arts and culture looking to other sources of investment will become an important theme in later policy documents. A final key aspect of this document is its emphasis on evaluation. The above five goals structure a framework on which evaluation will be judged offering "clarity and focus" (p.24), enabling them to "judge the effectiveness of our work and consider whether alternative courses of action are needed" (ACE, 2010, p.46)

2011

The British Show 7 (BAS7) and BAS Fringe took place this year. These events mark Plymouth as a location with national cultural recognition and as a place with a motivated local arts ecology. The British Art Show is a five-yearly national touring exhibition organised by the Hayward Gallery. Roger Malbert (2015) says the idea came from Frank Constantine, Director of Sheffield City Art Galleries and was proposed to the Exhibitions Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) in the late 1970s. The motivation for such an initiative was to address an imbalance between the cultural offerings of London versus other regions of the UK. The 2010 iteration saw 39 artists' work travel to Nottingham, London, Glasgow and finally Plymouth.

The discourse found in the exhibition text frames BAS7 as apolitical and primarily focused on the present. It says the exhibition "does not seek to entertain, educate, or redeem. It offers no recipes for self-improvement, since art of the present requires no special knowledge: we are all experts in the present" (Le Feuvre et al., 2010, p.21-22). In the forward it says "in partnership with Urban Splash, PVAC is using the exhibition to launch an exciting new cultural venue, The Slaughterhouse, within the historic Royal William Yard" (Le Feuvre et al., 2010, p.8). This line connects the national touring incentive of the Hayward Gallery to the urban developments outlined above.

BAS Fringe was run alongside BAS7 by a group of local artists and curators. It included *Come to Ours* a city-wide program of events designed to show local artists. This was organised by LOW PROFILE an artists' duo that are still operating in the city, including a member of one of

the focus groups I organised. *Come to Ours* was funded ACE National Lottery grants and Plymouth City Council. Another significant consequence of BAS Fringe was the opening of Vessel, an art space just off Union Street. The following year Vessel became KARST, a significant actor in my research and now an ACE national portfolio organisation (NPO).

2015

In 2015 Plymouth Council published *The Plymouth Plan: 2011-2031*, Plymouth Culture was established, and the first *Plymouth Art Weekender* took place. These three things could be seen as a nexus of local policy, cultural professionalisation and localised DIY artistic initiatives intersecting.

The Plymouth Plan: 2011-2031(Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Department, 2015) is a substantial document and covers council strategy on a diverse range of matters, from housing, climate change, and reduced public resources, to green space. The document says that it is the result of "the biggest conversation the city has ever had with its local communities and its partners" (SPID, 2015, p.1). The contents will be discussed in more detail in relation to other policy documents. The plan projects forward and connects to the Mackay Plan which can be read in the following statement: "Plymouth's unique waterfront has been transformed through improvements to public spaces and key heritage assets, such as The Hoe and The Barbican, as well as hosting major events for art, culture and sport" (SPID, 2015, p.23). Art and culture will fit into the connected waterfront, as envisioned by Mackay.

The establishment of Plymouth Culture was a significant event in 2015. Plymouth Culture is a "strategic development organisation that exists to support and enable the growth of culture across the city" (Plymouth Culture, 2023). They are a charity and now an ACE NPO. From 2015 to 2018, 73% of their funding came from Arts Council England, with the remaining 27% coming from Plymouth City Council (Plymouth Culture, 2023). They are not mentioned in *The Plymouth Plan: 2011-2031* and their funding distribution suggests that they stem from PVAC as much as from the council. Plymouth Culture collaborates with many cultural organisations and businesses across Plymouth. They help organise and promote cultural events from The British Art Show 9 visiting in 2021, to the 400-year anniversary of the Mayflower in 2020, which coincided with the opening of The Box (Plymouth Culture,

2016). The organisation frames Plymouth as “perfectly positioned to achieve ambitious cultural projects” (Plymouth Culture, 2016, p.3) by invoking large grants such as a £14m Heritage Lottery Fund award won in 2016.

Finally, *Plymouth Art Weekender* (PAW) started in 2015. It was organised by Visual Arts Plymouth (VAP) who were established in 2014. VAP is a community interest company (CIC) and is significant for Plymouth’s art and cultural production, with direct interventions on Union Street through PAW. VAP says it formed in response to BAS7 visiting Plymouth and started PAW to satisfy Plymouth’s “appetite for more city wide visual art activity”(Rollins, 2018, p.1). PAW acts as a showcase for a huge range of art and cultural outputs. Included have been local craft shops, a salon exhibiting drawings of their friends on their wall, alongside nationally recognised artists such as Serena Korda and Bedwyr Williams. In her 2018 legacy report on PAW, Lucy Rollins (2018) says PAW was organised via “voluntary task sub-groups [and advocated] a lack of overriding hierarchy” (p.1). PAW was run with a “can do DIY attitude” (p.1) that promoted a local arts ecology, a greater cultural offer for the city’s publics, and tried to connect Plymouth as a cultural destination nationally and internationally. From 2015 to 2018 PAW coincided with the Union Street party and used many locations on Union Street to exhibit works.

2016

One of Plymouth Culture’s first actions was the publication of *Go Beyond* (2016). This is a small booklet which discussed global ambition, the drivers of prosperity, and culture’s ability to enhance health and wealth (Plymouth Culture, 2016, p.3). They also commissioned a more substantial document *Plymouth Public Art Plan* (PAP). PAP is a key document for my research and is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Another significant initiative that started this year was Horizon - a project delivered by a partnership between Plymouth Culture, University of Plymouth, Plymouth City Council, Plymouth College of Art, Plymouth Arts Centre and Visual Arts Plymouth. It was funded through Arts Council England’s Ambition for Excellence fund, a £35.2 million program that supported 67 arts projects led by 66 organisations across England. Plymouth Culture received £635K to deliver Horizon (In2Impact, 2022, p.75). Ambition for Excellence intended to support organisations to take a step-change “in the creative quality, ambition and

diversity" (In2Impact, 2022, p.53) of cultural projects across the country. 56 of the 67 project grants were delivered outside London (In2Impact, 2022, p.76) and the project was framed as a contribution to the development of stronger regional cultural locations.

2017

Although Stonehouse Action had taken over a disused shop, renaming it Union Corner in 2016, Nudge formed in 2017. This is one of the biggest milestones in the timeline of Union Street. Nudge is a community benefit society that rents (and now buys) empty spaces on Union Street. They use these spaces for a range of community focused activities. Nudge developed out of Stonehouse Action and will be discussed throughout this thesis.

Stemming from Horizon, Plymouth Visual Arts Programming Group formed in 2017. This was a collaboration between The Gallery at Plymouth College of Art (now MIRROR), KARST, Peninsula Arts at Plymouth University, Plymouth Arts Centre (now closed) and Plymouth History Centre (now The Box). Their first significant action was to commission Foreground Projects to deliver *We the People Are the Work*, a series of artistic commissions "that explore[d] ideas of power, protest, and the public" (Morrissey, 2017, p.1). This brought national and international artists to work with people in Plymouth to deliver artworks. As part of the program, they screened Jill Craigie's *The Way We Live* (1946) which I discuss in my practice review chapter. It was also organized to open along with PAW that year.

2018

The Atlantic Project, the second of Horizon's major outputs, took place in 2018. The city-wide exhibition took over disused spaces across Plymouth, including the former nightclub Millennium on Union Street. A booklet that accompanied the exhibition said that the event was designed as a pilot "to test out the elements that will make up a potential new 'biennial' in the UK" (Trevor, 2018, p.4) It also coincided with the opening of The Box, Plymouth's extensively renovated and extended museum. *The Atlantic Project* opened on the same date as the Art Weekender that year and fit into a series of events called Mayflower 400 in 2020 which marked the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims' leaving Plymouth on the Mayflower ship heading to what would become the USA.

In September 2017 Nudge formally established itself as a community benefit society and they had taken a big step forward and bought The Clipper – a former 24-hour pub with a reputation for violence. According to journalist William Telford (2018) Nudge received "£10,000 from Plymouth City Council's social enterprise investment fund to pay for initial legal and start-up work and then secured an £85,000, low interest, one-year bridging loan from the local authority and raised the £35,000 deposit from four private investors". The Nudge website emphasises the amount of voluntary work that went into the renovation, and the number of unpleasant infrastructural jobs they had to do to get the place in opening condition.

In September 2018 during *The Atlantic Project* and PAW I volunteered at The Clipper. I helped paint their back courtyard that was used to house a small number of market stalls for local makers; I made a photomontage/mural of images of the building renovated; I helped set-up a Cancer Research UK bake sale and generally got to know Nudge staff members. It was striking how much buzz surrounded PAW, with the local maker stalls and other local artists using The Clipper to exhibit and sell their work as part of the event. For *The Atlantic Project*, SUPERFLEX, a Copenhagen based art collective, made a beer in collaboration with a local social enterprise brewery. SUPERFLEX had produced other free beers where they took inspiration from notions of free speech to produce the "recipe and branding elements of FREE BEER version 6.0 (the Atlantic brew) [which are] published under a Creative Commons license" (Trevor, 2018). The profits of selling these beers would go back to the local social enterprises. I spent most of a day labelling these bottles of beer, volunteering my time. Without volunteers donating their time, it is not clear how that element of *The Atlantic Project* would have been completed.

The few days I volunteered at The Clipper were eye-opening. In retrospect, many of the themes that are addressed in this thesis were at play: Nudge renovating an old pub, established artists from outside of Plymouth exhibiting in the area, the interaction of community focused work with cultural production, and the interaction of voluntary labour with funded cultural production that had direct links to wider arts policy.

2019 onward

Nudge subsequently started renting a former furniture store The Plot and bought former nightclubs Millennium and C-103 (also known as JFKs). While the Street Party continues, PAW stopped in 2020. In the domain of arts policy, ACE published a new 10-year strategy called *Let's Create* in 2020, and Plymouth Culture published *Culture Plan Plymouth* in 2021. Finally, The British Art Show 9 came to Plymouth in 2022, delayed by COVID-19. Pursued in this period, my research is conditioned by the financial crash and following austerity measures, and COVID-19. Decisive for my research is a specific policy document, *A Public Art Plan for the City of Plymouth* (*PAP*), produced at a pivotal moment in the timeline I have just laid out, which addresses notions of publics: an important theoretical point for this thesis.

Before turning to *PAP,* I will situate the above timeline and contextualising material regarding Union Street's history within relevant academic milieus for my research: arts management and creative placemaking. Outlining relevant aspects of these fields will allow me to clearly articulate the contributions to knowledge this research offers.

2.4 ARTS MANAGEMENT

Arts Management as a practice and field of study includes "activities and skills associated with the creation, organisation and dissemination of the arts in a field where culture, creativity, art, and management conjoin" (Murray, 2023, p.188). As I am concerned with the use and the effects of language, this definition produces as many questions as it answers. Part of the difficulty in framing arts management is the abstract and generalisable nature of both 'art' and 'management'. As Constance DeVereaux (2019) says, much of the *fuzziness* in arts management discourse occurs due to a constructed distinction between "the intrinsic and instrumental benefits of arts" (p.202) and therefore how art is valued and implemented. I will return to this, but for now I will address arts management as a practice and then draw out how it has developed as a distinct field and how that field is shaped by cultural policy.

In the Union Street context there are no established for-profit galleries, and my focus is the location's connection to wider art and cultural policies. For that reason, I will not concern

myself with people who work in the art-market gallery system but only with funded non-profit art organisations. According to Derrick Chong (2010), the origins of arts management as a distinct field has its roots in state funded culture. In the post WWII period, the progenitor of ACE, the Arts Council of Great Britain "played a leading role in initiating arts management courses and encouraging greater business involvement in the arts" (Chong, 2010, p.2). The establishment of state funded art and culture produced an "arm's length relationship with government and peer review as a method of adjudication for awarding funds" (Chong, 2010, p.2). Rather than state funding being offered directly to artists or communities, the primary function of ACE became the funding of organisations that help deliver and support artists and their art to various audiences and communities. In this sense, one could say an arts manager is a person that tries to connect the cultural policy environment they are working under with the immediate context they are working within (DeVereaux, 2019). This produced a tier of people, a professional managerial class (Jancovich, 2015; Kester, 1998), that decide between themselves who will and will not receive funding. Rather than state funding for arts being a concern between artists, government and audiences, communities or publics, a professionalised field sits between them.

This managerial class of people developed into a field with its own discourse. Chong (2010) suggests that since 1970s artists have been "concerned that the commercial language of management would become naturalized in the discourse and practice of managing arts and cultural organizations" (p.3). As with other areas of management, there is the potential for bureaucratic practices that are "conformist and monolithic" (McKenzie, 2001, p.6). Management as a generalised (abstract) practice often aims to organize "work upon rational, scientific principles designed to make work more productive from both managerial and labour perspectives" (McKenzie, 2001, p.6). For an arts manager it is not clear what being more productive means. As Carla Stalling Walter (2015) says, "[a]side from understanding the deeply held points of view of the artist, producers, distributors, and consumers, [an arts manager] must understand which production function is at work given the creative product in question" (p.12). Unlike other area of management where profit maximization is often the aim, arts managers are concerned with "deficit minimization, maximizing artistic excellence or critical acclaim, and maximizing audiences or outreach" (Stalling Walter, 2015, p.237). Rather than an abstract system that can be made more efficient, arts management as a practice is formed in relation to the art or culture being

produced, the context of the art form's reception, and the financial constraints hanging over both artist, audience and manager themselves. Arts managers are caught in a "landscape fraught with tensions and contradictions" (Rimmer, 2020, p.296) between the aims of funders and the local cultural ecology they are working in or for.

Arts management has an important function in a funded non-profit cultural ecology and "has evolved into an interdisciplinary field which influences and transforms the relation between arts, creativity and society" (Simjanovska, 2023, p.8). A major discontent of arts management as a field of academic discourse is its "long-occurring and increasing turn towards institutionalism and managerialism as a response to how best to support the creation and dissemination of the arts" (DeVereaux, 2019, p.189). As a field of study and practice, arts management straddles two worlds, that of artists and managers, with both sides viewing the other with suspicion and possible disrespect (Chong, 2010; Stalling Walter, 2015). There can be an assumed incompatibility between art and management in that artists who manage are in some way lesser than artists who only produce artworks (Murray, 2023, p.186). The divide between management and art, where managers are bound to bureaucracy and artists are free and separate from social, economic and structural constraints is a bourgeoise construct (Stalling Walter, 2015) but one that was ingrained in me through my own arts education. This was not so much to the detriment of managers but describes a view that if I wanted to be a *real* artist, the management of cultural spaces was not for me. Admittedly, this contributes to a suspicion on my part towards the notion of arts managers and the language they employ, a suspicion that was a core motivation for this research.

2.7.1 METRICS OF SUCCESS

Arts managers plan, organise, staff, supervise and control the facilitation and production of art and the presentation of the artists' work to audiences (Shafritz, 1998, p.128. referenced in Chong, 2010, p. 5). This produces three distinct concerns for an arts manager: excellence and artistic integrity; accessibility and audience development; and accountability and cost effectiveness to funders (Chong, 2010, p.18). However, what is considered excellent and therefore what kind of audiences want to or should experience this excellence is problematic due to the people who are involved with the prerequisite value judgements

(Belfiore, 2021, 2009; Jancovich, 2017, 2015; Sedgman, 2019). Determining cost effectiveness or value for a funder's money is also deeply problematic. Although value for money might not be in terms of profit from investments, a market logic structures understandings of value where money put in needs to equate to defined outputs.

The New Labour government (1997 to 2010) were in power in the lead up to my research timeline starting. They saw the benefit of art and culture, thinking it could help alleviate social exclusion and therefore delivered notably higher levels of funding (Rimmer, 2020, p.298). However, this came with the implementation of neoliberal justificatory frameworks (Belfiore, 2012, 2004; Bonham-Carter, 2017; Rimmer, 2020) leading to the implementation of economic, abstracted managerial techniques to measure value and justify further support. After the economic crash of 2008 funding dropped dramatically, with ACE and local government arts funding being cut by a third between 2010 and 2015 (Rimmer, 2020). However, the requirement to "produce hard evidence of impact" (Bonham-Carter, 2017, p.40) remained. In a time of austerity, spending on arts could no-longer be justified, which led ACE and arts managers to define the value of culture in non-cultural terms (Bonham-Carter, 2017, p.46). Justifying the value of arts is fuzzy, but arts managers are working within neoliberal horizons that require concrete metrics of success. Arts managers and cultural policy makers align themselves with other areas of policy that are perceived as definitely valuable such as local economies and social cohesion (Belfiore, 2004). It is worth noting that the organisations involved with my research on Union Street came about when neoliberal forms of justification were already the norm.

Arts managers must work within a metrics-based policy system to justify themselves, measuring things that are often difficult or impossible to measure. This difficulty occurs due to a constructed distinction between "the intrinsic and instrumental benefits of arts" (DeVereaux, 2019, p.202). An intrinsic value would be something like 'art makes people happy'. But research is not conclusive that "happiness, or life satisfaction, or well-being results from creating or experiencing any particular art, or the arts generally" (DeVereaux, 2019, p.193). A defining characteristic of neoliberal management is narrow instrumentalism whereby precisely quantifiable "returns" need to be guaranteed for the "investment" received (Belfiore, 2012, p.109). When policy takes on a solely economic means of justification and valuation, this filters down to arts managers and undermines their ability to legitimise their work in any other way than economic terms (Belfiore, 2012, 2009). This has

led to artists, arts managers and arts funding being instrumentalised to work on/with people and places categorised as lacking or problematic by government (Pritchard, 2019). This creates an imbalance of power between funders, artists, arts managers, and the communities and publics they purport to serve (Belfiore, 2021). In the absence of clearly defined means of valuing how art benefits people and places, value is pegged to the instrumental aspects of art's affects such as social cohesion or localised economic development.

Increasingly, art has become a means to try and change communities and neighbourhoods "under the auspices of neoliberal policies which have encouraged free market values of private enterprise and competition across the third sector" (Rimmer, 2020, p.296). Artists and art managers are increasingly encouraged to think in an entrepreneurial way, or as Stalling Walter (2015) puts it, as "culturepreneurs" (p.10). In her advice to student arts managers she says "[t]he point to grasp is that the cultural industries contribute significantly to economic impacts and growth for countries, cities, and nations, and this economic impact is provided through culturepreneurs" (Stalling Walter, 2015, p.10). Read together with discourse that appears to advocate for the social benefit of art, such as *Everyday Creativity* (64 Million Artists, 2016), social benefit can become blurred with economic benefit. When 64 Million Artists (2016) say "[th]e role of professional artist as initial inspiration, permission-giver and confidence-builder is significant and can create lasting impacts within community settings" (p.19) there is a risk that the lasting impact is only evidenced through economic shifts in a given locality. However, there is also the possibility that arts organisations can positively impact their local context by "operating as a 'boundary crosser' between the domains of creativity, civic and professional structures, and the public" (Schrag and McKinnon, 2022, n.p.). Arts managers are players in a complex set of relationships that contribute to how an area is framed socially and economically, acting as mediators between cultural policy, other urban stakeholders and the communities and publics implicated in such dynamics. The discourse regarding how art can interact with other fields to contribute to the development of an urban context such as Union Street is often called creative placemaking.

2.8 CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

Placemaking has roots in 1960s community led urban planning and is closely associated with the work of Jane Jacobs (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010; McCormack, 2018; Project for Public Spaces, 2007; Wright et al., 2024). As a practice it fits into an established discourse with a lineage "including urban renewal or regeneration, revitalization, community building, culture-led regeneration, city-making, placemaking, and more" (Borrup, 2016, p.2). Participation is a key concept in placemaking discourse, that of residents and community members taking part and having some power within a process of changing their locality. *The Mackay Plan* could be framed as delivering from above, with Crawford's everyday urbanism coming from within or below. Placemaking is framed as a collaboration between these two directions.

Placemaking falls into four broad categories: *standard* - physical upkeep and maintenance of a community's built environment; *strategic* - creating new developments on the scale of a neighbourhood or city via top-down development approach (Mackay's plan for example); *tactical* - a 'bottom-up' approach led by community groups often using temporary, low-technology interventions (Nudge's annual street party for example); and finally *creative* where art and culture are central to the process (Cohen et al., 2018, p.9. Also referenced in Schrag and McKinnon, 2020). *Creative* placemaking involves "the utilisation of artistic and event-based practices to make a place more interesting and vibrant… [and] can also involve arts-related businesses, studios and venues" (Lew, 2017, p.254. quoted in Cohen et al., 2018, p.10). A key feature is the strengthening of relationships between people and place, with art and culture serving as catalysts for interaction (Borrup, 2016). Therefore, the interaction between cultural policy and arts managers is implicated in creative placemaking dynamics, with the risk of policy makers seeing art and culture as the *central* point of such practices (Borrup, 2016; Durrer et al., 2019). As *creative* placemaking is my focus here, I will simply refer to it as placemaking from here on.

Placemaking is as much about creating a conceptual sense of place as physical attributes to an area – how memories, traditions and cultural practices give meaning to a landscape (Schrag and McKinnon, 2020). This sense is acutely felt on Union Street with the derelict nightclubs still standing as monuments to past cultural excess and pleasure, although much

of the discourse regarding placemaking has a more 'family friendly' tone. For example, Schrag and McKinnon (2020) say placemaking "generates places where people want to be" (p.4), using Zoe Ellis-Moore's formulation "in the same way that homemaking is the process of turning a house into a home, placemaking is the process of turning a space into a place" (Ellis-Moore, 2020, n.p., quoted in Schrag and McKinnon, 2020, p,4). It is a term that combines infrastructural and material intervention in the public space as well as a "cultural practice that centres community voice and agency; a civic practice that facilitates activities that define a place; an economic practice that works to support a place to thrive" (Courage, 2024, p.2). Many suggest that it can do all of these things via collaboration between various stakeholders (including artists and arts managers) to shape and manage spaces (Borrup, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018; Courage, 2024). The interaction of different types of practices links to my wider concerns regarding ideas of community, publics, and language so the connection between various people that come to gather to *placemake* will be my primary focus. However, it is worth noting some critiques of placemaking and its possible connection to gentrification.

2.8.1 PLACEMAKING AND GENTRIFICATION

Many cite Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa's work as pivotal in placemaking discourse (Borrup, 2016; Courage, 2024; Project for Public Spaces, 2007; Schrag and McKinnon, 2022). They define it as a process involving,

> partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighbourhood… around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010, p.3).

They discuss individuals that can catalyse activities with their "innovative vision and skills" (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010, p.5) which is rhetorically aligned with the image of artists as "initial inspiration, permission-giver and confidence-builder" (64 Million Artists, 2016, p.19), and the creative city (Landry, 2000) or creative classes (Florida, 2003). Artists and creative

people can boost economic development by using underutilized buildings which will in turn attract non-arts-related businesses and skills (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010, p.4). Artists tread a path that others can follow.

Artists inhabiting underused spaces and then raising the economic value of the area is closely associated with gentrification which "refers to the process by which working class or global majority people are displaced through private capital by predominantly middle-class residential and commercial property development" (Wright et al., 2024, p.15). The links between placemaking and gentrification are recognised by Markusen and Gadwa, but they are less critical on the subject than some authors. Oli Mould (2018, p.158) says placemaking is simply gentrification in a different lexicon and Stephen Pritchard (2019) says it can become "adopted and co-opted by state, local authorities and even property developers that use art, design, marketing and community engagement as a way of disempowering" (n.p.). This ultimately leads to communities that have lived in a location being dispossessed and a homogenisation between various places (Cohen et al., 2018; Schrag and McKinnon, 2020) – with the vernacular qualities of a place becoming flattened. Wright et al. (2024, p.14) found that the socioeconomic impact and potential displacement can be more controlled when the emphasis of a project comes from grassroots initiatives. They note that "placemaking practices within grassroots contexts are as much about social processes than tangible outputs" (Wright et al., 2024, p.7). A distinction between ideas of gentrification and placemaking is that the latter purports to focus on how people relate to each other and their area, it is psychological and social as much as it is economic. The emphasis on social process highlights the importance of language use in community and public interaction. Terms like 'grassroots' do not have fixed use and part of my aim is to understand how such a term mediates interactions between various people in Union Street. This will be explored later in this thesis in relation to the term 'DIY'. But to put the contingency of terms like grassroots aside for a moment, I would like to draw out the importance of social and professional interactions within placemaking discourse.

2.8.2 A COLLABORATION BETWEEN FIELDS

An issue with placemaking discourse is that people try and make claims across various contexts (Hollands, 2019). Rather than a top-down process of urban design, placemaking is

about the co-production of urban space, a collaboration between those that live and work in an area as well as people from 'outside', such as artist and council members, who want to be involved in the development of an urban context. Each member of such a constellation brings "different skills, sets of knowledge, professional fields, and approaches together into a synthesized whole" (Borrup, 2016, p.4). Placemaking is a process that has equity or power sharing as a premiss (rhetorically at least) so it makes sense that various stakeholders need to collaborate to make it happen. As I already mentioned, a grassroots approach has been shown to be preferable, where collaborative networks form between diverse stakeholders, starting from 'bottom-up', and then engaging "local policymakers, funders and agencies" (Wright et al., 2024, p.24). As Cohen et al. (2018) say "the success of any placemaking activities rely upon the involvement and 'buy-in' of diverse stakeholders including experts and communities" (p.9). Going further, Schrag and McKinnon (2020) say that successful approaches will involve "cross-sector partnerships [between] artists, community members, foundations, organisations, and the local government in all phases of the project" (p.25). However, an emphasis on collaboration does not mean people with certain professional or social status will not still have more power in a process. A major obstacle in this effort is what Borrup (2016) calls silo-based thinking where people from professional fields such as architecture, city council members, planners, or arts professionals see themselves as having *the* expert perspective. While maintaining a respect for their personal expertise, Borrup (2016, p.18) says creative leaders involved in placemaking need an attachment and attunement to an area, a respect for local history and an understanding of how things are already done.

A potential issue when various silos collaborate is that different people will have different modes of framing their skills and give emphasis to different aspects of a process. A single event can be appealing for different reasons, for example a street party could "facilitate social benefits such as civic participation and volunteering, as well as economic benefits such as the attraction of tourists and visitors" (Cohen et al., 2018, p.10). For this reason it is difficult to find a normative mode of evaluation of placemaking projects because there is often a conflict between external expert and local community concerns (Cohen et al., 2018, p.16). As I mentioned in relation to arts management, it is difficult to evaluate creativity normatively and this opens a potential mismatch in how people speak about art, culture and how these things interact with their work and lives. Much of the discourse on placemaking implies that if a community has a voice within a process, then it will be more successful. But

as I have shown, the notion of a community implies social boundaries of some kind (Tanesini, 2001; Young, 1986). Rather than a discrete formation, 'the community' in an area like Union Street could be amorphous and contingent depending on what exact element of development is being addressed. Further to this, it is part of the conceptual make-up of a public that its members do not share a single view (Arendt, 1958; Warner, 2002).

The ways in which knowledge is deployed has the potential to create a public between each field or silo where each member's perspective is critically acknowledged by other members. This could be framed as artists, arts managers and other stakeholders involved in placemaking understanding themselves as connected on similar lines while maintaining their own field-specific positions – listening to and respecting each other's voices. The world-building potential of such formations would require the right kind of spaces in which the voices of those involved could be heard by each other (Zerilli, 2005). If such a formation did occur, however, they might come to see themselves as a critical public in the face of outside, more powerful policy driven bodies. With this in mind, I will now turn to a specific piece of policy that directly addresses arts managers in a vein that combines issues of placemaking with a broader idea of art and the public.

2.9 A PUBLIC ART PLAN FOR THE CITY OF PLYMOUTH

To this point in the current chapter, I have surveyed theoretical discourses regarding publics and communities as well as my personal experiences of Union Street nightlife. I then introduced the Mackay Plan that has affected the urban environment around Union Street and frames the Street as an area that had been ignored since the closure of many of the clubs. I then mapped out a series of significant events that have affected the street within my research frame and focus – national and local arts policies and local arts and communities' practices since 2009. To situate these factors within an academic discourse, I outlined how these issues interact with both arts management and creative placemaking. This sets a terrain for the forthcoming research and offers a picture of the structural and material concerns affecting Union Street. In this, the final section of this chapter, I turn my attention to *A Public Art Plan for the City of Plymouth* (2016), as an example of public policy discourse specific to Plymouth that crystallises the key issues at stake in my analysis of communication and cultural production.

PAP was written in 2016 by Situations, an organization devoted to improving public art in the UK. According to their founder and director, Claire Doherty, Situations "developed a commitment to sharing learning, gathering evidence and nurturing new skills and talent in producing and engagement in order to improve the conditions for the production of new forms of public art" (Doherty, 2012). The document adopts national level rhetorical frameworks – for example, language used by the Arts Council in 2010: "The arts are at the heart of civil society, valued by local communities across the country. They are the bedrock of the creative economy, contributing to the nation's prosperity and its international reputation" (Arts Council England, 2010, p.25). Such language could be seen to directly influence the terminology found in *PAP* published six years later.

PAP attempts to define public art and distinguishes it from art made in and for the public realm (Doherty, 2016). The document proposes eleven principles or rules the city should follow to improve life for its citizens by thinking differently about art. The document explicitly states its purpose as redefining "Plymouth's relationship with public art – in its widest possible sense as the arts experienced within and produced for the public realm" (Doherty, 2016). This aim articulates two ambiguities relative to the local, particular and the abstract. First, it frames Plymouth as an entity that could have a singular position or relationship with public art in relation to the 'public realm' – but this itself is approached in the document as an abstract term, appearing 33 times with no definition. Second, the document seeks to redefine the relationship of an abstract group ('the public') to an abstract space ('the public realm'). Arguably, policy rhetoric necessarily deals in abstractions; even on a local level, policy works on a 'one voice fits all' basis. But the document addresses a specific scene of cultural practice – Plymouth. With these ambiguities in view regarding the local and the abstract, my analytical task is to understand the intended audience of the document, its public; in turn, I argue that it becomes possible to understand the consequences of the proposed actions. I divide my analysis into two sections addressing two areas of discourse employed by the document: art historical and policy. This is to frame the theoretical perspective of the document's author in combination with the practical, local governmental effects the document sets out to achieve. Put bluntly, the document frames what public art is and is not, and how it should be managed and paid for.

2.9.1 **ART HISTORICAL DISCOURSE**

To contextualise the theoretical position of *PAP* with regard to concepts surrounding art in and for the public realm (Doherty, 2016) it is important to consider three subcategories of discourse: Claire Doherty's previous theoretical output which is centred around her interest in durational artistic practice
(Doherty and O'Neill, 2011); the rhetorical position taken within *PAP* with regard to publics; and an art-historical background that moves artistic practice away from sculptural objects and towards participation. I will be focusing on ideas of post-sculpture (Krauss, 1979) and Joseph Beuys' famous claim that "everyone is an artist" (Bodenmann-Ritter, 2007; Mesch, 2007). This will be addressed first as it lays the foundations for other areas of discourse.

Doherty (2016) suggests that Plymouth move "beyond an emphasis on permanent sculpture or architectural embellishment to promote the possibilities for different types, forms and timespans for the arts in the public realm" (p.11) – a position that resonates with the concept of post-1960s sculpture propounded by Rosalind Krauss (1979) where "the category can be made to be almost infinitely malleable" (p.30) and departs from a referential necessity between its subject and its material form. Sculptures depart from being depictions of specific people or objects and become things for themselves. Krauss writes her reformulation of sculptural theory just after Joseph Beuys starts to talk about social sculpture and its corollary tag line "every man is an artist" (Bodenmann-Ritter, 2007; Mesch, 2007). Beuys had three interlinked ideals: education, information and democracy, which he understood to be facets central to the formulation of every person (Bodenmann-Ritter, 2007, p.190). Influenced by the work of Habermas, Beuys claimed his work to be a small-scale construction of the public sphere (Mesch, 2007). Beuys' formulation of "every man an artist" and the rhetoric of social sculpture places the public and any social situation as a material for artistic production. Together, Beuys' and Krauss' practice of artistic and theoretical production serve as examples of how an expanded idea of art for the public realm developed, without a clear definition of what that realm entails. In *PAP* we can see the inheritance of such art historical theories. Take the following statement:

> public art is not a single artform, but may be understood as a series of creative practices that encompass a variety of forms and approaches, temporary and

> permanent, that engage with the sites and situations of the public realm (Doherty, 2016, p.4)

Categories such as sculpture or monument have become undefinable, and any area of the public realm is a material for the artist's moulding.

Once an art-historical situation emerges where medium has become superfluous, people in everyday life become a possible medium for artistic production. An ethical dimension emerges that places artists as guardians of social well-being (Kester, 1998). Throughout *PAP* art is presented as a means of restoring a sense of place to Plymouth, particularly for young people. Art in the public realm can tackle "the most pressing issues of contemporary life" (Doherty, 2016, p.11), suggesting art is attuned to practices unavailable to everyone, placing the art world in a privileged position. According to Claire Bishop (2006), the supporters of such participatory practices see the potential for rehumanizing "a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalism" (p.180), ignoring the possible links between those practices, their funders, and the economic frameworks they move within. Bishop (2006) argues that unresolved, unsuccessful, or simply boring projects can no longer exist "because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bonds" (p.180). This moves emphasis from aesthetic integrity to a process-driven moral dynamic of participation over outcome.

Process and in particular an idea of duration (Doherty and O'Neill, 2011) are central to the practices advocated by *PAP*. The central, historical/theoretical orientated section of *PAP* regarding the "Plymouth Principles" references a sense of what Doherty and O'Neill (ibid.) might call durational practice. This discourse emerges due to two interlocking areas. On the one hand Doherty and O'Neill (ibid.) accept the danger of parachuting into a social situation, of pseudo-ethnographic commissioning outlined by Miwon Kwon (2002) that is often extractive of a social context understood as lacking in some way. Further to this, they inhabit a position of what Irit Rogoff (2003) calls "criticality", which sees the curator, producer and artist merge. This position replaces the "museum custodian by their active involvement in the production of the artwork" (Doherty and O'Neil, 2011, p.3) and emphasises a sense of time spent with a community, an embeddedness, as central to the production of public art works.

The use of the term duration stems from the work of French philosopher Henri Bergson. His term *durée* loosely denotes an idea of felt rather than empirically measurable time. For Doherty and O'Neill, a durational practice is an approach that focuses on the importance of relationships, on time spent within a given context and community. Duration becomes a central focus of their curatorial approach:

> This idea of duration and the transitory attribute of time as a means of structuring the fluctuating encounter with public space, has become a recurring motif in the search for a more profound understanding of place within public art (Doherty and O'Neill, 2011, p.5).

Passages such as this strongly echo the text of *PAP.* For example, statements such as "interventions which remake a sense of place; remarkable structures and events which act as gathering points for diverse temporary communities" (Doherty, 2016, p.4) share rhetorical features. "A profound understanding of place" becomes "remake a sense of place". Both share a discourse suggestive of duration as central to a real engagement with the public realm.

The durational approach places the artistic process at its core. The artists' process rather than their finished product is what will count when engaging a given community. By emphasising process and "prioritizing sociality, engagement and presence, inter-subjectivity also becomes a primary medium of artistic and curatorial investigation" (ibid., p.8) which is also a feature seen in *PAP.* Principle seven of the document advocates that working processes of artists are open to the public:

> Plymouth will take pride in opening up the working process of artists, *where appropriate*, to create a greater understanding and ownership for arts in the public realm, and *where possible* allowing participatory processes to be evident in the presentation of the work. (Doherty, 2016, p.12 – my emphasis added)

The kind of theorizing that I have briefly traced feeds from Doherty's artworld discourse into more applied, public art activities seen in *PAP*. Doherty and O'Neil (2011) are correct in stating "participation can only be experienced durationally, as lived difference that extends beyond a momentary engagement with art and with one another" (p.13), but that does not

state anything about how to create those moments or the ethical and care-related dimensions that would surely be involved. An artworld interest in the durational might not be shared by an entire public; in fact, theoretical discourse draws strong lines between the producers of such discourse and those that it purports to engage. The durational discourse is meant as a critique of institutional models, but as Frazer Ward (1995) has pointed out, such critiques are often fought on “unconsciously ideological grounds, with the effect in turn of maintaining the category of artistic individuality that emblematizes bourgeois subjectivity" (p.83). This discourse is common to those trained in an artistic field: it is a professionalized, managerial discourse. With its highly theoretical nature, it is questionable if such a discourse would adequately express the values of publics beyond those initiated.

The professionalization of an artistic field is a key concern of *PAP*. It is this emphasis that connects the art historical/theoretical discourse with that of the policy level discourse. For example, principle nine asks that projects should “be balanced with a commitment to critical, aesthetic and ethical integrity – which effectively means making careful choices about what the city itself chooses to promote” (Doherty, 2016, p.24). This statement is followed by an appeal to promote local talent in the production of public art (following recommendations from an unpublished Arts Council Outdoor Arts discussion paper for external reference group, 30th January 2012, referenced in Doherty 2016). A major consequence of this terminology is a plea for the professionalisation of the artistic sphere in Plymouth. This spells the emergence of a professionalised field and potential siloing outlined in the sections on arts management and placemaking. Discussions of aesthetic critical integrity not only signals a guardianship over areas of cultural life that are not manageable or promotable, but regulation of particular symbolic or critical discourses (Kester, 1998, p.114). Similar to the relation of lawyers to the law, this construct places a bureaucratic layer of language between aspects deeply integral to life yet kept at a distance from most people through complex and specialist discourses. In consequence, “professional status and autonomy (in which only artists' spaces are in a position to judge the work of other artists)” (ibid, p.114) removes rather than integrates the issues addressed by such art spaces from the people they aim to engage. Professional working practices strengthen an artistic sphere’s ability to justify and reproduce itself but threatens to remove those practices from the many communities that they propose to engage.

2.9.2 **POLICY DISCOURSE**

PAP intends to work on an arts theoretical level that aims to justify and explain contemporary artistic practices to an uninitiated audience, and on a policy level that describes how public art could be paid for and be beneficial beyond its artistic content, for example in creative placemaking initiatives. The last section discussed the first of these discourses, while the following section discusses the second. How public art can fit within a wider economic and urban development discourse is a key concern for an organisation like Plymouth Culture. Their role is to act as a link between funders such as ACE, networks such as VAP and potential funders such as Plymouth Chamber of Commerce and Destination Plymouth (a public/private organisation that aims to increase tourism to the area) (Plymouth Culture, 2023). In the following section I discuss how *PAP* addresses funding and aligns with wider policy concerns for the city.

In order to achieve the aim of improving visual arts in the city, Plymouth Culture outlines a methodology that will ensure that "the people who really matter in terms of its conception and delivery – the members of the arts sector itself – play a major part in developing and driving that plan" (Plymouth Culture, 2016, p.7), suggesting that the arts organisations that helped formulate *Go Beyond* and *PAP* hold a central position in taking Plymouth art forward. Concrete examples such as cheap studio rent and training for funding applications are proffered as good ideas to nurture artists (ibid, p.10), as is bringing international art to develop a global audience (ibid, p.9). However, other factors such as Plymouth's geographic location and travel links would have to be considered to determine the possible effectiveness of these approaches.

The Plymouth Plan (2015) proposes that,

> Plymouth has the ability through the growth of the creative industries and its size as a city to become a regional hub for creativity and culture specifically as a gateway for international practice and development (Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Department, 2015, p.28).

This claim seems to sit well with the intentions of Plymouth Culture. Both aim to strategize the city's cultural resources to offer new economic avenues through which the city can

thrive. Both Plymouth Culture and the Plymouth Plan (2015) frame Plymouth's artists/creatives as a mini public that can achieve greater prosperity for a wider, general public.

Policy 34 in *The Plymouth Plan* is where arts and culture are addressed in detail. Although the document was written a year before PAP, a definite cross-over of rhetoric is evident. Paquette and Redaelli (2015) discuss such policy interactions as policy transfer, where policies from one area influence and transfer to another. They highlight the particular salience and frequency of cultural and urban policy transfer that leads to unimaginative policies being applied in a one-size fits all fashion (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p.81). Stimulating trade with the United States and China through cultural investment is mentioned, read now as anticipating the Brexit referendum that was to follow. Supporting already existing artists through opening up vacant spaces for cultural projects is also discussed (Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Department, 2015, p.95). Both initiatives speak to nurturing local creative talent and placing Plymouth in an international cultural scene. However, sections 8 and 9 of Policy 34 seem more ambiguous, and manifest connections to *PAP:*

8. Delivering public art through key infrastructure and development proposals at key gateway locations.
9. Increasing community engagement and development in the least engaged communities through targeted investment, training and development. (SPID, 2015, p.96)

Point 8 places public art and infrastructure as interrelated, employing language that defines public art as a physical object in specific locations, as something that comes along with infrastructure. Implicitly, this juxtaposition suggests the use of Section 106 funds to construct art at key gateway locations. Section 106 is a policy that requires private developers to make financial contributions to council budgets in support of local facilities and environments. This could be affordable housing but also spending that improves the local environment, such as public art in key locations.

The Plymouth Plan: 2011-2031 adopts rhetorical frameworks identifying arts and culture as possible economic boosters for Plymouth. On this front it has clear aims and ideas in common with *PAP*. Further to this, both documents presume that certain communities need to be more engaged in art and culture. They both advocate investment in engagement but lack any explicit procedures to do so. Expanding the notion of public art to include more imaginative and innovative modes of fundraising, while also offering ways to engage the disengaged, seems to be what is lacking and is exactly the gap *PAP* attempts to fill.

PAP is available from the Plymouth Culture website, where the genealogy of the document is described as a collaboration between arts organisations in Plymouth and Situations to "tease out the vision for Public Art in the city" (Plymouth Culture, 2023). Information on the exact cost of the process is unavailable but came from core *Plymouth Culture* funds which come from Plymouth City Council and Arts Council England. Consultation, discussions, writing and publication took approximately a year. Plymouth Council is understandably interested in ways to improve the city through investment while various arts organisations are keen to illustrate their importance in civic processes. *PAP* attempts to show how important arts and culture are to civic life. Both sides of the culture/council dynamic are introduced to new ways and motivations for working with each other.

The policy level discourse in *PAP* seeks to redefine what is meant by art and public. The authors of *PAP* start by discussing what they mean by 'public' and 'art' before justifying why public art is a good thing for the city. The key distinction made is between public art, understood as objects such as sculptures and monuments, and art in and for the public realm. The latter kind of art can facilitate an engagement "with the sites and situations of the public realm to re-make a sense of place" (Doherty, 2016). This is a conception of art that goes beyond "old ideas of medium and offers remarkable structures and events which act as gathering points for diverse temporary communities (Doherty, 2016, p.4). *PAP* suggests ways in which artists might work, moving away from permanent objects to experience and practice-led interventions. The document explains upfront that "public art is particularly reliant on non-art partnerships to bring its forms into being" (Doherty, 2016) inspiring a need for shared working principles, focusing resources towards common goals. Collaboration between artists and non-art partners can mean improvement of public amenities, but it can also hail the privatisation of public assets by corporations that simply use art projects to give an ethical, participatory face to their activities (Pritchard, 2018).

Although not framed in these terms, *PAP* is clearly authored to advocate for arts role in placemaking processes.

After defining and celebrating the processes and practices that artists use in public, and before outlining eleven recommendations, *PAP* spends some time indirectly blaming the council for the issues artists face in Plymouth: assertions such as low level of investment in skills development, waiting for permission to take action, and a lack of maintenance procedures for the already existing 250+ public artworks (Doherty, 2016). The document suggests a lack of commitment from the Council towards the city's public art assets, justifying the principles discussed above.

PAP's closing section focuses on delivery, where a discourse relating to professionalisation becomes more apparent. In their aim to introduce local producers to developers and council planning teams, they position public art as part of a city planning system (Doherty, 2016, p.25). The authors want to produce a professional network (ibid, p.27) of arts managers to plan financially viable public art, largely through a strengthening of the relationship between the Arts Council and the Plymouth art sector. Plymouth has a swathe of community action groups that orientate themselves towards a socially orientated local economy, notably Nudge, a key factor in Union Street's recent development (Chakrabortty, 2018). Although such groups could offer access and insights into some of the most vulnerable people in the city, they are noticeably absent from *PAP*. Instead, *PAP* advocates the development of methods to court private investment, "to create and facilitate further networking and brokerage opportunities between artists, arts organisations, arts consultants, developers, architects and other public art commissioners" (Doherty, 2016, p.28), with no mention of community organisations, community leaders, or specialists from other areas such as health, education, law or politics. In this sense, PAP fits neatly into a policy timeline with the Mackay Plan, with a removed notion of publicness, where public space is an issue to be managed rather than participated in.

2.10 CONCLUSION - FROM MEMORIES TO PUBLICS AND POLICIES

In this chapter I have delineated the horizon on which my research takes place. I have done this via a mixture of personal, theoretical, urban and arts policy driven discourses, taking

myself and the reader from what Union Street was in my embodied memory to a place I have sought to investigate as a researcher, and which is now affected by cultural policy interventions. This was not to forget my previous conceptions, or to rationalise them, but to pluralise the range of material from which I can analyse and make judgments. In this sense, my method has reflected theoretical features of my conception of what makes publics. My aim in this chapter was not to define a true reality of Union Street, but to start acknowledging the circulation of sources and artefacts that define the publics of Union Street.

By foregrounding these wider concerns in reaction to Arts Management and Creative Placemaking, I situate Union Street's cultural constellations within broader academic discourses. Arts management describes a group of organisations and people with their own professionalised, managerial discourse (Jancovich, 2015; Kester, 1998) who are embedded within a neoliberal policy terrain (Belfiore, 2012, 2004; Bonham-Carter, 2017; Rimmer, 2020). This has the potential to affect both language use and collaborative practices within and between art spaces. Arts managers are also implicated in "collaborative policy platforms" (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010, p.6) where private and non-profit organisations, policy organisations and various levels of government are brought together in a cross-over of experience and knowledge to *placemake*. Armed with these sets of literatures, I will offer a picture of how Arts Management and Placemaking agendas playout in a specific time and place.

Many of the documents I have looked at seem to understand publics as static and empirically evident but, as Warner (2002) notes, this misses an important point about publics: the discourses that frame and sometimes form them also produce speech and judgements that are performed and therefore form publics (p.115). Publics are irreducible and active. There is a disconnection between the professionalised conception of urban planning, arts management and creative placemaking to that of everyday interactions where people can acknowledge and make judgments about each other's cultural interpretations. Crawford (2004) describes this as an undialogic approach to urbanism where "language remains authoritarian or absolute" (p.30). She recommends understanding urban settings through the already existing "texts" (p.35) making it possible to interpret an urban environment, rather than simply propose interventions (p.36). As Zerilli (2016) implies, politics is negotiated in the ordinary as much as anywhere

3. Film, Voice and Feedback

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter I moved from a personal, memory orientated perspective of Union Street to a policy register to consider both in terms of publics, the subject of my research. I did this through situating and critiquing planning and arts policy documents. To move again from a removed policy frame towards an ordinary perspective of publicness as performed in acts of speech I adopt a practice-based methodology that is borne out of a lens-based mode of documentation. My practice is inspired by filmmakers who attend closely to the performative nature of the everyday and to communicative interactions within a predefined context. In this chapter I outline a series of filmmaking practices that have been influential in the development of my own methodology.

The examples I review here focus on a blurred line between authentic and performed voice, problematising the notion of both. The three works I discuss in this section - Jill Craigie's 1946 film, *The Way We Live (TWWL),* Artur Zmijewski's 2007 *Them,* and Darcy Lange's 1976 *Work Studies in Schools* - all use creative filmic practice to highlight and extend a public dialogue on a particular socio-political intention or concern that is worked out through practice, and they share this method publicly through their work. These films are aesthetic objects, while aiming to further understand and make public a social dynamic. Importantly, following Warner and Zerilli's insights from the last chapter, these works create discursive frames for the expression of participant voices. In this sense they are public forming through the practices of the artists as well as through the release of them as artefacts in the world. Through the documentation of language, gesture and performance, a film's repeatability to the people involved in its production as well as others that were not there allows film to be a continually productive and reflexive medium. Through my practice that is inspired by these films, I have worked with participants to form a space where their voices can contribute to the public interpretation of their own social context, a core principle of my methodology explained in the next chapter.

Identity and social performance are approached from a range of angles in these three works. Each film pays attention to a potential gap between a person's professional or political identity and their behaviour as it is performed in a specific moment. Central to these works

and my own research is the process of highlighting how close or far a person's performative repertoire (for example their speech and gestures), are from an idea they have of themselves as a certain type of person, or a person with a specific role. Such a potential distance relates to an idea of the exemplary developed by Aletta Norval (2012). She says:

> Thinking about the exemplarity of the example, enables one to focus on both the distancing from the given order, a turning away, and the possibility of another way of being and acting—a turning toward—that is inscribed in it (Norval, 2012, p.820)

Craigie's, Zmijewski's and Lange's works enable participants, viewers, and filmmakers to have distance from their behaviour, which offers the potential to then act in another way. This notion is central to my methodological outlook.

I devote the first half of this chapter to *TWWL* because it documents the discourse and processes surrounding Plymouth's post-WWII reconstruction, a significant moment in the shaping of contemporary Plymouth. In 1943 Plymouth's city engineer, James Paton-Watson and town planner, Sir Patrick Abercrombie were commissioned to produce *A Plan for Plymouth.* As I have already discussed, this plan has been a looming influence over more recent planners' ideas about Plymouth's urban environment. *The Mackay Plan* regularly references its inspiration saying it is a "jewel in the crown of modern English town planning" (Mackay, 2003, p.23). But Mackay (2003) also talks about how the plan was either not fully completed or needs updating – the city centre "must be conserved, not as a fossil but rather alive to the present circumstances and shift in cultural values" (p.23). Craigie's film allows a window into the process that led to Abercrombie's 1943 *A Plan for Plymouth.* While Craigie clearly likes the plan, the film also employs several techniques that problematise the discourse that surrounded its production. Her use of non-professional actors and people playing themselves, re-enacting their own words, develops a method for critiquing a general approach to planning and consultation through specific articulations of local voices. A final significant factor when considering *TWWL* is the tangible effect Craigie's filmic practice had on the context she was documenting.

The second half of this chapter is devoted to two practices that pay attention to how film can interrogate and stimulate voice in everyday and constructed contexts. Through

Zmijewski's *Them (2007)* I will explicate how constructing situations where people are brought together and faced with other people's points of view can offer new insights into politicised notions of group identity and discourse. *Them* is an example of how an artist can facilitate an active discussion of socio-political positions through a provocation to perform. I differ from Zmijewski's approach in that I include myself in the process; my own performance is also an element up for discussion. Darcy Lange's *Work Studies in Schools (1976)* exemplifies feedback filmmaking, where participants are shown their own utterances on film and speak to the performative and political possibilities of their own actions. I then discuss other examples of feedback films before delving into Lange's practice. For Lange, the process of film making itself became a subject to be explored by those that he documented. Through feedback, filmmakers can bring their own methods into question.

3.2 ACTIVATING PUBLICS THROUGH FILM – *THE WAY WE LIVE*

3.2.1 JILL CRAIGIE AND THE FILM INDUSTRY

Jill Craigie (1911-1999) was a filmmaker in the British neo-realist tradition (Macnab, 1993, p.158). She was one of very few female directors in a Conservative, male-dominated industry, setting herself apart with her unashamedly socialist and feminist politics (*Independent Miss Craigie*, 2019; Tasker et al., 2018).[3] My focus here is specifically on *TWWL*, although her other productions *Out of Chaos* (1944) and *Who Are the Vandals? (1967)* offer valuable insights into her political and aesthetic views. Craigie (BECTU History Project, 1995, n.p.) comments that she never had much formal education but during the war had become far more political through reading texts by figures such as Sylvia Pankhurst and William Morris, the latter of which combined socialism with an appreciation of creative practice in everyday life. She said, "the war suited me very well, because although it was horrific it was very anti-materialistic" (BECTU History Project, 1995, n.p.); she also suggested that for the first time she felt useful and not oppressed by unwanted male attention (BECTU History Project, 1995). Craigie fits into a wartime educational documentary moment (Gold and Ward, 1997, p.63), described by Andrew Higson (1995) as a movement in which

[3] The AHRC funded project *Jill Craigie Film Pioneer* (2018-present) and the film *Independent Miss Craigie* (2019) both offer valuable insights into her life and work.

filmmakers saw their work as **"**a means of informing the public by putting ideas and information into mass circulation" (p.183) - in alignment with a prevailing idea at the time where the arts were seen as playing a key role in rebuilding Britain with a more anti-materialist and socialist ethos (Loukopoulou, 2019). This was almost in explicit contradistinction to Hollywood's output. Whereas documentary promoted a sense of social and civic education and responsibility, Hollywood promoted a sense of individualism through classic narrative (Higson, 1995, p.193). Craigie's career was departing from a nexus of socially responsible and publicly engaged filmmaking, but equally a feeling that to engage audiences, narratives and individual stories were necessary.

TWWL was produced by Two Cities films, a subsidiary of the Rank organisation. Although Arthur J. Rank had supported realist documentaries, he and his organisation seemed to hold contradictory aspirations to develop a distinctly British genre while also producing money-making production that could compete in the US market (Dickinson and Street, p.140, 1985; Macnab, 1993, p.136). This conflict between filmic form and market interests contributed towards Craigie's direction of *TWWL* as well as her choice of Plymouth as a setting. The internal conflict at Rank between big-money productions and informative documentaries was represented by John Davis, who ran Odeon Cinemas, and Fillipo Del Giudice, head of Two-Cities. *TWWL* became "a pawn in the ongoing struggle between Davis and Del Giudice" (Macnab, 1993, p.160). Davis did not believe in Craigie's documentary form and tried to sabotage the film (BECTU History Project, 1995; Macnab, 1993, p.159; Tasker et al., 2018). Due to unreliable box-office records from this time (Dickinson and Street, 1985, p.158) and Davis running the film alongside lower grade Hollywood productions at unwelcoming venues, it is difficult to discern how successful the film was in financial terms. However, Sarah Easen (2014) describes how successful it was in Plymouth, quoting one local observer as saying it "revived the interest of the man in the street in what is to be done to erase the scar which lies across our city". Despite not having the national effect Craigie had hoped for, in Plymouth the film had a significant impact and was a truly innovative and important intervention into the city's idea of itself.

3.2.2 TOWN PLANNING AND PLYMOUTH

After devastating bombing during the Blitz, Plymouth was left in ruins. As the Lord Mayor at the time, Viscount Waldorf Astor, stated: “there were thirty-one raids of varying severity before those apocalyptic nights in March and April 1941, when Nazi aircraft, attacking in strength, obliterated whole areas" (Astor in Abercrombie et al., 1943, p.iv). Although the loss of life was relatively small, a third of the city’s buildings were destroyed (Plymouth Museum, 2013). The Minister of Works and Building, Lord John Reith, urged local authorities to rebuild destroyed centres as quickly as possible (Plymouth City Museum, 2013). Plymouth’s city engineer, James Paton-Watson and town planner, Sir Patrick Abercrombie, were commissioned by Plymouth City Council in 1941 to produce *A Plan for Plymouth*. The plan was presented to the City Council in 1943, and adopted in 1944, laying out a strategy for the city as a whole (While, 2006, p.2410). With reference to both Plymouth and Coventry, Aiden While (2006) points out that this period saw the rise of the “inexorable and heroic” (p.2403) town planner, implementing rationalist planning principles to aid social reform. This image is exemplified by Abercrombie, who along with the Astor family were key factors in Craigie choosing Plymouth.

Through her interest in the polymath urbanist Lewis Mumford and the pioneering town planner Charles Reilly, after the war Craigie’s attention turned towards the reconstruction of the many devastated cities around Britain (Rollyson, 2005, p.165-6; Tewdwr-Jones, 2014, p.168-9). She felt that this was a key terrain in continuing the socialist and feminist ideals that she had espoused during the war, but also one that should be subjected to formal critique in a similar way to visual arts (BECTU History Project, 1995). Rollyson (2005) says Craigie realised the best way to combine her interests in architecture, women and art was to “capitalize on public determination to rebuild the country” (p.67). After visiting many bombed cities, she settled on Plymouth for tactical reasons. In choosing Plymouth, Craigie was taking advantage of historic links to America (the Mayflower set sail from Plymouth) and a contemporary link offered by Nancy Astor, an American who had been the first female MP to take a seat in the British parliament (BECTU History Project, 1995; Rollyson, 2005). The Astors therefore had strong connections to the British and American governments, but also a perceived appeal to a US audience which helped persuade Rank to fund a documentary project. In tandem with the appeal to the US offered by the Astor family, Abercrombie was also a leading figure in British planning at the time (Rollyson, 2005; Tewdwr-Jones, 2014;

While, 2006). Craigie (BECTU History Project, 1995) later noted that Plymouth was by no means her favourite of the nation's plans, but the combination of Abercrombie's reputation and ease in front of the camera (apparently he enjoyed being "made up" (Rollyson, 2005, p.70)), led Craigie to choose Abercrombie and Plymouth. Through her shrewdness, Craigie managed to "manoeuvre the complexities of commercial cinema to finance her socialist documentaries" (Tay, 2009, p.44).

3.2.3 STRUCTURE OF THE FILM

TWWL details Plymouth's post-WWII reconstruction through the discussion and consultation of *A Plan for Plymouth* (Abercrombie et al., 1943), while also guiding the viewer through that historical moment via the day-to-day lives of a Plymouth family and a writer from London. In the opening credits we are told "this film is made for the people of The Blitz in the hope that their newly built cities will be worthy of their fortitude" (Craigie, 1946). Then, after an aerial view of the city, we are introduced to various characters that make up the location and the film. For the most part, these are people playing themselves. We see councillors, businesspeople, mothers and fishermen. As they are introduced, they all look to camera, as if they are directly addressed by the voiceover. We meet the Copperwheats, a family that comprise one of the narrative arcs of the film, and a group of people who are cast from a call-out for local, non-professional actors. Finally, we are introduced to the "heroes or villains, depending on your point of view" (Craigie, 1946): Paton-Watson and Abercrombie, who we see speaking to each other, but who do not address the camera. This opening sequence sets up a relationship between a public that is watching and the public in the film; also, it forms a divide between that public and the people behind the plan. Their dialogue, which we cannot hear, is presumably about planning. Through the film we will be addressed by them as experts: they will be educating us. In this sense we are in a similar position as everyone else in the film. The plan and planners are not part of the diegesis, rather the diegesis will serve as a platform for them to explain their work.

The film thus allows a range of voices to be heard, making it a highly public form with which to investigate and interrogate Britain's post-war planning practices. Sharon Lin Tay (2009) describes Craigie's practice as "closely aligned with the public sphere" (p.46), meaning it feeds into and comprises a discourse of shared concern. This is a key feature of Craigie's

films that links to my conception of practice-based research in that she engaged and developed her films with people through creative means in a politically salient subject matter. For Tay (2009), Craigie's commitment to a "socialist and feminist ethics" (p.55) meant she chose subject matters and filmic structures that were to educate, invigorate and form alternative publics. As I have already described, Craigie wanted to feed into social movements such as town planning and feminism and, as Michael Warner (2002) says "when alternative publics are said to be social movements: they acquire agency in relation to the state" (p.124). The combination of feminism as a social movement, post-war reconstruction as a state enacted process, and film as a public medium seem to have been a fruitful ground for Craigie to work within. Importantly for my own approach, and *TWWL,* many people from Plymouth are drawn into the process to participate in the artform, making the production, content and output a public forming project. Craigie realises this through the participation of people at many levels of a public involved in, and affected by, *A Plan for Plymouth.* Significantly this included the planners themselves and people such as working-class mothers that had little voice within the public sphere.

Craigie cast a combination of professional actors, members of Plymouth City Council, Plymothians playing themselves and Plymothians cast as actors in central roles. The film has three major streams that carry the viewer through interrelated narratives. We follow Tom (played by Peter Willes), a London-based writer who has returned from war and wants a subject to get his teeth into, choosing town planning and Plymouth as his focus. We also follow a family, Mr and Mrs Copperwheat and their three daughters Alice, Patricia and Jane, along with their Granny. Finally, we have people playing themselves – the planners and other members of the public. Each group has a different aspect of the plan to offer, and their casting reflects the position they have within the diegesis.

Tom, showing an interest in planning literature, and heading off to write about Plymouth, could be understood as a proxy for Craigie. She writes his script which echoes her interest in planning; coupled with the way he drops in literary references we can see many crossovers with Craigie's personal interests. He also stands in for what was considered a general member of the public, that is, a white bourgeois man who is moving through the film using his good nature and a reasonable attitude. He displays his position within the public sphere through his "idiom and style" (Fraser, 1997, p.83). Tom is generally in agreement with the

need for planning but needs to be convinced of the details. His role is to lead the viewer through scenarios where the plan is interrogated from various perspectives.

The Copperwheats have been displaced by the war and we follow them as they settle into a new home in Plymouth. They can be understood to be the personal, private side of the concerns expressed in the film. For example, they describe the conditions they currently live in and the amenities they would like. Significantly, they hold the view that they deserve these things after the efforts of the war. We hear details of what a house needs such as the size and location of bedrooms and the accessibility of local amenities. The monotony associated with the destroyed town is navigated predominantly by Alice Copperwheat, the oldest girl, who is trying to gain some freedom, mainly by dancing on The Hoe (a large public area that faces Plymouth Sound, an inlet of the English Channel) and dating a sailor. Each Copperwheat girl offers a different idea of freedom. For Jane it is independence from family, for Patricia, intellectual freedom, and for Alice, sexual freedom. These girls could be read as representing various aspects of Craigie's feminist views, so as with Tom, her personal attitudes are embodied through various characters within the film.

Aside from these personal aspects of post-war life, there are scenes that play out the official discourse surrounding planning at the time. We see the consultation and deliberation of *A Plan for Plymouth*. A key example of this is a scene where Abercrombie presents the plan in a town hall, where the viewer of the film is informed in a similar way to the audience within the film. There is also an extended, word-for-word re-enactment of the Council Chamber's deliberation, mediated by the Lord Mayor. This is followed by various people of Plymouth, playing themselves, discussing the pros and cons of the plan.

Rollyson (2005, p.78) comments that a number of critics focus on Craigie's ability to represent the interest of 'ordinary people'. This notion is important, for as Higson (1995) comments, at this time working-class characters had become more represented on screen but often as passive bystanders. In *TWWL* we do not see much deliberation of depth played out by anyone other than the council and the planners; the various members of the Plymouth public give rudimentary comments for or against. Craigie falls into a trend of dignifying the ordinary person by "seeing them in terms of apparently universal human values" (Higson, 1995, p.198), values which are historically bourgeois. Having said this, at this time young women had little opportunity for public expression on political matters, but

are given agency within the film, offering a sense of how young people can have an active role in changing a prevailing discourse.

Craigie's use of young people in the city had an effect beyond the film; the process of production was as significant as the film itself. Her approach to casting embedded an activating, participatory spirit in the city. She ran open casting sessions to find Plymouth talent to fill key roles in the film (Rollyson, 2005; Tasker et al., 2018). From early on in 1945, *The Western Morning News* ran a series of articles detailing the casting process: the actors who play the Copperwheat daughters were already taking part in amateur dramatics and shared some elements of their characters' experience, such as death in their families and wartime displacement. Mr Copperwheat (played by Francis Lunt) was a regular broadcaster on local radio known for his "Devonshire dialect" (WMN, 6th August 1945). Mrs Copperwheat (played by Verena Chaffe) was head of the War Widows Guild and stated that she was happy to take part for a "bright spot in a rather monotonous life" (WMN, 6th August 1945). Although they play roles, the Copperwheats could be understood as re-enacting elements of their own lives. This injects an agency, or effect beyond the film, into the performances, for as Margulies (2019) points out, "what is said is uniquely true not because it refers to actual events but because of its performative valence, and its co-presence with the viewer" (p.11). A person watching the film in Plymouth at the time (and perhaps beyond) can relate to the Copperwheats not because what they say is necessarily true, but because they can relate to them as Plymothians. To this day it is still highly unusual to hear a Plymouth accent in any mass-media format, contributing to feelings of ridicule and exclusion from other areas of the country (BBC Devon, 2004). The simple act of casting local people had a significant impact for Plymothians at the time.

Rather than framing an "us" and "them", the film aims to show the position of a public, within the planning process in Plymouth and beyond. When Alice and her Sailor say of the plan "they'll never do it", Tom exclaims, "don't you see, *they* is you!" (Craigie, 1946). Peter Couldry (2010) says, "for me to feel that a group of which I am a member speaks for me, I must be able to recognize my inputs in what that group says and does" (p.101). In the above example this could be a disconnect between planners and a public that will be affected by their plans. Craigie clearly saw a disconnect and it motivated her to make the film. According to the organisation Civic Voice (2020), a charity that aims to further civic participation in communities across the UK, a lack of proper communication between planners and

communities is still a problem to this day. I have heard first-hand accounts that corroborate this in a Union Street context at events such as *Urban Dialogues* (Brown et al., 2021) and *The State of US* (Real Ideas Organisation, 2021).

3.2.4 SPECIFIC INSTANCES OF VOICE

A conflict between the presentation of information for activating purposes, and that of offering information for passive consumption is expressed in Craigie's film through the position of various voices. Documentary has the power to move an individual from a passive to informed and active member of the community, but, as Higson (1995) points out the form may discourage rather than inform. He says, "by situating the discussion in the text itself" (Higson, 1995, p.184), a film might leave the viewer better informed, but still passive. In many areas *TWWL* aligns with this critique. In scenes such as Abercrombie and Paton-Watson presenting their plan to a bored, dissenting and then enthusiastic but sceptical public, the interplay between levels of discourse is less well displayed, with this scene adopting an educational “B film” format. Also, when we see the Council Chamber deliberations, a rare glimpse inside such a space, it still seems a straightforward information giving exercise, rather than a public discourse – information is given on the dominant positions within the council, but no community-based views are exchanged. The intention of *TWWL* is to use film as a "creative form of public communication that might convince a wider audience of the benefits of comprehensive replanning" (Tewdwr-Jones, 2014, p.164), and although it does communicate ideas, it does not serve as a platform for deliberation.

The benefit of such sequences is more within the activity of the production, rather than the specific speech within the scenes. Newspapers at the time reported the difficulty Craigie (and the councillors) faced in filming the council scene. We hear that “when the councillors stumbled over the script or coughed in the wrong place the scene had to be retaken again and again until it was done as the director wished” (WMN, 23rd July, 1945c). Apparently, when one councillor asked to sit down, Craigie told him he had got his words wrong so had to try again; another Councillor needed 30 takes to get his lines correct. The paper also reports that many of them needed their bald heads powdered (WMN, 23rd July, 1945c). Margulies (2019) places a significant emphasis on the idea of exemplarity in re-enactment, and again, Norval (2012) describes the significance of this in terms of an attention towards

"the practices through which we come to hold particular dispositions" (p.823) – exemplarity comes about through social practice. To see and understand that a council deliberation is a human process is to see that official positions come about through a human process. Public commentary of the film's production found in newspapers at the time offer a humanising view of men who occupied seats of power and to some degree grounds the arguments they make.

Voices enacted by people playing themselves become more salient in a scene where Tom meets a group of working-class mothers. We are led into this scenario by Tom wondering about the significance of city planning. To make planning seem less remote, Tom is told by the city engineer, Paton-Watson (played by himself), to gate-crash an Efford mothers' meeting (Efford was, and still is, a low-income, working-class area of Plymouth). Paton-Watson's acting is incredibly wooden; no matter what Craigie tried she could not get him to perform with any life (*Independent Miss Craigie*, 2019; Tasker et al., 2018). The mixing of professional actor and professional city engineer, of a scripted, imagined character with a man performing as himself was perhaps never going to appear seamless. As clunky as this meeting is, it exemplifies Craigie's approach perfectly as the various voices involved highlight each other through their varying levels of performative comfort. Although there is still the explicit imparting of information in this scene, such as Paton-Watson explaining the follies of older housing estates or the mothers making requests for better homes, both stand as exemplars of roles because they are bad actors but the best examples of themselves. Paton-Watson is not just playing a city engineer but *the* Plymouth city engineer.

Tom's role as knowing member of the public is also questioned here. He is incredulous at the thought of a mothers meeting offering any insights worth listening to; however, through the scene these women are framed as having the kind of first-person experience of housing that will bring the importance of planning to the fore. In her later film *To Be a Woman* (1951), Craigie makes this point more explicitly by asking why, if a woman's place is in the home, do women not have a say in architecture and planning?[4] When Tom arrives in Efford he starts off by berating the area, first of all asking why anyone would damage a rather nice signpost, then comparing the community centre to something from the *Grapes of Wrath.* The

[4] *To be a Woman* is a far more polemic film. Commissioned by the Equal Pay Campaign Committee (EPCC), formed in 1944, it was made after Craigie left Rank. Jo Fox (2018) describes this as an early example of a crowdfunded film.

comparison to the 1939 novel by John Steinbeck has many potential meanings. On the one hand it is signifying that the building looks broken down and dilapidated, like something from rural, depression era USA. Also, Efford had been used as a military base by American troops (part of the area was renamed Little America). But Craigie alluding to *Grapes of Wrath* might have a deeper significance. A major theme in the book is the relationship between people, land ownership and power, embedded themes found within *TWWL*. As Tom enters the mothers meeting, he is like a rabbit in the headlights. He nervously walks in and says he is interested in women, only to be faced with a room full of mothers giggling at him. This is funny but also introduces the women to the audience. As they turn to look at Tom they also look to the camera. The mothers all speak in a shouting unison while he poses his questions, that is until Tom tells them to speak one at a time, a moment that is intended to be funny but now feels patronising and sexist. Tom's nervousness and the women's joviality represents a perceived divide between what might be considered serious discourse and chatting or gossip, but as Jane Mansbridge (1999) points out, "in the everyday talk of the larger deliberative system, creative thought often thrives in protected space" (p.221), such as a mothers meeting in community hall.

In contrast to Paton-Watson, the mothers offer a lively performance. Under Craigie's guidance "they repeated their own actual conversations in front of glaring lights in all the atmosphere of a film studio" (WMN, 14th August 1945b). Tom asks questions about the nature of their area and housing situation. "Do you like the houses better than what you had before? – yes! Do you have any complaints – yes!" They explain that the houses are too far from shops, that there is no proper washroom, that steam ruins the walls and the baths must be filled with buckets. Tom exclaims "I don't know how you manage to do it all: seven children, the cooking, the shopping" and in a distinctly Plymouth tone one woman replies "well, I mean it has to be done hasn't it, I mean". The conversation moves on to Tom's concerns of vandalism, to which the mothers ask what he expects when the children have nowhere else to go[5]. Finally, Tom enquires about a return to the village green "your own back garden with the houses facing in towards a green – would you like that?" "Yes!". At this point Craigie's personal views are clearly heard as she openly advocated the village green as a planning ideal (BECTU History Project, 1995).

[5] In *Who Are The Vandals? (1967)*, Craigie uses the idea of teenage vandalism to deliver a harsh critique of planning and architectural practices in Camden, central London.

The above concerns were all prevalent within planning discourse at the time. As early as 1934, architects associated with the modernist movement were organising housing exhibitions to inform the general public of the benefits of modernist planning (Gold, 1997). Planning was promoted through exhibitions, films, publications, and any other medium that could be employed. According to Peter J. Larkham and Keith D. Lilly (2012), all levels of government and professional bodies were promoting the importance of planning and reconstruction, and a range of media "spread the message of the opportunity that the wartime destruction provided" (p.651). Craigie attended these exhibitions at institutions such as RIBA and taking these ideas forward stated that "I wanted to interpret what the artists and the town planners were saying to mass audiences" (BECTU History Project, 1995). The scene with Tom talking to the Efford mothers could be described as a re-enactment of a prevailing cultural discourse being explored between the institution and those on the periphery. A middle-class man is speaking 'BBC English', representing the establishment, performing a role distanced from himself, in conversation with working-class women appearing as themselves, speaking with strong Plymouth accents. It seems one is required to access the other. To participate publicly, the women's speech is mediated by a man. But he is a fictional character; this moment of advocacy, of public acceptance, was just a performance.

Although at the time accents like Tom's were the standard sound of public broadcasting, it seems outdated now. I find it jarring, but more jarring still is the thought that to hear anything but that in 1946 would have been shocking. Part of Craigie's intention was to promote planning discourse, but also to offer a platform for working class women to simply be heard beyond their own communities. When I first saw this film, it struck me that I had never heard anyone with this type of accent on screen. The Efford mothers offer a means for other, similar women who had not been depicted in mass media to relate their situation to that of the film. As they voice their concerns, they open a possibility for others to speak as part of a public.

3.2.5 THE FINAL PARADE

Towards the end of the film, after the Council has deliberated and we have seen Michael Foot elected as Labour MP, the audience is told that nothing has happened. The film is

ending, and Mr and Mrs Copperwheat finally meet Alice's Sailor on The Hoe. As they watch her walk away, they discuss that the plan may never happen and Mr Copperwheat says, "one day the workers will wake up, when the little one's a grandmother", offering an explicitly socialist conclusion to the Copperwheat story. Then we see Tom wondering around The Hoe, lamenting the lack of action with regard to the plan. But then he sees something in the distance, a banner held by some teenage boys. In the last line of the film, we hear a hopeful Tom say, "youth, I'd forgotten the impatience of youth". We are then left with a stream of images of "youth" holding banners asking for change. This procession includes "Soldiers, Sailors, scouts and boys' and girls' clubs" (Rollyson, 2005, p.76) that fill streets lined with a bursting crowd. Liam MacQuitty, the film's production manager, estimated that the crowd was over 3000 (Rollyson, 2005, p.76). Importantly, this was not organised by Craigie, but by the participants in response to Craigie's provocation.

During filming she had a number of conversations with various groups of young people (BECTU History Project, 1995; Rollyson, 2005). The final parade stemmed from an interaction with a "cynical group of young people who told her that the plan would never be implemented" to which Craigie replied, "what are YOU going to do about it?" (Rollyson, 2005, p.77). From here the group decided to arrange a protest march, assisted by Craigie with stopping the traffic. This is an instance of the film not only documenting action but producing it - a feedback response to the political motivation of the film, which then becomes part of the film.

The banners asking for "less monotony please", "premises not promises" and "roads designed for safety" are a few examples of demands made for a better civic environment. Judith Butler (2015, p.157) says that assemblies such as this are speech-acts, that such a collective action is, in the first place, a claim on behalf of popular will. This final scene expresses the idea that "the 'we' voiced in language is already enacted by the gathering of bodies, their gestures and movements, their vocalizations, and their way of acting in concert" (Butler, 2015, p.157). The claims the youth are making are the subject of the film, summarised by the banners. But their claims, framed as those of a counter public, are then contrasted with an organised display of scout and military processions. This literal blending of state and local collectivist action emphasises the film's desire to place a national subject and character within a specific location. The military is central to the history and current character of Plymouth, while, especially at that time, representing national pride in WWII

victory. Craigie is showing a political assembly by staging a celebration of 'the people' - the characters in the film, that is, and by extension Plymouth in general. Marginal voices asking for change become the image of a whole city, and a nation. Through the film, Craigie was not only trying to educate a public, but form one.

Figure 2. “Youth” holding banners in support of the plan, *The Way We Live* (Craigie, 1946)

Figure 3. Plymouth mobilised on mass in support of the plan, *The Way We Live* (Craigie, 1946

3.2.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON TWWL

TWWL has contextual, political and methodological relevance to my research. It describes how Plymouth was rebuilt and shaped in the wake of WWII, beginning a narrative of planning and consultation that I argue, is as relevant now as it was then. The film was shown at *We the People Are the Work* (2017), a Plymouth wide public art event, because curators felt it offered a "remarkable record of how our city has been shaped and continues to evolve" (Morrissey, 2017, p.33). The film holds a mirror to Plymouth, offering a rare opportunity for Plymothians to see and hear themselves on film. Also of key importance is Craigie's directorial approach. She applies an artistic methodology that has direct links to my practice-based research, emphasising the connection between people perceived as experts and their interaction with local communities and voices.

TWWL does not only intend to inform, but it also aims to involve and excite. It not only asks that people listen to voices but asks people to speak. Craigie displays an aversion to political conformity that Aletta Norval (2007) describes as giving "attention to the exercise of our political voice and to the claims to community that it inevitably invokes and/or contests" (p.8). The film is a form of artistic activism that tried to encourage participation, as well as appeal to a mass audience. The final parade scene is emblematic of the points Craigie was advocating in terms of urban planning, while also historically representing the fight she had to make as a female, political film maker at the time. It represents the fight to get the film made, while also displaying the level of activation it gave to a Plymouth public.

3.3 PROVOKING VOICE AND FEEDING IT BACK

A key feature of my methodology is to reflect various uses of language by juxtaposing them. By bringing people with diverse views together, their uses of language will reflect new aspects in each other's utterances. Zmijewski's *Them* is intended to provoke arguments and vitriolic interaction by bringing together representatives of different political factions together. In this sense participants are not heard by each other, with each group seemingly framed to speak aggressively *at* but ultimately *past* each other. Craigie, Lange and Zmijewski all ask people to perform on film within their own ordinary contexts, highlighting aspects of

their identity for the viewer. Craigie, however, asks people to perform differently depending on who they are, leading to a less methodologically rigorous approach to the documentation of voice. While Craigie was caught by a particular moment, trying to make both a popular film and an activating documentary, Lange and Zmijewski have very clear intentions for their work. While Craigie was working in a post-WWII moment of idealised social collectivity, Zmijewski's work marks the rise of a now endemic tendency to see social and political exchange as a battle between discrete groups - ethnocentrism, to use Sobolewska and Ford's (2020) term. Lange's work aimed to document, interrogate, and ultimately celebrate people as they worked. His feedback approach aimed to foster a self-reflexive space for the subjects of his films and himself. His self-questioning practice positions him as the biggest influence on my approach.

3.3.1 PROVOKING VOICE: *THEM*

Artur Zmijewski's film *Them* (2007) confronts hostility felt between populist factions of Polish society, producing a rancorous interaction. Jan Verwoert (2008) describes how Zmijewski employs "a set of basic rules, which provide a group of performers with a cue to act upon, but which never prefigure the outcome of those actions" (p.164). By not shying away from societal conflict he "exposes the premises of social antagonism by stirring up controversy" (Verwoert, 2008, p.167). Zmijewski produces a political space; when considered with Zerilli's (2003) general insights into what constitutes a political space, this means participants can test the limits of their claim to a community by seeing the different ways agreement can form or break down (p.148). Also, through *Them*, Zmijewski's practice and his position as artist can be critiqued in relation to the ethics of practical enquiry.

Watching a person enraged and in conflict often highlights the shaky foundations of their beliefs. Conversely, such performances can strengthen our opinions in relation to an impassioned defence of positions we stand by in solidarity. Forms of direct democracy such as deliberative polls attempt to mediate political impasse. Such vitriolic discourse is the action that constitutes *Them*. The film, running 26:28 minutes and first shown at *Documenta 12*, shows a focus group of sorts, a collection of people taken from various factions of Polish society. We see older Catholic women, young left wing-radicals, right-wing nationalists, and

members of a Jewish youth group all taking part in an activity set by Zmijewski. Each group is asked to create its own national flag. Through edited footage we witness the situation devolve into chaos over the course of a few days. Each group edits the others' flags as they become more and more aggressive and defensive. By the end, all the flags have been destroyed.

Figure 4. Artur Zmijewski's *Them* (2007). Image from Galerie Peter Kilchmann

Zmijewski's practice is all about making art more politically useful. He thinks art lacks a sense of pragmatism. He complains that art can be political as long as it does not act politically, social as long as it does not have social consequence (Zmijewski, 2007b, p.3). In a manifesto of sorts, *Applied Social Arts* (Zmijewski, 2007) he discusses how institutional critique was absorbed by art institutions to "mitigate arts ideological turpitude [however, as the market commodifies rebellion] art is becoming more and more anodyne" (p.3). To confront a general culture of poor communication between people with opposing views, he attempts to form situations where people are,

> confronted with the opinions of others, and when they have to respect others' opinions … it is interesting for me if it's possible to "remove" violence—verbal,

> symbolic—from group communication and from the way people take decisions (Zmijewski quoted in Szász, 2016, n.p.).

In a text for *Documenta 14*, Zmijewski (2016) laments the state of Polish politics. In this text he describes a Polish state where tabloid hate-speech has infiltrated parliament, where terms such as "rabid feminism" are becoming publicly acceptable (Zmijewski, 2016). Such a politically charged climate creates a context where the "meaning of words is reversed" and there is a total breakdown in "shared rationality, which makes discussion and compromise-making possible" (Zmijewski, 2016, n.p.). This echoes Elizabeth Anderson's (2019) characterisation of double-down dogmatism (DDD). These are claims devoid of a sense of ethical constraint and are hallmarks of contemporary populist politics (left and right) (Anderson, 2019). While clearly recognising issues such as DDD, Zmijewski's (2016) view that voters do not know what they want, and that the Polish government frees the public from having to think for themselves could be construed as patronising. As compelling and politically salient as *Them* is, there is a sense that Zmijewski is above the action taking place, that he knows the conflict will ensue and that it will produce a captivating artwork. The work seems to provoke political conflict so that it can be documented. My intention is not to provoke heated conflict and I also want to have my views part of what is presented. Another difference between *Them* and my research context is in the nuance of the positions held by participants. In the focus groups I organised, the delineation between different points of view is not so stark. *Them* provokes dogmatic conflict to show the conflict, not to analyse the political subtilties of voices.

With some of Zmijewski's subsequent works there is more detail available about the process he enacted. For example, in 2016 he ran a three-day workshop in Budapest where a group were paid a sum (not publicly specified) for their participation. He formed a three-stage process were the group developed an issue to which they could all relate, then developed ways to solve and represent the issue (Szász, 2016). However, with *Them*, the ethics of participation are less defined as the audience is not privy to the set-up of this context and unaware of any parameters which might have been set or debriefing that might have been given afterwards. Zmijewski's sense of a duty of care for his participants' emotional and at times physical safety seem absent (from the exhibited video). While the intention of the Budapest workshop was to produce artworks from the process (*Book of Problems* and *Kebab Manifesto* both 2016), with *Them* the conflictual process is the artwork.

Without doubt, *Them* does produce a scenario where different discourses meet and clash. Marta Dziewańska (2017, n.p.) comments that Zmijewski's social experiment intends to "jolt participants out of their customary reactions and identifications" while also aiming for artistic effect. She likens this to a Brechtian belief in the political power of montage, "in juxtapositions that shatter our certainties, mock authority, and author the impossible. Zmijewski has faith in the power of such a clash" (Dziewańska, 2017). Zmijewski was educated by Grzegorz Kowalski who structured his studio as a space for collective problem solving through the exchange of visual symbols (Galerie Peter Kilchmann, 2020; Tate, 2012). *Them* employs a similar approach, a broad set of parameters where participants are left to exchange and create art through their actions. But there is a significant difference in that the participants are not artists, and it is unclear what kind of understanding they had of the process beforehand. More importantly, it is unclear if their views towards each other became more or less recalcitrant.

Maybe there is a need to aestheticize pragmatic political processes that aim to widen and engage people in democracy. Methods such as citizens assemblies or deliberative polls aim to mitigate DDD. Made in the late 2000s, *Them* seems to be trying something similar by displaying the aesthetic and symbolic aspect of political tribalism, but it raises questions as to the mode through which it brought people into heated discursive exchange. Offering audiences a window into a situation in which populists tear each other down arguably serves to fuel an already raging fire such as that between Polish nationalists and members of the Jewish community in Poland. Trenchant political views have an aesthetic aspect (Zerilli, 2016) - they are often based on judgment formed from prior beliefs, rather than judgment based on empirical evidence. Viewers of *Them* may have a means to re-evaluate their political positions; it is not clear if the same was the case for the participants. The film ultimately questions the position of symbolic representation in political disagreement, and art and artists' role in such conflicts.

Zmijewski is almost entirely absent from *Them,* placing the aesthetic and political investigation found in the work at a distance from its author. From the outset of my research, I have found it useful and important to place my own confusion around arts policy and the various practices found in Union Street at the centre of my investigation – my confusion helps drive my practice. For example, my inability to grasp the complexity of

various relationships I found in Union Street led me to construct the diagrams that participants have edited and interpret for me. Moi (2015) describes how good investigative work begins with “one’s sense of lostness…and confusion” (p.193). For me, sharing my uncertainty and lack of clarity is productive. The centrality of an author’s confusion as driver of inquiry brings me to the next example I would like to discuss.

3.3.2 FEEDBACK FILMS

Feedback or reflexive filmmaking, where the film maker documents a situation and then records the subjects of the initial document watching themselves, is key to my methodological outlook. The filmmaker and anthropologist Jean Rouch (2003) discusses this method in terms of participant observation, and tells his readers that for the first time, a researcher’s work is “not being judged by a thesis committee but by the very people he came to observe” (p.96). This reflects my interest in practice-based methodology as it has at its centre the idea that participation and publicness should be central to research practice. Feedback offers a process of participatory judgement – people judge their own judgments. Such an approach offers a means to open-up analysis to people who are to be analysed, based on a principle that those who inhabit a social context are best placed to judge the discourse emanating from it, and can phrase such judgments in the language ordinary to that setting. This is not to say that the artist/researcher cannot also offer critique. Any socially orientated research has the problem of mediating between the language found in the context under scrutiny and pre-articulated notions the researcher brings (Pitkin, 1972, p.244). Feedback film offers a mode to combine both discourses.

Recent instances of feedback film such as Joshua Oppenheimer’s duo *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Look of Silence* (2014) use this method to explore violent histories in post-colonial Indonesia. We see members of a death squad that carried out mass killings in the mid 1960s faced with their actions through film documentation, while also being asked to make their own films to tell their stories. We track a man as he meets the men who murdered his family after watching documentation of their actions. Feedback combining watching and re-enactment is used to hold people to account, to face their abhorrent behaviour, or to come to terms with unbearable trauma. The films offer an insight into the

psychology of atrocity for both perpetrator and victim, while also seeking justice and accountability. Another example is the film *The Unknown Knowns* (2013) by Errol Morris, in which we watch Donald Rumsfeld read through tens of thousands of Pentagon memos he wrote throughout his career as a notoriously hawkish US politician. In some instances, the mind-boggling intricacy and abstractness of the language he used seems to bamboozle even Rumsfeld, offering a window into rhetorical formations used by politicians to justify their actions. A sense of justice and accountability drives the films of Oppenheimer and Morris. In the above-mentioned films, they use feedback to seek retribution, or to limit the disavowal of those responsible for war atrocities.

Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961) focuses on more everyday (for 1960s Europe) circumstances, although the action we see is prefigured by the French and Algeria war (1954-1963). The film is unscripted, a relatively unique approach at the time. Rouch and Morin "set out to examine how discourses of modernization were transforming Europe" (Di Lorio, 2013) through a combination of survey-style questions in the street and more orchestrated social settings. For example, we see Rouch and Morin at dinner talking between themselves regarding the direction of the film. They comment that the film has started with a personal focus, on individual views of personal matters. They would like to expand the content. Rouch brings up the military draft and the possibility of being sent to Algeria. Attending the dinner are the film's participants, seemingly unaware of the camera, they begin to discuss Algeria. Rouch's suggestion in the film becomes part of the film's content. The steering of discourse is seemingly laid bare in front of us; the directors open up their process to the viewer.

In the penultimate scene, in which we see a cinema filled with people who have featured in the film, we see their reaction to what we have just watched. They have been shown their own filmic performances and are now to give feedback on the experience to the directors. The reactions are varied. We hear Mary Lou, a character we followed earlier in the film, comment that to get a "sparkle of truth the character has to be alone and on the verge of breaking down, he has to talk about a very intimate matter" (Rouch and Morin, 1961). This is in reaction to another man's comment that the film is either boring or so painful to watch it becomes indecent. The conversation then turns to authenticity on film and in life. Some found the camera allowed them to open-up and talk in ways they would not normally,

others found this laying bare vulgar or artificial. But these are social barriers as much as filmic ones. As Morin says (1961), “such reactions block the emergence of truth in life, in relationships”. Emotional confrontation, individual or collective, make many of the participants uncomfortable. Ultimately, I would agree with one of the young students in that, “switching from phony to naturalness, the movement back and forth, is what gives the film its strength” (Rouch and Morin, 1961).

Zemirah Moffat’s 2006 practice-based PhD research film *Mirror Mirror* is also a perfect example of how feedback can be used to research a given context. Moffat’s thesis titled *Queer Giving: an audio-visual shared ethnography of ‘The Wotever Vision’, London 2003-2006* gathered a group of queer performers associated with an influential queer performance space. She says, through adopting a filmic method similar to that of Rouch, "I wanted to know if I could somehow make the two ideas that ‘gender is drag’ and that ‘documentary film is a drag of reality’ mutually inform and comment upon each other" (Moffat, 2006, n.p.). Moffat used feedback similarly to *Chronicle of a Summer,* with the bulk of the film depicting interviews, documentation of performances and generally following her subjects around with edited sections of the group watching the film together in a cinema. Her method disrupts the boundaries and relationship between areas of disciplinary knowledge, and she found questioning her own position as a researcher a central consequence of her use of the feedback method (Moffat, 2006, n.p.).

The above are examples of feedback films that address broad and politically fraught contexts. They work on a larger scale and engage with socio-political subjects that are not the focus of my research and therefore do not wish to integrate into my own approach. Darcy Lange’s film *Work Studies in Schools* (1976) relates more closely to my own methodology and research context in that it engages with everyday practices rather than coming to terms with traumatic events; less violence and peril is at stake. Lange is also less sure of his approach and places his own method as a subject of the film, also bringing this work closer to my own research practice.

3.3.3 WORK STUDIES IN SCHOOLS

Darcy Lange (1946-2005) was a New Zealander artist who originally worked in sculpture and came to the UK in the early 70s to study at the Royal College of Art. Upon his arrival the British class system captured his interest (Sharpe, 1975, p.12). This shift to the UK permanently realigned his attitude to artistic practice. He started using cameras and turned his attention to the everyday lives of people around the UK working in a variety of jobs. Starting with factory labour in Bradford, Lange documented multiple workplaces, from mills and prisons to punch card operators, surveying characteristically working-class forms of labour (Vicente, 2009, p.35). Lens-based media was a way to communicate, to make his work and the subject matter accessible. Lange found it difficult to relate his work to outsiders and to validate his practice to himself (Lange, 2001, p7). In an interview he says, "it has to do with a slightly bourgeois socialist attitude, which I have, a middle class feeling that if you express yourself by presenting something else, that's a very healthy way of doing it" (Sharpe, 1975, p.12). This coupled with his self-professed inclination for putting his nose in other people's business, for being a "nosy parker" (Lange, 2001, p.8) directed him to document working practices in the UK.

The mid to late 70s was a time in which many theorists were paying attention to education and forms of power and social reproduction found within schools. Although Lange does not explicitly attribute his interest in educational institutions to such theorisations, there is a marked overlap between his practice and sociological studies conducted around the same time. Basil Bernstein published *Class, Codes and Control* (1977) and Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron published *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1977). Both looked at how language and embedded practices were deeply rooted in the educational system. Bernstein's (1977) research was based on the intuition that social class could produce differences in education, despite schooling. Two pupils could follow the same curriculum in the same school, but a working-class child would not do as well in certain examinations. Key to his investigations was the theme of language use. In researching his thesis, Bernstein found it necessary to,

> make explicit the distinction between the patterning of speech evoked by specific social contexts (speech variants) and the concept of code as a regulative principle controlling speech realizations in diverse social contexts (Bernstein, 1977, p.12).

His research found that upper classes had greater access to putatively *universalistic meaning*, implying they would be more comfortable and confident using language in a wider range of contexts than their lower-class cohorts (Bernstein, 1977). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) similarly found that language not only allowed a supple social movement the higher up the class system one went, but also that language was a site of power sublimation. As they say, “language can ultimately cease to be an instrument of communication and serve instead as an instrument of inculcation” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.110). When Lange felt he wanted to move towards a practice with social conscience, less isolated from the world around him (Legg, 2009, p.46) education seemed an appropriate focus. Schools served as the perfect subject for a bourgeois artist who wanted to pay attention to class dynamics while also being aware of his own position of power.

Helen Legg (2009) points out Lange’s "ethnographic style studies cast educational establishments as complex societal mechanisms engaged in the production and reproduction of class identity" (p.46) but it is Lange’s method itself that interests me. In 1975 Lange was introduced to video technology while in Birmingham and around the same time met Dan Graham (Lange, 2001). Through Graham’s influence Lange started experimenting with “watch-back-processes” (Lange, 2001, p.78), meaning he and others could directly view films he had just recorded. Lange had been exchanging ideas with artist Stephen Willats and both were interested in ways class was reproduced through forms of communication (Legg, 2009, p.46). The 1970s saw a marked turn towards more socially orientated and overtly political forms of artistic production (Gaal- Holmes, 2015; Walker, 2002). John Walker (2002, p.3) suggests that artists at the time not only wanted to change modes of artistic production but use those new modes to change society. While Willats employed "abstracting discursive processes of anthropological investigation to enable the participants to view their own lives" (Irish, 2004, p.8), Lange would condense this process, allowing students and teachers to immediately view their own social performances. His feedback approach, that allows subjects to view their recorded

performance, offers a means to reflexively interrogate a situation, drawing the subject into the process of interpretation.

Lange approached each of his subjects in the same manner, although there is a sense he was working things out as he went. Three aspects of his approach are most relevant to my concerns:

- Draw attention to "vocal and gestural communication".
- Highlight "the establishment of values and parameters of behaviour" within a "subtly political context".
- Prevent what was produced as becoming an endpoint in itself.

(Lange, 1976, p.18)

Lange would film a lesson taking place, then show the students and teachers the film he had just made. After watching the feedback footage, Charles Mussett, an art teacher, states that, although he had never considered himself to teach with a specific method, the film highlights a certain approach he had not formalised before:

> [Students] come in in an absolutely free way, they're constantly being given an assignment, but quite often I do everything I can to get each person's work to be entirely individual from their next-door neighbour […] Actually, I feel that with this non-method I would like very much to mention that *as* a method it can in fact give you some sort of good result (Lange, 1976, p.21-22).

Tony Morgan, another art teacher, describes how his own teaching style contrasts to others from different subject areas. He feels uncomfortable with a traditional teacher-student, knowledge imparting dynamic, and this becomes manifest to him through watching the documentation of his lesson:

> I think what comes out of these films you've made is that I cannot sit here on my own and deliver a monologue about how I view art and how I view tuition and teaching art or even how I see myself […] I might be wrong. But I am only just

> becoming aware of this really, just through these films making me think about it (Lange, 1976, p.27).

Dan Graham (2001) felt that Lange, like Craigie before him, wanted to develop an anti-Hollywood aesthetic. But he also points out that his “tapes can be seen as documentations of performances: work as a form of performance" (Graham, 2001, p.1). Guy Brett (1977, p.3) adds that the feedback gave Lange the opportunity to know in which direction his work should move, similar to Rouch, he wanted the audience to be co-authors – publics that he could directly engaged through the works. The immediacy of video distanced the participants from themselves, for the reason that "the now commonplace experience of appearing on camera still had the whiff of the exotic" (Morton, 2009, p.123), opening up an experience of themselves that may not have been seen before by many of the participants. Seeing the self on screen was intended to offer a therapeutic effect, and it was hoped one’s "relationship to reality can become more active and also in a way more humorous" (Brett, 1977, p.4). This portrays a Brechtian idea of breaking down the illusion of a performance, through which the videos had the power to liberate (Vicente, 2009, p.41). The performances under scrutiny were those of people going about their everyday activities; but what was being noticed?

Tom Morton’s (2009, p.123) description of Lange’s videos pays particular attention to gesture:

> The slightest modulation of a teacher's voice or near-invisible hand movement, designed to calm or encourage, fascinates, charged as they are with dense information about the educational contract […] body language, occasionally clumsy witticisms and pop-culture references that always threaten to fall flat.

Goffman describes that in a moment of communication such as a sermon or a theatrical speech "what goes on upon the platform is only incidentally - not analytically - talk" (Goffman, 1981, p.139). He means there is no exchange as in other speech situations, the monologic nature of address can make the educational environment ritualized. Gestures become part of the context of communication, but this does not mean the people performing those gestures notice or realise their significance. This could be an emphasis

on a certain word, or the use of humour in relation to a certain object. Importantly these small-scale performances may often go unnoticed because the performer has grown into their role inadvertently, grown into the context without reflecting on the gestural elements of such a process. Following Bernstein (1977), and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), such gestures could delineate social access without ever becoming explicit to the users of such codes. If a teacher does not listen to their students and simply imparts facts, perhaps those students will adopt similar practices, or perhaps students will start to believe their voice is not worth expressing. Social arrogance and meekness are not only expressed through words, but such features may also lie in crossed-arms, eye contact, accent and posture, a whole repertoire of language use. Lange's approach of long takes and fixed camera shots allow these features to be read explicitly by the viewer. He stays with the awkwardness, allowing the nuance of social performance to come through.

Ultimately, for Lange, people's general daily practices were the real area of interest; the videos were not artworks, the everyday work of the people depicted was the artwork. Lange was archiving cultural practices as instances of artistic performance, breaking a boundary between the environs of life and art. Laugier (2012) talks about film's potential to show its audience the ordinary, describing a sense in which to experience our lives it helps to experience the ordinary use of language on film. She says "films put us in the presence of a body and a voice, or ordinary language. Thus, to find the ordinary would be to find an adequacy between our words and our world" (Laugier, 2012, p.1000). My interest in Lange's method is primarily about the subject reacting to what might be unnoticed performative decisions or choices. The films bring a recognition of voice to the subjects through closely listening to and watching themselves.

Both *Work Studies in Schools* and *Chronicle of a Summer* offered a public platform where "communities could express themselves in their own time, on their own terms" (Di Lorio, 2013). They are not simply allowing people to express themselves on film but using film to reflect social performances back on those that may not realise the ways they perform. Lange was highlighting the unnoticed professional practices of teachers, stimulating a public discourse on a socially and politically prescient subject. Although a different area of focus, Lange's work has many methodological overlaps with my own practice-based research. Through his use of feedback, his practice investigates the ordinary rituals, work and

language of teachers and students (and others) by asking people to stay with their ordinary behaviour, to try and understand what ordinary in their context might mean.

3.4 CONCLUSION TO FILM, VOICE & FEEDBACK

In this chapter I have described three artworks that have had significant influence on my practice. Jill Craigie's *TWWL* not only frames a Plymouth planning context that is still relevant today but engages with ideas of performativity and the public that feed directly into my motivations to research Union Street; she too asks how artistic practice can widen a public debate regarding civic access. In a sense *TWWL* created mini publics to gather a performed manifestation, a civic voice, exterior to conventional discourse found in more traditional public outlets such as newspapers or mainstream cinema. Craigie's desire to bring educational film to the masses may not have been realised, but her work had a significant impact on Plymouth. She also documents on film, and lived herself, a context where who is worth listening to and who has a voice in civic matters was determined by gender. As people who took part in my research attest being taken seriously often depends on identity traits (class, gender) as much as what is said (FG2, 2023). *TWWL* had the intention of highlighting the people in Plymouth's role as a public that could and should react to the delivery of policies from on high. My investigation addresses different policies and a different public, but my intention is the same.

Zmijewski too expresses concerns over the efficacy of art in political discourse, delving into the conflictual nature of contemporary, identity-driven, populist anxieties. Although he engages with a less specific context in *Them* the work still offers ways to think about framing a workshop/film space to investigate political concerns. Despite my ethical and political reservations, *Them* shares methodological aspects that align with my research approach. The film represents clear examples of divergent discourses interacting; there is a framework, but the action is not predetermined; Zmijewski documents the action for further viewing. His approach certainly stimulates dialogue between participants, but we do not know what they thought of the process, and this is a key factor in my approach. If I was to use a similar method, I would also apply a feedback stage afterwards to determine the effect of the workshop.

Lange, who has perhaps had the biggest influence on my practice, uses feedback film techniques to bring his own practice as an artist into the work, openly engaging with his personal and ethical position within wider social concerns. By adopting a sense of self investigation, he developed a reflexive practice that also effectively researched educational environments in 70s Britain. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1990) comments that "a documentary aware of its own artifice is one that remains sensitive to the flow between fact and fiction" (p.89), implying the acceptance of a questionable truth is imperative for an ethical visual practice. The appeal of a feedback approach is the questioning of social performance in general; the filmic is used to highlight the precarious nature of truth. Importantly this is a step taken by the participants as well as the film makers. The truth claims of the films are secondary, it is the truth claims of the everyday that become the focus.

4. Methodology & Methods

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I outline the philosophical and practical concerns that inform my research into art and cultural production in Union Street. I have adopted a practice-based research methodology informed by feminist ordinary language philosophy and a range of artistic practitioners (discussed in the previous chapter). Feminist ordinary language philosophy describes a group of writers that inherit an ordinary language tradition and apply it to contemporary moral and political concerns. The writers working within this loosely defined field inform my practice-based methods due to their insistence that we look to how language is used by and between people, a spirit that my practice aims to facilitate, capture and feed back to those involved.

To understand the practices adopted by and between people and organisations in Union Street it was necessary to evaluate a range of language use within and between those people and organisations. This included communicative repertoires adopted by social actors not considered to be part of their professional discourse – for example, chat and jokes. Jane Mansbridge (1999) connects the everyday speech of citizens to those institutions whose actions and rhetoric are widely considered to carry political weight. To consider the whole spectrum of actions relating to civic life, we must bear in mind that "different parts of the deliberative system mutually influence one another in ways that are not easy to parse out" (Mansbridge, 1999, p.213), implying that every layer of language use is relevant when considering the interaction of civic institutions and the everyday practice of citizens. Considering the above, I addressed the following questions:

1. What forms of language use constitute the interactions between communities of cultural practice in Union Street?
2. To what extent do rhetorical uses of language found in planning and policy discourses feed, stimulate or hinder language use in the Union Street area?

These questions were the basis of my investigation into how culture is produced, managed, and understood in the specific location of Union Street, and how cultural production informs

a sense of place. They were formulated to help me understand how factors external to that context can affect, negatively or positively, such a cultural dynamic.

Initially my research was bracketed between the British Art Show (BAS) 7 (2011) and British Art Show 9 (2022) visiting Plymouth. The BAS in 2011 was cited by many in Plymouth as a key turning point in the city's cultural development. However, through conversations during the focus groups, it become clear that BAS was not as significant as I had initially thought. However, I kept this timeline because it also encompassed the fallout from the economic crash of 2008, Brexit and COVID. As I have already discussed, *PAP,* published in 2016, sits at the centre of this timeline. My analysis of *PAP* and other key policy documents has informed three practice-based methods I developed to investigate my research:

1. **Participatory Diagrams** – 16 people edited diagrams I created that mapped various connections between people and organisations in the area. Images of the 16 diagrams can be found at the end of the thesis starting on page 233.
2. **Focus groups (FG1 and FG2)** - Seven people were identified through the initial participatory diagramming process. Five people were able to take part. For FG1 (held in September 2022) we met in Plymouth and discussed a set of keywords developed through the diagrams and related conversations. The session was filmed. For FG2 (held in March 2023) the same participants were invited back to take part in a second meeting where they watched filmic documentation made during the first. This second session was also filmed.
3. **Feedback Film** – I edited the footage from FG1 and FG2 to produce a film called *Permissive Space* (the title is taken from a comment a participant made during the first focus group). I instruct the reader when to view the film later in the thesis. Instructions to access the film via Vimeo are given in the text and in the list of evidence of practice.
4. ***Cultural Constellations*, an exhibition held at Peltz Gallery** – From January to March 2024 I exhibited the diagrams, two contextualising films (made by other people), facilitation material from the focus groups, and *Permissive Space*. The outputs from practice-based research are made to be exhibited, but the exhibition I presented at Peltz Gallery, rather than a final or definitive version of this research, was an opportunity for me to gather the material together and use the exhibition as a site of further reflection and analysis on the material. I will refer to this as 'the Peltz

exhibition' to avoid confusion with the title of this thesis, but also to highlight that I intend to exhibit *Cultural Constellations* in Plymouth. The handout and wall text, along with photographic documentation of the exhibition can be found in the evidence of practice section at the end of this thesis starting on page 249.

This was an iterative process where outcomes from each phase influenced the next. Between stages two and three there was a sub-phase called Keywords. This was a bridging method that assisted me in the analysis of the diagrams and helped me facilitate FG1. The keywords allowed me to use words taken from the diagram phase in a discourse analysis that then informed later stages of research.

Throughout this research two concepts have assisted me in the description, interpretation, and analysis of the language-use I have captured during my investigation. Firstly, a constellatory frame, meaning connecting groups of people and organisations through similarity and dissimilarity in their uses of language. Secondly, approaching research with an emphasis on feedback. This meant that I fed my analysis of data back into the research process to involve participants' interpretations in the research as well.

My methodology was designed to understand how various levels of discourse influence and conceptually construct a specific urban context, and how cultural policy and localised, community-led cultural practices interact. In this chapter I outline the conceptual background to using a practice-based methodology. I then focus on each method (diagrams, keywords, focus groups and feedback filming) explicating the theoretical, practical, and ethical concerns I have for each method. I discuss the editing and production of *Permissive Space* and the Peltz exhibition in the following chapter on editing as analysis. My curatorial approach was more akin to editing rather than collection of data and therefore I think it is better placed within a discussion of making my research public. Editing and curating are also analytical but sit in a different relationship to Union Street and the people that participated in my research.

4.2 PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

I have conducted this research using a practice-based methodology that involved a series of creative methods that collected, ordered, analysed, and shared data. The conceptualisation of my research approach and context of study is subsumed within the artefacts produced through the research, and the processes of their production (Hope, 2016). In general, artistic practices can create a space where process and critical inquiry are shared by producer and viewer (Dewey, 1934; Douglas, 2008; Sullivan, 2009; Vaughn, 1999). As research, such a space was appealing as it allowed for the process of critical reflection to be shared with and between my research participants. My practices of diagramming, editing, facilitating focus group discussions and feedback filming are research methods that incorporate individual and collective moments of analysis. They also resulted in a series of material objects (edited diagrams, keyword booklets, *Permissive Space* and an exhibition), each of which I reflected on, analysed, and use to inform the next stage of research.

I produced multiple cases of language use that relate to Union Street through a practice that self-perpetuated through an open and creative process and allowed those involved with Union Street to have a voice in the research outputs. These constructed scenarios highlighted modes of performance that relate to various positions found within Union Street. My methodology draws together the voices of those engaged in cultural practices in the area as well as planning and arts policy to frame both the physical and conceptual space of Union Street. These articulations can then be considered in relation to (and distinction from) each other. When one area of language animates another, it may or may not be possible to understand a word in a new light. My practice highlights how discourse (of many forms) connects and/or distinguishes various people from each other (addressing question 1) and how various motivations for practices fit with wider public discourses (addressing question 2). Perhaps most importantly, my practice-based approach represents a process that makes reflection and learning about the process itself possible, adapting to findings as they emerge. This was notably felt in my process of editing as analysis that I discuss in chapter 4.

My practice-based methods could be described as convivial (Gidley, 2019; Nowicka, 2019). During each phase of research, knowledge, opinions and emotions were exchanged

(Nowicka, 2019, p.24). By facilitating and capturing these interactions creatively (through a diagram, a workshop technique or camera) there was no foreclosure of categories or identities. Rather than research participants being defined by a professional role or category, through research artefacts, their identity remains in flux. Ben Gidley (2019) discusses the use of creative methods for convivial research as being able to form a space where "incommensurable claims to truth can be spoken" (p.133). This moves away from academic language that describes socially situated research as sites of knowledge production to a space where people share their judgments and where they articulate their positions, a space that holds a range of voices.

4.3 ADDRESSING MY OWN POSITION

In chapter one I discussed my personal history with Union Street. This history did and did not help my research into the area. Here, I describe the process of disambiguating between how personal memory occluded my ability to analyse the cultural context of Union Street and how taking a participatory, practice-based approach helped to understand the constellations of practices that currently operate in the area. The relationship between established academic and removed practices of discourse analysis and that of practice-based research is, to follow Tina Cook (2009), messy. My desire to offer a "true and honest picture of the research process" (Cook, 2009, p.279) is helpful to create a space where "multi-faceted reflections on practice are brought together in one space [which] can provide opportunities for new ways of seeing, thinking and theorising" (Cook, 2009, p.280). Dwight Conquergood says if we embrace abstraction "we cut ourselves off from the nourishing ground of participatory experience", however, if we only consider participation "we drive into an isolated cul-de-sac" (Conquergood, 2004, p.320); his answer to this dilemma is to "turn, and return, insistently, to the crossroads" (p.320). I frame this in a different lexicon based on feedback and a zooming in and out of a context where both discourse analysis and methods such as film making and editing have been mutually beneficial.

As a researcher approaching a context with a feminist perspective, I have been inclined to hold my personal experiences as essential for analysis. For the knowledge I produce to be situated, I must be a situated researcher. A key reference point for this approach is Donna Haraway. She argues for "the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring,

and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity" (Haraway, 1988, p.589). The idea that there is no single standpoint that should be more valued than another, or that such an approach to knowledge "allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (Haraway, 1988, p.583) is appealing. However, my previous embodied knowledge of the street was a hindrance at times. Attempting to adopt an objective view, born out of academic removal, was at times necessary for my research as my personal memories of the street occluded an open view of what was currently happening on the street. Equally, maintaining a personal, situated perspective when engaging with what is currently relevant to the street has been essential. I point this out to complicate a view of knowledge production and to emphasise my dissatisfaction with placing the essentially political interactions engaged in this thesis investigation as an exchange of what people *know*. Rather, I place emphasis on how people practically make judgements about what counts for them and how they argue their positions (Zerilli, 2016). Here I critique the idea that knowledge is always situated to justify my methodological position. However, I would like to point out that this is only to problematise prominent notions of knowledge production. Part of the reason I have adopted a practice-based methodology is so that I can pay attention to the embodied positions of myself and the other research participants.

Cora Diamond (1991) critiques standpoint theory (an important precursor to Haraway) by pointing out that it might not be knowledge *per se* that is the issue. She says "in a plain unmetaphysical sense there is gender-free knowledge. 7 + 5 is 12" (Diamond, 1991, p.1013). She makes this point to highlight that the issue might not be of a certain knowledge practice as impersonal or personal but whose ends it serves to present certain practices as objective (Diamond, 1991, p.1011). She claims that such arguments can become "blurred if we fail to see that words like *impersonal* or *objective* or *gender-neutral*" can refer to either methods of obtaining knowledge or to "the relation between that sort of knowledge and the wider aims of various groups" (Diamond, 1991, p.1013). Rather than framing a research context in terms of what kind of knowledge a person deploys, of what people know and how they know it, I am interested in how they discuss their points of view. This is not a problem of "having a more critical epistemology" (Zerilli, 2016, p.174) but of staying with ordinary language. For Linda Zerilli (2016) contesting forms of knowledge is an epistemological issue where interlocutors are caught between relativism and rationalism which "keeps us from seeing judgement as a practical problem of first order discourse" (p.174). The issues at stake are political and practical, they are not settled by philosophical claims to knowledge. A person's

position could combine a financial calculation along with an experience of toiling with their body. The point is to discern in what ways they are deploying different types of knowledge, not to think all are based in a certain epistemology. These concerns informed my adoption of a feminist ordinary language philosophy as a guiding conceptual framework with which I conducted my research.

4.4 PRACTICE BASED RESEARCH AND FEMINIST ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY

The division between voice within research and 'authentic' voice in other contexts points towards a key reason to choose a practice-based methodology and links to feminist ordinary language philosophy (OLP). Hanna Pitkin (1972) explains that the 'ordinary' in ordinary language philosophy relates to "the regularities in our language, to the ordinary contexts in which a word or expression is at home" (p.17). It concerns not only words but our ways of communicating and expressing ourselves generally. Words, gestures, and sounds are all ordinary when communicating; so too is listening. Zerilli (2016) claims OLP offers a different idea of what counts as important for political and social understanding. Following Zerilli (2016), I understand various perspectives not as competing, but as constituting a common world. She suggests that we not only need to accumulate perspectives, but to learn "how to *count* these other perspectives as revealing something *about* the world" (p.39). Her comments have significance for both my conception of what a public is and for how to approach research. To research how language works in Union Street is to see the similarities and differences across the people who work, speak, practise, and engage in discourse in the area and how they justify, negotiate, argue, and analyse their positions. The task of my practice-based approach is not only to interpret and analyse such cases but to provide the conditions in which people can engage in debate and discourse about cultural work in the area.

Constellational thinking is a term Nathan Ross (2020, p. 82-91) associates with Walter Benjamin. This area of Benjamin's thought relates closely to Wittgenstein's comments on seeing-aspects which dominate the second part of his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) and is used to great effect by Zerilli (2016, 2015). I will extend this set of connections in

relation to editing as analysis in a later chapter. For now, it is worth mentioning that Zerilli (2016, p.80) shows how framing the conceptualisation of terms of aspect-seeing can offer insight into how collective ideas such as 'knowledge' or 'beauty' are shared – or, for that matter, 'culture', 'community', 'The People' or 'DIY'. I used this conceptualisation to interpret the similarities and dissimilarities in how people used certain terms, without the need to generalise across cases (Moi, 2017, 2015). Through practice-based methods that are informed by a feminist and ordinary-language perspectives, I placed various representations of language use side-by-side so that their shared and diverging aspects could be reflected in each other.

4.5 PRACTICE BASED METHODS AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

Socially orientated research does not only describe a social situation but alters it (Taylor, 1985, p. 104-5; Bourdieu, 2000, p.607). The world is made sense of by various practices and institutions and they in turn are partly constituted by descriptions of them. To extract and document moments of interaction opens the possibility of disrupting a participant's social and working life. At all points I handled the research situations with tact and care and made clear that such interactions were being documented. Each method I employed was designed to facilitate a dynamic process of inquiry, allowing intuitive insights within a structured setting (King et al., 1994, p.12). It was ethically important that those settings were made explicit and that it was only within those settings that someone can be considered a research participant. Everyone whose views are represented in the research process read an information sheet and signed a consent from before their participation. I obtained ethics approval from Birkbeck at every stage of my research.

Discussions of participation within art and progressive research frameworks are fraught with implicit power imbalance. Miwon Kwon (2002, p.118) highlights that to open up decision-making within a project is not the same as sharing authority. She says, "only those with authority in the first place are in positions to delegate; that is, the act of delegating is itself an act of authority" (p.118). In a similar vein Cooke and Kothari (2001) highlight that researchers and artists alike create the discourse that promotes participation, they are "engaged in the construction of a particular reality - one that at root is amenable to, and

justifies, their existence and intervention within it" (p.15). It would be ethically dubious for me to claim that the participation of various people within my research is not due to a certain form of participatory rhetoric that I adopt and try and work within. However, I recognise that the rhetoric alone does not make research ethical. Ethics is a practical concern that I have tried to pay attention to continually.

4.6 METHODS

4.6.1 PARTICIPATORY DIAGRAMS

At the beginning of my research in 2018 I was focused on two organisations in the Union Street area: Nudge and KARST. Nudge is a community benefit society that took over an empty shop in 2014 and used it for community-oriented activities. KARST is a contemporary art gallery situated just off Union Street founded in 2012. From 2019-2022 I spent time meeting other people who work in and around Union Street and came to understand that the area embraces a complex set of people and organisations that are highly interconnected. My Participatory Diagrams were designed to illustrate the complexity of the situation and to offer a more nuanced perspective of the Union Street context through eliciting reactions to a graphic representation of connections running through Union Street. Although I had some familiarity with Union Street and its organisations, I aimed to get a more detailed picture through engaging with various sources. My close reading of *PAP* led me to research the list of contributors engaged in the production of the document.

Due to COVID-19 and the necessity for social distance, I had to alter my initial approach. I had planned to develop with participants a set of diagrammatic representations of relationships between people and organisations through a workshop scenario. When COVID disrupted my intended methods of engaging participants to further my research, this list (Appendix 2) became a starting point for me to construct a group of relevant people to contact. I then began looking at various websites from organisations that operate in the area; attending cultural events in the city (for example, *The Atlantic Project* in 2018, Plymouth Art Weekender (PAW) was held annually in September until 2020); and meeting

people through personal introduction. I managed to gain a preliminary picture of some connections between people and organisations that seemed relevant. As my research is focused on how policy relates to local action, I felt it was necessary to involve a range of voices in the process. The Plymouth cultural scene is ever changing, and no single diagram would capture the situation, or would be so complex as to be illegible.

Stage 1: Constructing the initial Diagrams.

I produced an original diagram to summarise the complex set of relationships I already knew about. This acted as an introduction to my research as well as an offer to take part. Through desk-based research of publicly available data relating to organisations and people that seem relevant to Union Street culture, I included 95 funders, people (staff, board members etc.) and connections with other organisations. A connection in this case simply means evidence that two people or organisations have worked together at some point. Here, 'worked together' does not necessarily mean either party was paid. The exact nature of any collaboration is unclear in many instances, hence the use of this technique.

Otte and Rousseau (2002) say, "the relationship between actors becomes the first priority" (p.442). They offer some key terminology that will be helpful in the analysis of the diagrams such as "node centrality" (Otte and Rousseau 2002, p.443). A node is a point on the network, in my case an organisation, person, or event. For example, Nudge, Donna Howard (KARST Director), and PAW are all nodes. The centrality of a node is the number of connections it has to other nodes (Otte and Rousseau 2002). In my three-node example network above, PAW is connected to both Donna and Nudge, so it has two connections, its centrality is two. Donna and Nudge (for the purposes of this example) are not connected, so their centrality is one. Importantly, PAW has more centrality than the others. When constructing my initial diagram, it was helpful to have an easy means to calculate nodal centrality because that would tell me nodes that seem more relevant to the area. Of course, relevance is relative, subject to continual change, and therefore, never fully determined. It may be that people who are never mentioned in any publicly available discourse are far more relevant to the development of Union Street culture than anyone mentioned so far; the graph will help identify those people. Graph Commons (graphcommons.com) offered a digital tool to help organise the information I had collected and turn it into a diagram, it also calculates node centrality.

Graph Commons is a free (for basic features) website designed as a “collaborative platform for mapping, analysing and publishing data-networks” (Graph Commons, 2015). According to one of its creators, Burak Arikan, when a researcher starts mapping a set of actors and relations, it becomes possible to make sense of a complex issue or context (Graph Commons, 2015). Graph Commons offered a tool for me to visually present an initial understanding of various Plymouth based cultural organisations and their connections to each other. As a service they ensure privacy. In accordance with their terms and conditions, I sought permission from Graph Commons before sharing any content I produced using the site. Visually clear and straightforward to use, Graph Commons offered a valuable tool to produce my initial diagram.

The website allowed me to place nodes on a blank surface, although placing nodes became difficult because of the number of connections across the network. I was able to colour code nodes (green=organisation; blue=person; red=event) and name connections between them. This function quickly became obsolete as connections were often not described sufficiently on websites or in publications to determine the type of connection. Also, this was the kind of information the diagram was able to elicit from research participants. The most useful feature is the inbuilt representation of nodal centrality; the more connections a node gets, the bigger it becomes. My initial map is displayed in Figure 1.

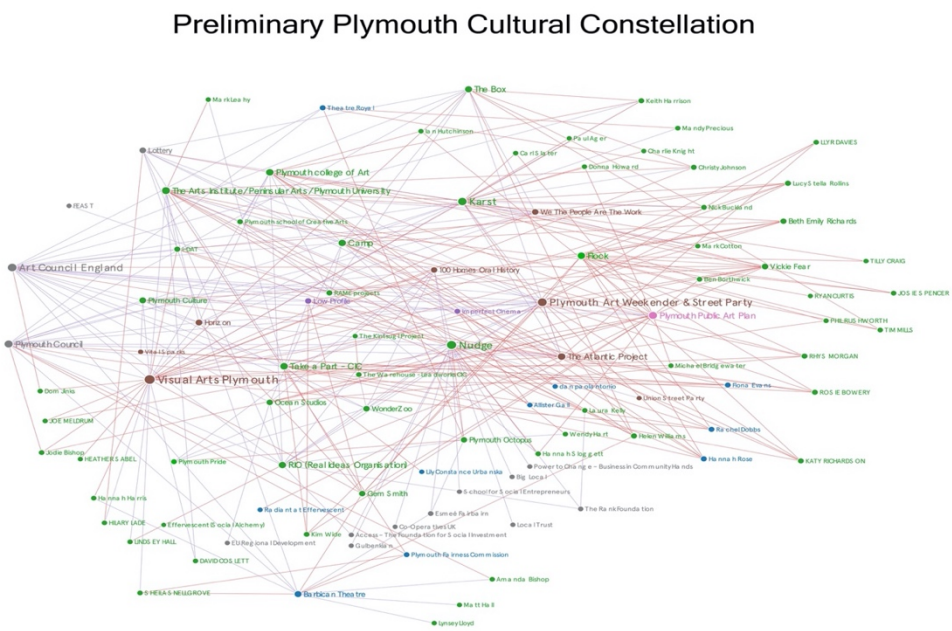


Figure 5. Initial Map (whole) © Henry Mulhall and Graph Commons 2020.

Visual means such as this map help find new data embedded within a certain group or context, offering a “backstage of the participant’s experiences and perceptions" (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009, p.72). It helped me identify previously undetected areas of interaction formed around specific nodes (Bravington and King, 2019, p.511) through collaborative means. In this sense it serves as a coding system for the data I had gathered until this point, but, following Saldana (2016, p.5), this highlights a distinction between *de*coding and *en*coding. When a researcher reflects on a section of data to find a core meaning they are decoding; when they determine its appropriate code and label it, they are encoding (Saldana 2016, p.5). In retrospect the complexity and fluctuating nature of the data I had gathered meant that a constant state of decoding was necessary, but this would be helped by participants encoding my data that had been represented at a certain stage. The diagrams opened a productive cycle between myself and participants, an interpretative process of to-and-fro between my failure to represent a complete or full picture of all the various connections that might be important to Union Street (which I realise is impossible) and participant perspectives on how they would like to represent things differently. This element of to-and-fro regarding the people identified through the diagram process became a productive prompt for discussions during FG2, a topic that will be disused in the analysis chapter.

Stage 2: Sending Diagrams

In this stage I invited participants to fill in gaps of information on the diagram I had produced and provide material for me to take into further stages of data collection. The diagram serves as an invitation to participate and collaborate in the research by encouraging people to share their individual perspectives. After creating the initial map, I was able to identify 43 people and organisations of high centrality. In November 2020, I approached these people with a brief introduction to my research. After inviting these 43 people, 21 responded with only 1 person explicitly declining to take part.

A3 printed copies were posted to the 20 people who agreed to take part, so that editing could be conducted at home, making this process possible during social distancing. To make the process as open as possible I did not ask people to use Graph Commons directly as I did not want to assume computer access and literacy as well as easy access to Internet connection. On the print, all lines are red and all nodes are green on a pale yellow paper as

this is a particularly easily read combination of colours (Design Work Plan, 2020). I asked them to fill in gaps, erase connections, add pictures, stories or whatever else they saw fit. This could include the elaboration of a certain connection or the offering of newspaper articles, personal photographs, and stories. People could simply add extra lines and nodes to those already on the diagram.

I offered conversations via email, phone, or video conference if people required further guidance in the diagram editing process. I held 10 of these with people regarding the diagrams. Only in one case did I have a Zoom call regarding the diagram process and not received their diagram. The Zoom conversations, offered to clarify the process for people taking part, became a useful method to interview people about the diagrams, and related topics. The conversations were recorded, and participants understood that I would use the recordings to analysis their views on Union Street and other areas brought up by the diagrams. Along with help in analysing interventions in the diagrams, these conversations also provided valuable insights into Plymouth arts and community practices. This phase helped me gain a fuller and more nuanced picture of people, places, and subjects to take forward into further phases of research. Of the 20 diagrams I sent out, I received 16 back (in two cases one diagram was edited by two people together). I had intended to collect the diagrams from people in January 2021 to save postage costs. Due to COVID-19 and the difficulty this poses for travel I asked participants to send me photographs of their edited diagrams by end of March 2021. Between June and August 2021, I collected all the diagrams physically.

When I contacted people to collaborate on the diagrams, I made it clear they have no obligation to take part and that their contributions do not need to be made public. Bravington and King (2019) point out that as with any interpersonal research method, participants “can feel distressed if they are asked to reflect on events in their past that touch on difficulties in the present" (p.517). As far as I know the diagrams and the process involved did not cause distress, however I still maintained a constant sensitivity towards any possible issues caused by my contacting people to edit such a diagram. The nodes and lines represent human relationships which inherently involve emotional states and in the turbulent time the world is going through, patience and an acceptance that people may drop out for whatever reason was paramount.

Stage 3: Analysing Diagrams

By opening the process of diagram authorship, I hoped to gain more interpretations of my preliminary data collection. Any research approach structures and shapes interaction (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009) and through my use of these diagrams I imposed my own perspective from the outset. These diagrams offered the possibilities to open up the process to the people who were the subject of the research. The collaborative diagram process identified new people and events of salience. I gained insight into connections between people and places that I could not have known from the outset. Such discrete representations cannot express the messiness of communication practices as they are performed in a social context – lines and nodes cannot fully represent socially performed relationships. However, they offered a starting point to open dialogue with people who can add nuance, and to offer fruitful avenues for further analysis into policy discourse. They also offered a means to start engaging with the people that are the focus of research from a distance which was a great benefit during COVID-19 and social distancing.

For analytic purposes, I used a coding system that falls into three areas which encompass the various ways that people intervened in the diagram and were developed from looking at the diagrams themselves:

1. New information (connections, people, organisations, or events).
2. Emphasis placed on existing information.
3. Stylistic or form intervention.

In many cases people did not add new information but emphasised their own level of connectivity and offered detail to the nature of their connections. It is worth noting that the style with which people approached the diagram was at times as telling as any names or connections offered. For example, one person separated various forms of culture onto different sheets (music, visual arts, other) suggesting they understand these areas to be distinct; another person completely filled the sheet with names, disregarding the format of node and connection in favour of sheer volume of entries, suggesting that for them, what was missing was people rather than details of roles and connections; another person simply added their name and connection to themselves, displaying a more conservative approach

to offering information. Through the diagrams and interviews certain terms became prevalent. For example, some words were used frequently in the Zoom conversations (evidenced by word counts). Some words were also added and emphasised on the diagrams. For example, one participant emphasised the importance of geography, relationships, and communities. I discounted the words 'diagram', 'Plymouth', 'art' and 'culture' as they were broadly the subject of the diagrams and conversations so were always going to appear frequently. The most used words were **community, infrastructure, local, organisations, partnership, people, and relationship.** This set of terms comprise my Keywords*,* which offered a facilitation tool within the focus groups.

Significantly, the diagrams also offered a group of people an invite to take part in two focus groups, the structure of which is discussed in below. Through the analysis of the diagrams, I formed a group of five participants who relate to the Union Street cultural context. This group included people who were identified as most connected, or representatives from organisations that were identified as most connected. For example, Nudge was frequently mentioned which could have implied that I invite either of its founder/directors, Wendy Hart and Hannah Sloggett. However, Hannah was mentioned more individually, and I had had more contact with her, so she was the obvious person to invite between the two. Similarly, although LOW PROFILE (an artist's duo comprised of Rachel Dobbs and Hannah Rose) was highlighted as highly connected, Rachel Dobbs was mentioned more so she was invited. Plymouth Culture was given significant emphasis and although not mentioned individually, Hannah Harris, the current director, was the obvious person to invite.

Background to Diagramming.

My Participatory Diagramming approach took influence from something my father (a psychologist) used to call *Cognitive Maps* (Mulhall, 2012). These maps presented a patient's situation to them in a visual form. Rather than bringing a preconceived idea of say, anxiety, to the patient, the maps would offer a descriptive account of how anxiety plays out in their own words. My father would elicit a set of words or terms (7-14 depending on the situation) that the person felt characterised their problematic context. Through a process of statistical ranking, it was possible to see how each term fit with another. I understand the statistical process as distancing the patient or diagram user from the material. The distance allows a

clearer view of something that a person can be completely bound-up with – the alienating effect of the process offers new aspects on the language. This process could be linked to theatrical, Brechtian ideas of *verfremdungseffekt* (distanciation) that move an audience from emotional to conscious or intellectual interpretations of a performance. In a politically and theoretically inverse sense, it could also be linked to notions of technological and rationalist performativity described by Jon McKenzie (2001) that alienated workers from their labour. In this thesis, I use an idea of feedback to describe a process of zooming in and out of the research context, embedding and then removing myself (and others) from familiar language use. *Cognitive Maps* visually presented how some behaviour or experiences related to others. The interpretation would feel personal because the connections were made in the patients' own words, but also new because the words had gone through a feedback process. With *Cognitive Maps* ordinary language is used to untie confusing situations making areas of complexity seem more approachable because they could be interpreted.

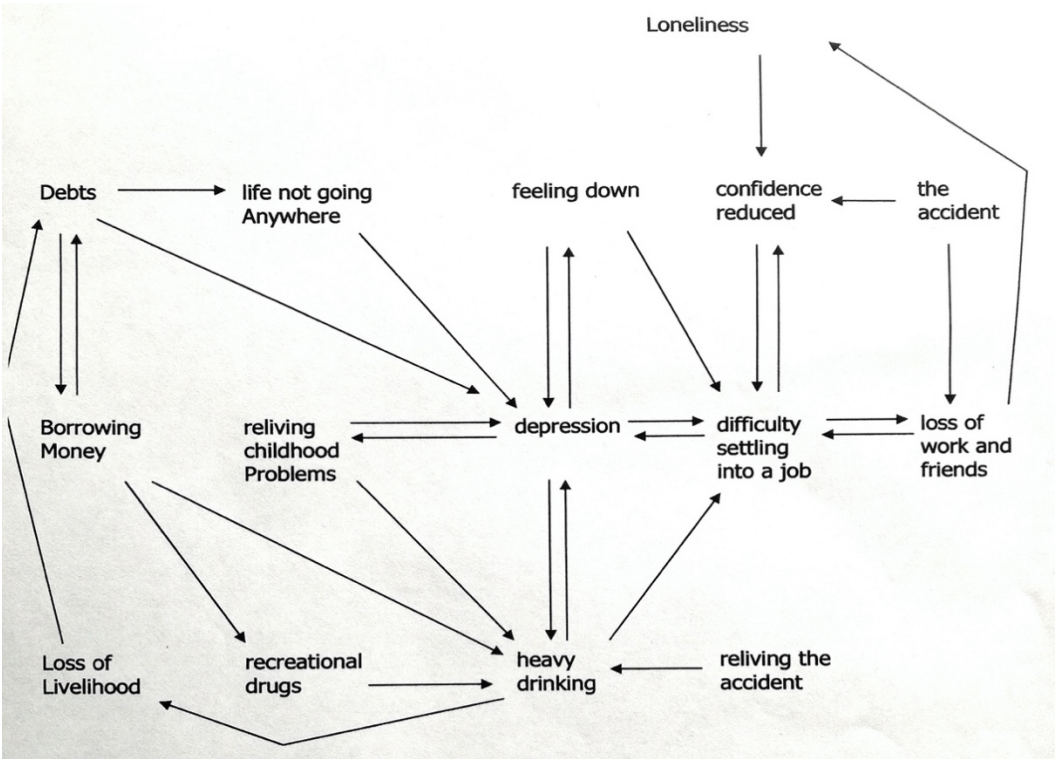


Figure 6. Cognitive Map © David Mulhall 2012

My aim in using a diagramming process was threefold: to gain a sense of the level of connectivity between organisations and people working in art and culture in Plymouth; to find out about people and organisations I did not already know about that might be relevant to the context and to gain a picture of the language used by people to describe their own

situation. Diagramming offered an opportunity for me and the participants to zoom in and out from a highly complex situation with many personal and professional associations.

Although I see the benefit of pictorial representations such as my father's cognitive maps, I have reservations about using diagrams as representations of social situations. Diagrams are often overly deterministic, making something that is complex appear simplified. Cognitive maps are personalised, whereas many diagrams depict a more general set of relationships. I did not want to summarise information to represent or describe what I already knew, but as a question to find out what I did not know. Johanna Drucker (2014) has written on visual forms of knowledge production or *Graphesis.* She talks about a visual epistemology that defines "ways of knowing that are presented and processed visually" (Drucker, 2014, p.8). However, Alice Crary (2000, p.119) points out that there is no way to think from outside a language game. This means there is no way of knowing or theorising that sits outside of a social practice. Any knowledge my diagram produced would not be expressible within the diagram and would always require a further articulation to say anything. For the diagram to be relevant and the information it visualises to live, people need to connect it to further areas of language, to areas of social practice. This is exactly why they are useful for my research, as they stimulate further descriptive accounts. The diagrams can offer a picture of a situation to be interpreted, and in my case, commented upon.

Like *Cognitive Maps*, the participatory diagramming process has a set of personal and nuanced starting points for my investigations into Union Street. I am using a diagram technique to open up the research context. The diagrams I produced are not definitive representations of a Union Street cultural dynamic; such a dynamic is in constant flux. These diagrams are to be understood as questions rather than answers. My attempt to represent people and organisations found in Union Street visually serves the purpose of opening up dialogue between myself and the people and organisations whose work I am investigating. A good example of visual means used in this way is Lucas LaRochelle's ongoing *Queering the Map* project (www.queeringthemap.com). Since 2017 LaRochelle has developed this "community-generated counter-mapping project that digitally archives queer experience in relation to physical space" (LaRochelle, 2017).

Figure 7. Image captured from www.queeringthemap.com on 30 October 2020

A map like that found on Google offers a framework for anyone in the world to add their story. LaRochelle (2017) says as queer life becomes less centred around specific spaces, “notions of ‘queer spaces’ become more abstract and less tied to concrete geographical locations”. There are no rules for who, what and where can be entered, “If it counts to you, then it counts for *Queering the Map”* (LaRochelle, 2017). Over time the map has come to represent a global queer community, nuancing the original framework of lines and borders that represent a global history of power relations. The map becomes animated through ever greater levels of participation in the form of personal description. As with the diagram I have shared with people, as they interacted and added their experiences to it, it became more animated.

Such diagrams are employed in qualitative research to form a more insightful picture of “the social and material world and the lived experience of networks, neighbourhoods, and communities" (Emmel and Clark, 2009, p.2). Such visual means arrange a variety of connections between objects and people, helping form narratives around such associations while also offering alternatives to preformed ideas through more personalised uses of language and metaphor (Bravington and King, 2019; Emmel and Clark, 2009). Diagramming techniques in social research have their origins in psychological research, often used as therapeutic tools (Mulhall, 2012; Umoquit et al., 2013). Social Network Analysis, popular since the 1980s, has grown significantly in recent times to try to come to terms with the

effect the Internet has and is having (Otte and Rousseau, 2002, p.441-2). Although the diagram I produced might serve as a social network map, I am not employing it for that reason (a social network map would not answer my research questions relating to language use). For me, the diagram is a starting point to facilitate interaction and stimulate conversation rather than represent materially evident connections. The diagrams were not simply a means to an end. They are a visual, aestheticised representation of the variation in participatory interventions – they represent my research practice as much as they informed it.

[Please look through the photographic documentation of the diagrams at this point in reading the thesis. They start on page 233].

4.6.2 KEYWORDS: FROM ANALYSIS OF DIAGRAMS TO FACILITATING FOCUS GROUPS

Through the diagrams and interviews I extracted seven keywords: **community, infrastructure, local, organisation, partnership, people, and relationship**. The idea of keywords stems from Raymond Williams' (1976) landmark work of the same name. He collected and historicised a set of terms he felt could be disputed, or that had multiple possible uses. In revisiting the project and creating a version for the 2000s, Bennett et al. (2005) comment that the project "was always more concerned with exploring the complex uses of problem-laden words than it was with fixing their definition" (p.xvii). A term with a variable use becomes a term that expresses social tensions and a ground of contested meaning. Those who determine use are expressing control over discourse. My intention is to use the terms that became significant through analysis of the diagrams and interviews to conduct further discourse analysis of a range of policy documents and to stimulate further discussion. I realise that the structuring of the diagrams must have influenced the words that become prevalent because I approached a group with certain concerns and interests. For example, people taking part know that the title of my research includes 'communities'. Also, the diagram represents a set of relationships on a local level, therefore 'local' and 'relationships' are unsurprising. However, this is not of great concern as any research approach affects its findings, and as will become clear, the words were in place to facilitate conversation between participants.

I used the selected keywords to draw out quotes using a word search from six specific policy documents published between 2010 and 2021: *Achieving Great Art for Everyone* (ACE, 2010); *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (ACE, 2013); *A Public Art Plan for the City of Plymouth* (Doherty, 2016); *Let's Create* (ACE, 2020); *Let's Create: delivery plan* (ACE, 2021) and *Plymouth Culture Plan* (Plymouth Culture, 2021). This selection stems from the desire to include policy discourse produced within Plymouth, while also noting the predominance ACE has on the funding climate for the arts within the UK. I read these documents to foreground the arts policy terrain during my research timeline. In relation to discourse analysis, Wodak and Krzyzanowski (2008) discuss the idea of a "borderline" (p.169) between public, that is collective, uses of language and private or localised uses. They align these distinctions to societal rules and norms and how individuals voice their experience. The selected policy texts offer an atmosphere, a general horizon of discourse that the various organisations and people involved with my research have been working under and within.

I collected a database of all relevant uses of keywords from each policy document. Appendix 3 gives a count of the number of times each word appeared in each document. Sometimes words were discounted because they were used as nouns, for example "placing Plymouth 26th out of all English **Local** Authorities in terms of NPOs" (Plymouth Culture, 2021, p.18). Also, in some cases the word appeared in a too specific usage such as "promote the Resurgam Spend4Plymouth initiative within the cultural sector to increase **local** procurement of cultural and creative services" (Plymouth Culture, 2021, p.41). Perhaps unsurprisingly given the nature of the documents selected, **organisation** is the most common word with 103 entries and **infrastructure** the least common with 14. In searching through the documents for the keywords I had to read every entry of that word. This process altered by perspective on certain terms. For example, the first time I read *Let's Create* (2020) I had the impression that **relationships** was a significant term, although it only appears five times. This quite blunt technique was intended to defamiliarize me from a standard practice of reading, to pull terms from their context, which in turn, offered a new way to see that context. In relation to Williams' *Keywords*, Fraser (1997, p.122) talks about a defamiliarization of terms, moving away from taken-for-granted uses, opening the possibility of critique. In putting my finger on a word, I could see the way different areas of language move around it. This "putting my finger on" was a form of analysis and allowed me to pull extracts that use keywords from the documents. Through this process I made a bank of quotes relating to keywords.

My main intention in collecting the keywords was to facilitate the next stage of research. To this end I selected at least one quote from each document including each word. If a word appeared significantly more times I would select more from that document. For example, **community** was particularly prevalent in *Let's Create: delivery plan* (ACE, 2021) so I included more from there. As the keywords were gathered to produce a facilitation tool/booklet (discussed below) I chose enough quotes to fill approximately one and a half pages of the booklet (between 100-250 words) leaving space on each double page spread for notes. The consequence of this process was to allow me to gain a broad overview of how discourse developed within the policy documents and take these perspectives into my facilitation of the focus groups.

[Please look through the photographic documentation of the keyword booklet at this point in reading the thesis. They start on page 243].

4.6.3 FOCUS GROUPS

In the following section I will outline how I structured and facilitated the focus groups, and the ethical implications of asking people to take part. This points towards how this phase led into my next phase of research: feedback filmmaking.

Identifying keywords from the diagrams and then using these to navigate and analyse the policy documents was a way to see how these terms were being used. Through this method I obtained a selection of available, at-hand uses of a given set of terms. The quotes I pulled out of the policy documents fed into my focus group planning and facilitation. My intention was to determine how focus group participants related to keyword policy terminology, and to see how and when it might differ from their ordinary uses of language. I used the seven terms in three ways to help facilitate the focus group activities: 1) as stand-alone words used with the *Impossible Conversations* technique (explained below); 2) participants were asked to reflect on a selection of the quotes I had taken from the six policy documents that included the chosen keyword, but the origin of the extracts were hidden and they were jumbled because I did not want the group to associate a particular quote with a particular time or organisation; 3) as a group we read directly from keyword booklets I had made and

discussed how the language used in the policy documents related to the Union Street context.

I have taken influence from ideas and methods found in deliberative democracy techniques. For example, a key method of deliberative polling is to provide a random group of participants with booklets outlining information on an area of policy offering a balanced perspective (Fishkin, 2018; Fishkin et al., 2002; Fishkin and Diamond, 2019). Balanced here means from a range of perspectives or information offered with little or no value judgements (Centre for Deliberative Democracy, 2015a). Moderators at polling events are advised to ask questions relating directly to information in the booklets and offer no opinion of their own. If conversations become heated, moderators are recommended to refer to the booklet, to anchor the conversation back in the balanced information (Centre for Deliberative Democracy, 2015b; Healthy Democracy, 2017). I distributed the booklet to focus group participants ahead of time so that they could familiarise themselves with the kind of topic we would be engaging with.

The keyword booklet provided a boundary for discourse in the focus group, at once homing in on individual terms, while also defamiliarizing them from the original context of use. The booklet offered an important mediating structure to the focus groups in that the language we discussed did not belong to any one person, or any one policy document. My intention was for the booklets to allow free remarks on the keywords and policy extracts as it is abstracted from participants' ordinary uses of the terms. This approach was in part to draw participants away from the habitual but also often abstracted nature of terminology found within policy documents. One participant was involved in the writing of some of the policy documents under scrutiny, however this did not produce conflictual moments even though the person was under a spotlight. In fact, these moments provided useful insights into how professional roles became blurred with personal perspectives.

3.6.3.1 Focus Groups: Impossible Conversations

The keyword booklets offered a wealth of material to introduce to the group. However, I still needed techniques to get people relating terminology gathered from the diagrams to their own lived experience and ordinary uses of language. My influence in this area of facilitation came from a method called *Impossible Conversation,* a technique developed by

Lotte van den Berg with Building Conversations (www.buildingconversation.nl). Building Conversations specialise in dialogic forms of participatory art. Through *Impossible Conversations* (IC) they ask that participants "slow down and connect personal images by writing, reading and speaking together" (van den Berg, 2020) in order to address big topics such as money and sexism. When planning my focus groups, I had recently taken part in an IC where van den Berg explained that ideas like power are so big and difficult to define that it is easier to relate them to a personal, concrete experience.

I met van den Berg through my work on a European cultural network called BE PART (www.beyondparticipation.eu). I took part in a workshop at *City of Women* festival in Ljubljana in October 2021. In the workshop, we began with what van den Berg described as weather questions (what's the weather like where you are?). As we were all living in different parts of Europe the weather varied. Later she explained that asking people to describe something everyday and easy that everyone can relate to relaxes participants and makes the experience seem less severe. This is a method I also employed, but instead of weather I asked people to say their favourite "something" which the group had to follow. For example, I started with my favourite food, then everyone followed by saying their favourite foods. Then the next person said their favourite book, and so on. In the IC, after the weather questions, we spent time in silence reflecting on an experience of the word in question (participation) and wrote down short descriptions of that experience to share with the group. Understanding how a word is lived and felt through real life examples is very fitting to my research questions. The anchoring of complex terms within personal experience not only grounded the ideas surrounding a word but also offered in-roads into other people's experiences and interpretations of that complexity.

Importantly, IC does not try to find core meanings. In a similar way to the diagram phase, with the keywords I was not presenting a final or definitive parameter around use or meaning, but rather asking why and in what way the diagrams and policy extracts may have failed to match up to experience. Through an IC model, I encouraged a space where a difficult area of discourse could be negotiated, a space where the messy reality of disparate points of view could be exchanged. Voice when considered within a practical method such as IC represents the ethical nature of a community's ability to speak and listen. The practice of listening, and the attempt to understand another's words in relation to a shared meaning, frames an ethics or responsibility towards others within aspects of language use (Laugier,

2015). As I will discuss in my analysis section, IC did not immediately start a free and open conversation, there was still plenty of awkwardness that followed. But it did let the group know what kind of subjects and expectations they could expect.

Focus Groups: Rationale

A group discussion format was analytically productive for several reasons. I am interested in how speech and discourse might be altered by the identity of interlocutors and the context of speech. For example, I am interested in the articulations of someone who works for Plymouth Culture in connection/distinction to someone who works for Nudge. To detect instances of this I observed moments of group discussion in the format of a focus group as one-to-one interviews would not evidence the dynamics of discourse in the same way. The behaviour I was trying to capture was inherently variable; a group dynamic provoked various forms of speech relating to a given subject (Bryman, 2012; Cronin, 2016). Also, and perhaps most significantly, I filmed FG1 to record the performances of the participants (this includes myself as a facilitator). This offered material for the next phase of my methods where the group met again and watched footage from FG1. The edited footage from FG1 comprised the facilitation material I used for FG2.

As I was in the room facilitating the session, I could potentially miss telling moments of behaviour. Goffman (1967) and Bourdieu (2000, 1990a; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) suggest that much can be determined through tone, posture, and ease of movement, all telling the researcher about a given moment of communication. There are many physical gestures central to certain language-games, and access and ease of movement within those language-games express a social position. Finger pointing is clearly part of the language-game of giving directions, as is shaking hands when greeting. More ambiguous gestures such as folded arms and eye contact are slippery and hard to pin down. They undoubtedly change in meaning given the context and person making them. For me to be aware of these non-linguistic areas of language offered a means for me to understand aspects of a participant's life within language. For this reason, accurate and detailed documentation was essential, and therefore I required a camera person. The presence of a camera and camera person had the potential to affect the performance of participants. In the presence of a camera, people often experience a sense of another person(s) looking at them (Ravetz and Grimshaw, 2009, p.552). Bill Nichols (2001) says this can lead to self-conscious and modified

behaviour that "alters the reality [the film] sets out to represent" (p.6). The consequences of any potential modification of behaviour are discussed below.

The need for a camera operator posed a logistical issue in terms of budget. Although film equipment was available from Birkbeck, I had to raise funds to pay the camera person (predominantly from Birkbeck's PGR Support Fund). The camera operator and I held extensive conversations involving the framing of shots, but the shape of the room also dictated what was possible. We had two cameras, one that captures the group, set-up at a distance, and one with the camera person that followed the action more closely. As gesture and co-presence in a shared space is central to some areas of communication, the focus group could not be conducted online. I did a risk assessment to set-up a COVID safe environment.

FG1 and FG2 offered a space for divergent discourses to meet, and in this sense a space for diverse social practices to collide. Using focus groups, I was able to see a contrast between discourses, although this was a highly complex process. The modes by which participants expressed themselves shaped the group dynamic, while at times individual expressions mediated by the group. Clashes, overlaps, and contrasts between discourses offered the data by which a constellatory picture of the various practices found in Union Street emerged, particularly around the term DIY and discussion of shared values. The documentation of the meetings fed into the feedback video and editing practice, which developed over the course of research.

4.6.4 FEEDBACK FILMS

Although film can document and represent in myriad forms, it is those forms' ability to provoke discussion (Vaughn, 1999, p.55) that I find most important. The documentation that arose from FG1 provided over six hours (approximately three hours from each camera) of data from which I could interpret specific instances of language use. However, to identify the various aspects of discourse produced by the group, and to open the task of interpretation, I fed the documentation from FG1 back to participants during FG2.

Practical Breakdown

I made it clear to participants that I would edit the footage from FG1 to use in FG2 and to produce a final research film. I offered access to the entire documentation for participants to watch but no one took this offer up. Participants probably did not have a spare three or six hours, and also, they knew that they would watch footage in FG2 anyway. I made it clear to participants that the footage they watched in FG2 was edited footage from FG1. The first set of footage was edited down to form three roughly 20 minutes extracts. This stage had significant analytic significance and is discussed in Chapter 4. I accounted for this stage to take a month of concentrated editing so planned for a one-month gap between FG1 and FG2. However, arranging a suitable time for FG2 was far more difficult than I expected. From the outset participants knew that a second meeting was coming and that it would require another half day of their time (time and compensation details are outlined below). I had planned to hold the second meeting in November 2022, but it took until March 2023 to arrange a time that fit for all participants.

In FG2, participants watched the three edited extracts from the FG1 footage and were given the chance to reflect and voice concerns they had during the first focus group, as well as offer any feedback of the experience. This session was also filmed with the same camera set-up as before. In FG2, participants made observations about specific moments of the documentation and how I had edited it. My intention was to open the analysis of the focus group to those that participated in it, while also offering a new area for my own analysis – the ways people engaged with the feedback process.

I did not need any facilitation material for FG2 beyond the footage from FG1. In similar moments of filmic reflection in Moffat's *Mirror Mirror* (2006), *Lange's Work Studies in School* (1976) and Rouch and Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961) each group requires minimal prompts to react to what they see. In these films, a significant amount of the conversation in the feedback is centred around how people are represented through editing (or the absence of editing in Lange's case). This highlights Trinh T. Minh-Ha's (1990) reflection that in such contexts participants are "uttering the 'truth' they would not otherwise unveil in ordinary situations" (p.80). This is exactly why I am drawn to the feedback process: including such reflections highlights the artifice of the film and whole research process. The participants' performance is altered for or to the context. The film can

become “sensitive to the flow between fact and fiction" (Minh-Ha, 1990, p.89). In the FG context, rather than fiction, I would say the tension is between a reality that is captured on film and the orchestrated nature of a context that has been created to be filmed in the first place. The feedback method allows participants to engage with the context of their own documented performance, and those documents facilitate their participation.

After FG2 the material from both meetings was edited together to produce *Permissive Space* which is approximately 30 minutes and comprises a key element of my practice-based submission. My approach to editing and its analytic potentials are outlined in Chapter 4.

[Please watch *Permissive Space* at this point in reading the thesis]
[link: www.vimeo.com/906715716?share=copy - password: Peltz2024]

Reflexivity and Film

In this section I focus on the feedback aspect of my filmic practice. I have already discussed aspects of this type of approach in relation to other practices. Here I outline how this method relates to ethical concerns I mention above in relation to focus group documentation. It is important to remember that I was not filming what Colin Young (2003) refers to as “normal behaviour” (p.101). Young uses the term normal as opposed to ordinary. For his purposes the distinction is not important, but because of my use of the word ‘ordinary’ in relation to Feminist OLP, I will clarify the distinction. ‘Normal’ has connotations of the socially normative, and to Bourdieu’s (1990a) use of the term *doxa*. In this sense, normal refers to “undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p.68). Also, normal, norms or the normative speak to the hegemony of certain identities within the public sphere – in a classic western liberal public, white bourgeois men are seen as the normal standard (Fraser, 1997; Mills, 2008). Ordinary on the other hand is intended to be contextual and not socially prescriptive.

As I have highlighted, ‘ordinary’ refers to words and behaviours that are ordinary to their context of use. This is useful as it makes a connection between a context and the way people speak within it. For Laugier (2018) this has political significance as it connects language to shared social settings. The ordinary world is the place where we can express ourselves to

each other. The possibility of understanding others is based on the fact that we share ordinary social contexts together. The implication of politics in this “arises not so much from its recognition of commonality as from its renewed attention to the voice of the human individual subject” (Laugier, 2018, p.206). While normal connotes a standardisation, ordinary highlights the individual voice within a shared context, a thought that the feedback process has been particularly good at highlighting to participants and me because it offers the opportunity to witness one’s own performances within a social setting.

Film can be useful not only for recording data but for self-reflection (Pink, 2007, 2001; Ravetz and Grimshaw, 2009). Reflexive filmmaking is a process where the filmmaker involves the subjects of the film within the process of making (Moffat, 2006; Pink, 2007). I am particularity interested in processes where the film involves a documentation of people watching themselves – their feedback to the film becomes part of the film. Sarah Pink (2007) says watching material with the people involved in research "can help researchers to work out what are and are not appropriate representations of individuals, their culture and experiences" (p.113). Participants can become critics of their own representations, helping dictate their portrayal and direct the overall analysis of data (Pink, 2007, p.115). Importantly, I was also a subject of the film. Zemirah Moffat (2006) describes how a researcher and research participant role can become blurred when working reflexively. She says "[b]oth the observer and the subject alternate between positions of dominance and submission, switch between the centre and the margin”, leading to a methodology that disrupts a subject and author dynamic (Moffat, 2006). Within *Permissive Space*, I present my own performances as someone who was involved in the situation I orchestrate, both as a PhD researcher and as someone with a vested interest in the cultural life of Plymouth. I was clear with participants as to my role as a researcher who is producing content for PhD submission, but the documentation also offered moments to reflect personally on how that process had gone.

4.7 METHODS OF ANALYSIS

My approach to analysis was iterative and interwoven with each stage of the research process - each phase informing the next. I have already outlined how my reading of policy documents and publicly available information regarding arts events led me to construct the diagrams. In turn, I have described how the process of analysing the diagrams led me to

select a group of five people who took part in the focus groups, as well as how I selected keywords to facilitate the focus groups. Each stage informed my approach to editing *Permissive Space* and to the development of editing as analysis and practice becoming an umbrella for me to think about each stage of the research. My approach to editing also informed my curatorial approach to my Peltz exhibition. From this point on, when I discuss footage, I am referring to all the footage gathered from both FG1 and FG2 rather than the final film *Permissive Space.* A core principle of my analytical approach developed through the practice of editing, and I discuss this in Chapter 4. However, I began with an approach to analysis based in principles of coding, more as an organising principle than an analytical one.

The process of interpreting, coding, and analysing the footage was complex so I needed a clear system for editing that helped me process the data. The negotiation involved in producing a coding system can be fraught (Olszewski et al., 2006; Pink, 2007). Olszewski et al. (2006) comment that when coding filmic data "mistakes, snags, and 'incongruities' occur all along the way to the completed product", but the authors go on to highlight that these issues are fascinating and edifying for the research process (p.365). To embrace and make public such snags is important for my conception of practice-based methodology. I had intended to follow the following process when coding footage:

1. Watching and making notes (first coding using terms adopted by people in the focus group).
2. Grouping the footage into themes. This stage will also consider other areas of data collection previously conducted, such as the diagrams.
3. Editing into sections that represent each theme.
4. Watching themes together and aligning into *chapters* of a preliminary edit.

Stage 1 was as expected but stages 2 and 3 seemed to stem naturally from the conversations we had in FG1. Three distinct areas of discourse seemed to emerge, discussed in more detail in my analysis chapter. Here I will explain the issues I had conducting the coding of the video footage. McNaughton (2009), when describing coding of interactions on video adopted the following system:

Episode: the complete section of the drama,
Discourse: the whole of the transcribed portion,

Transaction: the short dialogue about a particular topic,
Exchange: a single block/set of utterances from one person, and
Act: individual meanings within the one exchange (p.36)

These terms were used in the discussion and analysis of discourse and subdivided into further categories such as facial expression, posture, information given, and volume and intonation (McNaughton, 2009, p.37-38). This is a useful guide to coding, but I follow Pink (2007) in that “images and words contextualise each other" (p.120). While subdivisions of interpretive categories (codes) may clean up the process of analysis, “analysis should not only focus on the content of images, but on the interpretation participants give them” (Pink, 2007, p.123). What people say about images is as telling as what they show. I concur with Pink (2007) who states that connections between "visual and verbal materials are key in the production of academic meanings" (p.129). When analysing the footage from FG1 I therefore adopted the following categories to code the footage:

- speaker,
- comment (words or phrases that summarise a moment of speech),
- physical gesture,
- summary (read as broader theme).

Practically speaking, this became a means for me to edit the footage to facilitate FG2. The process of editing footage from FG1 used to facilitate FG2 offers a connection between theorisations of coding and analysis and how they relate to practice. I intended to analyse and edit the footage in four stages: watch and make an initial coding based on the participant’s use of language; group footage into chapters that represent themes comprised of a single or set of related codes; edit the footage into chapters; watch the chapters in FG2, allowing the footage to facilitate conversations between participants. The chaptering of FG1 footage proved far more straightforward in a practical sense, but less so in an analytic sense. To code the filmic performance and arrange into discrete sections would be to treat footage like a collection of discursive data. Due to the interrelatedness of areas of discourse the group brought up, to treat conversations as discrete bits of data would have been problematic because to code footage in such a way would lead to repetition or overly assertive categorisation. More importantly, the separation of moments of speech into bits of

data has the potential to lose sight of the full nature of how people use language in their social performances.

Although I edited out moments of silence, especially at the start, the footage did not need to be reordered, and seemed to offer three clear phases through which I produced three approximately 20-minute sections that structured my facilitation of FG2. Broadly speaking, those sections have in turn structured my analysis chapter: DIY, Shared Values and The People. I agree with Bartek Dziadosz when he says “editorial decisions are the *sine qua non* of any sort of filmic experience in a way that is fundamentally different than the role played by other creative contributions to the film” (Dziadosz, 2020, p.5). However, through my use of FG1 footage as a facilitation tool, the practical and analytic potential of film in a feedback process is as important as the creation of a filmic experience. I was editing to facilitate further interaction in FG2 rather than to present a narrative or argument. This meant the FG1 footage had to be edited in such a way that the group could see the subjects we discussed, while also having to be as short as possible – the participants’ time was not free. However, editing out slower moments of FG1 did not mean that they were not analytically useful for me.

Silence and awkwardness offered a route to understand various forms of communication between the participants and myself, "uncovering the shape rather than making the line of the film" (Ravetz and Grimshaw, 2009, p.543). I take Ravetz and Grimshaw’s (2009) emphasis on the bodily aspects of observational filmic modes to empahsise the irreducibility of performed interactions. There is an analytic potential of staying with material rather than compartmentalising it out into codes. In assigning a "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2016, p.3) there would have been a danger of not acknowledging the gestural moments of interaction. Equally, in assigning a definitive meaning to gesture, I would run the risk of adopting a removed position of analysis, leading to a “suppression of the human voice" (Cavell, 1983, p.48). The division between voice within research and whatever might be considered an authentic voice point towards a key reason to choose a practice-based methodology in the first place. As became evident in FG2, at times the participants had a more adept analytic eye than me.

The final filmic phase of my research method created a space for reflection on the diagrams and the focus group, while also facilitating a means to publicly share the research process. The interpretations individuals give of their and other participants' actions during FG2 offered the means to analyse the material and to edit the final film, *Permissive Space*. During FG2 the participants were the ones to draw connections and distinctions between theirs and others' modes of articulation, placing them as co-analysers or primary interpreters. *Permissive Space* is comprised of people interpreting their own filmed performances, analysing their own discourse. A process of editing as analysis aims to offer a montage of performances and articulations about those performances and a meditation on the research process itself, allowing new knowledge to emerge.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All the methods I used intended to stimulate and frame various kinds of social interactions that affect Union Street, aiming to understand those interactions and produce data about them. Such framings are necessarily reductive because any kind of analysis, documentation or description will never live up to the full details of the people and how they interacted. Kate Nash (2011) argues that "it is by encountering the Other that we are constituted as an individual" (p.230) so my idea of self, where I fit within the research, and my conception of Union Street is determined by how I experience social interactions within the research. Through practice, I have shaped my own view of a context through my encounters with others. This highlights two key ethical concerns: the possibility that my framing of a participant reduces them to a certain social type or *kind* (Asta, 2018), and that my framing is taken as a total (true) depiction of a participant.

I did not intend to capture *normal* behaviour through the focus groups but to construct a situation where people would perform in certain ways that helped me address my research questions. As the focus groups were filmed, it was important to consider the transformations that take place through any form of documentation. I "run the risk of representing the other as 'something' to be 'experienced' placing the Other within a symbolic order and founding knowledge of the other on the basis of similarity to the self" (Nash, 2011, p.231). Nash (2011) highlights that although it is sometimes necessary to frame

people within research in terms of types, it is crucial to remind oneself and others that the participants within my research are only represented in specific terms, they are represented in a research frame, and not in their totality. This becomes particularly salient when someone is participating as an individual as well as a representative of a certain organisation, neighbourhood, or profession. It was necessary to highlight my role as researcher, as well as participants' roles as people of interest to the specific context I am looking at. In fact, the notion of a singular identity and that the people in the room were of interest was discussed directly by the group and became an important aspect of my analysis.

To offer clarity about my process to the research participants, in as clear a language as possible, was an ethical baseline for my research. This entailed not only giving as much information as I could about what I wanted to find out about Union Street and why I was conducting the research, but also to be clear about the things I do not know. When approaching people to take part in the diagram phase, I had to be upfront about the fact that I did not know the exact details of how I would structure the next phase, or when that would take place (COVID made this area of planning particularly difficult). Everyone who was invited to the focus groups took part in the diagram phase. This meant that they had some familiarity with my research, but I offered an information sheet to give an overview of my motivations. I also explained that the motivation for the focus group method was to document group dynamics and that the reason they had been selected was because of their centrality evidenced through diagrams. I also explained the time requirements of the focus group and the follow-up meeting (two half days). I explained that by taking part in the next phase of research they were agreeing to be filmed and that anonymity beyond this stage would not be possible. Pickering and Kara (2017) point out that when anonymity is not offered to participants, it can create "uncomfortable and unwelcome knowledge of self and other within and beyond the community" (p.302). Such discomfort has the potential to alter the performance of a participant. Because of the nature of the people I was inviting, it was always going to be impossible to maintain anonymity between the focus group participants, and due to that, their performances would always be mediated by the presence of other people they already knew. Finally, I pointed out that they will be asked to write and read in front of the group at various stages of the session. On a personal level this was particularly important as I have dyslexia and appreciate the anxiety that comes with reading and

speaking in front of others. Consent forms were sent to each participant that they all filled in.

One of the biggest practical concerns was asking people for their time. Many of the people involved with cultural production in Union Street have precarious working conditions so asking for their participation was potentially a strain on them financially and therefore emotionally. For this reason, I accepted that people may need to exit the process and that a commitment to participate did not mean someone would see the process through. Focus group participants gave up their time that could be potentially spent working (or for that matter enjoying leisure time) so it was necessary to offer financial compensation. To ensure that I was not simply extracting from the participants, I paid them for FG1 and FG2 (£70 spread across two sessions). The more detail I could give on the research process and its requirements, the more freely someone can commit their time and energy. Although scheduling FG2 was difficult, and people felt awkward seeing themselves on film, everyone was appreciative of the process and continued until the end.

Here I will briefly outline the time commitment that was required of each participant and what compensation I offered:

Method	**Time requirement**	**Number of participants**	**Compensation**
Participatory diagrams	Flexible, as much or as little as someone likes	Invited 43, 17 took part	None – the offer of their version of the diagram
FG1	Half a day (3 hours)	5	£70
FG2	Half a day (3 hours)	5	

For the focus group and follow up feedback session I asked for six hours spread between two half days. The first was spent in FG1, the second in FG2. I offered participants £70 (£35 for each session). I calculated this in relation to seven hours at national living wage: in Plymouth this is £9.90 (Trust for London, 2022). For the focus groups, I chose a venue that was

considered as neutral as possible for the participants. I did not want to show favour to any one person, group, or organisation. For this reason, I held the meetings in the library at Plymouth Athenaeum. This is a building run by a charitable society that promotes learning in science, technology, literature, and art. COVID casts a long shadow over a significant timespan of my research. Although the first diagram phase was designed to negate the risks of COVID, this was not possible with the focus group and feedback. I chose a venue that was large and ventilated so that participants could be at a safe distance. To avoid the need for a discussion over vaccination, I asked that everyone do a lateral flow test the night before FG1 but also had them on hand at the meeting.

The way I approached the filming and editing of the focus group footage was a key practical and ethical concern to the participants. Unlike the diagrams that provided (depending on how people interacted) a degree of anonymity, once someone agreed to taking part in the focus group they had agreed to be filmed and they knew the film would be shared publicly. This has the potential to affect their performance in the sessions. This concern echoes Colin Young's (2003) observation that "the normal behaviour being filmed is the behaviour that is normal for the subject under the circumstances, including, but not exclusively, the fact that they are being filmed" (p.101). This does not mean a film will not have a bearing on reality, but that the documentation is explicitly documentation of a research context. This has ethical and analytic bearing on my research and was made clear to participants from the outset. I made it clear that the film would be shared but offered everyone the chance to review footage before any public presentation. My method of editing, that responds to the footage, influences how someone is perceived in the group, so the feedback method was partly designed to offer a moment of reflection for participants on the focus group processes, as well as how they have been captured on film.

4.9 CONCLUSION TO METHODOLOGY & METHODS

Through reflections on how language is used in policy discourse, and with tools derived from politically orientated philosophy of language, I have formulated questions that seek to understand the cultural dynamics found in Union Street. How does language interweave with cultural and social practices and how does policy discourse and rhetoric interact with such practices? To answer these concerns, I turn to ordinary language feminism and a

practice-based methodology, both orientated to produce spaces where language relating to Union Street can be drawn together by similarity and difference to create a cultural constellation. This is not to determine how language use can be framed using a theoretical principle, but to allow instances of language use to offer new aspects to those they are placed beside.

The reason I chose to develop the research in phases was to get to know the people involved and to allow analysis at each phase to inform the next. I hoped to build trust and rapport with participants, starting with a hands-off method, participatory diagrams, building to a far more intimate exchange through the focus groups. Each phase built on the ones before, allowing the voices of participants to become more prominent in the interpretation process. My research looks at a time marked by severe austerity measures, culminating in COVID-19. Many of the people involved work in extreme precarity, made more severe by recent events. It was necessary to consider the difficulties they faced and the time and energy they gave up in taking part in this research.

By contextualising concepts within Union Street, I described a terminology that sets the scene for various conflicts, categorisations, jokes, and applications between people and organisations working in the area. In this sense, the analysis of my research context was formed not in relation to a theory but in relation to various aspects of language found within the constellation. A discourse analysis of policy documents offered a grounding structure from where to start, but my practice-based methodology creates space for key interpretive and analytical stages through the voices of participants. Therefore, a practice-based approach was apt; concepts and methods were formed by each other through process. Dawn Mannay (2016) suggests that visual practices can offer a means to give participants a voice and recognises “the need to address power relations that construct the research relationship" (p.22). She describes this in terms of data production rather than data collection, an active rather than passive participation (Mannay, 2016, p.22). This style of approach, included in the diagrams, focus group, feedback and resulting film allowed participants the opportunity to identify themes and to take part in the interpretation for their own data, although the editing and facilitation was conducted by me. My methodological approach facilities a publicly accessible form of research that manifests not only in academic discourse but in a series of practical and participatory research outputs.

5. Editing as Analysis

In this chapter I address the editorial, montage-based approach I took to editing which provided a methodological frame with which to analyse data, to develop *Permissive Space,* and my curatorial approach to the exhibition held at Peltz Gallery from January to March 2024*.* Ravetz and Grimshaw (2009, p.540) describe certain practice-based film techniques as highlighting the analytical difference in method between films that show and those that tell, and those that assert and those that see. The quality of the relationship that allows a film to be made becomes the central point, not the camera and frame itself. I would like to suggest that the moments where connections can be made is a key facet to practice-based research and analysis based on constellations where objects placed together inflect new aspects and meanings onto each other. The film I produced as part of this practice-based thesis displays moments of connection that show group dynamics, from the focus group (FG1) and from a later feedback session (FG2), depicting relationships between participants as well as their own interpretation of those moments. Such moments have allowed me to draw analytic connections between specific instances of speech. Putting participants in conversation through editing offers a way for each voice to inform the analysis of the other. Also, putting different elements of practice in conversation via a public exhibition highlights certain ways forward as well as limitations for this research.

The theorisation of montage as film based editorial practice is well established (Aumont, 2014; Dziadosz, 2020). I was drawn to such a practice for its ability to juxtapose images “that shatter our certainties, mock authority, and author the impossible” (Dziewańska, 2017, n.p.). In the case of *Permissive Space,* the impossible manifests through the combination of putting people in conversation, even putting a person in conversation with themselves, and the various time registers that this entailed. Laura Mulvey (2006) discusses film’s ability to slow down or delay time. She draws out the conceptual interplay and tension between still photographs and film - “the instant rather than the continuum” (Mulvey, 2006, p.13). By playing on these temporal tensions, the content of *Permissive Space* is structured as a conversation, but also through my use of stills and interior frames I aim to limit “the polysemic character of any given component image" (Sekula, 1982, p.97). Through a visual aesthetic I highlight the static nature of much policy discourse with the performed voices of the focus group participants. Through vocal and visual combinations that cut across various times and modes of language use, juxtaposition and montage as an

editorial practice aligns with my wider methodological approach of framing practice through constellations. Through editing, I analysed in a constellatory way.

Through a practice of editing as analysis I have been able to maintain a sense of openness to when and how analysis happens. Editing requires a process of analytic sifting through material, not just as data analysis, but as filmic or curatorial (public) provocation. There are numerous examples in the raw footage I could choose to make specific points and there were other elements I could have included in the Peltz exhibition. In editing, analysing and then displaying a certain point, I chose exemplary cases. If I simply present the footage in its unedited entirety, I would bore the viewer and I would not be conducting analysis. I am taking the inherent risk of presenting judgments that ask people for their full attention on a specific moment (Moi, 2017, p.195). Exemplary examples are cases that are useful to think with, in the sense that they will "illuminate other cases" (Moi, 2017, p.92). Editing *Permissive Space* was in part an exercise in determining exemplary cases of voice. Through looking at other film work in my practice review, and editing myself, the idea of exemplarity became prevalent and then fed into my analysis in the section entitled 'The People'. I highlight this to show the interrelated, feedback nature of practice-based method and analysis.

To outline my editorial approach further, I begin by describing my approach to editing FG1 footage for FG2. This is to highlight the stages of editing that contributed to my facilitation of FG2 and the structuring of footage that contributed to my editing of *Permissive Space*. I then extend my theorisation of constellations through a closer look at Zerilli's (2016) reading of Wittgenstein's (1953) idea of aspect-seeing. Through these lines of connection, I present a robust notion of constellations based in a visual practice of juxtaposition that can also be linked to general conceptual analysis. Armed with these tools, I discuss how the editing of *Permissive Space* was constellatory and offers an aestheticised representation of my analytic process. I then look at how theorisations of montage and editing as practice can be framed as constellatory before highlighting how this relates to specific instances of my editorial approach. Finally, I turn to the first public presentation of my practice-based research, the Peltz exhibition which was also constellatory in nature. Here I reflect more on what the Peltz exhibition realised in terms of a wider contribution to knowledge through my methodology rather than Union Street-specific findings.

By adopting a light touch approach to the editing of FG1 footage for FG2, I move away from a prevalent conception that language, voice, life, listening and so on can be understood as separate. This conception of voice poses difficulties for people who come from what Moi (2017, p. 10) calls a post-Saussurean tradition. The post-Saussurean view is that there is language (signs and signifiers) and then there is the world, our bodies, our minds, and so on. Signs and meanings float free from our voices. OLP is more concerned with getting "clear on what problem the theorist believes she can solve if she could just get rid of the idea that language is representational" (Moi, 2017, p.14). Language is performed and subjects of discussion are not separate from those that speak and hear them.

As one participant commented in FG2 while watching the footage from FG1, "it started quite slow, like it started off quite boring. It's interesting how much you need to kind of get to a point to have a more dynamic discussion" (FG2, 2023). The warm-up games and *Impossible Conversation* I used at the beginning of FG1 gave each participant the chance to speak, but they did not start flowing interactions between participants. The start was filled with awkward moments of silence and participants making short statements. The comment above is in relation to edited footage and the slowness was far more severe than the speaker describes. Following Pink (2007), I intended FG2 to be an opportunity for participants to analyse and interpret the material. In the data I collected, the initial moment where a participant contributed to the "production of academic meanings" (Pink, 2007, p.129) was to highlight awkwardness of a space where the reason for gathering is to exchange potentially disparate points of view. This was the first but not only instance where the group analysed my methodology which stemmed from how I had edited FG1 footage.

Another significant contribution also came near the start of FG2 when a participant highlighted a tense exchange between two other participants. Following Bryman (2012) and Cronin (2016) the group meeting I organised was intended to provoke variable and dynamic interactions, possibly disagreements. With filmic documentation, I knew that even if I missed a physical gesture at the time, I would be able to see it afterwards. When watching the footage, however, Goffman's (1967) and Bourdieu's (2000, 1990) emphasis on tone, gesture and posture was almost too influential on me as I started to focus too much on gesture in isolation from communicative context. I had made many notes on the physical

rhetorical style of two interlocutors, noting in detail the way they emphasised their points with hand gestures that became more and more active as the conversation went on (see still from *Permissive Space* below). In relation to a conversation about *Plymouth Art Weekender*, one participant in FG2 commented "I remember there were obvious tensions in the room that I didn't fully understand" (FG2, 2023). Both at the time and while watching back, I had missed an argument conducted as politely as possible between two members of the group. My desire to be analytic made me miss the whole situation within which an interaction took place. By compartmentalising gesture and words, I missed what would ordinarily be described as an argument between two people.

Figure 8. Still showing hand gestures. *Permissive Space* (2024)

My desire for the FG participants to take part in the analysis of their own performances was successful. As the above (and further examples throughout) show, participants were often more sensitive to the context than I was, but rather than presenting their views in a formal analytic mode, they simply described what they had seen which often counts perfectly well as analysis. Following Clifford Geertz (1973) and Gilbert Ryle (1971), Michelle Moody-Adams (1997) says, "only certain kinds of description and analysis can adequately account for the complexities of meaningful behaviour" (p.157). Participants were describing from a position of relevance; they were describing a context which they had experienced and therefore spoke about from a position of authority. Through a lived experience of the subjects being discussed, and having been in the room the first time, they were able to draw connections

and distinction between theirs and others' modes of articulation, placing them as co-analysers or primary interpreters.

5.2 CONSTELLATION AS MONTAGE

To outline my editorial approach further, I extend my understanding of constellations through Aby Warburg's *Bilderatlas* (picture-atlas) to draw out some connections between his work, that of Benjamin, and ideas found in Wittgenstein that have influenced Zerilli. A core methodological principle I have followed throughout my research is an attention to constellational thinking (Ross, 2020, p.82-91). In 1927 Warburg and his colleagues started work on the *Bilderatlas* which was thought of as a mnemonic device that would trace "the pathways of abiding symbolic figures and gestures from antiquity to early modernity" (Vollgraff, 2014, p.144). The atlas was designed to present "recurring visual themes and patterns across time, from antiquity to the Renaissance and beyond to contemporary culture" (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2020). Warburg wanted to show how culture could be distinguished or connected over various epochs.

Warburg's method "rearranging canonized images and looking at them across epochs" (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2020, n.p.). Matthew Vollgraff (2014) suggests that images lose their energy when considered in isolation. He says, "contact with the Zeitgeist polarizes images, releasing [their] dynamic" effect (Vollgraff, 2014, p.146). He means that to consider an image solely in relation to one's own time and place is to lose its full aesthetic possibilities. We only see one aspect of the image; we can only deploy its meaning within a limited scope. This notion is aptly expressed in terms of specific words in the FG's discussion of the term DIY, or in their discussion of shared values which will be discussed later in my analysis. My editorial approach to *Permissive Space,* although not as complex as Warburg's, was to place side-by-side various ways people spoke about a given subject so that the aspects of what one person says could animate another's.

Figure 9. Aby Warburg, Bilderatlas Mnemosyne, panels 6 & 77 (recovered) | Photo: Wootton / fluid; Courtesy the Warburg Institute. Taken from Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

Benjamin had a similar conception of the energy of *images* (understood not only as pictures but as depictions through performance) (Benjamin, 1999a, 1999b). Unlike Hegel's *Geist* that consumes all difference into a whole, "Benjamin insists on the importance of allowing contradictions to remain unresolved" (Rampley, 2000, p.25). In Warburg's atlases, Benjamin saw a "productive function of the constellation of opposites and the mutability of meaning" (Rampley, 2000, p.96). Notions of meaning through difference, and the didactic power of such disruption seems to run throughout Benjamin's work. For example, in *What is Epic Theatre* he writes "to quote a text involves the interruption of its context" and then "the more frequently we interrupt someone in the act of acting the more gesture results" (Benjamin, 1999a, p.148). In line with Brecht, he felt such ruptures had a political effect, he thought these interruptions made manifest our experiences of alienation (Benjamin, 1999a, p.147).

Nathan Ross (2020) connects this type of thinking in Benjamin's work back to language through his writing on mimesis. A juxtaposition of concepts brought together in a constellation offers an idea of truth as "not a property of acts of knowing, but of experience" (Ross, 2020, p.82). To leave ideas in a state of constant interpretation, recognising that there is never a single interpretation, allows negative and positive alignments between concepts to offer meaning. Here, a constellation is connections made up of many interpretations that will shift and alter depending on how it is looked at.

Benjamin (1997) suggests that our faculty of language and representation are both throwbacks to a time when our ability to mimic was central to our lives. He says man's "gift of seeing resemblances is nothing other than a rudiment of the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else" (Benjamin, 1997, p.160). A notion of understanding through language, and language as deeply tied up with our lives draws Benjamin very close to Wittgenstein. Consider Benjamin's statement: "the coherence of words or sentences is the bearer through which, like a flash, similarity appears" (Benjamin, 1997, p.162), and then look at Wittgenstein's comment on seeing the aspect of a word:

> The importance of this concept lies in the connexion between the concept of 'seeing an aspect' and 'experiencing the meaning of a word'. For we want to ask 'What would you be missing if you did not *experience* the meaning of a word (Wittgenstein, 1953, p.214)

We do not only understand a word in terms of knowing what it means, we experience the meaning of the word by seeing how it fits with other words and meanings in practice. Aesthetic considerations could also be framed through this distinction between looking and seeing, where looking means to point one's attention towards a certain picture, object, word etc. and seeing refers to the interpreted meaning of that thing.

My use of constellations as a means of understanding is influenced by Zerilli's reading of Wittgenstein's idea of aspect-seeing (Zerilli, 2016). To see a new aspect is not to look differently but to see differently, to understand another possibility for that object. Zerilli follows Stanley Cavell in her interest in the idea of projecting words into new contexts. She says,

> Using words learned in one context and with one sense in other contexts and with related but different senses—can help us see what is at stake. The projecting of a word that one has learned in one context onto new contexts demonstrates one's understanding of the world (Zerilli, 2016, p.23)

The implication for editing as analysis is that what I am calling constellatory thinking is central to general conceptualisation and our ability to converse on any level. Zerilli (2016) continues, "[o]rdinary embodied coping involves seeing and dealing with things continually under aspects, that is to say, conceptually" (p.274) – a principle that is applicable to the

viewing of footage from FG1 in FG2, and to my editing certain moments of speech together, placing them in conversation with others, but also in editing together various styles of representation, from two screen conversation, to a single frame within a field, to stills and voice over and relatively unedited sections towards the end of the film. This conception of constellations as editing and montage extends to my curatorial approach to the Peltz exhibition, discussed below. As can be seen from Figure 10, there are (at least) two registers at play in the film. Each person appears in two temporal modes, one grounded in FG1 and the other in FG2, sometimes in conversation with themselves and sometimes in conversation with someone else.

Figure 10. Still from *Permissive Space* showing two different temporal registers, 2024.

I would like to highlight how ideas of aspect-seeing relate to constellatory thinking, and then point towards how a conception of constellatory thinking is applicable to other theories of montage and editing. Interpretation, Zerilli (2015) explains, "is the making explicit of the as-structure that already accompanies our otherwise ordinary skilful and conceptual embodied coping" (p.274). This means that we may be taking part in an activity perfectly well without having the words to describe the practice. Until we have the words, we are not interpreting our practice. This signals the first important influence on my filmic approach, that of asking or facilitating people to consider their voice within a constellation of other voices. The various aspects of one's own performance in FG1 become a subject in FG2. These conceptual objects may not align, but to lay the various interpretations next to each other in *Permissive*

Space, to present the various ways people articulate their understanding of the themselves and each other, is to understand a certain cultural context in a constellatory way.

5.3 CONSTELLATIONAL EDITING

Two inherent aspects of editing are important to highlight: that the process of editing arranges things together; but it also leaves things out. My editorial approach to *Permissive Space* combines moments of speech to make new ideas through combinations of perspective, but it also leaves many moments from the focus groups out to articulate and concentrate certain subjects. This is how the sections of *Permissive Space* (DIY, Shared Values, and The People) emerged and how I then arrange chapter 5. To theorise my use of editing it has been productive to think of *Permissive Space* as an essay film. This means, following Laura Rascaroli, it is a piece of "thinking cinema [which] thinks interstitially" (Rascaroli, 2017, p.11). She goes on to say that "to understand how the essay film works, we must look at how it forges gaps, how it creates disjunction" (Rascaroli, 2017, p.11). Here I will also address theorisations of montage that discuss the editing together of rhythms (Pearlman, 2009) and differing temporal registers (Mulvey, 2006).

By placing various representations of how people performed through language together I have attempted to create a conversational rhythm that does not skew what people said but re-frames articulations by editing them with others' speech. This notion of matching moments of voice while still aligning with a speaker's intended meaning connects to a notion of continuity and discontinuity found in film editing theory. There is an essential discontinuity to any change of shot, but "the matched cut renders it secondary to semiotic continuity: *I see* that the shot has changed, but *I know* that I am still in the same sequence" (Aumont, 2014, p.13, empahsis in original). In *Permissive Space* the viewer knows that this was not a real moment of conversation, but they see the sequential nature of a speaker's meaning in relation to other speakers.

The notion of editing as combining the apparently separate is traditionally referred to in film theory as montage. Jacques Aumont (2014) suggests that Warburg's methods were closely aligned with film montage for its ability to bring objects together while also keeping them

separate. He claims that for Warburg the appeal was to avoid “a plot-based way of thinking, which at the time appeared to be mired in bourgeois ideology” (Aumont, 2014, p.37). Rather than a story, montage appeals to moments of realisation or inspiration through combination. As with Warburg’s maps, I attempted to create moments of overlap or cohesion between how people coming from different perspectives speak about the same subject. Rascaroli (2017, p.12) also makes a connection to Warburg through the use of black or blank spaces on his maps, with the spaces between images as the area where truth can be found. For ease of sharing, I made a single film and therefore there is a certain linearity to *Permissive Space*. Unlike the spatial arrangements Warburg adopted, I worked with sets of combinations along a temporal line while still adopting the aesthetic of arranging frames in space**.** I avoided using a standard black background because it becomes invisible due to its ubiquitous use on film. Instead, I used a distinctive green background, chosen to match the cover of keyword booklets. This reminds the viewer that each frame or moment has been edited and contextualised by me. At all points within *Permissive Space*, I want to highlight that this is a film that shows instances of voice in a research context, not a film that depicts a truth.

My editorial decisions are intended to highlight the performative aspect of editing and researching. Rather than a case of "ethics becom[ing] buried in style" (Vaughn, 1999, p.60), my intention was, following Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1990), to critique what is considered a standard mode of depicting a true situation. She critiques the notion that montage is a trick, that close-ups are seen as impartial, that small, handheld cameras are preferable because they are inconspicuous and therefore people are more natural in front of them (Minh-Ha, 1990, p.80). Highlighting the documentary nature of the focus groups was provocative in the sense that the group fed back on their own recorded performance, but also it positions me as someone who is conducting research, not a passive, removed or objective conduit between what happened in the FGs and the viewer. I wanted my performance as a researcher to be part of what is analysed. The practice of editing is part of the montage, not only what produces the montage.

5.4 TIME, GESTURE AND DISCOURSE

Editing as a form of practice-based research requires a conceptual framing that is both felt (emotional, intuitive) and analytic. Through my use of constellations, I show that these two things are not contradictory. Analytic insights come through connections, we see new aspects by placing things together, and this placing could be intuitive or even random. An editor can "relinquish the desire for explanation and, in its place, seek out moments, flashes of connection between what would otherwise be lost in flux" (Ravetz and Grimshaw, 2009, p.544)". Pearlman (2009) productively discusses film editing as a practice of matching or harnessing performative rhythms on film to produce affects for the viewer. She also connects the intuitive skill and creativity of an editor as "the process of making associations or links" (Pearlman, 2009, p.5). These connections are intuitive because their meaning is not necessarily predetermined. For Wodak and Krzyzanowski (2008) an important step in analysing any area of discourse is to organise and map key themes. The intuitive arrangement of various cuts or moments of discourse captured on film is analytic in this sense.

From an ordinary language perspective, physical gestures are part of how we express ourselves and communicate. When editing "pauses, hesitations, shifts in position, glances… are all contractions and releases of feelings, all energetic motions written all over the screen" (Pearlman, 2009, p.122) that can be arranged to produce meaning. Pearlman (2009) describes emotional rhythms an editor must be attuned to. An editor must be "guided by performance focusing attention on the intentional movements made by actors" (Pearlman, 2009, p.111). When looking at the footage from the focus groups and making decisions on when to make cuts, it was not only a case of deciding when a person has made their point clearly. People repeat themselves, they sometimes never finish their point, or the point changes during speech. Equally, a person can make a point with how they gesture or even try and discuss a subject. In the absence of clear articulations of points of view, there is still lots of meaning in a performance. When a shot is juxtaposed with another, "[t]he second shot receives the energy the first throws" (Pearlman, 2009, p.114). Ambiguous moments can become clearer through their combination with others.

Pearlman's (2009) lexicon is based in a physical understanding of performance - energy is thrown, tension is released. She frames her ideas of editing in a physiological way; her emphasis on the physical was useful for me to consider discourse that is not performed or embodied. Rather than the above referring only to the body of actors, I would like to suggest the nature of various discourses as having performative rhythms. The arts policy found within keyword documents is dead and static to the point of seeming inhuman. As one participant joked, "I don't see any truth in it… I wonder who wrote this, and why" (FG1, 2022). When reading some keyword quotes members of the FGs questioned the reality of the texts, the policy tone felt removed. This is not simply a consequence of policy being delivered through text. Rather, the nature of policy language as abstraction is arguably the source of this sense of 'unreality'. Some journalism and novels have a sense of dynamism in their textual delivery, the author or characters' energy can be felt. I used the distinction between stills and moving image to aesthetically frame a distinction between the types of policy discourse being discussed in the film and the voices of participants (including myself). The combination of stills, disembodied voice, and performed speech highlights that although we are talking 'live' we are at times discussing elements of policy that are stable, abstract and 'still'.

Photography and film sit on two different temporal registers. Mulvey's (2006, p.22-23) thinking on this subject is in part a result of her experience of video as a new technology. Video offered new possibilities in the way people could make and watch films. In my practice review, I introduced the idea that video changed how people could interact with film. Lange's feedback method was, at the time, a new possibility due to the quick and easy playback possibilities of the new video technology. While Lange's practice influenced my approach to filming and facilitating the focus groups, Mulvey's ideas hit a more conceptual register that informs my theorisation of editing as a practice of analysis. She says stills are "an unattached instant, unequivocally grounded in its indexical relation to the moment of registration. The moving image, on the contrary, cannot escape from duration" (Mulvey, 2006, p,.13). In more bodily terms that draw connections to Pearlman, she continues: "the still, inanimate, image is drained of movement, the commonly accepted sign of life" (Mulvey, 2006, p.22). I adopt this conceptual distinction between still and moving image on a metaphorical level to make visually explicit that in the film two forms of discourse are being referenced. I display my process of thinking, my "self-reflexive stance implies that issues of textual and contextual framing are at the centre of [my] critical practice"

(Rascaroli, 2017, p.20). When editing I played on a notion of *still* policy and *moving* performed voices through holding still frames next to moving images. This aesthetic gesture is a nod to an analytic point about the often-inhuman nature of how participants experience arts policy, and its perceived distance from what the group valued at an interpersonal level. Policy is seen as abstract compared to the concrete social experiences of the group that are articulated through performance of voice.

5.5 DOCUMENTING THE VULNERABILITY OF THE ORDINARY

The possibility of not being understood, or our words not performing the actions or having the affects we desire "defines language as a vulnerable, human, and social activity" (Laugier, 2018, p.379). When we speak, we take a risk in some way. The indeterminacy of our performances, of our voices and of how we are understood and understand others is central to my methodological emphasis on the ordinary. Laugier (2018) expresses a notion of vulnerability as built into our shared practices that constitute reality. We are always at risk of either not being understood, but also of giving more away of ourselves than we intend. Our actions are vulnerable to "failure, misfire, practical error" and are countered by the social reparations that are necessary to "maintain the expressive thread of our actions, the social tissue, or, put simply, the ordinary" (Laugier, 2018, p.367). The ways people try, succeed, fail, or are left in ambiguity is an important language-based principle of what it means to be part of a community or public. Therefore, my practice that both frames and is constituted by the ordinary is inherently open to saying less or more than I can control.

The participants in the focus groups came to the situation with roles, professional and personal, and both these aspects come with certain discourses. Verbatim theatre practitioner Anna Deavere Smith says, "we learn a lot about a person in the moment that language fails them, in the very moment that they have to be more creative than they would have imagined in order to communicate" (Deavere Smith, 2000, p.53). What happens when the common sense of professional discourse does not have the words for an interaction? In these moments we "are betrayed by language, if not in the words themselves, in the rhythm with which we deliver our words (Deavere Smith, 2000, p.36). These moments express the vulnerability of our ordinary interactions. The rhythms with which the group delivered their words was a primary reference for how I approached

editing, not to fix meaning, but to expound the irreducibly performative nature of public interaction. This led me to leave some moments of conversation unedited. Furthermore, there were moments of editing that could have been left but were altered. Rather than fixing meaning, *Permissive Space* and the Peltz exhibition are possible public formations that aim to extend a conversation rather than crystallise Union Street in a given form. This is not to say that *Permissive Space* and the Peltz exhibition do not follow an organising logic, but that there are other possible edits and, hopefully, more versions of the material I have gathered destined for public display in other places, at other times.

Putting different people in conversation to highlight nuances in positions given by various voices was the intention of the focus groups. For example, how does an arts manager speak on a subject in relation to a community artist? There is no stable lexicon that circumscribes cultural practice in Union Street – rather, a set of words in common that attract different investments of meaning. Such disparity, due to a general attunement to ordinary conversational norms goes unnoticed in general moments of interaction. Through the editing of *Permissive Space,* some of these moments become explicit and in various ways which I tried to highlight through my aesthetic approach. One participant who uses a wheelchair talks about the access failings of DIY venues and these comments threw into relief the previous comments that celebrated DIY. In the film, I have presented this moment as a singular scene on the green background, not in visual dialogue like other moments. Her experience is singular and therefore the frame is singular. For a moment in the discussion, this articulation of a disabled person's experience brought silence, which I chose to reflect visually and analytically. In another moment when the group discusses gentrification, one participant comments on the heaviness of the subject and her role within those processes. She does not articulate what she means clearly, she struggles to find words and repeats herself with regular glances to others for recognition. Despite the lack of clarity, the group acknowledges her point. There is an acceptance that her role in processes of gentrification is difficult to digest, but the ordinary coping techniques of the group lead them to nod, indicating acceptance of what she says. These, along with funny and informal moments display an ethics of group interaction – what they care about and what they find acceptable.

Figure 11. Still from *Permissive Space* displaying visual representation of singular experience, 2024.

The visible awkwardness of interruptions, frustration, and inter-personal communicative gestural actions gives away something that is difficult to express. As Laugier (2018) insists, "The success of a speech act no longer resides in the speech act itself or in the circumstances in which it is produced but in the maintenance of an expressive quality" (p.385). This relates to the moral aspects of social interactions, that an expressive quality needs to be maintained, not through retribution for each other's inability to be clear but in the negotiations of what is considered clear to the group because "it is shared reality that is threatened when interaction misfires" (Laugier, 2018, p.388). Agreement in what is funny, what is awkward or what is appropriately clear define the ordinary for the group, and this sense of regularity expresses an ethics for them.

Towards the end of the film, I stay with one participant for a significant chunk of her speech regarding uses of "the people". Although I do make minor cuts to this monologue, I stay with her for longer than most to amplify her voice and this focal point. This again reflects the silence of the group, the inability or lack of impetus on the part of the others to intercede. Goffman highlights how unusual it is to find the exact right words for a given moment, "when during informal talk a reply is provided that is as good as that could be later thought up, then a memorable event has occurred" (Goffman, 1986, p.501, quoted in Laugier, 2018, p.396). From a personal perspective, in the context of the focus groups, I had regular instances of the opposite, of realising I had said the wrong or unclear thing for that

moment. There are also instances that stem from using a feedback film technique where people have watched themselves say something, and then basically repeat the same thought again, as if they are correcting their initial position. These moments display the ways in which certain members of the group have been inculcated into certain areas of discourse. This point is analysed in more detail in the 'values' section of Chapter 5, in relation to wider fields of discourse relating to arts policy and evaluation practices.

5.7 AN UNCERTAIN NARRATOR

Jean Rouch says, "instead of clarifying the pictures, the film commentary generally obscures and masks them until the words substitute themselves for the pictures" (Rouch, 2003, p.91). In general, due to the heavy emphasis on participants speaking in the film, I have tried to be minimal with voiceover. However, rather than substitute words for pictures, this questions the position of analysis. Through explicit editorial decisions I put myself and my approach as an element of the film to be interpreted. Smooth cuts between moments that appear continuous could push the editorial aspects to the back of the viewers' experience. My editorial decisions not only create the film's address, but they are also part of that address.

During a moment of voiceover in *Permissive Space* I say that I do not like the feeling of imposing myself on the group or the viewer. My position on narration broadly reflects my feeling of being at once a remote researcher with an embedded ethos, and an absent Plymothian whose personal history of going to clubs on the street, and knowledge of the area's 'reputation' often occluded my critical and contemporary perspective of Union Street rather than enhanced it. In her use of a feedback documentary technique, Moffat (2006) found that the positions of subject and author became indistinct. She says "both the observer and the subject alternate between positions of dominance and submission, switch between the centre and the margin" (Moffat, 2006, n.p.). Even if I submit to the participants' expertise and authority, due to my role as the researcher, the one producing this work, I was not dominated by their positions. To some degree I was always controlling the conversation, even if at times I remained silent for long periods. I accept that hearing myself on screen, "whilst often an uncomfortable experience, offers the opportunity of retrieval and insight about oneself " (Roberts and Lunch, 2015, p.3), but speaking over the footage in a removed extradiegetic voiceover provoked further discomfort. Making claims in

a textual form in this thesis has different aesthetic implications than the voice-over film where I am - I want to say physically - speaking over others who live in and with the subject matter being discussed.

I want *Permissive Space* to be accessible to people who do not know anything about the context of research, and to that end there were certain moments of voice-over that seemed necessary. Union Street as a platform from which the participants discuss arts policy, amongst other things, was far more easily introduced in a few lines by a voiceover than through footage. The length of the film was also a concern. I felt that participants needed to be introduced, not by name but by role. I do not directly assign roles to each participant but tell the viewer what kind of people are in the room. I asked all participants how they would like to be described in the film and I say the viewers are watching the founder and director of a contemporary arts space, a community artist and organiser, an artist and general art professional, the co-founder of a Community Benefit Society, and the head of an arts and cultural organisation. This was all to ground the viewers' experience more easily. However, this also introduces a dynamic that I found uncomfortable. A voiceover that speaks from the first person, **"**often acknowledges that he or she is the director [and] usually embodies in the text a narrator who sometimes shares a voice and a body with the empirical author" (Rascaroli, 2017, p.15). I must accept that I am the director of the film, but I have worked to avoid dictating the reception of the conversations held on the screen.

Trinh T. Minh-Ha (Chen, 1992; Minh-Ha, 1990; Minh-Ha and Julien, 2020) discusses the exterior western male voice that dominates the filmic image. In a conversation with Nancy Chen she talks about "a speaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place" (Chen, 1992, p.87) but as the middle-class, white man who produces *Permissive Space*, it is impossible to "speak nearby" in the way Trinh T. Minh-Ha might intend. As one FG participant comments, the group is comprised of women, which must affect how they are perceived. This statement was in response to another member of the group describing how, in certain contexts, she is faced with patronising denunciations of her professionalism. A participant has already spoken 'nearby', as it were, in a way that I never could. I found that the best way to address my discomfort about my position was to acknowledge it as part of the voiceover. I cut in a moment of my sister speaking as me, as well as a moment of a friend

"whose voice reminds me of my mother". If I cannot speak 'nearby', the next best thing is to playfully acknowledge that I know that that is the case. Rather than ventriloquising a subject position through casting female family members and friends, this voice-over subversion is intended to highlight that I cannot speak from a position akin to the FG participants. From the outset I realised this impossibility on an intellectual level but the practical aspects of finding solutions offered a more embodied recognition of the limits of my identity in speaking through *Permissive Space.*

5.8 CURATING CULTURAL CONSTELLATIONS AT PELTZ

I have included my approach to the curation of *Cultural Constellations* at Birkbeck's Peltz Gallery in this chapter because, for me, curating is very close to editing due to the combination of elements brought together in a contained space to make new meanings. However, the relationship between curating and analysis is less clear but brings out important aspects of my practice-based research methodology. When considering how to represent archival material, Julie Ault (2013) asks herself a set of "vexing questions [such as] how do artefacts - whether material or informational - communicate? Can context be, in effect, communicated" (p.105)? Ault's vexations are informative because they set themselves an impossible task through their abstraction. An ordinary language remedy for these concerns would be to point out that artefacts in abstraction do not have a set way of communicating, but a specific set of diagrams, for example, does. Further still, an abstract context does not have a set form for communication, but a focus group, or 1990s night out on Union Street, can be communicated. Exhibiting my practice highlighted a methodological contribution to knowledge: a constellatory frame will always contain specificity that can say something about the abstractions that a context sits within.

Exhibiting the results of practice is important because a core impetus for conducting research with practice is the inherent publicity of my methods – films are made to be watched. Part of the justification for my approach is to make public my process of inquiry through artefacts so that producer and viewer can both bring critical perspective to the work (Douglas, 2008; Sullivan, 2009). When specifically considering the diagrams, there was a sense that they were not complete unless displayed collectively. Each one holds a

perspective, but those voices were not in conversation unless seen together. In this sense they are a rudimentary example of a constellation but only when seen together. Ben Gidley (2019) says if we try and capture a complex social space in its totality we will necessarily fail, but "[t]hese attempts can nonetheless be productive, but only if researchers have the humility to admit to the partiality" (p.135). The diagrams were always partial but through their exhibiting they displayed this partiality. Each diagram informs another, so as a constellation they become more than their constituent parts. This thought can be extended to the whole exhibition – the artefacts on display shed light on each other because they are in constellation.

The notion of editing as thinking through interstices (Rascaroli, 2017, p.11) is important for directly making *Permissive Space* but also for the Peltz Exhibition. The gaps that create disjunctions (Rascaroli, 2017, p.11) here are not only in frames, or even between objects in a room, but between what areas of practice I did and did not include in the exhibition. Exhibiting my research offered the chance to present areas of practice that did not directly feed into my analysis (the analysis found in this thesis) but did, or does, comprise part of a more general practice. Peltz was an opportunity to acknowledge Plymouth artists that were not directly part of my analysis but have been part of what has given a general atmosphere to my research. Notable examples are Alan Qualtrough, a printmaker who helped me make the booklets and the printed posters in the exhibition; Adam Milford and Tony Davey, two curators from The Box who pointed me towards the archival film made my John Walmsley on Union Street (circa 1990) which was an important contextualising feature of the exhibition; finally Imperfect Cinema, local filmmakers who I have organised screenings with, interviewed and written about (Mulhall, 2022). They provided the second contextualising film on display called *BLVD* (2019) that documents the upheaval caused by the construction of Millbay Boulevard, a consequence of Mackay's Plan. Here I will comment on what the artefacts did in the exhibition but more detail on each of these people can be found in the exhibition texts (Appendix 4).

The limits of my research and my practice's ability to give a full picture of the subjects discussed in this thesis were an issue I came across when curating the Peltz exhibition. Mulvey's (2006) idea that editing can impose temporal dynamics, in combination with Pearlman's (2009) description of gestures moving through frames informed my selection of

both archival footage and more recent filmic interventions into the area. For the exhibition, I curated two companion films to offer contextualisation to Union Street. There was a difference between the gestures captured in the FGs, for example, and those I discuss in terms of the carnivalesque and edgework relating to my own past experiences of Union Street, characteristic of an often drunken and aggressive environment. Walmsley's footage of him following the police for an evening on Union Street captures the drunken tension indicative of my memories. The branding of KFC seen in the background of figure 12 is a minor example of how venues have changed. Some clubs depicted have closed and others have new names. Despite this, the atmosphere captured by Walmsley felt familiar and expressed the exact tension I could not get across using results of my own practice. Similarly, *BLVD* was perfect to bookend the timeline I offered in Chapter 2, with its meditative shots of construction sites and the voice of local people lamenting the changes to the area. The gestures and temporalities shown through these films bleed out of their frames to interact with my own filmic and print based practice and offer a more complete picture of the research I am exhibiting. *Cultural Constellations* at Peltz offers an example of how various elements can be put into a constellation to construct a possible picture of cultural publics on Union Street. By refusing to hold each element in stasis, or as itself exemplary, the dynamics of each film can animate the others, just as the voices of participants in the focus groups animated one another.

Figure 12. John Walmsley (circa. 1990) – SWFTA archive, held at The Box, Plymouth.

Through exhibiting *BLVD*, Walmsley's film, and the other works I have produced through this process, I learnt less about what they did within my research and more about what my research could do and not do beyond its defined scope. At the opening of the Peltz exhibition a friend said to me that the works could be representing many places around the UK. The sense in which "this could be anywhere" brings out an important aspect of the exhibition and my research more generally. Union Street could be anywhere in the way wider social conditions affect the whole country, but also that everywhere is unique in the way its publics specifically respond and develop within those conditions. "This could be anywhere" is a policy-like abstraction, and when exhibiting these works to a non-Plymouth audience, the representation will abstract the specificity of a place. Ault (2013) warns that microhistories can become "thematicised and rendered an illustration of larger phenomena" (p.111). I do not explain Union Street in terms of wider phenomena. Instead, my intention is to "focus on one microhistory and its capacity to accentuate and register cultural conditions and change, through the lens of itself" (Ault, 2013, p.111). My methodology was based around forming a specific group and asking them to reflect on their own conditions, not in terms of wider reference, but through their own ordinary use of language. This methodology is not present in the Peltz exhibition, because it is not in Plymouth and (as far as I know) only Plymothians who have left Plymouth attended. This points to how my methodology contributes to knowledge – it is contextually specific in its form, but the route to get to those specific forms could be replicated across many other contexts. I have framed Union Street publics through feedback and constellation. Similar methods could be used to find and frame other publics in other contexts.

Dally et al. (2004) suggest that the strength of practice-based research for academic outputs is in their ability to reframe, though artefacts, what might be familiar to a viewer. Viewers get a new perspective from seeing a familiar object and such new perspectives are potential contribution to knowledge. After conversations with practice-based examiners, Dally et al. (2004, p.8) suggest that exhibitions should show a research journey and that written theses by contrast productively fix or situate the research context for the reader/viewer. In their analysis, it seems that practice offers an expressive mode of researching but one that needs to be fixed by definitive exegesis. Similarly, Niedderer and Biggs (2006) say the exhibiting of practice can set an "interpretive framework for the presentation of the products of

practice" (p.5). For them, the problem of practice and knowledge production is in the indeterminacy of the signs provided through artefacts. They suggest a correctly framed practice, either through a thesis or clearly defined exhibition context, has "the potential of unambiguously communicating the contribution to knowledge contained in these products" (Niedderer and Biggs, 2006, p.6). Considering my interest is in the communicative interaction between people, language is central to what I document, analyse, and produce through practice. Dally et al. (2004) and Niedderer and Biggs (2006) offer a limiting view of the possibilities of practice and a too deterministic perspective of how people live with language. When considering the vulnerability of the ordinary and how Laugier (2020) realigns ethics through attention to mutual recognition and dependence, my intention has been to call attention to specificity, rather than a generalisable picture that can be transposed onto others.

5.9 CONCLUSION

In this section I have moved from my conception of constellations as a theoretical premise to how this informed my practice-based, editorial approach. This became the primary focus of my analytical work that comprises this thesis. Through a practice of editing as analysis, I have produced *Permissive Space*, the Peltz exhibition, as well as the analysis sections of this thesis. Importantly, the notion of editing became the primary means by which I wove together the disparate elements of my research, reconciling personal (lived memories) and contextualising elements of my research, with the more involved, performed, current aspects of my investigation into Union Street publics.

Via a triad of art history, film theory, and ordinary language philosophy, I link the notion of constellations to montage. My conception of constellations as a way of understanding is influenced by Zerilli's reading of Wittgenstein's idea of aspect-seeing (Zerilli, 2016). To see a new aspect is not to look differently but to see differently, to understand another possibility for that object. We do not only understand a word in terms of knowing what it means; we experience the meaning of the word by seeing how it fits with other words and meanings in practice. I extend this to posit that the combination of words, images and objects can form constellations of new meanings. The possibility of new meaning through combination is similar to Aumont's (2014) theory of filmic montage. Aumont (2014, p.37), along with

Rascaroli (2017, p.12) connect this notion to Warburg's *Bilderatlas* where constellations of images offer new meanings, interpretations and knowledge that stem from novel combinations. Editing together data collected through my research has allowed me to analyse it via similar means. The participants' articulations regarding a term like DIY, for example, allow me to develop a more complex understanding of how that term is voiced.

Editing as a constellatory and analytic practice moved me away from an approach of coding discourse to staying with the "nourishing ground of participatory experience" (Conquergood, 2004, p.320). This is not to say I have not theorised the various ways participants (and myself) performed in the FG settings, but that the performance of editing as practice also became an element of my research output. There is new knowledge in the forms of public address found in *Permissive Space* and the Peltz exhibition, not only in their content, but in their processes of production and final form. This is inherently public knowledge where my "radical move is to turn, and return, insistently, to the crossroads" between theory and practice (Conquergood, 2004, p.320). More than diagramming, writing, and filming, editing becomes the primary analytic and practice-based element of my research.

By publicly addressing my research outputs via exhibition and film I open myself up to critiques of ambiguity. My means of communicating knowledge could be construed as ambiguous (Dally et al., 2004; Niedderer and Biggs, 2006). But instead of defining this written thesis as a way to anchor the practice-based elements of research in a dynamic of knowledge versus ambiguity, I prefer to frame editing as practice in terms of accepting the vulnerability of the ordinary (Laugier, 2018). Rather than my practice-based output as a sign of knowledge production, I prefer to give attention to participants' voices and the inherent ambiguity of their public utterances. Moi (2017, p.226) suggests that if we sharpen our attention to the various forms of expression that intertwine with various human practices, we develop a sharpened attention to reality. She advocates paying attention to particular cases of language use which involves "the idea of caring for… of listening, waiting, and watching" (2017, p.227). Listening, waiting, and watching describes both editing and viewing a film or exhibition, and Moi's comments gives such activities a moral dimension through the notion of care. Editing as practice becomes a way to know through attention and care, rather than through attempting to define objects and texts unambiguously through written analysis.

In the following chapters I engage in a written analysis of the ways participants articulated themselves in relation to Union Street's art, culture, communities and publics – an analysis that is based and developed through my approach of feedback and attention to ordinary uses of language. I focus on three pieces of terminology: 'DIY', 'Values', and in conclusion, 'The People'. Each section's title centres around terminology that was particularly activating in the focus groups. In each case, the title and terminology in question did not necessarily provoke outright disagreement amongst the group. The nuances of how terms such as 'DIY' differ for participants, and the implication of those differences, is what this analysis addresses. Each case serves as an appropriate constellatory frame because with each there are crossovers and divergences among the group regarding the practices that surround 'DIY', Values', and 'The People'. Regardless of any working definition of a term, it is how the terminology is performed practically and conceptually that is of interest. At times it may seem that Union Street as a physical space falls from view within the following analysis, but the public formed for the focus group are of Union Street. Language about the street also comes from the street, with voice and space dialectally engaged. My methodology draws together voices, cultural practices, planning and arts policy to frame both the physical and conceptual space of Union Street. The resulting analysis centred on terms like 'DIY' is Union Street specific but the methodology I have applied could be used to frame other streets and areas.

6. DIY: Not asking for permission and the creation of permissive spaces in and around Union Street.

Terms like 'DIY', 'grassroots', 'independent', or 'bottom-up' approaches to cultural production were referenced frequently when I spoke to people about Union Street and Plymouth during diagram conversations. These terms were used to describe the practices that led to events such as *Plymouth Art Weekender* and the *Union Street Party*, both seen as important and local-led cultural events. Many of the terms seemed to be interchangeable, but 'DIY' is of particular interest because of its association with counterpublics that are known for their cultural production, be it punk or rave. The term DIY is referenced in the two Plymouth-specific policy documents I used to gather keywords: *Culture Plan Plymouth: 2021-2030* (*CPP*) from 2021 and *A Public Art Plan for the City of Plymouth* (PAP) from 2016. PAP (Doherty, 2016, p.17) advocates for a certain approach to public art, taking influence from Assemble's Granby Four Street project in Liverpool. The document states that, through a celebration of architectural heritage, the Granby Four Street project supports "public involvement and partnership working, offering local training and employment opportunities, and nurturing the resourcefulness and DIY spirit that defines the four streets" (Doherty, 2016, p.17). Granby Four Street is used as an example of best practice by Doherty, one that Plymouth should aspire to when considering public art commissioning. *CPP* (Plymouth Culture, 2021) uses the term DIY in two places, first claiming that Plymouth has a DIY spirit, embodied by its creative and cultural sector which has "an inbuilt entrepreneurial spirit where change and innovation is driven from the grassroots, artist-led community" (p.6). The second use problematises the first by saying:

> The structures that make up the cultural sector are fragile, often built on personal energy, generosity and volunteering. Whilst this drives a dynamic DIY culture, which has been incredibly important in Plymouth, it is not sustainable; people become burnt out, the true cost of initiatives is never fully understood, and it can reinforce sector hierarchies. (p.39)

DIY is 'inbuilt' and 'entrepreneurial', while also being 'fragile' and potentially unsustainable. A tension arises here between two meanings of the term, one in relation to grassroots and community action (McKay, 1998; Richardson, 2008), the other in relation to urban development through creative classes (Florida, 2003; Landry, 2000).

One FG participant suggested that Plymouth is “a city where there's also opportunity to make stuff happen on the ground, like, you know, in terms of doing it yourself. That DIY mentality” (*FG1*, 2022). The above makes clear that DIY and related terms are ordinary in relation to speaking about Union Street art and culture - ordinary here meaning that they are part of everyday conversation “established and extended in concrete use” (Moi, 2015, p.203). If policy makers are using the term in relation to entrepreneurial spirit (Plymouth Culture, 2021) and local filmmakers in relation to their punk influenced ‘open-mic’ film nights (Mulhall, 2022), then contradictions are apparent in the term’s usage.

The ordinariness of “DIY” has the potential to obfuscate the term, painting over possible discrepancies in usage. As Moi (2015) describes, a term can become “a network of criss-crossing similarities” (p.202), and this mesh of usage blurs possible implications of the speech in which it is used. This potential complication does not prevent anyone communicating about art, culture, and Union Street using the term DIY, but the ethical and political dimensions of its use are occluded by that ambiguity. I am using a feminist notion of ethics as developed by Laugier (2020) where the primary theme of ethics is what people care about, how they care for others, and how they express that care through ordinary language and practice. She describes this as shifting “[t]he centre of gravity of ethics […] from the *just* to the *important*” (Laugier, 2020, p.26 - emphasis in original), moving away from abstract moral theorisations to a “moral ethnography—one which would make space for the expressions of agents themselves” (Laugier, 2020, p.28). This formulation of ethics allows me to connect the linguistic use of DIY with the practical nature of how people operate describing themselves as being DIY, while also taking into consideration the possible divergences in the political and social underpinnings of their actions.

6.1 DIY IN FOCUS GROUPS

Based on its use in key policy documents, I introduced DIY as a catch-all in FG1. In some respects, I regret this move, as it potentially influenced terminology that was employed by the group. This realisation comes from my use of the feedback method which allowed me to reflect on how I approached the facilitation of the first focus group while preparing for the

second. My potential mistake in directing discourse around “DIY” is tied up with my embeddedness with the research process. The time I have spent reading *CPP* while constructing my Keyword booklets, and the time I have spent talking to cultural producers such as Imperfect Cinema has impressed certain uses of language upon me. This is not surprising but to impose a term on the focus group may have halted the process by which "people in conjunction with one another construe the general topics in which [I am] interested" (Bryman, 2012, p.501). More radically, following the insights of Trinh T. Minh-ha, in my “quest to make meaning” (1990, p.93), I may have imposed a discourse on myself and others, reinforcing a power imbalance between researcher and research subject/participant. However, themes emerging from the research do cluster around the term, so despite my imposition of language use, it has been a useful theme through which I can analyse topics discussed throughout the research process.

In both focus groups a broad range of subjects were covered in relation to DIY including: a notion of creativity as a driving force in cultural production; a general explanation of how Union Street has changed and what makes it an interesting area; how “traditional power” in Plymouth ignored Union Street; cultural events like *BAS* and *PAW*; the negative aspects of having access to little to no money and recognition of DIY working patterns in this light; and how to pass on knowledge and skills through DIY practices. During a 15-minute exchange in FG1 participants engaged with the topics and drew out several interlocking but also at times contradictory perspectives relating to DIY which included: themes of art and cultural production; Plymouth and Union Street’s sense of conceptual and geographic remoteness; and the absence and need for further practices of care in relation to cultural production. The complexities and complications are not settled by the group at any point - in fact, they diverge and converge on elements of the term, offering a significant opportunity for me to frame a constellation of practices around DIY, that is, to place various representations of language use side-by-side so that their shared and diverging aspects can be reflected in each other.

6.2 CONSTELLATIONS AND DIY

It is important to note that my aim in this section is not to offer a definition of DIY. Although I will survey how it has been employed in various literatures, this is not to collect and

produce an average, fit-all boundary around the term. Rather, I suggest that among participants there is an interweaving of terminology and adherent practices. The various aspects of DIY as a conceptual object may not align, but to lay the various interpretations next to each other, the various ways people articulate their understanding of the concept DIY, is to understand the term in a constellatory way.

In her work on the concept of political representation, Hanna Pitkin (1967, p.10-11) uses an instructive metaphor that describes my analytical approach. She asks that we imagine that inside a dark box there is a concept such as 'representation'. Various political theorists will have taken a photograph of the object and then describe the view they have as if it is *the* correct and complete picture. Each picture is an extrapolation and is only describing one aspect of the object, yet everyone thinks theirs is the true picture. She describes her task as that of looking at all the descriptions and reconstructing the object by seeing how they all fit together. This is not because the truth of *representation* is a composite of all the views, it is to show that the *truth* of the idea is never complete (or very useful). Pitkin's metaphor highlights the importance of looking in detail, not to make broad claims or theorisations, but to see that, as I am arguing with this project, our life with language is by nature constellatory. A definition or true picture of DIY is less analytically useful than to see the various overlaps in its use because this tells me more about how language and practice overlap – how a community of speakers could form around their use of a given term.

In the following section I will begin by describing some of the *pictures* of DIY offered in other literature. This will lay the groundwork for me to introduce commentaries of DIY offered by participants in the focus groups. Through such an approach to analysis, I aim to draw out the complexities of 'DIY' - a stock phrase used in relation to various practices found in and about Union Street - and to show that DIY in ordinary use complicates ethical divergences between various focus group participants.

6.3 DIY - CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL USAGE

DIY has multiple uses in everyday discourse, including that of home improvements such as putting up shelves or painting walls and in reference to cultural manifestations primarily, but not limited to, punk. David Gauntlet (2011) has highlighted that in recent years DIY activity has proliferated both in terms of hand crafts (knitting, woodwork) but also in terms

of digital production of media (blogs, photography, and videos online). None of the following uses neatly map onto uses found in the focus groups, but they are instructive to offer a literary background to the term.

A major cultural space/movement associated with DIY is punk, which, by the 1970s, had cemented the term with anti-establishment, subcultural associations (McKay, 1998, p.7). This is an important influence for Imperfect Cinema when setting up their DIY Film nights, notably using old cinema venues on Union Street to host events where people can screen their own short films (Mulhall, 2022). Beyond the punk association, George McKay (1998) traces DIY culture from WWII to the 1990s, saying it is "a youth-centred and direct cluster of interests and practices around green radicalism, direct action politics, new musical sounds and experiences" (p.2). Beyond the "narcissism, youthful arrogance, principle, ahistoricism, idealism, indulgence, creativity, plagiarism as well as the rejection and embrace alike of technological innovation" (McKay, 1998, p.2) he strongly emphasises that the key feature of DIY is "actually *doing something* in the social and political realm" (McKay, 1998, p.4, emphasis in original). As well as an aesthetic implication there is an activist and political dimension to the use of the term.

In community action settings, Liz Richardson (2008) directly relates DIY to unpaid labour and people trying to help their own communities. She states DIY is synonymous with "self-help and is taken to mean: *informal groups of people, acting on a voluntary basis, working together to solve common problems by taking action themselves, and with others*" (Richardson, 2008, p.1, emphasis in original). An important feature of this framing is that DIY is understood to be action taken independently of outside authority or assistance, although it is not clear why this labour is necessarily free in Richardson's understanding. Stonehouse Action the precursor to Nudge, embodied many of these features when they first began their work on Union Street. Stonehouse Action is an informal group based on voluntary labour that came together to change the image of the Stonehouse and benefit the local community.

A more hopeful if nonetheless vague framing comes from Amber Day's (2017) linkage between utopian thinking and DIY cultural production, stating that there has been a recent "flowering of utopian imaginings and of the creation of spaces designed for collective discussion and creativity" (p.vii). For Day, DIY practice has distinct political implications

because it positions “itself as an alternative to the dominant culture of conspicuous consumerism, corporate mass production, and ecological destruction” (p.viii). This formulation again frames DIY as operating outside of wider economic and political power, filling in gaps left by “mainstream culture or political life” (p.viii). Rather than positioning punk as a central aesthetic, anything outside of corporate consumerism may register as potentially DIY.

This all seems at odds with the use of DIY in relation to working on one’s home. What does attaching shelves to a wall have to do with subcultural music genres? Gauntlet (2011) draws on the 19th century Arts and Crafts movement, notably the work of William Morris and John Ruskin, to make a connection based on the distinction between fine art and crafts (p.46-49). Morris and Ruskin were both interested in bringing art and culture back to the everyday, while also valorising everyday objects. This, in part, was a reaction against the removal of craft skills from various communities through the manufacturing innovations associated with industrialisation. Morris wanted communities to “have control over their own labour, and contribute to a vibrant and dynamic culture through the creation of their own individual objects” (Gauntlett, 2011, p.47). As mass produced objects start to be found within the home, people became alienated from the production of objects that were becoming standard for a growing proportion of the population. Here a link to punk emerges through the rejection of popular forms of music. Punk is a rejection of “bland consumerist pop that dominates the airwaves” (Spencer, 2008, p.11. Quoted in Gauntlett, 2011, p.53), just as repurposing wood to make shelves is a rejection of prefab or flatpack IKEA products, or so the logic goes.

Although the concern given to workers by Arts and Crafts was clear, the movement had a paradoxical effect of producing “beautiful handmade products the average worker could not afford” (Gauntlett, 2011, p.48), just as some punk bands became commercially successful. However, this is resolved through the notion of doing-it-yourself. Gauntlett’s (2011) emphasis on creating objects and solutions yourself that are aesthetically pleasing also eschews a notion of top-down standards of aesthetic appreciation. He establishes a link between individuals making objects in and for the home and the creation of aesthetic objects through the work of Morris and Ruskin, epitomized in his statement “the central idea at the heart of them all is the rejection of the idea that you overcome problems by

paying somebody else to provide a solution" (Gauntlett, 2011, p.56). Looking at one's own community for solutions as well as for artistic fulfilment is clearly a key premise of how DIY has been written about.

Personal and community self-reliance emerges here as a key theme in the literature on DIY. More than any specific aesthetic commitment, or set of cultural genres, DIY is described as a criss-cross of cultural and political practices. DIY means "working together to solve common problems" (Richardson, 2008, p.1), "unselfconsciously communicating through everyday things that people have made" (Gauntlett, 2011, p.47), and "resolving social problems… outside the mainstream" (McKay, 1998, p.53). Through its "homemade strivings for utopia" (Day, 2017) DIY culture supports and feeds a utopia-as-process approach to culture and politics (Levitas, 2017). However, the vagueness and personal specificity of what a utopia might be perhaps lays the ground for the disagreement over DIY found within the focus group.

6.4 DIY FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

In this section I address specific statements articulated by members of the focus group in relation to DIY. I do this to approach the term from the various perspectives held within the focus group space. I will define the speakers' professional roles because there seems to be a direct connection between certain positions and certain policy discourse. This is not surprising, as Moi (2017) remarks, "think of the specialist distinctions that appear to come naturally to chefs, fashion designers, farmers, and fishermen… every human practice gives rise to its own expressions, its own ways of speaking" (p.226). My intention here is not to construct a lexicon for each professional role, but rather to see how the use of the term DIY varies and coincides across cases.

6.4.1 FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF A CONTEMPORARY ARTS SPACE – DONNA

Donna is a founder of a contemporary art gallery and studios just off Union Street. She holds a senior strategic position in Plymouth in terms of cultural planning. She was involved in the

inception of PAW, worked on *The Atlantic Project* and *We the People are the Work* and has sat on the planning committee for BAS9. She also oversaw the gallery becoming (and maintaining) their status as an ACE national portfolio organisation (NPO). She remains proud of Union Street and Milbay's status as an "independent cultural quarter", a term she used in our diagram conversation (Howard, 2021). In my initial diagram conversation with Donna, I was struck by how much she emphasised the idea of working in partnership. Throughout the research process, she has been keen to emphasise the importance of relationships, partnerships, and collaboration in the way she works. Partnership(s) is a prevalent term in *Let's Create* (Arts Council England, 2021) and Donna was particularly adept and using terminology found within ACE documents.

In FG1, she used the term DIY freely and is proud of the way Plymouth and Union Street have embraced creative practices characterised as DIY. In saying "just listening around the table, this, you know, what we're talking about, it's nothing to do with permissions. It's that DIY, do it yourself, mentality" (*FG1*, 2022) she identified the group as embodying a set of practices characterised as working independently from power bases in the city such as the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce. She also commented that "people are looking in now… I'm signposting so much to independent. We're starting to create place through independence" (*FG1*, 2022). The "I'm signposting" and "we're creating" elements articulate a relationship between individual and collective action – they imply that she can direct any searches for various skills towards local talent while also signalling that she is part of a group that is constructing a new image for Plymouth. The notion of placemaking, mentioned in three of the keyword policy texts (Doherty, 2016; Plymouth Culture, 2021; Arts Council England, 2021) is reminiscent of Charles Landry's (2000) ideas of creative city place-making. Pratt (2010) frames Landry's ideas as counterposing creativity to "dead hand bureaucracy or non-democratic planning" (p.16). Donna attributed the cultural development of Union Street to a DIY sense of creativity as urban planning solution.

For Donna, the development of the Union Street area is closely connected to an idea of independence, DIY and creativity. She said that she cannot explain this "creative buzz" but that when she first opened the gallery she runs, it was like "tumbleweeds" (*FG1*, 2022), with no discernible audience in the area, and a concern that no audience interested in contemporary art would travel there. Throughout the research process, she has been

consistently articulate around a constellation of terms implying the importance of independent, creative, and partnership/relationship-based working. After viewing the footage from FG1, she commented:

> Looking at Union Street and Millbay, it's a lot of the stuff where things have happened without looking for permission [and] have been creatively driven. So, whether you sit within arts or culture, or you know, the Pirate Radio, or Street Factory or anything within those streets, I would say they have come from creative drive. (*FG2*, 2023)

In the context of the focus groups, Donna responded to other participants' point of view, but her dialogues with others did not alter the rhetorical frame she gave to DIY-led creativity. For Donna, a DIY creative buzz aptly describes the area's development over the course of the time she has worked there. This rhetoric recurred in her contributions, but the terms themselves and the practices that sat alongside them were not interrogated.

6.4.2 THE HEAD OF AN ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION – HANNAH H

The participant that has the closest relation to Donna's view of DIY is Hannah H's. Hannah H is the director of an arts and cultural organisation, another NPO that "creates connections between businesses, stakeholders, city leaders, artists, creatives, performers, among others" (Plymouth Culture, 2023). PAP was commissioned by Plymouth Culture before Hannah H joined, but the *Culture Plan Plymouth* (2021) was written during her time as director. As head of Culture, Hannah H has a central role in planning the strategy of arts and culture across Plymouth. She holds a unique position in the focus group as the only person who has overseen the writing of one of the policy texts addressed by the keywords. Also, in terms of Plymouth wider cultural strategy, she holds far more power than any other member of the focus group as she is the director of an organisation that is an NPO and has direct links to the city council. This means that, at times, her role comes under attack, although no group member ever directly challenged her personally. For example, some keyword quotes that come from *CPP* were challenged, particularly on the grounds of art and culture's link to wider economic factors like the visitor economy and the chamber of

commerce. Hannah H highlights that she is commenting from a plurality of subject positions, both as director of Plymouth Culture, and as someone who attends events "as a mum" (*FG1*, 2022). Hannah H is also set apart from the group in that she has strategic influence on activities that happen in and around Union Street and therefore might attend meetings there but does not work there directly.

Hannah H explains "the term DIY came up a lot when we were writing the Culture Plan [*PCP*], as very much part of that DNA kind of you know, what's unique about us when we started talking about USP" (*FG1*, 2022). Immediately it is clear that she also shares a rhetorical influence with Donna in terms of creative-led urban development. A term such as USP (unique selling point) frames DIY activities as a way to market Plymouth, both as a geographic location and as a conceptual space. The participants' comments bring to mind Florida's (2003) statement that, "urban malls, tourism-and-entertainment districts… are irrelevant, insufficient, or actually unattractive to many creative-class people" (p.9), whereas a *DIY DNA* is appealing to a younger set of cultural producers. However, Hannah H goes on to problematise the above idea by explaining that although the arts and cultural sector appreciated the term,

> [W]hen it was taken into other groups, maybe the chamber or the local authority, it didn't have the same meaning. It wasn't that they didn't get it, it just wasn't seen as positively. And it was seen as a bit of like, poor relation, less quality, why would we brag about that kind of thing? And also for some, and I think there are egos involved in this particular bit, it was seen as being to the exclusion of the corporate multinational, rather than us saying it's good that they can sit alongside (*FG1*, 2022).

In this passage, Hannah H very clearly articulates many aspects of her role and of Plymouth Culture's position within the city. She foregrounds the importance of a creative class, as well as more traditional power bases such as the Chamber of Commerce. To try and negotiate the term DIY to the point where it can sit alongside the corporate multinational skews its meaning well beyond its common usage, based on "unselfconsciously communicating through everyday things that people have made" (Gauntlett, 2011, p.47), or "resolving

social problems… outside the mainstream" (McKay, 1998, p.53). But her attempt to reconcile two opposing social and economic positions signifies the difficulties of navigating such a role where business concerns are combined with personal attachments to the culture being produced. In an arts and cultural field, members of the professional managerial class such as Hannah H, can produce and regulate particular symbolic or critical discourse (Kester, 1998, p.114) but are also caught between conflicting concerns for artistic quality, gaining funds, and working with various stakeholders.

A key issue that everyone in the group was concerned with is the difficulty of maintaining DIY-based initiatives. Everyone recognised the social and economic benefits of activities such as PAW, which everyone agreed was an example of a DIY event. The group discussed at length that such initiatives become unsustainable when they run on passion and free labour. Hannah H said: “these amazing things that happen, but because they just happen, they're not run by an institution or funded, which in many ways is why they happen because people get off their butts and get it done” (*FG1*, 2022), going on to express her concerns regarding the eventual failure of such projects in the absence of infrastructural support. She presented to the group two initiatives that might assist in the running of such events: it being logged as part of the City Calendar[6], maintained by the Council or a model like Visual Arts Southwest (VASW)[7] and Spike Island (an NPO)[8]. The first example would directly connect PAW to the City Council, the second to the Arts Council, both traditional power bases. Hannah H tries to hold together diverging meanings of DIY. She employs a common use that describes people working outside of centralised power. But DIY is also used in terms of a USP, more akin to a marketing strategy than a practical approach to creating cultural events or networks.

I put it to the group that people who work in a DIY way could be seen as “the cool gang” by which I meant that there is social and cultural capital attached to working in a certain way or entering certain spaces. I linked this notion to an idea of threshold fear, a perceived set of barriers, both physical, social and psychological that a visitor of a cultural space might feel when entering, or even thinking of entering a space (Gurian, 2015). If DIY is cool, as a visitor

[6] www.visitplymouth.co.uk
[7] www.vasw.org.uk
[8] www.spikeisland.org.uk

or participant in a DIY project you might feel that you need certain kinds of cultural and financial capital to take part. Hannah H pointed out that this idea of DIY is problematic, not only for the reasons set out above regarding unpaid labour and unsustainable working patterns, but also because DIY is characterised as “the good bit” whereas large organisations are “the bad bit”. She explains that the city (read as Plymouth Culture) had worked hard to undo a tension between those positions, seeking to:

> [C]ollaborate with large and small and funded and unfunded… I don't think it's good to lose sight that within these larger organisations, there are people who… might have a DIY spirit or be actively finding ways around their institution” (*FG2*, 2023)

Adam Milford and Tony Davey, curators from The Box discussed earlier, worked independently from the museum for six years before having their *Plymouth After Dark* project given an exhibition slot that could be described as falling into this category of action. Hannah H’s statement works to counter Mould’s (2018) view that a “governmental implementation of the 'creative' mind set has rendered any subversive or resistive creativity as going against the 'neutral' order to societal progress" (p.109). In this view, the subversive roots of DIY practices are rendered neutral by large institutions like The Box celebrating the DIY in their programs. However, from Hannah H’s perspective, a DIY ethos can challenge institutional homogeneity from within. Both Donna and Hannah H value DIY approaches to cultural production, but while Donna reaches an impasse when trying to explain what a creative buzz is, Hannah H is caught between two perspectives of institutional acceptance coupled with corporate viability and supporting and celebrating independently organised cultural events. This is exemplified in Donna’s statement “understanding [how we go] from the doing and making happen, to then what DIY means outside our sector to those decision makers, that's where value comes in again” (*FG2*, 2023). For both Donna and Hannah H, DIY activity risks not being properly valued if its benefits cannot be demonstrated to traditional power in the city such as the chamber of commerce, local business leaders, or the council.

Gabi's contribution to the conversation regarding DIY offers a completely different perspective, and a strong critique against many of the uses of the term so far. Gabi is an artist, writer, and translator. She was an early member of WonderZoo, a poetry, theatre, and performance collective set-up in 2017, a previous resident of Adelaide Street (just off Union Street to the North) and co-developed *Follow the Dragon*[9], an internet-based game developed as part of BAS9 to highlight access needs in major cultural venues around Plymouth. Gabi uses a wheelchair so can offer a lived perspective on disability that the other members cannot. She said,

> [I]t's probably due to the funding and the money available, but it's much more difficult to use independent venues and restaurants. And I know for example, if I go to Wetherspoon's I can go to the toilet, which I'm fond of doing sometimes. In little independent places it's much harder (*FG1*, 2022).

She generally paints a picture of DIY venues and events as exclusionary on multiple fronts, whereas "mainstream brands" are cheaper and more physically accessible. Gabi outlines the difficulty of time, money and choice of venue when working in a DIY way. Shape Arts' (2018) *How to Put on an Accessible Exhibition* adopts a social model of disability that repositions access barriers as socially constructed, moving disability away from something considered as a medical issue. To make events accessible, Shape (2018) makes suggestions that involve more time, budget, and choice of venue. Gabi's critique fits within a social model of disability, laying emphasis on the failure of many DIY venues for their lack of access, but also for their lack of imagination. Alison Kafer (2013) shows, that disability is often framed as purely medical and personal so it becomes a depoliticised, natural phenomenon that is not the concern of cultural or political actors. This normative conceptualisation renders disability as having "no place in radical politics or social movements—except as a problem to be eradicated" (Kafer, 2013, p.9). Gabi's critique suggests that, in many cases, DIY's association with counter-cultural politics does not extend to the political nature of disability, automatically reducing some of the radical claims of DIY practices. Gabi also recognised that

[9] www.followthedragons.co.uk

a lack of funding is a major contributor to the issue. Her contribution is clearly valued by the group, but, as she admits herself, getting past this problem is challenging for the same reasons an event will be considered DIY; it has little to no funding and is organised on low time and capacity. On Union Street particularity, with its many old and badly maintained buildings, trying to be DIY and accessible is expensive. By not considering access, whether it is due to budgets or political priorities, DIY spaces restrict themselves as "potential site(s) for collective reimagining" (Kafer, 2013, p.9).

The above concerns are largely in relation to physical failings of DIY environments, but Gabi makes another comment that connects to Hannah H's point about DIY considered as 'good' and large organisations as 'bad'. Gabi explains "you also get a situation where some people will kind of virtue signal about the fact that they can use independent places and not acknowledge that it's not possible for everyone" (*FG1*, 2022). She returns to this thought in FG2 by saying "if you're part of a marginalised group, then you're going to have more problems accessing something anyway, and having the capacity to volunteer or do something in a DIY way is going to be harder for you as well" (*FG2*, 2023). For Gabi and Hannah H, there is a value judgment made when proclaiming that a space or project is DIY. For them, DIY is seen as better than national chains. This echoes McKay's (1998, p.4) points that although DIY can be politically orientated, there is often a self-interested indulgence that comes with such a framing.

Gabi challenges the idea that Union Street is still home to DIY activity. In relation to her past as part of a "Metal-Head, Goth community" (*FG1*, 2022), she explains in detail the atmosphere at a specific venue, JFKs[10]:

> I'll sort of look at when I was a teenager, when I used to go to the clubs, and obviously, you get the music… you will get artwork as well, a lot of it in the clubs, but not by sort of recognised artists, you get people doing visuals and things like that... But that's very much a sort of low culture that was discouraged, you know, it was linked to drinking and drugs, all these unacceptable things (*FG2*, 2023).

[10] JFKs was a club I also attended on certain nights. Before it closed it had become C103. Nudge bought the venue in 2022 (www.nudge.community/club103).

Her characterisation of DIY as low cultural practices in association with unacceptable things comes closer to the punk associations of the term. Counter to the narrative that Union Street works in a DIY way, she goes on to explain that people who spray-painted club walls in the past did not apply for funding and rarely had any formal training. She points out a professionalisation of culture has taken place in Plymouth largely through the work of KARST and Nudge. It seems that she is sceptical of DIY as a term to describe current Union Street working practices. Gabi displays a lived experience of many spaces and events that others do not seem to share. She also offers significant first-hand commentary on what it is like to work on an event such as PAW (generally characterised as a DIY event), strongly agreeing with Rachel on factors relating to the undervaluing of DIY style work.

6.4.4 COMMUNITY ARTIST AND ORGANISER – RACHEL

Rachel is a socially engaged, community focused artist who is part of several artists collectives one of which works out of a Nudge operated venue, The Plot[11]. Although largely critical of the formulations Donna and Hannah H give to DIY, she also implicitly characterised herself as working in a DIY way. She sees herself as working outside of an arts economy that is attached to power bases in the city. In reaction to a quote in the keyword booklets taken from *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (Arts Council England, 2013) that says, “we recognise the importance of the [creative] sector's relationship with the private sector, and the partnerships and shared learning that can emerge from these links” (p.31), she framed herself as anti-establishment using the example:

> Okay, so as an artist, my relationship with the private sector is like, I go to Wilko’s, and I give them money and somebody in Wilko’s head office knows that people really like buying the yellow masking tape. So, they make more of the yellow masking tape and sell it… Like as an artist in Plymouth operating in the kind of things that I'm doing, I'm not meeting like business leaders (*FG1*, 2022).

[11] www.nudge.community/plotstory

Not only did she separate herself from organisations like the Chamber of Commerce, but she highlighted that her art practice involved things like cheap yellow tape. Her statement constructs an “us and them” of corporate or business leader power and independent, DIY artists. Although she explained this division in terms of an autonomous individual artist (herself) and abstract power (Chamber of Commerce) she frequently called for the social and financial recognition of labour in DIY activities. In FG1 she emphasised that events like *PAW* entail a lot of unrecognised, unpaid labour. She defined a major issue with such events as "there's nobody there just like caring, just holding” (*FG1*, 2022), no one offering emotional and financial support for the often invisible people who work to make events happen. However, as is discussed by the group, it is not clear where further funding might come from. In a period of austerity, it is understandable for Hannah H to seek financial support from “business leaders”, but Rachel was happy to distance herself from those possibilities.

Rachel’s rejection of direct corporate relationships, and her rhetorical style, point to a political orientation. She often frames her statements in a humorous way, for example, in relation to her point about unrecognised labour saying, “you know, the Lord Mayor isn't inviting you to their salon or whatever, to say, well done” (*FG1*, 2022). Butt and Rogoff (2012) suggest that taking a less serious approach to culture can counter “high-brow culture and institutional officialdom” (p.11), but further to this, in a political sense, humorous acts of resistance have been used by anarchists as a method to counter or show-up power (Loizidou, 2023). At many times throughout FG1, she made the whole group laugh and often couched her remarks with funny metaphors. One could read this humorous approach as subversive.

In FG2, her tone in relation to subjects regarding the recognition of labour became far more direct. In reaction to Donna and Hannah H using statements like “things just happen”, she countered directly by saying,

> It's a complete fallacy that they just happen… the stuff is led… But maybe what we all need to get better at doing is like identifying who's doing that. When are they doing that? How are they doing that? Why are they doing that? (*FG2*, 2023).

She had previously expressed an idea that the simplest way to recognise labour was to pay people for their time, but this articulation took it further than financial renumeration. To recognise the motivations and practices behind DIY events is to instil a sense of care beyond the notion that such events are good for the area and extends a notion of DIY practice to networks of support. Asking that the who, what and why of DIY practices is brought to the fore is akin to asking that a network of localised support be instilled through community and cultural spaces. This is reminiscent of a classical anarchist position that "advocates an extended network of individuals and groups, making their own decisions, controlling their own destiny" (Ward, 1996, p.26) through mutual support that allows individual freedom. For Rachel, the appeal of working in DIY ways is the support it can offer to those that are currently not recognised, offering individuals the means to continue in their cultural practices.

For Rachel, DIY practice and networks of support link to elements of Nudge's working practice. Rachel stated that Nudge work to create permissive spaces, "where people feel that they can bring things, they can do things, and there won't be huge barriers in the way" (*FG1*, 2022). Nudge's intention to create permissive space is counterposed to "not looking for permission" (Donna's phrasing). Rather than a celebration of individual "creative buzz" that does not ask for permission, Rachel framed Nudge as a place that creates the conditions for creative action, particularly for those who might not have the pre-existing cultural or economic capacity in terms of time, money or confidence to work in a creative or DIY way.

6.4.5 CO-FOUNDER OF A COMMUNITY BENEFIT SOCIETY – HANNAH S

Hannah S is a co-founder and director of Nudge. Nudge does not frame itself as an art or cultural organisation. Perhaps for this reason, Hannah S remarked:

> The whole conversation was quite art focused wasn't it, because I remember spending a lot of time generally through the conversation, feeling quite outside of it because I do actively participate with cultural stuff, and as an

> organisation we do. But less so with that kind of British Art Show, Art Weekender kind of stuff (*FG2*, 2023).

I will take up the distinction she creates between art, culture, and community practice in the next section. It is interesting that Hannah S said this while commenting in the first focus group that she felt the loss of *PAW*. She appreciated *PAW's* ability to "intelligently match people, artists with spaces" (*FG1*, 2022), the reuse of space for people who live locally to Union Street being a primary concern of Nudge[12]. Many *PAW* events have happened on Union Street using Nudge spaces.

In previous conversations with Hannah S, and other Nudge staff, they have expressed a distrust of artists and the way they have approached Nudge to conduct projects (Sloggett, 2020; Kelly, 2020). They felt that artists often approached them with an extractive mentality that did not respect the work expertise they had developed when working with vulnerable communities, using them as access to work vulnerable groups. However, despite her self-removal on subjects such as art and culture, Hannah S articulated many of the traits described in literature on the subject such as working in a community self-help fashion (Richardson, 2008). Further still, she made incisive comments regarding the nature of what DIY might mean to her, even if she feels removed from subjects relating to art and culture.

Hannah S commented on the importance of paying people properly, and trying to show people that their time is often worth more than they think. In a general sense, this correlates to Rachel and Gabi's emphasis on the recognition of labour. She stated that, in her experience, women regularly undervalue themselves. She also described a specific case where she spoke to a group of graffiti artists that were resistant to Nudge paying people to do artworks on the street. She asked why they did not value their work and then explained to the focus group "we ended up like doing something together" (*FG2*, 2023). This example shows that Hannah S values art and cultural outputs that would be described by many as DIY.

[12] https://www.nudge.community/whatwedo

Hannah S's practice of fostering self-value in various practices on Union Street is complicated when she commented on Hannah H's suggestion about logging *PAW* as a city event in FG1. Hannah S said:

> We started to have a conversation about like, how do you get it logged as a city event, all of that kind of thing. And actually, that's almost like looking for like validation rather than money, isn't it and that's quite interesting because I've kind of like, personally, I've kind of given up on that (*FG2*, 2023).

This extends Donna's idea of not asking for permission to not asking for validation. Highlighting that when Donna claims to work in a non-permission led way, she still accepts that there are those with power who have the right to give it. Hannah S could be understood as saying, regardless of what anyone outside of Union Street does, just 'do-it-yourself'.

In her discussion of *PAW*, Hannah S also commented that there was enough freedom involved in the organisation of the event that "randoms could come through and go, at the last minute, 'I want to do a thing', and all of that sort of stuff" (*FG1*, 2022): as an event, *PAW* was inclusive and had the organisational agility to give a platform to any kind of artist or maker. Further to this, she said *PAW* had "enough sort of structure there to make really quite a big thing happen with not huge amounts of money". These comments frame *PAW* as a DIY event in some of the terms already discussed, but as Rachel had pointed out, a notion of permissiveness is valuable for Hannah S and Nudge. She included KARST as part of a network that has created the conditions for local people's personal development, highlighting that someone who had been given support and eventually worked for Nudge now sat on KARST's board. She says:

> to me, there's something around like a pipeline for people… It's like those kinds of things they don't need to be directed, it's almost like creating the conditions where individuals can see that they can be valued (*FG2*, 2023).

The emphasis on individual progress through mutual support also connects her views to a position reminiscent of anarchism, drawing her closer to Rachel's position on how to think about ideas relating to DIY.

6.5 CONNECTIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

In these focus group conversations, two major themes emerge regarding ideas that relate to DIY and similar terms such as grassroots, independent, non-permission led and the creation of "permissive spaces". One sees creativity and DIY working practices as a form of urban development, where a creative buzz has made things happen, but that these practices also need to sit with power holders from other areas and sectors. The second is a DIY that needs to recognise all labour that contributes to cultural events, creates the conditions for others to work in and with culture, and does not associate itself with other forms of power. Listening to ways participants spoke about subjects related to DIY, Donna and Hannah H fit into the first category, Rachel and Hannah S fit into the second, and Gabi does not fit in either, instead offering critiques of both.

At no point do the discussants directly disagree with one another regarding the meaning of terms like DIY. Everyone finds the concept appealing for its ability to progress Union Street in terms of an active culture, even if ideas of what that means specifically do not align. How is it that a set of terms can be used in agreement, with clearly diverging practices that support the terminology? The first position could be theorised as a liberal view of urban development associated with Landry and Florida, while the other, as I have already suggested, could be aligned with anarchist ideas of mutual support. I will go into more detail of both to frame how the group's use of DIY is constellatory – divergent and overlapping in ways that have a significant effect on how they are drawn together through such a term.

6.5.1 THE LIBERAL VIEW OF DIY

A view that prizes creativity as a place-making tool – a tool that creates Plymouth's USP - is a key element of urban development strategies that situate creativity at their core. Such a

view places value on the professionalisation of cultural activity, while also allowing culture to be a key driver in changing the reputation of a given geographical location. But it is also important to highlight that the discourse surrounding these ideas is not settled but can be "better understood as an organic process, carried out on different fronts, based on the imperfect combination of disparate ideas" (Segovia and Herve, 2022, p.2). With particular reference to Landry's work, Segovia and Herve (2022, p.6) point out that such rhetoric focuses on the economic opportunities associated with cultural development, rather than giving any emphasis to urban problems.

The first text cited in *Go Beyond: a visual arts plan for the city of Plymouth* (Plymouth Culture, 2016) comes from Charles Landry, who says:

> Plymouth is demonstrating a commitment to placing culture and creativity at the heart of city plans. This will work to steadily re-imagine and reinvent the city and engage a range of local people and new cultural visitors (Plymouth Culture, 2016, p.3).

In *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovation* (Landry, 2000) Landry explains a route to development that entails a professionalisation and depersonalisation of the already existing culture of a place. His method of urban development sees people, their creativity and imagination as key features of a new vision of development that circumvents "location, natural resources and market access as urban resources" (Landry, 2000, p.xiii). He asks that cultural practices do not rely on connections based on friendship so that they **"**achieve tangible and monitorable results" and that amateur projects are made professional to ensure they come to fruition (Landry, 2000, p.127). This creates a marked distinction between a non-professional set of people working convivially or informally and individual professionals that create concrete results that can be evidenced.

In the work of Landry and Florida a problematic link between places that are ready for creativity-led urban development but have weaker senses of community connection emerges. Florida says:

> places with dense ties and high levels of traditional social capital provide advantages to insiders and thus promote stability, while places with looser

> networks and weaker ties are more open to newcomers and thus promote novel combinations, resources and ideas (Florida, 2003, p.6)

Following the closing of most of the nightclubs on Union Street the area went into steep economic decline. As Hannah H, Hannah S and Donna pointed out in the focus groups, this led to a disregard from the rest of the city whereby "traditional power looked away" (*FG2*, 2023). This would have offered a context with weak social ties, ready for creative individuals to create projects without the need for permission, offering them the "opportunity to validate their identities as creative people" (Florida, 2003, p.9). This collection of individuals producing culture and therefore other forms of capital can change a place's image, shifting a public's idea of a location (Hewitt, 2011, p.23-24), laying the groundwork for capital to move in. From this brief overview of creative city rhetoric, the views of DIY put forward by Donna and Hannah H relate to a Florida or Landry style argument - individuals with a creative buzz can change an area's image. However, it is the notions of individual action and autonomy that they also invoke that link this conception of DIY to anarchist versions, specifically a feminist conception of anarchism.

6.5.2 FEMINIST ANARCHISM AND ORGANISATION

Hannah S and Rachel's comments regarding DIY and the creation of permissive spaces on Union Street is reminiscent of ideas of mutual support found in anarchist theory (Kornegger, 2012). While Rachel bucks the need for a relationship to wider networks of power or "the business sector", Hannah has given up on recognition from outside the area in favour of supporting a localised network of support. Colin Ward (1996, 1976) makes direct links between anarchism and issues regarding urban planning. He is concerned with how to shift urban planning and housing away from power centres, "from bureaucrat to the citizen… from passive consumption to active involvement" (Ward, 1976, p.11). According to Ward (1996), a key feature of anarchism in relation to social organisation is a theory of spontaneous order, which he describes as "the theory that, given a common need, a collection of people will, by trial and error, by improvisation and experiment, evolve order out of the situation" (p.31). Elena Loizidou (2023, p.8) describes anarchism as incorporating local understanding into political systems, providing and building from knowledge that

cannot be obtained from centralised planning. Both positions still place individuals as a key feature of their theoretical outlook.

Traditional anarchism has not been receptive to feminist concerns, broadly speaking, as the equal place of women in society (Brown, 1993; Kornegger, 2012; Loizidou, 2023). Kornegger (2012) makes a distinction between a "rugged individualism, which fosters competition and a disregard for the needs of others, and true individuality, which implies freedom without infringement on other's freedom" (p.26). A feminist reading of anarchism still places individual freedom as paramount, but changes the perspective of who individuals are, and how to support their freedom. L. Susan Brown (1993, p.3) describes how anarchism and liberalism have more in common than is generally recognized. She says "[a]narchism shares with liberalism a radical commitment to individual freedom while rejecting liberalism's competitive property relations (p.1). Brown (1993) suggests that liberalism will always be caught in a paradox between putatively free individuals and "instrumental market relations" whereas, anarchism "takes the freedom of the human individual to its logical conclusion" (p.144). In that picture, every person is free and equal.

For both Brown (1993) and Kornegger (2012), anarchism and feminism share the assertion that any theory that supports private property or centralised power of any kind will always subordinate at least some women. Only social structures based on "obligation modelled on promising [and] free self-expression and discussion" (Brown, 1993, p.146) can produce feminist and anarchist worlds. To think of a promise, for example, as a binding, or to imagine a context where anyone is free to express themselves seems very different from a liberal formulation that frames creativity as an expression of personal agency rather than a communal enterprise (Mould, 2018, p.61), and where promises are secured by contracts. For a promise to have meaning, the speaker must have some control over what they promise. Promises serve as a kind of commitment and extension of a person's agency into a shared public realm. From an anarchist and feminist perspective, mutual support is the key to individual freedom and self-expression, whereas for liberals, it is the individual's ability to act for personal (often economic) gain that is central.

6.6 CONCLUSION TO DIY

McKay (1998) says that "the construction or reclamation of space, with its attendant problems, is a central area of action and concern for DIY Culture" (p.28). This rings true for all focus group members; everyone wants to see the buildings of Union Street in use again. Also, it seems, the members of the group agree that DIY practices can positively contribute to such developments. However, as I have shown, the analysis of DIY's use tends towards two opposing economic and political theories. When DIY is used in the focus groups it is in connection to how people can produce and engage with arts and culture. All focus group participants want to reinforce cultural production and participation in Union Street, and all seem to agree that DIY practices have gone some way to extending cultural practice in the area. There is nothing in the term DIY itself that promotes one way of using the term, and there is no definitive boundary around its use. The term is part of a discursive repertoire used by people engaging in a complex set of practices, but these practices do not necessarily overlap.

Although there is theoretical complexity to Brown's (1993) helpful articulation of the cross-overs between liberalism and anarchism, it does not match the lived complexity of a group of people discussing and practising in a range of ways in the focus group and Union Street in general. The distillation of various articulations from the focus groups such as people not asking for permission in contrast to the creation of permissive spaces, or creative buzz versus cared for and held labour, still asks for a reduction of how people articulate and practice in their various roles. These are just a few aspects of how DIY is thought about and used. Moi (2017) says that to understand an object of study we must "do our utmost to see the situation from the other person's point of view, yet without relinquishing our own perspective" (p.228-9). Through an analysis of a shared piece of terminology, I have attempted to present various views to create a constellatory picture of how the term DIY is used in relation to Union Street. However, this leads me to further areas of analysis, such as, given these diverging perspectives, what would it mean to have shared values? Is there an agreement in how to speak about value? Finally, what are the implications of a localised value system when placed in relation to wider conversations of the value of art and culture?

7. Values

As noted in an earlier chapter, as an opening facilitation tool in FG1, I asked the group to take part in an *Impossible Conversation* (IC). When people slowly started reflecting on the stories they had heard, one commented that “it felt like I recognised each of the things or places or experiences, they definitely rang true as experiences of Union Street” (FG1, 2022). Another person said, “I think it's really important. Listening to people's names makes it almost more creative for me when I'm listening to it” (FG1, 2022). The same person continued, “I think value sits within everything that I heard, like the value of time, people, moments, food. Just, yeah, it's just the value of culture and time” (FG1, 2022). For the speaker, the encounter of individual people (emphasised by names) sharing collective activities was a clear expression of the value of culture expressed by the group. This vision of value connects a contemporary art space like KARST to a community benefit society like Nudge. According to the group’s use of “value”, the creation of such spaces and then people spending time together in them *is* culture and it *is* valuable. This understanding of cultural value came very early in our discussion.

Although the framing given to culture above came quickly in our discussions, how such value could be expressed more widely proved ineffable for the group. The conversations over the course of FG1 and FG2 address many areas relating to arts funding and the difficulty of expressing value beyond the arts and cultural sector. Jill Ebrey (2016) describes cultural policy as **“**deficient in its neglect of everyday life” (p.165) by which she means the terms of cultural value have been professionalised and removed from grounded “everyday lived experiences” (p.165). She also describes a professional system of values that sees economic impact as paramount, where individual experience is prized over communal practices (Ebrey, 2016, p.165). It was telling that through the IC method, the group did not struggle to discuss value because the conversation was between people who, for those moments at least, acknowledged each other’s everyday experience as valuable. A main concern for me is the difference between the explicit practice of valuing which in a professional framework is called evaluation, and the implicit value systems that are or are not shared by the group. In the next section I will discuss how art and cultural evaluation as a practice can be problematised before moving on to discuss how valuing is divergent between different professional fields. However, before doing so I will address some established discrepancies in theories relating to value.

Joel Robbins (2013) makes some useful distinctions between value and values. He says value is often discussed by Marxists theorists, for example, in terms of exchange, or production orientated value, whereas values are "those things defined as good within a society or social group" (Robbins, 2013, p.100). There is the exchange value of an object on the one hand, and the things people think are worthwhile on the other. David Graeber (2013) complicates this distinction by pointing out "[w]e speak of value when labor is commoditized [but] the moment we enter the world where labor is not commoditized, suddenly we begin talking about values" (p.224). This links value and values through different discourses, but the position of "money as universal equivalence" (Graeber, 2013, p.224) makes a link across boundaries. Graeber (2013) goes on to list things that are not and should not be commodified such as truth, beauty, loyalty and integrity and points out "[t]he value of 'values' in contrast lies precisely in their lack of equivalence; they are seen as unique, crystallized forms. They cannot or should not be converted into money (Graeber, 2013, p.224). How can we speak about the value in the change in character of an area? If we consider this complex of definitions and interests in terms of the Union Street Party, for example, we could speak about the growth of economic value due to heightened footfall, but also about the value of a person who performs on a stage gaining confidence. Is the value of that confidence only to be exchanged in their potential on the job market, or could it be seen as a good in and of itself?

In the following sections I frame the practice of valuing within art (those people funded by ACE) as evaluation to connect the group's concerns to wider arts policy. This allows me to contextualise the focus group's conversations with wider critiques, showing that what they found difficult or challenging is not unique to Plymouth or Union Street. There is a tension between the ambiguities of what people are required to do for funding and what they actually do, like and want in local contexts. By framing local practices of value to wider conversations, the Union Street context can be associated with conceptualisations of cultural democracy that would see values as diffuse. In an early text, Owen Kelly (1984) argued that culture was currently very centralised, and "the values of one particularly powerful group" (p.152) were imposed on everyone else through culture. He argued that over time, "these values appear as neutral and as natural" (Kelly, 1984, p.152). For a public or community to be able decide what is good would require an open conversation regarding what value is. As Graeber (2001) puts it, "the ultimate freedom is not the freedom to create

or accumulate value, but the freedom to decide (collectively or individually) what it is that makes life worth living" (p.88). Laugier's (2020) notion of an ordinary ethics based on what people practically care about becomes important here. Rather than using shared values as a descriptive endpoint (as one member of the focus group attempted to do) I frame valuing as a practice. This does not generalise the meaning of value across cases but asks that ordinary speakers express their judgments on their use of the term within specific circumstances (Moi, 2017).

Graeber (2001) discusses the pernicious attempt of neoliberal ideology to encompass every form of value under the logic of a global market. Jeremy Ahearne (2009) points out the often occluded connection between cultural policy and wider economic goals of the public body that distributes such polices. He says "the actual impact of policy upon culture may not always be where we are accustomed to look for it" (Ahearne, 2009, p.151). As was shown in my analysis of *PAP*, there was a policy transfer (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015) between the urban development and international connectivity aims of Plymouth City Council, ACE and Plymouth Culture. A given area of cultural policy may serve a dual role, both to support strategic visions of government (national and local) and culture linked to what value means in the first place. These concerns "collide and intersect, whether or not these or other terms are used to describe and mask the processes involved" (Ahearne, 2009, p.151). These works speak to how policy might be authored and how certain pictures of value might be disseminated. My aim in this chapter is to draw out various conceptions of value held by the group and to show they are in part dictated by the different fields participants work within. Does arts policy get in the way of localised judgements over what value(s) mean and how it is practised – a publicly formed conception of value?

7.1 VALUE AND FIELDS

In FG2, the idea of shared values was put forward as an overarching theme or umbrella term of the first focus group discussion. One participant said:

> I don't remember that striking me when we had the conversation but watching it back, it's all about value. Do we value ourselves as a city? How do other people value us? Do we value the time it takes to do stuff really well? Do we value the

> volunteering? … That came across really, really strongly to me as a kind of thread throughout the conversation (FG 2, 2023)

Two aspects of this statement are striking; first, the speaker refers to an "us", secondly, the idea of value seems to be a way to connect the various threads outlined such as a city, people, time and volunteering. The above quote suggests that values are a way to draw various areas of life such as art, culture and community action together. In this formulation, value might be considered a category that acknowledges and appreciates various "textures of life" (Laugier, 2020, p.2). According to Laugier (2020), this notion of texture "refers to an unstable reality that cannot be fixed by concepts, or by determinate particular objects, but only by the recognition of gestures, manners, details and styles" (p.2). Values are not set, and valuing is a practice of recognition or acknowledgment that is continually restated and redefined through the performances of a community or public.

The group and I discuss different activities as "fields or zones" (FG2, 2023), evoking a Bourdieuian (1990) discourse where different fields denote aspects of life such as politics, religion, art and production (p.150). Throughout this section I will use the term field to refer to differing activities relating to art, culture, and community work. Bourdieu (1984) links the idea of separate fields to language and the limiting effects of certain discourses. He says, "the political field in fact produces an effect of censorship by limiting the universe of political discourse, and thereby the universe of what is politically thinkable" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.173). My interest here and throughout is how art and cultural policy discourses might limit what is thinkable in the art and/or cultural fields, even to the point of what the limits of such a field might be. One of the FG participants captures Bourdieu's idea of language and fields perfectly when she discusses arts funding and evaluation practices. She said, "it feels that it's designed to exclude people, like legal specialist language or medical language, because if you don't get the phrasing that they use and the words they use, you can't even have a meeting with them" (FG2, 2023). Through specialised discourse a field such as professional art production and management can become crystalline and remote from those who are not fluent in its lexicon.

The group's discussion of values outlines a tension between different working fields that have their own discourse, and the idea of having a shared set of values which can be realised in practice. The group suggests that arts policy has strict boundaries around certain terms

that render its aims difficult and off putting. To develop a notion of different fields having different understandings of values, I will look at some ACE discourse surrounding evaluation, that is, the practice of valuing within ACE policy. I will show that ACE attempt, contra Moi (2017), to lay down boundaries around what is meant by value within evaluation practices. This imposes a top-down definition of a theory of value, ignoring the nuances of how culture develops in a specific area.

An emphasis on generalisable meanings is often found in discussions of arts evaluation. ACE's 2017 Quality Metrics, that cost approximately £2.7 million, and was imposed on many NPOs is an example of a standardised approach to data collection that hinges on a collection of terms having set meanings that are imposed on those who receive funding. Respondents (staff at NPOs) were asked to rate projects along the following lines:

Concept: it was an interesting idea
Presentation: it was well produced and presented
Distinctiveness: it was different from things I've experienced before
Challenge: it was thought-provoking
Captivation: it was absorbing and held my attention
Enthusiasm: I would come to something like this again
Local impact: it is important that it's happening here
Relevance: it has something to say about the world in which we live
Rigour: it was well thought through and put together. (ACE, 2017)

The system was administered by the Culture Counts platform, an "application and web portal that collects data on arts and cultural experiences based on standardised metrics" (Gilmore et al., 2017, p.282). Gilmore et al. (2017) say the intention for imposing the system was "the belief that it will assist arts organisations to improve the quality of their work through better understanding the value of their product" (p.283). There are several benefits to such an approach, predominantly the ease with which an organisation that uses the system can justify their work to funders through clear statistical data (p.289). However, the system "restricted the kinds of responses audience members might give [and] the survey questions were biased towards positive responses" (Gilmore et al., 2017, p.289). The steer towards positive responses, or the avoidance of failure will be discussed below in relation to the FailSpace project.

Before analysing how the subject of evaluation was discussed by the group, I would like to point out the inherently problematic nature of the above categories or metrics. D'Ignazio and Klein (2020) point out, "it is essential to ask questions about the social, cultural, historical, institutional, and material conditions under which [such] knowledge [is] produced" (p.152). They write that a feminist approach to understanding data requires that the context of collection be considered (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020). Many academics who work in cultural policy emphasise the closed nature of the groups that might answer and therefore steer the results of such metric-based evaluation (Belfiore, 2009; Gilmore et al., 2017; Jancovich, 2017; Sedgman, 2019). But beyond the field specificity of respondents in ACE evaluation practices, the material conditions of the respondent at the time of response must be considered. Language and meaning are tied together through complex practices that make up our lives. When terms are removed from their ordinary context it gives the impression that they might have base or core meanings – the process of abstraction implies fundamental stability or stasis. Take the example of *captivation* above; respondents are asked to determine if *it* was absorbing and held their attention. Does being absorbed have an inherent character? If it does, would our valuing of feelings of absorption be as significant? I have been captivated by a poster before, but not absorbed by it. These questions may seem pedantic, but they emphasise culture as contingent and particular.

In FG1, one participant said she felt statistical information would be helpful to express the value of their work to non-arts audiences. Statistics would offer a way to "cut through" professional arts discourse. Another participant offered an example that captures the inherently problematic nature of standardised metrics that determine quality or value. In response to the comments regarding statistics for showcasing value, she said:

> maybe we could say that [cultural participation] has an impact on health, okay great, but should we collect stats around that, and how the hell do we do that? ... how much of that is to do with doing that creative activity that day, versus hearing that your electricity bill is going to be two and a half times as much as it was last month? (FG1, 2022)

Regardless of who responds to such questions, the material conditions of their lives in that moment might affect the response. As the same FG participant said, "it's like the fabric of

our lives and our relationships, and so, you know, it can change from day to day" (FG1, 2022). Statistical data is useful in many situations, however, as the FG conversations show, a concept such as value is highly contested and negotiable, on personal and collective terms. Rather than imposing a framework to capture an average understanding of value or quality, the experience of facilitating the focus groups suggests that perhaps there should be a move to listen to people who are making those judgements, forming ideas of value through everyday practice. ACE have attempted to standardise value by collected statistics via a standardised terminology. In the FGs, such statistical representation of value was seen as useful to be able to share value across different fields, but other FG members pointed out the variable and messy nature of how people actually live and experience value. The arts policy discourse is not up to the task of fully capturing cultural value in these terms.

7.2 ART LANGUAGE AND POLICY

> I do realise when we're talking about where we sit today, if a lot of the words and the language and the messaging around our sector is really hard for us to digest, and particularly within contemporary art, the sector I work within, you have to then question what does that language mean when you're trying to engage. (FG1, 2022)

The above quote from the first focus group frames a contradiction: a situation where someone within a field such as contemporary art is fully aware that there is an issue with their own professional discourse, but that does not mean they know how to 'speak' with it. Alana Jelinek (2013) reminds the art world that they themselves are the ones who create their own discourse. She says, "the institutional definition of art reminds us that we collectively define art and therefore we define its value" (Jelinek, 2013, p.8). Jelinek's "we" is the artworld, but this rhetorical collectivisation does not help to get an individual or group outside of the discourse they help to create. She points out that "normative language operates so that certain phrases or concerns indicate worldliness or aptness to the moment" (Jelinek, 2013, p.51). The discourse considered apt by a specialist group changes through fashions, which in turn has the capacity to influence the conditions of funding, processes of cultural valuation, and even what is considered or understood as art.

Arts policy, a subset or governmental arm of the artworld, is often “insular and self-referential” (Jankovic, 2017, p.110). A point the participants in the focus group picked up on through the following quote I included in the keyword booklet: “We are clear that excellence cannot be separated from the people that value it, and that this relationship will be relative, subtle and complex” (ACE, 2013, p.25). One participant highlighted the statement to the group, but it seemed that it had piqued everyone’s interest already. Many jokes ensued based on what the statement might mean, “who wrote it, and why?” (FG1, 2022). One participant mockingly performed the role of the hypothetical author, gesturing to another participant that “you wouldn’t understand, it’s too subtle and complex” (FG1, 2022). The FG response shows that they realise that there is a group which authors policy, and others that read it. There is a hierarchical and often patronising tone to how policy is delivered that Leila Jankovic (2017) says comes from “a narrow range of voices from the professional arts, with a self-interest in retaining the status quo” (p.109). As discussed in the following section on DIY, humour is often subversive, used here as a form of agreement between the group regarding their feelings of being patronised by policy rhetoric. What is also of interest is that they position themselves as an audience for this discourse.

The language used by certain funders was a clear divide between those who work in art and those that work in community action – the arts field was deemed by some to come with some patronising and nonsensical discourse. The group agreed that trust in working relationships is of great importance, but that the discourse found in the keyword booklet was not comprised of “trusting sentences” (FG1, 2022). Another participant continued that the discourse feels “exclusionary, and I mean, if you're trying to exclude someone that's already a lack of trust” (FG1, 2022). Hannah S, co-founder of Nudge, explained that even though ACE has directly approached them and asked that they apply for funding, the discourse employed in ACE policy documents and funding applications has been enough of a barrier for them to never apply, stating that “it’s definitely a language thing” (FG1, 2022). Another participant jokes that Nudge is desirable for ACE because they would “fulfil their strategies so well” (FG1, 2022). By this she meant that ACE wants to show their impact on communities that are socioeconomically marginalised (ACE, 2020). For example, ACE state that they are “beginning the new decade with a far clearer understanding of the role that culture can play in building the identity and prosperity of places, creating stronger communities, and inspiring change” (ACE, 2020, p.7). Cynically, one could suggest that if ACE

fund Nudge, an organisation deeply invested in creating a stronger community with more prosperity in a specific place, ACE could frame themselves as having contributed to those effects.

ACE policy documents are generally very positive in tone and very uncritical of government. Readers are told that there has been a "golden age" of creativity (ACE, 2010, p.7), or that there has been a "blossoming of creativity across the country" (ACE, 2020, p.6) supported by ACE's work. Although there is recognition that funding has been reduced, there is never any direct political critique aimed at government, which is not surprising. This absence of critique seemed to extend to focus group participants who derive most of their funding from ACE, remaining silent when others discussed the failings of ACE funding and policy. The participants who work at NPOs made fun of some of the policy language, but that did not extend to direct critiques of ACE practices. Also, participants who did not see themselves as coming from the arts field found ACE language alienating. This suggests that art language has a splintering effect on the group, reinforcing the notion of art as a separate field away from more community focused work. When talking about different ideas of value, "[t]he one thing one can be sure of is that they will never knit together perfectly" (Graeber, 2001, p.88). However, a lack of cohesion in discourse to the extent that community groups are averse to working with arts funders suggests that arts policy discourse can prevent its stated values – to work with communities that are socioeconomically marginalised (ACE, 2020). An analysis of this splintering effect is compounded when considering the practice of valuing, that is, evaluation.

7.3 FUNDING AND EVALUATION

Within the timeframe of my research two national cultural evaluation projects have been established: the *Centre for Cultural Value* set up in 2018 following research by Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska (2016) and the recent AHRC funded *FailSpace* project (2020). *FailSpace* emphasises the benefit of seeing success and failure as interconnected and essential to "foster understanding" (Jankovic and Stevenson, 2020, p.4). Bradby and Stewart (2020) emphasise the way the "language of 'transformation' became embedded in aims and funding criteria" (p.4) which can be heard in the language used by FG participants

regarding the creatively driven changes that are happening around Union Street. The value of a cultural project here is not about the cultural event or object itself, but about the success of culture in changing a location economically or socially. Due to the reliance on ACE for funding “curators and artists have grown adept at presenting their work as transformational and life-changing” (Bradby and Stewart, 2020, p.5). Rather than ACE being indicative of a funding climate in general, the focus group discussed the difference between ACE language and evaluation and non-art funder language and evaluation. In FG2, after watching the group’s discussion on the subject one participant said, “the language hasn't caught up, the decision-making process hasn't caught up, the way that funding is distributed just hasn't caught up” (FG2, 2023). She goes onto suggest that ACE is operating with a set of policies that are from 2010, both austere and focused on value for money rather than simply values.

At points, the conversation turned towards community-focused funders that Nudge are more inclined to work with; funders that are more “relational and trusting” (FG1, 2022) and that work on a more “place-based, longitudinal basis” (FG1, 2022) as opposed to ACE that the group characterised as emphasising outcomes and delivery. Hannah S described the relationship Nudge have with some of their funders, particularly the Local Trust. She explained that “you just get a sense of a funder don't you… this funder kind of gets what we're doing, and I can explain it in a way they're gonna understand and I understand” (FG1, 2022). She described a dynamic where evaluation is given space and the funder “explore[s] alternatives and are consciously trying to also learn from the process” (FG1, 2022). This is in direct contrast to how Eleonora Belfiore (2012) describes the “narrow instrumentalism that has come to dominate public discourse” (p.109) surrounding arts policy. She describes a situation where a “limiting utilitarian and calculating logic to arts policy” (Belfiore, 2012, p.109) is primarily interested in quantifiable returns against investment provided. This logic of calculating return on investment dictates the relationship between arts organisations and ACE, strongly directing how values are shared and judged between the two. The means by which ACE seek evaluation dictates the valuing practices of arts organisations.

In contrast to the lack of openness to failure or critical self-reflection found in ACE and ACE-funded people and organisations, I would like to highlight an article commissioned by The Local Trust written by David Boyle and Steven Baris titled ‘*Us and them’: A mindset that has failed our communities* (2021). The overarching theme of the article is the idea of an “us and

them" mentality between those with power (funders and politicians) and those without (community members). They describe the perceived need for centralised control that has led to a tick-box culture that exacerbates an "us and them" mentality in those with power. They diagnose "an assumption of superiority and a fatal need to control, and just below the surface [they] can sense toxic undercurrents of contempt and fear" (Boyle and Baris, 2021, n.p.). They say solutions are often delivered in a top-down manner. Those solutions come with "deep-rooted assumptions of community incompetence, combined with an underlying fear of the 'other', and intensified by a desire of governments and institutions to centralise… seemingly regardless of the results" (Boyle and Baris, 2021).

Boyle and Baris connect this approach not only to general ideas of metric-based systems of evaluation connected to neoliberalism, but also to the Big Society rhetoric pushed by the Cameron and Osborne government that took power in 2010. Big Society brought a new emphasis on civil society and communitarian ideas that were new for the Conservatives (Glasman, 2010; Sage, 2012). However, the Conservatives still awarded most contracts to large private companies instead of local organisations (Sage, 2012, p.376) which is indicative of the critique put forward by Boyle and Baris. Ultimately, with competing aspects to Big Society such as a "shrinking state, marketization and a paternalistic view of personal responsibility" any serious move towards a more communitarian political formation was doomed (Sage, 2012, p.376)[13]. Boyle and Baris (2021) say that we need to go beyond a rhetoric of delivery, but a policy context has evolved that produces documents rather than produce spaces for exchange. This failure to see exclusion amounts to a silencing of community voices, or a lack of recognition of any voice other than the familiar. In this sense, top-down delivery disregards any claim to voice. Inherently, through our voices "there is the idea of a claim. The singular claims a shared, common validity" (Laugier, 2015, p.64). The denial of common validity, of the idea of every person having a voice, is exemplified by a funder's inclination to gather metrics rather than create spaces for exchange.

The text, located on the Local Trust website, described the many failures of community focused support from government and the charity sector (of which The Local Trust is a part). Structurally The Local Trust is not significantly different from ACE, delivering government money for specific and localised needs. The difference in public discourse available,

[13] For extensive critiques of Big Society in comparison to Blue Labour see Glasman (2010) and Sage (2012)

however, is stark. The Local Trust is trying to learn from the people who receive funds, not asking for numbers, but making space and time to talk, to hear voices. This has allowed Nudge, recipients of Local Trust funding, to work in a certain way,

> We don't talk about delivering. We don't talk about numbers. We've never looked at how many people come through our door or anything like that… so it drives a very different focus to what you're doing and its sort of given us permission… it's also given us the ability to pass that behaviour on to other people… we've been able to pass on that culture they've created. (FG1, 2022)

In the case of Union Street, the reflexivity evident in the commissioning and publishing of the Boyle and Baris texts, and the experience of the Nudge staff member show a marked difference to the frustration felt by the group in relation to ACE. A line can be traced from a funder's public discourse and their approach to the evaluation of a community organisation and then onto the people they encounter. Rather than a set of beliefs, aims or premises, values are performed through practices of evaluation. Rather than an approach that evaluates work done with their money based on this set of criteria, Local Trust are asking what they can learn from processes in situated contexts. In the words of Hannah H, who receives Local Trust funding, "they value that reflection as part of the fund and part of the process… your time to [have those conversations] is funded, because they value that" (FG1, 2022). Evaluation is often funded, but the example given above frames the practice of evaluation is valued to the point where questioning the shape evaluation could take is itself funded. Reflexivity in practices of valuing is valued. This approach creates a space for exchange, for voices to be heard and acknowledged – it is interested in the public that receives its funds.

7.4 ACE AND WIDER ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

ACE and local authorities have experienced funding cuts since the financial crash in 2008 and this has significantly affected regional arts funding (Harvey, 2016; Jancovich, 2017; Rex and Campbell, 2022; Rimmer, 2020). I frame this in general terms as the group discussed a general climate that ACE is working within. My interest here is less the economic intricacies of arts funding that flow towards Union Street than the general economic culture the

participants understand themselves to be working with or within. Broadly speaking this is often labelled as neoliberalism, more pointedly described by Belfiore (2012) as narrow instrumentalism. Robbins (2013) outlines the philosophical ambiguities between value monism and value pluralism, between the notion that there is one overarching, super value, for example happiness, and many different values within and between various cultures. Neoliberalism could be seen as the attempt to impose a super value that encompasses everything under a single value – the market (Graeber, 2001). One participant said that she felt ACE had "pandered to a centralised, metrics-based discourse… [ACE] reps tell me that [they] used to be a development agency… [they] have to prove our worth in a metrics that is centralised" (FG2, 2023). Her statement prompted me to admit that I often frame ACE as "the bad guy" (FG2, 2023), which other members of the group also admitted to doing. The participants' reflections, although not new to me, were a stark reminder of a weakness in my own predilections towards constructing narratives of good and bad, winners and losers, that block more sober analysis of wider considerations that affect specific cultural contexts.

In FG1, participants agreed that ACE strategy rhetoric does not match the processes that ACE require those seeking funding to go through and in FG2 Rachel summarised the group's conversation by saying,

> Like we were talking about in the video there, the language hasn't caught up, the decision-making process hasn't caught up, the way that funding is distributed, just hasn't caught up. It's still working to kind of set of metrics and priorities that are like, you know, 2010 onwards. Like priorities that like 2010 onwards (FG2, 2023).

The policy discourse has changed to be more inclusive, but the application processes and the evaluation procedures those who receive funding are asked to go through, do not match the more progressive tone of recent ACE strategy documents. Here, language is not understood as part of the procedure, there is rhetorical discourse and people must read between the lines to receive funding. The focus group participants often seemed to be stuck in a similar groove where they could not find the right words to express value to those from outside the arts field, or even to those within it. Graeber (2001) suggests the importance but also difficulty of defining the values of human creativity and action which leads people to define value in terms of the tokens they use to denote it, such as money. When speaking

about value "[p]eople tend to see [money] as the origin of the values they embody and convey" (Graeber, 2001, p.81). Although ACE is more subtle than defining their worth simply in monetary terms, the policy discourse influences how those that receive funding deploy their own discourse around value. Austerity and neoliberal frames of justifications might explain a certain aspect of the demands placed on ACE which is then passed on through policy documents and funding applications.

When we discussed why ACE uses metrics-based discourse, one participant asked, "Is it to do with the need to overlay credibility onto something that people maybe don't see as worthwhile?" (FG2, 2023). ACE must fit into our current economic justification culture, where art is not seen as valuable by the wider political logic we currently live within. This conceptualisation comes with an implicit feature that sees art as a thing that value might surround, rather than a set of cultural practices that stem from or produce ways of valuing. Rather than art and culture being a set of interlinking practices that includes participation, art here is more defined but limited.

7.5 TALKING ABOUT VALUE

One of the participants contributed to the writing of a keyword policy text, *Culture Plan Plymouth 2021-2030: A place-based Culture Strategy* (2021). She explained that the difficulty of making documents with such a board scope clear is that "they are what they are, and we fall into a trap of writing them in certain ways because it does speak to certain audiences" (FG1, 2022). The audience, it seems, are those that work professionally in arts and culture. She went on to explain that following the writing of the 10-year strategy, there should be a process of translation into languages that other fields will understand. The difficulty of writing policy for a wider audience is linked to the difficulty of expressing value beyond the sector.

At times during the focus groups there seemed to be a distinction between meaning and use, as if words were fixed and the participants were not offered the right ones by policy to express value appropriately. Moi (2017) highlights that when we use words, we are taking action. She says, "word and world are enmeshed… anyone who thinks that language only does one thing— namely represent or refer— will soon discover that they can't even explain

how we understand the simplest sentence" (Moi, 2017, p.155). Value is an ongoing practice where the language used to express value is doing something. This begs the question of what the group do, or would like to do, when they talk about value.

The words to express value were framed as specific yet elusive. Expressing value was at times associated with expressing statistical information clearly. It was as if value was something already out there in the world, a fixed category that one could appeal to when justifying practices. Valuing was not seen as a process and practice in and of itself. However, in more reflective moments in the second meeting, participants recognised that the problem was less about the wording and more about having limited time to talk. Articulating value is not a special conversation, rather the conditions to have such conversations within professional arts practice are limited. The participants describe a situation where the terms by which value can be assigned are limited, and that even that process is not given enough time and space. In exasperation, one participant said:

> you know, we're moving on to the next thing, like straightaway, you know… there's so much value in that time to reflect and think about, where does value sit, but it seems really important when we're sat here to talk about it and see the value of sharing and learning. But the time and the language, beyond the delivery, is where I think it just doesn't happen. So, language is part of that, but also, its time. If we struggle with that within our own sectors, how do we extend to other sectors? (FG2, 2022)

The working conditions of arts and cultural management, in stark difference to community-based funders such as the Local Trust, do not often allow the practice of sharing value. For the speaker above, a major drawback of this is the inability to clearly express value beyond her own field. When people are time-poor the appeal of something like the Quality Metrics grows. A standardised, cross-sector, time saving tool seems like a potential solution to the messy work of evaluation (Arvanitis et al., 2016; Gilmore et al., 2017). Also, a shared criteria of value presented statistically is easier to deploy in political debate (Belfiore, 2009, p.350). However, as the group recognised, rather than evaluation conducted as a formal exercise at the end of a project cycle, they suggested that evaluation should be practised throughout a project, from start to finish. There is a desire for arts and cultural learnings to "feed into the bigger picture, which it has to, because actually, that's where we get strength" (FG1, 2022).

For some of the group, the most important factor in expressing value was for that value to be recognised by people beyond arts, culture, and community practice. Whereas for others, value was something that should be fostered locally and maintained within the area. This moves away from value and values as stable criteria to an ongoing practice of what people want and care about and how to facilitate resources and the conversations regarding their control.

7.6 MAINTAINING VALUE

Cultural value was often contrasted between an economic cache that might develop through art being produced within Plymouth, and the possible benefit to communities that are affected or involved in art and art making. A confounding feature of the constellation formed around shared value was the discrepancy between art's potential economic value and the opportunities it might create for a localised community. In FG1, a participant expressed a desire for critical dialogue that could be opened beyond her sector (art and culture). She said,

> We should also be talking to the retail sector and the business sector and the education sector and the whatever. Because I think that's where the interesting feedback comes from as well, where those people can almost be critical friends (FG1, 2022)

This position contrasts with another participant who had issue with two quotes referring to relationships from the keyword booklet: "The mutually beneficial relationship between culture and the visitor economy remains important for Plymouth" (Plymouth Culture, 2021, p.15) and "We also recognise the importance of the sector's relationship with the private sector, and the partnerships and shared learning that can emerge from these links" (Arts Council England, 2013, p.31). She explained that as a community focused artist, she does not feel connected to the private sector, and that the lack of interest from the private sector is mutual. Much of her discussion relating to the quotes is humorous, potentially to avoid an explicit confrontation with other speakers who see great value in exchanges with the business sector.

The same speaker's tone is more direct when she describes what she thinks are the underlying motives of the relationship between art on Union Street and city-wide economic concerns. She says, "you make it all nice, we'll make money out of it… it's like, that's not a relationship, that's, you know, sex work" (FG1, 2022). This metaphor leaves us in no doubt that she sees a link between the policy rhetoric found in the keyword booklet and processes of gentrification. However, it is not clear if her reference to sex work is used to link Millbay and Union Street's reputation as a redlight district to broader waves of urban development in the area. If so, the point she makes is less clear. However, to use the notion of exemplarity that Norval (2012) develops, sex work provides a perfect exemplar of male/female power imbalances, shifting "our gaze onto the mechanisms through which senses of wrong are inscribed into existing political languages such that they are reconfigured as a result" (p.813). Through the comparison, the exemplarity of sex work opens a new horizon of possible subjectivities that "place demands on the moral order" (p.819). The example links modes of gentrification that see an area's buildings as assets to be bought and sold to that of women's bodies as objects that can be bought and sold. Given the area's history, this is perhaps insensitive, but given that all participants were women, this exemplary deployment of gendered rhetoric has significant impact.

Through the notion of a "bigger picture", also expressed as sharing "beyond our sector", a division in the group's attitude towards value starts to become apparent. For those working in larger funded art and cultural organisations, there is significant emphasis on sharing beyond the cultural sector, with the chamber of commerce, for example. Whereas those who do not work for larger cultural organisations are more concerned with developing and maintaining value within the area. This was also reflected in the conversations we had in the room, with a community focused, non-arts professional saying that the conversation from FG1 was very art focused and that she felt outside for much of the conversation. After watching extracts from FG1, she commented,

> I thought it was interesting, in the second conversation that we didn't really talk about the invisible work, we went right into funding and delivery. And there is like, the buildings are almost invisible work as well, like you need them to be able to do the things, but they're quite often undervalued through funding, or kind of, seen as too big and put over here… It's all these little things, but actually, it would have been better to… get that kind of infrastructure in place. (FG2, 2023)

This point makes clear that many funders and policy makers have not reflected what would be most useful on Union Street, that is, to maintain and renovate buildings that have fallen into extreme disrepair. Union Street has not been given significant attention since the closure of all the nightclubs. Nudge publicly state that one of their core aims is to bring buildings on Union Street back into use (Nudge, 2016). This is an approach that combines community, economic and cultural concerns, exemplified by the following statement found in their Millennium Manifesto (2021), a document that sets out their intentions for the former nightclub. It says,

> we aim to create an exceptional venue for music and other cultural activities, supported by daytime uses that contribute to the local economy we (will) make a building that benefits our community and the city (Nudge, 2021, p.10)

Here, an infrastructural investment is framed as beneficial to the area and to the wider city. Financial value will be drawn in through larger cultural spectacle that will benefit the city, including its "visitor economy" (Plymouth Culture, 2021, p.15) but the intention is for that value to be maintained locally. This approach of wider economic value contributing and being held locally could be described as a form of entrepreneurial municipalism (Thompson et al., 2020), or municipal socialism (Hanna et al., 2018). These approaches aim to counter the neoliberal emphasis on the privatization of public assets "by embedding the social objectives of democracy and distributive justice from the very outset within the initiatives and mechanisms of local economic development" (Thompson et al., 2020, p.1180). Nudge's point is that in Union Street's case, if a building like Millennium is owned locally, the cultural activities that take place within it will bring financial value to the area. If someone lives locally and works at Millennium, the money that flows into the building from outside is held in part by the local community. Graeber (2001) says "one has to consider the nature of the media through which social value is realized" (p.78). The buildings on Union Street can be seen as a medium through which value flows, Nudge hope that if a building on Union Street starts to be seen as a community asset, the reputation of that community will become associated with the cultural activities that take place there.

I use the example of Millennium because of its scale and clarity of use around cultural activities relating to music, but similar points could be made about other Nudge buildings. In

all of Nudge's ventures, there is an emphasis on "valuing the homegrown [and] appreciating the local" (FG1, 2022). Articulations of this notion in FG2 start to form a picture of how Nudge and other community focused people working in the area understand value and therefore what they are doing when they attempt to maintain value. One participant described the intention of Nudge as forming a "a pipeline for people" that can "root value locally" (FG2, 2023). In FG2, a Nudge staff member said,

> it's almost like creating the conditions where individuals can see that they can be valued. So, we're really actively trying to mitigate the risks around gentrification. At the same time, there's something about the individuals locally valuing themselves. (FG2, 2023)

Rather than a desire and difficulty in expressing value beyond the area to other sectors, the emphasis is on a locally rooted system that supports people in the area to value themselves through paid opportunities and cultural recognition. An example was given of someone who started working at Nudge now sitting on KARST's board. Although a board position is not paid, in theory this signals a shift where local people might have an influence on how KARST is governed, making it part of a system of assets that are steered by local concerns. The values expressed here would be local input into a cultural space that is financially recognised as valuable by ACE. In a performed sense, this could be described as the value of people having a voice within a local cultural ecosystem. Laugier (2019) describes voice as both a personal and general expression, that every spoken word is a claim to an *us* and opens up to the possibility of the political. Voice is at once an ability to express oneself and to understand others, because to have a voice we must have access to a community of speakers and listeners. Through the locally rooted pipeline of opportunity, people in Union Street can speak and be heard. Cultural recognition and a changing perception of the street has value, but this also comes with economic development which is more difficult to maintain locally.

The above speaks to culture's role in the development of a community identity based around shared values rather than an external view of marginalisation. Although everyone in the focus group agreed that Union Street and Stonehouse have developed in a positive direction, meaning there are more spaces being used for community and commercial use,

and more activities such as The Union Street Party that cater for people who live in the area, one participant offered a caveat by saying,

> you know, there are a lot of community workshops. And, you know, it's not just there to make money, but at the same time it's driving up house prices, attracting more middle-class people, it's becoming a very different sort of area. (FG2, 2023)

The same speaker, who had earlier questioned the independent nature of culture in the area, suggested that there has been a general "social enterprise-ation" (FG2, 2023) in Stonehouse and Union Street. Not only has there been a professionalisation of art and cultural production, but also a professionalisation of community development. This was summarised by a distinction between "high-culture and low-culture" (FG2, 2023), where the contemporary activities are seen as professional, funded, high culture and the activities of the past are unfunded, low-fi, low-culture. In FG1, Hannah S said she was kept up at night by the processes of gentrification, with Gabi highlighting how extreme the eviction rates had become. Hannah S commented that Nudge's strategy is to understand, "how the area can change, but change in a way where people who have lived there, often for generations are still living there. And that's a real tension" (FG1, 2022). Andy Hewitt (2011) warns that culture-led development will often only serve those already with power if it is delivered in a top-down fashion. For him, "the arts become a vehicle for public relations between the state and citizens" (Hewitt, 2011, p.25). In this formation, top-down art and culture is used to 'artwash' an area. If cultural production is led from outside and is not owned or rooted in an area, what has been there for generations will likely become less important. The top-down and professionalised versus the rooted and local speaks to a distinction between democratic culture and cultural democracy which in turn links centralised notions of value to more localised values.

Democratic culture is exemplified by ACE throughout its history (Cultural Policy Collective, 2004, p.14-21) and is characterised by the notion that certain cultural forms are more valuable than others. There is high-culture that people should have access to and should be funded, and low-culture that is less important. Whereas "high cultural practices have been overwhelmingly successful in securing state patronage… popular forms are for the most part left to the marketplace" (Cultural Policy Collective, 2004, p.14). The consequence of this formation is that popular cultural forms are left to the market to be developed or put aside,

gaining value through economic success. Cultural democracy, on the other hand, “revolves around the notion of plurality, and around equality of access to the means of cultural production and distribution” (Kelly, 1984, p.152). In this view, everyone has culture, and all culture should be supported. The question that the group seemed to struggle with at times was how to express the value of bringing art that is valued in a wider sense to a context like Union Street – what is the local value of high art’s aesthetic value?

The idea that value is inherent in certain art forms promotes the idea of a separation between various areas of culture – we cannot compare two art forms that both have inherent value, they both just are valuable. Ideas of democratic culture have entrenched the view of what is and is not worthy of state funding, exchanging perceived aesthetic value for monetary value, not for the exchange of commodities, but the spread of symbolic cultural forms. Hewitt’s (2011, p.31) concern is that culture is delivered to marginalized people to raise their aspirations. In this sense, culture-led urban development is patronising and placating rather than rooted locally. The naturalisation of cultural values Owen Kelly discussed in his 1984 text was present in the strictly separated fields the group adhered to in the early 2020s, where community, art and culture are separate. It is clear how community-action becomes conceptually separated from funded art and culture, but by looking at the practical activities of Nudge, we see the separation is not necessarily so clear.

7.7 CONCLUSION TO VALUES

At the end of FG1, I had asked the group what we had not covered in the conversation so far. Participants described a division between the city and Union Street, and between arts and culture. For many of the group we had not addressed the connection or lack thereof. I had described my interest as arts and culture, without a definition of what I meant by either term - how the group used and define such terms *is* my interest. At the end of the first session, I had framed Nudge as working in cultural terms. They house artists and have commissioned artworks on their buildings. In 2021 they commissioned William Luz and Stephen Smith to produce a mural on the side of Union Corner (figure 12.); also, The Plot is home to JarSquad, a social art project that “connects the dots between food waste, climate action, and combating social isolation” (JarSquad, 2023). However, Hannah S was persistent

in the view that Nudge does not fit within a conversation around arts funding or art on Union Street.

Figure 13. Mural by William Luz & Stephen Smith on the side wall of Union Corner. Image: Dom Moore

For Nudge, arts funding and policy is closely linked to art and culture more generally. It seems the professionalised and bureaucratic discourse that surrounds arts funding and policy is off putting - recall the comment “it’s definitely a language thing” (FG1, 2022) above. Grant Kester (1998) talks about the “artist as a vaguely defined (and highly mythologised) social type [that is part of] a more contingent and specifiable set of bureaucratic drives and rhetorics" (p.112). Art and culture are bureaucratic and practised by a mythologised group of people, but concrete practices of cultural production are not. However, it was not only Hannah S and Gabi who enforced the separation, Hannah H also upheld the divide by saying,

> there is a distinction between culture and art. And I think that [footage from FG1] was quite a lot about art, I felt. When you think of Union Street in terms of that cultural space it’s a different thing. I often think arts and culture are put into the one category… art is a very specific strand within culture more widely. (FG2, 2022)

She wondered if that was because of the people in the room, or the way I had framed the conversation. What interests me here is that at no point had I defined what I meant by arts and culture, and I had been explicit that the group had been chosen through the diagram process where other people had told me who I should talk to. Particularly for Hannah H, there seemed to be frustration that I want to group art, culture, and community-focused work together. The idea that Nudge might be working in ways that intersect with arts and culture was also rejected. The reinforcing of different fields came from both the arts managers and the community focused professional around the table. When I asked what a connection might be, the discussion came back to value, creativity and a DIY spirit – "talk[ing] about Union Street/Stonehouse… there is an underlying creativity amongst what people do and how they start and what drives them. And possibly, there's an artistic output" (FG2, 2023). Most of the group was more comfortable discussing various fields through abstractions such as creativity.

Separation between fields through professionalised practices instantiate the notion that art, culture and community work are to be understood as separate. This idea is reinforced by the required arts evaluation practices that are often based on metrics rather than the creation of spaces for sharing and establishing values. The focus group did not see themselves as sharing a field and therefore the difficult job of sharing values was complex. This is due in part to systems of values being based on a top-down conception of culture that either mythologises the role of the artist (Kester, 1998) or adopts a "rhetoric of art as an economic driver" (Hewitt, 2011, p.20). Open discussions regarding what values are shared by the members of the focus group (and others involved in Union Street's community and cultural practices) could lead to better collaborations and more rooted and established pipelines for developing and maintaining value. As I have shown throughout this section, processes of valuing are not shared across the different fields the group understand themselves to be working within. Throughout his work, Kelly (2023) emphasises a connection between community and economic politics, as strands that should be inextricably linked through cultural democracy. But these links take place "at the level of everyday life-as-we-live-it" (Kelly, 2023, p.136). Professional practices of valuing differ in different fields and offer a static sense of what is valuable, but value is also determined through our interactions, through "a process of comparison" (Graeber, 2001, p.87) where

we can project our different words for valuing into different contexts (Moi, 2017) and determine what kind of communities we can form around systems of value. The FGs and feedback method offered a microcosm of how values can be discussed and compared.

The group unanimously agreed that having time and space to discuss value was valuable. The task of expressing value to other sectors and of maintaining value locally would be strengthened by seeing more connection between the group's various fields. The FGs facilitated this through the requirement of participants having to listen to their own and each other's modes of articulating value in FG2. To adapt Moi (2017, p.15), adapting Wittgenstein (PI, §115), the FGs allowed the participants to see a picture of value that holds them captive and therefore realise that a certain idea of value is not compulsory. This was not fully achieved, but as will be discussed in the final section, members of the group started to see their involvement in a public that included everyone in the room, as well as the area more generally. An important feature of publics is that they provide a forum for determining shared values between individual people.

8. The People – and back to the Communities and Publics of Union Street

In this section I analyse how the group discussed a notion of 'The People'. Although 'People' was a keyword, 'the people' and the range of constellatory frames that stemmed from its use come from a quote found in *PAP*. In relation to the term, I have been able to analyse the group's relation to individual identity, how space relates to ideas of communities and publics, and how gendered notions of professionalism or expertise are critiqued by the group.

The notion of professional roles does not neatly align with modes of performances within the focus group. People are not only their jobs, and there were personal connections to Union Street's cultural development for everyone in the room. Nonetheless, an official role or status might influence how a person speaks or is heard (Goffman, 1981, p.131), but outside of a context such as an office, studio or meeting, the normative aspects of those contexts are to be found through conversation itself. As I have already mentioned in relation to the vulnerability of the ordinary, Laugier, (2018) shows that a speaker's failure to be understood or appear reasonable in such a context can give away their ethical commitments, as the morality of the context is not predefined. Morality, Laugier writes, "is defined by the possibility of remaining in the 'normal' domain of error, which is what we might call that of the excusable" (2018, p.392). In other words, everyone in the room is looking to each other to determine what is acceptable (or excusable) to say on any given subject. At times it seems that some participants held back or did not articulate their views as stridently as they might, but that is to be expected in conversations between people who broadly share a view of what is acceptable, while also having differing views or interests. 'Values' and 'DIY' are terms that are familiar to participants through their professional roles; the nature of conversation was different when less directly professionalised terms were in question. 'The People' offered good example of this, as did notions of public and community space. When the speakers voice more complex personal perspectives, their position in a shared public become more apparent.

'People' was a Union Street keyword. It was closely aligned with 'individuals' throughout the conversations I had regarding the diagram process. Generally, 'people' was used to highlight the importance of certain individuals as leaders within cultural production while also often being used in contrast to group formations like 'community'. The focus group participants pointed out, there is a double meaning in that there are people (individuals) and *the* people, an abstraction like communities or publics. After the midpoint break in FG1, I asked the group for their reaction to the following keyword statement:

> For the love of all things without boundaries can we inspire, support, nourish, develop and maintain our public spaces and remember they are for the people by the people. (Doherty, 2016, p.20)

This came from *PAP's* Principle 5 - *listening to young voices*. It is credited to Emma Morsi, who made the statement as a "young journalist at Arts Council England's *No Boundaries* conference in 2013" (Doherty, 2016, p.20). She has also worked for Situations in the past. The statement is made in the context of the privatisation of public spaces. If Morsi had made the statement directly to the group, it would probably have been received more sympathetically. I read it out loud without context and emphasis was placed solely on the words used rather than the author's voice. It should be noted that even though Morsi is quoted, the document itself gives little context to the statement, only that it was performed by a "young person" (Doherty, 2016, p.20). Perhaps at the time of speaking the statement had great effect, "the peculiar authority or status vested in the speaker or author is often the most essential part of what makes a speech performative" (Beale, 1978, p.235). The performative aspect of a speech act provides rhetorical force. Following JL Austin (1962), the power speech has over its audience is called perlocutionary. Nancy Bauer (2015) says, "the perlocutionary effects—those consequences that I bring about by ("per") my locutions" depend on the audience and the context of speech (p.56). In the case of *PAP*, for the readers in the focus group, the perlocutionary force of the statements shifted from a rousing 'we the people' to a 'you the people'. The rhetorical intention of drawing the reader(s) together in a sense of solidarity regarding the management of public space had the opposite effect of making the group feel as if they were being spoken down to.

The group immediately made fun of the statement, performing the words with a deep, posh tone suggesting an authoritative, male, stuffy speaker. One participant suggested that it sounds religious and that she could imagine it being delivered from a pulpit. In FG2, another joked that the use of “people” in the phrase could be followed by “let them eat cake” (FG2, 2023), suggestive of an aristocrat looking down on lesser beings. One participant pointed out that “it’s a complicated sentence” (FG1, 2022) with another contributing saying "I don't relate to it… I don't see a reality to it" (FG1, 2022). The reaction suggests an aversion to abstractions that quickly become patronising. Although there was a general dislike for the statement, it was perhaps one of the most activating in the keywords booklet as it provoked a series of group exchanges regarding who ‘the people’ are and how this marker might shift depending on context. The statement explicitly links two abstract notions, that of ‘the people’ and public space. Through the group’s conversations about the intersection of these two abstractions, some concrete articulations came about regarding how participants relate to those ideas. The various aspects of the two abstractions shine a light on the concrete interactions between the two terms. To begin with, I will address the implications of the group’s conception of space.

8.3 PEOPLE AND SPACE

The connection between geographic boundaries and notions of community and public space were complex within the FGs. In the first meeting, when we spoke about public spaces in and around Union Street, we did not get beyond listing examples before the subject moved towards the civic management of space, or that such spaces are not owned “by the people”. The group listed the road, a small square next to Dance Academy that leads to Phoenix Street and small areas near the Octagon roundabout as the only public space they could think of near Union Street. Everyone agreed that public space is limited and that there is little opportunity for children to play publicly in the area. The annual Union Street party was not spoken about in terms of an intervention into public space. Such an event, although occupying public space, could be considered a community event. Through the Union Street party there is a temporary restructuring of space from the bottom up (Crawford, 1995, p.5). The road is closed, community members decorate the street and set-up stalls selling food and crafts. From Nudge’s perspective, the temporary restructuring of public space via a

community take-over or intervention has allowed that community to gain some control over the conceptualisation of the people who live in/inhabit the area. The street party could be thought of as carnivalesque in that the control over infrastructure (roads, street lamps, pavements) is subverted for a time, but the previous aggression and drunkenness associated with edgework is nowhere to be seen.

In FG2 I asked the group to distinguish between a public space and a community space. Each participant had a coherent response, all taking it in turns to contribute to a definition. A distinctive aspect of what constitutes a community space for the group is that a specific person or group allows access or gives permission for it to be used. Whereas when it comes to public space, the group aligned with Gert Biesta's (2012) definition, "public spaces are precisely those places where things can be done without the need for anyone to give permission" (p.684). Community spaces were aligned to "a specific group [who] enjoy that space and use it" (FG2, 2023). That group have the "opportunity maybe to have more influence, to be part of taking care of [it] or being responsible for it" (FG2, 2023). This notion of access and permission was then also associated to how the speaker as an individual can behave. For example, regarding community spaces, one participant said,

> I have to enter them trying to see whether that space is for me or whether I'm for that space… I have to understand what that space is about to know whether I'm okay in that space, or whether that space is okay with me. (FG2, 2023)

It is notable that when I asked about public space in the first meeting, the group offered a list. When I asked about public space in relation to community space, the group were more inclined to offer reflexive responses. This could be because the group was more confident by this point, but either way, this marks an important aspect of an ordinary language approach. Through an emphasis on distinctions made by the group, I could elicit more detailed descriptions of what key terminology meant to them. Ordinary language is "language that works, language that helps us to draw useful distinctions, carry out tasks, engage fruitfully with others" (Moi, 2017, p.161). Through engaging with each other, the group expressed themselves as precisely as necessary by highlighting connections and comparisons in their conceptions of public and community space. My enquiry regarding the "for the people, by the people" quote and its relation to the reality of Union Street required a working definition of what a public space is. Through an appeal for comparison between community

space and public space, a far more nuanced set of articulations were voiced. Although conceptions of public space and publics, or community space and communities do not align neatly, the emphasis the group gave to specific groups of people who must be asked for permission is significant. For the focus group, in ordinary language, a public is faceless, whereas a community is known or can be approached interpersonally.

Towards the end of FG2, a significant subject of conversation was the ways the area had changed over the last 10 to 20 years. As has already been mentioned, gentrification was explicitly referenced as a process that was already happening before the actions of the people in the room could have an effect. The enactment of the Mackay Plan had already started to alter the space to the south of Union Street, with the Millbay Masterplan (Vision for Millbay, 2006) and Urban Splash's development of The Royal William Yard both starting in 2008. There was agreement amongst the group that such developments did count as gentrification and that they had little control over such developments. Two members of the group explicitly questioned their role within the changing nature of the area, with Donna saying,

> [I]t's quite weighty, just listening to how people question it around the table… these questions… you know, good growth, quality growth, and actually, how far we're gonna go and what does that look like, for the future. In terms of getting it right… you know, securing the buildings, and then, you know, making sure that within that, you know, how are you driving that? where do the voices sit within that? [who] is at the table…? there's some positive stuff that comes from it, and yet some of the questioning that we're doing within it is questioning the process of what we're actually doing. (FG2)

There are two elements of this passage that are important. The first is the acknowledgment that this is a "weighty" subject; there is a moral significance to the subject of gentrification and her role within it. This is a distinct example of a moment of reflection on her position within the process. Through listening to how she and others spoke on a subject via the feedback film method, a connection between language and practice became apparent. As Grimmel and Hellmann (2019) put it, "language and practice are essentially two sides of the same coin and, therefore, also constitute the foundation for any social inquiry" (p.201). Through the acknowledgment of the group's articulations, practice and social context

become apparent. She says “we” (I take this to mean the other participants) speak about the growth of creativity in the area but there seems to be a seriousness to how this moment is taken. It is not clear what “good” or “quality” growth exactly mean for Donna, but in prior moments it was connected to the “creative buzz” that has contributed to the area’s development. It seems development in the area is a normal subject, but the ethical dimension of their act is not always considered.

The second significant aspect of the above statement is the realisation that other people in the room are also considering processes of gentrification or development from another perspective. Rather than the development of a creative culture in the area, Donna acknowledges (through listening to how others talk in the focus groups) that people who were already occupying the area should have a say in the process, asking “whose voices are at the table?” This realisation marks a broadening of a public as “becoming public is necessarily connected with the condition of plurality” (Biesta, 2012, p.684). As Zerilli (2012) says, a common world is built through listening to other voices within that plurality. Significantly, the moment of acknowledgment is reciprocated. Rather than agreeing with or rebuking the statement, Hannah S extends the thought by making a connection between voice and the buildings on Union Street. She does this through the concept of cultural memory, saying,

> [T]he memories that are attached to buildings or spaces along Union Street [are] hugely valuable. But all of that was already destroyed and gone… you can't recreate what was there 20 years ago, it needs to be something different, but there's a responsibility to honour all those memories, but also they're really diverse… you pick up all those nuances, and that kind of memory, that are sort of imprinted in a building… how do you reflect that in a future use and honour that appropriately? (FG2, 2023)

Here we see a different set of concerns that are built upon the comments of the first speaker. This passage complicates the idea of community on the street. This is not simply a case of developers changing the area and making it attractive to more affluent people (although another participant does accuse Nudge of contributing to that process). As Nudge take over buildings on the street through rental or purchase - buildings that have been left to dilapidate for many years - they contribute to the area becoming more economically

valuable. But as was discussed in previous sections, Nudge also try and maintain social and economic value for the people who have lived there for some time. The difficulty expressed above is not how to maintain economic value for a neighbourhood community but for a set of communities of interest such as Gabi's Goth/Metalhead community who have historic attachments to buildings through past cultural activities. This distinction highlights a crossover between Kelly (2023) and Gorz's (1999) differentiation between associative and constitutive communities because for some people, their association with a certain cultural form becomes central to their identity.

The Nudge staff member explained that with the Millennium building, the "loudest voices" (FG2, 2023) come from people who once went to Warehouse. This was a prior incarnation of Millennium and a major venue for early Rave and House music in the city. For C103, previously JFKs, another focus group participant explains the building's significance to a specific community:

> JFKs was like a goth/metalhead community. It's where I met my partner… a lot of people our age, who go to Black Cats or the Nowhere [Inn] were the same people… we've known each other since we were teenagers, and we're all very invested in that [C103] building… it's like the community is still here in Plymouth, but we move from place to place… we've all sort of got our eye on Nudge… we're all like, what are they going to do to that place? Because it's special to us. (FG2)

The description of a community feeling turns what was once associative towards constitutive. Kelly (2023) describes the possibility of walking away from associative communities because that membership is voluntary (p.111). The above quote, with its mixture of cultural scene and personal, formative experience complicates the idea of walking away. JFKs embodies a sense of community, and the speaker uses that to place pressure on Nudge. Communities continually negotiate internally and externally their "visceral reactions to pressures" (Kelly, 2023, p.110). Nudge became guardians for C103, a building that is central to a community formed around a cultural scene. But they are also positioned as representatives for a special community, for people who have "lived there for generations" (FG2, 2022).

I was told in conversations with participants who worked on the diagrams that Nudge had a strict mile radius that determined who they worked with (they have subsequently stopped using this parameter). This narrow geographic limit came with problems as living within that distance does not mean a person is attuned to the concerns of others within the area. For Tanesini (2001), attunement in this context is framed as someone expressing commitments in a similar fashion to those that are already considered part of a community. In the FGs, Rachel suggested that such boundaries become porous through the possibility of a person's attunement to a context. She lives outside of this mile radius, but works in Union Street, and is there frequently, so has become valued by the Union Street community. Rachel recognised in FG2 that although she might have a voice in some decision-making processes, she may not be a full member of the community.

Using Hannah S as an example, two participants suggested that a sense of trust had developed because she is seen as a resident and a mum as much as someone who works for Nudge. She was able to wear those "other hats" (FG1, 2022) while also being a Nudge representative. This was also associated with an ability to listen and see things that others cannot. Veena Das (2007) places emphasis on listening, care, and acknowledgement in the formation of community, which rejects a notion of geographic limits and ethnocentric boundaries placed on community. One participant said, "you're there a lot [and can] spot potentials [and] you can spot opportunities that somebody who sits in an office in Crown Hill can't" (FG1, 2022). (Crown Hill is an area outside of the city centre, approximately five miles from Union Street). Familiarity within a context and sensitivity to that context was spoken about as an important aspect of Nudge's success. This can extend what an existing community is. By speaking in new situations, with new people on new subjects, we reveal "our commitments [and] invite others to look and see things in novel ways. Sometimes we create new communities in this way" (Tanesini, 2001, p.18). Hannah S is attuned to local concerns and articulates those concerns beyond that community. This frames her as an appropriate community representative.

8.4 WE'RE SOME OF THE PEOPLE

In the closing moments of FG2, I asked the participants if they were 'the people' and what 'hat(s)' (read as identities or roles) they were wearing in this room and were these different

from when they were ‘The People’. This was intentionally provocative. I knew there was not a clear answer to the question but as everyone had reacted so strongly to the *PAP* quote in FG1 I thought it was worth returning to the subject. There was an immediate desire for clarification, for me to define what I meant by the term. Someone asked, “do you mean the people of Union Street?” (FG2, 2023). Another recalled the confusion and frustration they had felt in the first meeting and in a humorous tone said, “Oh yeah, we got stuck on *who,* and does it matter, and do we need to be?” (FG2, 2023). The group had negative associations of how terms like *the people* and *the community* were used in the policy discourse. Their desire to problematise these terms also affected how they viewed my use of the term. Although my question was intended to prompt discussion of what the term meant *to* them, it also led to a view that I was imposing an identity *on* them. My question, “are you the people?” was received as “you are the people” which comes with a certain sense of responsibility and power.

In response, the group discussed the problem of defining groups in abstract terms such as community or ‘the people’, problematising the way in which such normative concepts are deployed. This led to a critique of the diagram method in establishing them as people I should invite to the focus groups. For some of the group, this critique involved a disavowal of the power or responsibility of being considered ‘the people’. Although I framed the initial diagram as a partial representation, one that should be changed by those that knew the context better, Gabi and Donna in particular saw it as an assertion that defied who could and should be added. This was particularly surprising given the sheer volume of names added by Gabi. My research practice is characterised by “attempts to get the reader [or viewer] to test something against her own experience” (Moi, 2015, p.195). When I had conversations with participants who had edited a diagram, about the diagram, they did not critique the process by which I constructed it. The participants in the focus group had been selected through the diagram method, and when this fact was discussed, the diagram was critiqued. Donna pointed out that the diagram was only as useful as a guide to the perspectives of people I had approached to fill in the diagram. She said,

> Maybe we're the people in terms of the people that you went to, to fill in the diagram, but actually, who weren't the people on the diagram? Maybe we are the people for who you went to… the diagram might have said we’re the people but only the people that someone might have known. (FG2, 2023)

She went on to point out that appearing on the diagram does not represent a set of "valuable relationships" but simply that participants filling in the diagram knew who they were. This implies that in some way, even if limited to people I asked, they were people of significance. The FG participants were mentioned in connection to the most nodes, so regardless of the quality of relationships, they were understood to have many connections. Gabi followed by saying, "I wouldn't put everyone I knew in the area even if they were connected to the arts. I knew a poet that just sort of used to wonder around, but he wouldn't fit in that diagram anywhere" (FG2, 2023). These concerns highlight the fact that regardless of what I said I wanted participants to do with the diagrams, some still took me to be projecting an authoritative perspective of what an arts and cultural ecology is. It was implicitly (mis)understood that I had a defined idea of art and culture and the people I thought be worthwhile speaking to. The diagramming method was developed during COVID to be delivered at a distance and although effective in some ways, it instilled an idea for some participants of me as a removed observer who only wanted a certain kind of data.

Two distinct characteristics of how FG participants understood their role within the research process emerge from the above points. On the one hand the above critique reinforces a top-down normative idea of art and culture that they performed through the diagram process. A participant not including a local poet on the diagram, even though my prompt was open to them doing so, reinforces a notion that there are certain people who "fit". This brings a notion of 'The People' back to professionalised fields as discussed above. Here my concerns are with a different question that relates more directly to 'The People'. The diagram identified these participants to be invited to the focus group, so why did some disavow the responsibility of being a person others consider to be significant? This question relates to a notion of exemplarity which is useful to address why someone might or might not be included on the diagram, and why being included and identified as significant (in terms of my research) might be uncomfortable.

Aletta Norval (2012) uses the notion of exemplarity to show how some people's behaviour inspires others through a mixture of similarity and difference; from being similar enough for us to see ourselves in them, while also seeing that they are beyond us. She says, "[t]hinking about the exemplarity of the example, enables one to focus on both the distancing from the given order, a turning away, and the possibility of another way of being and acting—a

turning toward—that is inscribed in it" (p.820). To hold someone up as exemplary places a burden on them because it separates their behaviour from the failing of others. She follows James Conant (2001) in suggesting that a person seen as an exemplar places a burden on others to emulate while not copying. Exemplars show others through concrete actions, a way of behaving they can aspire to (Norval, 2012, p.820). In this sense, exemplarity speak to claims of what is common in that certain people seem to define what a group share as a common ethic (Norval, 2012, p.812), even if that is felt as an uncomfortable responsibility.

If a person is seen as the exemplary example of a community member, an artist, or a connected artworld person, they are both representing an idealised sense of a practice, while also being close enough to a context to be seen as living within it. For someone to be shown as highly connected on the diagram means they are an example of a connected person, and through my methodology the focus group members become exemplars of the connected person. Norval (2012) says "the educative role of the exemplar can only be fulfilled if someone or something is both related, similar to us (exemplarity is a mark of this), and different from us (exemplariness is an indicator of inessential difference)" (p.823). The exemplar is part of but aside from others, they carry, even if implicitly and reluctantly, a responsibility to represent others. Even if they are not directly nominated as such, exemplars could be considered community representatives. This notion is complicated by the plural nature of community membership and the different positions people have within both communities and publics based on race, class, gender, and professional status.

According to Michael Walzer (1983), professional roles often come with an "inflation of specialized knowledge and expertise" (p.156). Through the specialisation that comes along with professionalism a distinct hierarchy forms between various positions. Some professional fields try and subdivide, with additional groups seeking to isolate their performances "where competence can be certified and, to some degree at least, monopolized" (Walzer, 1983, p.156). Through Bourdieu's (1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) work a link is made between professional fields and specialised forms of discourse. The focus group added the role of expert to the discussion of professionalism. A participant said, "you could argue that someone that's lived locally for generations is an expert" (FG2, 2023). Another commented that "the position of external experts, or external observer, I think is a false position. I don't think it can exist" (FG2, 2023). I have argued that communities can be framed through their use of language, but a fluency in some discourses

would not be seen as professional or expert. For the group, a tension emerged in relation to community membership and one's professional or expert status. In fact, the task of much community-based research is to show that such community-based expertise is valid (Banks et al., 2019; Goodson and Phillimore, 2012). A further detail added by a member of the group related to a contextualising aspect of how such labels are applied to certain people:

> In a meeting before this I was told that I wasn't professional. [they said] If you were to do this professionally, you'd be doing this... I didn't feel like, able to kind of push back and go, actually, I am a professional... there's like a kind of hierarchy... locally, I think people would see that we are capable, and have a track record, and would be seen as maybe too professional… The hat you wear, it's not always a choice… sometimes it's made for you depending on the environment that you sit in (FG2, 2023)

This brings into stark relief that terms like expert or professional are contingent and, as Gabi pointed out, often gendered. In many instances, it was striking how often focus group members reminded me, each other, and any potential viewers of the footage, that they were not only their role (artist, managers etc.). They were also Plymothians, mothers, residents, and human beings – "I'm always a human being" (FG2, 2023). These articulations situate how the group's sense of what an expert and professional might be. The rejection of exemplarity by some members points towards the impossibility of seeing themselves through solely professional frames because they are with others who may not share their professional standing, not in the sense of a hierarchy between different fields, but due to the mutual exclusivity of those fields. The rejection of being 'The People' opens a more plural notion of what an expert of professional is. This rejection has implications of what a public based around cultural and community production might look like in Union Street.

8.5 CONCLUSION TO 'THE PEOPLE'

Despite the emphasis given to separate fields that I have argued is based on professionalised cultural production; the group were drawn towards a community sense of themselves in contrast to a traditional public based on professional status. Gabi highlighted

this through her emphasis on having lived in Adelaide Street and realising that “all sorts of people live everywhere, you find, when you live there” (FG2, 2023). She goes on to note, “I’ve noticed, Donna, you'll often say, I'm from here, I didn't grow up somewhere fancy. This is who I am” (FG2, 2023). Gabi frames such statements as sometimes necessary to authenticate and justify her role as someone claiming community memberships or associated identity. Donna agreed and said it is a case of letting “people know that's your voice” (FG2, 2023). A voice is authenticated because it comes from, or understands a given community, and this should give that voice weight in public discourse. For the group, there was an irreducible connection between being a member of a community or public and the personal aspects of one’s life that could be brought to a role. Hannah H said, she’s a resident before she’s a director of Plymouth Culture, and when she goes to events, she goes as a mother. In the Habermasian conception of the public discussed earlier, personal motivations for our opinions could be seen as irrelevant or weak (non-rational); with this group, to their credit, their personal connections are entangled with their stake in the area’s development and their personal attachments to that process. This aspect of the group’s interaction points towards a certain sense of care – care for one’s role and work being entwined with care for the people who live in the area. In Laugier’s (2020, p.26) terms, this frames an ordinary ethics of care that emphasises a mutual dependence and vulnerability. Such vulnerability is less a weakness and more a commitment to a place.

A fear in basing moral or ethical frameworks (shared principles of what is right, wrong, good and just) on the ordinary is that it leads to a conservative preservation of morals based on “customs and traditions rather than on argued principles” (Laugier, 2020, p.14). In a similar vein to Carol Pateman and Charles Mills (2007), Laugier (2020) argues that the idea of a neutral and universal set of principles is a liberal ideal. Neutrality is only neutral for those that have decided the rule that is being followed (or imposed). There will always be, in every case, a difficulty of establishing the ‘*we’* that a tradition or principle is based on (Laugier, 2020, p.14). It seems that the group’s discomfort in accepting that they might be ‘The People’ is tied up with the responsibility that come with being a ‘*we’* that sets a standard. If we look to ordinary practices for ethical standards, ordinary because people in specific cases practice them through acts of care, then we do not need an *a priori* set of principles and the background standards “can be modified by practice itself” (Laugier, 2020, p.14). Public moral standards could find their origins and justifications in ordinary interactions, rather

than normative ideals delivered via public bodies like ACE. However, this would require spaces, both physical and discursive, to facilitate such voices to be heard as a public. Zerilli (2005) has shown the importance of certain physical spaces in feminist political progress. When reminding her readers of those space she says,

> we begin to appreciate the value of an action-centered conception of politics. We can see how any physical space can be transformed into a political one and, indeed, how it is that things become public. The peculiarity of such a space of appearance is that it exists only so long as people are engaged in speech and action (Zerilli, 2005, p.20).

People need to meet and express their views to form publics and the various ways people care and form ethical practices are expressed through the spaces in which publics are formed. Throughout the course of the FGs, the group became more comfortable speaking in terms of personal identity traits and commitments. The creation of a 'permissive space' where participants could share critical judgments regarding Union Street shaped the possibility that participants could become audiences of, and critical interlocutors to, arts policy.

The rhetorical and often abstract use of language in policy could be seen as necessary – policy must work across cases. My methodology offered a microcosm of how values can be discussed and compared. I highlight that the rhetoric of planning and policy was often characterised as an abstraction which did hinder interaction, but via conversation about what, how and who to value, the group understood more about Union Street's cultural dynamics. Policy rhetoric does hinder interaction, but conversation *about* policy encourages it. When terms are removed from their ordinary context it gives the impression that they might have base or core meanings – the process of abstraction implies fundamental stability or stasis. The group's reaction to terms like 'community' and 'the people' showed an aversion to abstractions that quickly become patronising. Through my approach of editing as analysis (represented through *Permissive Space*) the boundaries between what is abstract and what is exemplary use of language were highlighted against the backdrop of discussion of what the group cared about.

The focus group, seen as a community of practice, was drawn together by their ordinary dealings with terms such as DIY and 'The people'. Rather than any specific lexicon, the continual openness to conversation was important for the group to see themselves as part of a community. The often-obscure abstraction of policy language was worked through by the group acknowledging each other's response to that abstraction, bringing the policy discourse back down to earth in relation to concrete situations. This process had the potential to shift a siloed or field specific way of speaking to a group that could collaborate and be a critical public towards arts policy. Within such a public, acknowledgement of other living conditions, professional expertise, and interests can shift the ethical centre of gravity towards what is concretely cared about by a given group of people (Laugier, 2020). Creating the right spaces for voices to be listened to and acknowledged, spaces for judgments to be formed and exchanged collectively, are key to understanding how constellations of communities and publics can form and interact.

9. Conclusion

A theme of the conversation was how language bleeds into reality… Gabi, (FG2, 2023)

I began this research with a set of interlocking concerns regarding how language was used with and between community and art spaces. Union Street, with its history of nightlife, dilapidated buildings and contemporary fervour regarding both community and artistic activity has served as a suitable context to understand how arts policy affects such a context. Through a practice-based methodology informed by feminist ordinary language philosophy, characterised by processes of feedback and constellatory frames, I have zoomed in and out of Union Street. My methodology facilitated interactions and placed various articulations side-by-side so that they could shed light on each other. This methodology has allowed me to hold a mirror to how people speak about Union Street to generate new insights into how life is lived through language for Union Street communities and publics. Gabi's quote above is apt because language is best understood through conversation, and the fact that we can have conversations about Union Street makes Union Street intelligible.

In this conclusion I will begin by turning to the questions I set myself in chapter 4. I will then outline four distinct contributions to knowledge in relation to the following: Methodology – how a practice-based constellatory frame could be used productively in other contexts; Arts management – What an attention to constellatory frame and language shows about the field of arts management; Creative placemaking – The ways recent developments on Union Street contributes to and critiques the academic discourse on Creative Placemaking; Arts policy and public(s) - How a formation of a public in Union Street could respond to arts policy. I will end with some potential directions I could/would like to take the skills and knowledge I have developed in this thesis.

9.1 ANSWERING QUESTIONS

I began with the assumption that the abstraction of arts and planning policy did not match-up to a contingent and performed sense of community and publicness that I theorised as being relevant to how people interact through ordinary language. Through analysing my

own experience of Union Street in comparison to policy driven conceptions of publics, I was led to ask the following questions.

1. What forms of language use constitute the interactions between communities of cultural practice in Union Street?
2. To what extent do rhetorical uses of language found in planning and policy discourses feed, stimulate or hinder language use in the Union Street area?

My practice-based methodology constructed a frame through which to view Union Street and gather participants' perspectives, but each method I used also allowed for a problematisation of itself. I aligned with Moffat (2006) in the sense that my disciplinary coherence could be questioned, and new knowledge could be produced through the continual questioning of the relationship between participant and author. Feedback and a constellatory frame have allowed me to not only answer the questions above but to problematise my formulation of those questions.

To answer the above questions, I generated a set of keywords from the diagram process, a new set of terms emerged through the direct interaction of focus group participants: I moved from community, infrastructure, local, organisation, partnership, people, and relationships, to 'DIY', 'Values' and 'The People', but neither list is what constitutes interaction between various groups – this would only be to answer what lexicon is characteristic of a group. In retrospect, question one was framed in an unhelpful way as it asks for a certain set of terms, or distinct 'forms of language' that characterise collaboration or interaction. A better question would be what kinds of actions represent the ways people care for their community and locality, and how is that evidenced through language?

For example, to ask directly what DIY means would have resulted in a series of definitions of DIY. Instead, I was able to compare various notions of DIY through comparison which informed my own and participants' use of the term. Through feedback I was able to "pay sufficient attention to the particular" (Moi, 2017, p.101). An answer to question one might be language around a term like DIY as it is a catch-all for language that constitute the interactions between communities of cultural practice in Union Street. Participants connected over a valorisation of DIY, but that valorisation entailed different things for different people. For some it entails not asking for permission while still working within

national funding structures, for others it means creating an environment where others "feel that can do a thing" (FG1, 2022). To push further would only be to find that another abstraction such as 'creativity' as a cipher for DIY (or vice versa). If an understanding of language is based on what words mean to people it does not get us very far, but if language use is compared across cases, the ways people concretely care about other people, their community, professional identity and urban development, emerge through use.

As Conquergood (2004) suggests, a continual turning away from and returning towards abstraction can be productive and this points towards an answer to my second question. The abstract nature of some policy language instilled a sense of distance or 'unreality' for the group. Rachel highlighted that "there is an abstract idea of community, and that abstract idea of community gets referenced very regularly, and it gets used in decision making very regularly without much real thought" (FG2, 2023). Abstraction in policy rhetoric as a counter to ordinary articulation has emerged as a productive analytic focus of my methodology. Forming a constellation around values offers a picture of divergent understanding and practical implications of values among the group and in the cultural, artistic and community practices of Union Street.

The rhetorical and often abstract use of language in policy could be seen as necessary – policy must work across cases. My methodology offered a microcosm of how values can be discussed and compared. In response to question two, I highlight that the rhetoric of planning and policy was often characterised as an abstraction which did hinder interaction, but via conversation about what, how and who to value, the group understood more about Union Street's cultural dynamics. Policy rhetoric does hinder interaction, but conversation *about* policy encourages it. When terms are removed from their ordinary context it gives the impression that they might have base or core meanings – the process of abstraction implies fundamental stability or stasis. The group's reaction to terms like 'community' and 'the people' showed an aversion to abstractions that quickly become patronising. Through my approach of editing as analysis (represented through *Permissive Space*) the boundaries between what is abstract and what is exemplary use of language were highlighted against the backdrop of discussion of what the group cared about. This brings me to the first contribution to knowledge I would like to discuss, my methodology.

Before I started this research, Darcy Lange's video practice that documented voice and gesture to highlight a participant's "values and parameters of behaviour" within a "subtly political context" (Lange, 1976, p.18) offered a guiding principle for my practice-based methodology. His aim of not letting a single video or object become an end point, but for the results of documentation to be stimulants of further discussion and creation is a spirit I have taken through this entire process. The emphasis he placed on film as an activating agent for communities and publics was shared by Jill Craigie. It is difficult to determine the long-term effect of Lange's or Craigie's interventions, and time will tell what kind of affect I have had on Union Street's cultural constellation. I did produce a set of artefacts and techniques that facilitated a group of Union Street stakeholders to engage with Union Street's cultural ecology. This was done with a sense of feedback that encouraged a constellatory perspective of language use. I will address each method I used before summarising the overall contribution of my practice-based methodology.

The participatory diagrams I produced, although appreciated by participants for their level of complexity, served as a starting point that placed me as an external viewer. My representation of the people and organisations relevant to Union Street, although produced to be problematised, instilled a certain frame for some participants, guiding their interactions, and therefore the resulting data. My assumption that participants would over-write my perspective, or feel comfortable disregarding it, was foolhardy. Any picture offered to participants of a research context will impose the researcher's perspective. This affect would have been mitigated if diagram interventions had been done in person, over conversations about the links I had made. Although there were practical benefits in using the diagrams as a remote method (I had to because of COVID), similar methods could offer a facilitation tool if conducted in person, with individuals or groups. Similarly rich data would have been collected, and a resulting set of keywords would still have been produced, although they probably would have been different words.

The keywords offered an atmosphere of discourse that Plymouth based artists and arts managers have been working within between 2010 and 2020. The phrases I collected were removed from their policy context to highlight that policy often presents certain pieces of

language as having stable or core meanings, a position I wanted to highlight and disrupt. The keyword booklet had two distinct benefits: I had the opportunity to work with Alan Qualtrough; the booklet served as a facilitation tool for the focus groups. Alan is a local artist and highly connected, embedded person in Union Street. Making with others, as a form of ethnographic data collection, could easily have resulted from my interactions with Alan. A failing or frustration with my methodology was my inability to incorporate all possible avenues of research within this thesis. I am impatient with my own practice and this research process was a lesson in staying with specific themes and objects rather than flitting between various practical methods and outlets. This meant leaving some practice-based avenues I began to focus on areas that felt more fruitful. Although they were not formal elements of this thesis, my interactions with Alan still provided me with insights that shaped my thinking about the social and cultural dynamics of Union Street and Plymouth. I point this out to highlight that practice-based research, if reduced to distinct formal methods, would limit the potential of seeing research as an ever evolving practice – there will always be more contained within a research process than can be captured in its final outputs.

As a facilitation tool the booklet offered a way to introduce policy language which, when participants reacted to it, highlighted an interweaving of terminology and adherent practices. Such interactions offered DIY, shared values, and 'The People' as suitable analytic and editorial lenses. This was not because the group offered definitive frames to such terms, quite the opposite. The interactions, stemming from the booklet, presented a sense of vertigo, to use Zerilli's (2015, p.276) term, regarding the lack of a core meaning to DIY, for example. However, through filmic documentation I was able to evidence that this vertigo does not stop shared discourse, in fact the exchange of perspective is what publics are built on (Arendt, 1958; Warner, 2002; Zerilli, 2016). For me, editing as analysis has developed as a new way to approach various kinds of linguistic material through practice and I would like to develop this further in other contexts, potentially as a group activity. Although I recognise the heightened time commitment this would pose for me and participants.

The facilitation tools I used, including the booklets, discussions of the diagrams, *Impossible Conversations* and showing participants performances on film allowed a process of comparison that is a core methodological premise of this thesis and one that could be used in other contexts. For example, in the discussion of public space versus community space

the group's conversations regarding these abstract terms offered concrete articulations about how the participants related to each concept. The benefit of a feedback practice is the way it can facilitate interactions between terms, showing how the aspects of the two abstractions can shine a light on each other. Abstract terminology can stimulate articulations about concrete experience. This has implications for placemaking and arts management. Talking about value is an important part of a discursive repertoire used by people engaging in a complex set of placemaking practices (Cohen et al., 2018). The constellations that form around how people talk about value show that the uses of such a term do not necessarily overlap. My approach to facilitation, using diagrams, keywords to read policy and feedback film, offer methods for highlighting the complexity of abstracted terms and a route to bring them back to their ordinary uses.

Making *Permissive Space* and exhibiting my practice-based research at Peltz highlighted another methodological contribution to knowledge. Adopting a constellatory frame or approach allows specificity that can say something about a wider policy terrain that a context sits within, but this will always play out in specifics rather than generalities. A potential drawback in the effectiveness of my methodology was that I relied on a relatively small and committed group. This allowed a sense of trust and comfort to build. However, it did not include some important people for placemaking such as architects, city planners or developers. It is impossible to say what kinds of interactions would have resulted if everyone involved in Union Street's recent developments would have been around the table. I have offered a set of outputs that make claims beyond textual form, offering different aesthetic implications. On a conceptual level, constellation thinking does not offer definitive terminology to be considered when framing arts management, placemaking, cultural policy or communities and publics. Rather it shows the fluctuating and ever emergent nature of public discourse, an important consideration when dealing with the concrete interactions that are essential for collaborative cultural practices. Evaluation and research into how cultural constellations form is important for anyone who wants to understand the nuances of a given location and the relationship between the people who inhabit it.

Practice-based research will always produce new methodological outputs. The nature of practice is that knowledge is produced in the *doing* of practice. For example, each participatory diagram produced in this process was a unique object and therefore could be

seen as a contribution to knowledge. The individual methods I developed for this research (participatory diagrams, keyword booklets, and feedback filmmaking) join a swathe of techniques that have been developed recently to change the nature of arts evaluation such as those found in *Disrupt* (Chard et al., 2023), *The Little Book of Creative Evaluation* (Christou et al., 2023), the *Storytelling Methodology* (The Old Fire Station, 2017), *The FailSpace Toolkit* (Jancovich et al., 2020), or those that I have used and developed with Dr Sophie Hope in our evaluation of *BE PART (Hope and Mulhall, 2024, 2023).* All these methods are designed to create a more equitable space for the participants of cultural projects to have their voices heard, including those that are facilitating such projects. In this sense, I have developed a set of methods – a practice – that I can use in other contexts and that others can emulate for their own purposes. But in the same way that ordinary language philosophy tries to bring metaphysical uses of language back to everyday use (Wittgenstein, 1953, §116, also quoted in Moi, 2017), I have shown the benefit of bringing policy abstraction down to concrete use within the Union Street context. This approach could be repeated, but the diagrams, keywords, focus groups and resulting analytic focuses would probably be different. An attention to individual locations and the groups that work within them is what a bottom-up approach to cultural policy formation would entail.

9.3 ARTS MANAGEMENT

Arts management's concern with the professionalisation of individuals (DeVereaux, 2019; Jancovich, 2015; Kester, 1998) and the neoliberal constraints those individuals are working within (Belfiore, 2012; Bonham-Carter, 2017; Rimmer, 2020) offered me a way to frame policy language as a concern for how art spaces can relate to other fields and, importantly, to the evaluation of their own work. In this thesis I have shown how policy rhetoric found in *Let's Create* (Arts Council England, 2020) and *PAP* (Doherty, 2016) for example, feed into how arts use language and think about value in their work. Throughout the focus groups, policy language was seen as abstract compared to the concrete social experiences of the group that are articulated through performance of voice. The group suggests that arts policy has strict boundaries around certain terms that render its aims difficult and off putting. This is problematic as there are frameworks for evaluation and therefore valuing imposed on arts managers. The group describe a context where there is not enough time and space to have evaluative discussions. In the current arts policy climate that is framed through the

collection of metrics-based data, arts managers are encouraged (forced) to capture features of participation rather than to offer spaces where participation can be discussed. Participants' voices are flattened, but so too are the are the voices of arts managers themselves. Rather than arts managers being seen as experts in their own contexts, they are framed as conduits for data collection.

I have shown that the voices of arts managers, by their capture within narrow managerial practices imposed by arts policy (Belfiore, 2004; Bonham-Carter, 2017) has the potential to silence the voices of those involved in cultural production. An individual's voice is a claim to a shared common validity (Laugier, 2015, p.64) and the denial of voice is exemplified by a funder's inclination to gather metrics rather than create spaces for exchange. An alternative, bottom-up conceptualisation of cultural value would not be to determine if art is most valuable in intrinsic or instrumental ways, but to accept the context dependent fuzziness (DeVereaux, 2019, p.202) of cultural value. I do not point towards a preferable decision on this matter, but through this research I show that current evaluation practices imposed by arts policy are contradictory or paradoxical. Value is determined through interaction and comparison (Graeber, 2001, p.87). Rather than arts managers acting as conduits for an abstract community's data, they could be implicated in determining what kind of communities we can form around systems of value. An important contribution of my methodology to the field of arts management is feedback's ability to highlight unnoticed performances of those involved. Donna displayed this in her reaction to how gentrification was spoken about between the first and second focus group. Habitual uses of language come with a professionalised field. This habituation of language can have an inhibiting effect on how a certain professionalised field understands itself and presents itself to other fields. The interaction of arts managers with other fields is an essential feature of the literature on creative placemaking.

9.4 PLACEMAKING

As an area of academic discourse and practical work happening in specific urban contexts, creative placemaking seeks to connect various fields and stakeholders to affect change (Borrup, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018; Courage and McKeown, 2019; Schrag and McKinnon, 2020). Borrup (2016, p.1) emphasises the importance of the distinctiveness and character of

an area. He says that when planners, artists and other "experts" work in a location with specific communities they need to try and build on the stories and the social and civic fabric of a specific locality (Borrup, 2016, p.1). Schrag and McKinnon (2020) say this means "utilising and leveraging the local cultural, historical and aspirational assets" (p.25). Nudge's ownership and use of Millennium and C-103 are examples of this. However, Gabi pointed out some communities that might not be considered local or residents (Goth/Metalheads) have very strong attachments to such buildings. As Hollands (2019) points out, an issue with placemaking discourse is that people try and make claims across various contexts. People from different fields and silos are required to step outside of their professional fields (Borrup, 2016, p.19) in order to form longer term networks of support (Hollands, 2019). My research evidences practical and philosophical issues of making claims across cases, showing that even when people from different fields use the same words they can talk past each other.

In a context like Union Street where a mixed economy of commercial development, state support and practices of community ownership interact, the possibility of "value monism" (Robbins, 2013) seems impossible. The group I formed through this process come from different fields and have different practices of value. Although they did not use the term themselves, they are in a process of creative placemaking. This research evidences the difficulty language use poses when trying to work with people from different fields. Understanding what a community values is a central concern for placemaking if it is being done from a 'grassroots' direction (Wright et al., 2024, p.7). But as I showed through a discussion of the comparable term 'DIY', people from different professional perspectives do not align on what such a term means. This is problematic due to a potential merging of discourses "softening neoliberalism with culture and community on the one hand, and neoliberalising culture and community on the other" (Pritchard, 2019, n.p.). When the group started talking about various conceptions of what is valuable and their values, the abstraction of policy became problematic. The group dynamics were structured via the agreement and disagreement in what is valuable and how to go about valuing. Importantly, my contribution to knowledge regarding placemaking is not to substitute series of unhelpful words for more pointed and accurate ones, this would be fruitless even in a specific location like Union Street. What I have shown is that facilitated spaces where people can talk through their various concerns and interests need to be put in place for any kind for

equitable placemaking to take place. These spaces do not need to be held or even facilitated by artists, although the methods I developed are most likely to be taken up by artists.

Feedback has been a central premise of my methodology. A core principle of this approach has been my attempts to get the participants to test something against their own experience (Moi, 2015, p.195). Throughout this research my aim has been to document varied articulations of participants' judgements – including my own – to then reflect those judgements back to participants. This approach allowed various subjects to be represented in a constellatory way. In relation to placemaking my methodology has benefits and drawbacks. An ordinary language approach that adopts what Laugier (2020, p.28) calls a moral ethnography makes space for individuals to express their position. This means there is no foreclosure of categories. For example, I do not determine what DIY means in this thesis but showed the criss-crossing of its uses in relation to Union Street. This is to show DIY's constellatory implications for this particular group. Terms like DIY, or grassroots are useful for placemaking practices (Wright et al., 2024). My methodology does not determine how any one term should or could be used across cases (Moi, 2017), it offers evidence that such terms will always have contextually specific uses. This is not helpful if someone wants a placemaking glossary. However, the route to get to a constellatory picture of various terms relevant to a specific context is repeatable and could be replicated across many other contexts.

My methodology draws together the voices of those engaged in cultural practices in the area as well as planning and arts policy to frame both the physical and conceptual space of Union Street. If placemaking is based on the interaction of a set of varied knowledges there is a risk of people speaking past each other but through a constellatory understanding of language, the interactions inherent in placemaking are less about a mixing bowl of knowledge than people acknowledging each other's perspectives. No one person's knowledge is prized over another, and even on an individual level, a person's professional knowledge is as important as their personal connections to an area. This is because my methodology formed what could be theorised as a public.

9.5 POLICY AND PUBLICS

When the participants of the focus groups voiced more complex personal perspectives, their position in a shared public became more apparent. For the group, there was an irreducible connection between being a member of a community or public and the personal aspects of one's life that could be brought to a professional role. I theorized this through Norval's (2012) framing of exemplarity. The group were not happy with purely professional characterisation which I suggest is because they are exemplary examples of artists, community organisers, or arts managers – they are close enough to ordinary others for their professional status not to dominate. Through the interaction of such exemplary people, there was a self-modifying nature to the group's interactions around ordinary aspects of care (Laugier 2020). Part of what gives publics their critical and political quality is the space given to acknowledgment over knowledge; an individual's specific claims are legitimated in the presence of other people's claims (Zerilli, 2016, p.10). Through the creation of a 'permissive space' both in the focus groups and in the documentation of those focus groups, participants could share critical judgments about their work and their personal attachments to Union Street.

I have come to think of the group I formed through my research as a public that sits between specific practices of production and engagement and a national set of concerns regarding the efficacy of arts policy and its interaction with various urban environments. My research signals a critically engaged agenda that shows a possible avenue to "hold public institutions and funders to account in the name of fairness and social justice, even when this might lead to uncomfortable conversations with funders, policy-makers and cultural sector partners" (Belfiore, 2021, p.75). Finding a shared, ordinary ethics (Laugier 2018) concretely based on what each member cares about would form a critical public that could have leverage in the face of arts policy.

9.6 DIRECTIONS OF TRAVEL

If my research is focused on a middle group the possible directions of travel would be to focus in further or to zoom out and take a wider perspective, but in both cases a constellatory frame developed through feedback techniques would be appropriate. Taking a more micro perspective would offer detailed information regarding specific audiences,

producers and publics that organisations engage with. For example, how do Nudge engage with communities and form publics around activities such as the Union Street party? A difference with a more specific focus would be the sense of trust and embeddedness needed to conduct research and an ethics of care towards more vulnerable participants. Although the methods and analytic lens could be similar more situated research would be needed to develop trust and listening skills appropriate to the situation. In the way that Hannah S was described as being in Union Street (and Nudge spaces) a lot and therefore became more trusted and more embedded, research with more specific practices would require a similar commitment to place – the researcher would also have to be there a lot.

A more macro perspective could look at cases on a national (possibly international) scale. Many of the material and political conditions affecting Union Street are not unique. Looking at a range of specific publics in a range of environments (both urban and rural) could inform ordinary conceptions of arts policy and its relationship to communities. This approach could lead to a constellatory view of art and community publics that would have real leverage to inform a national or international perspective on arts policy. In a sense I have looked at a slice of a far more complicated cake, but the methodological spirit could be employed on a much wider or more specific scale.

Evidence of Practice

Participatory Diagrams

p.233 – 242

Keyword Booklet

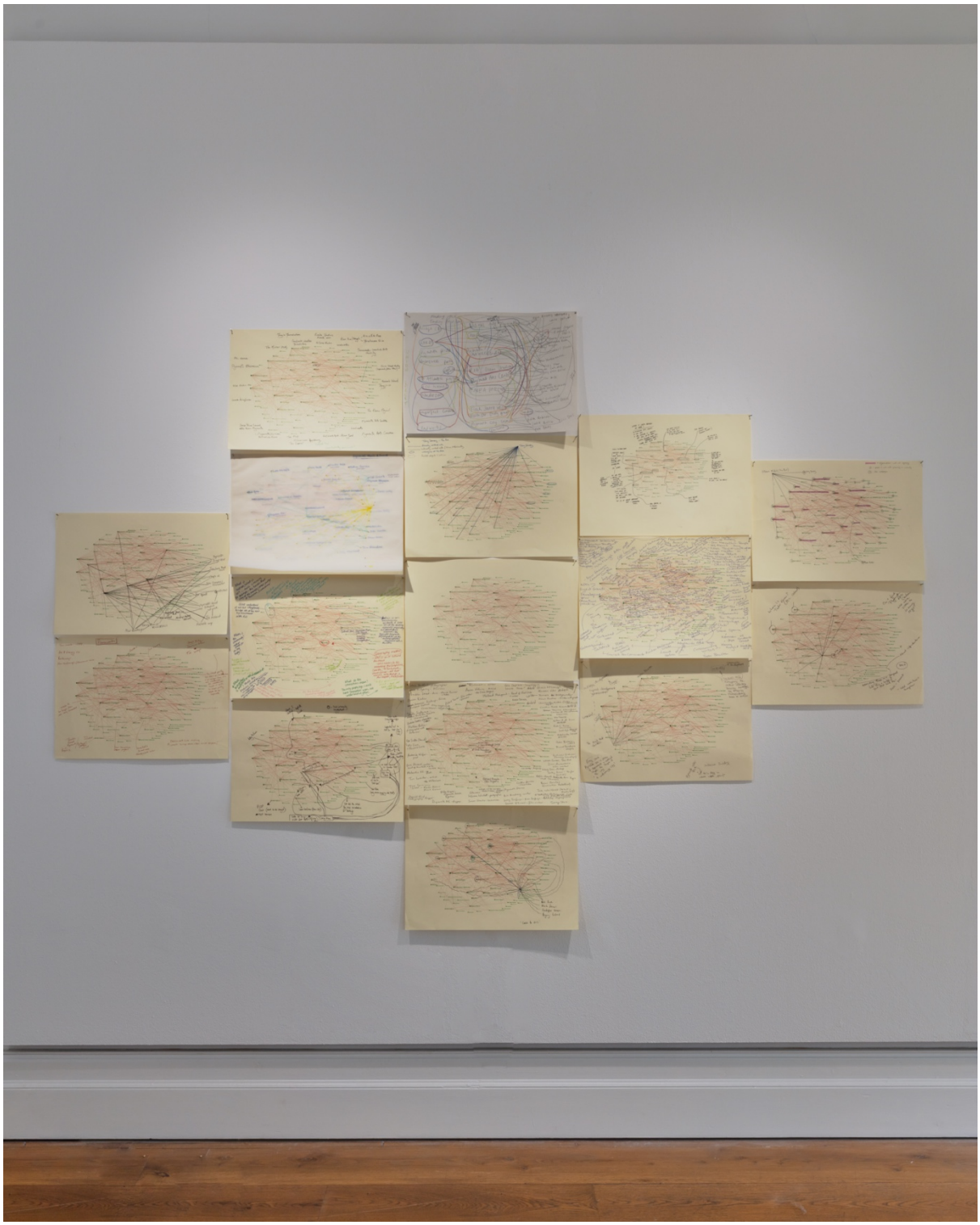
p.243 – 248

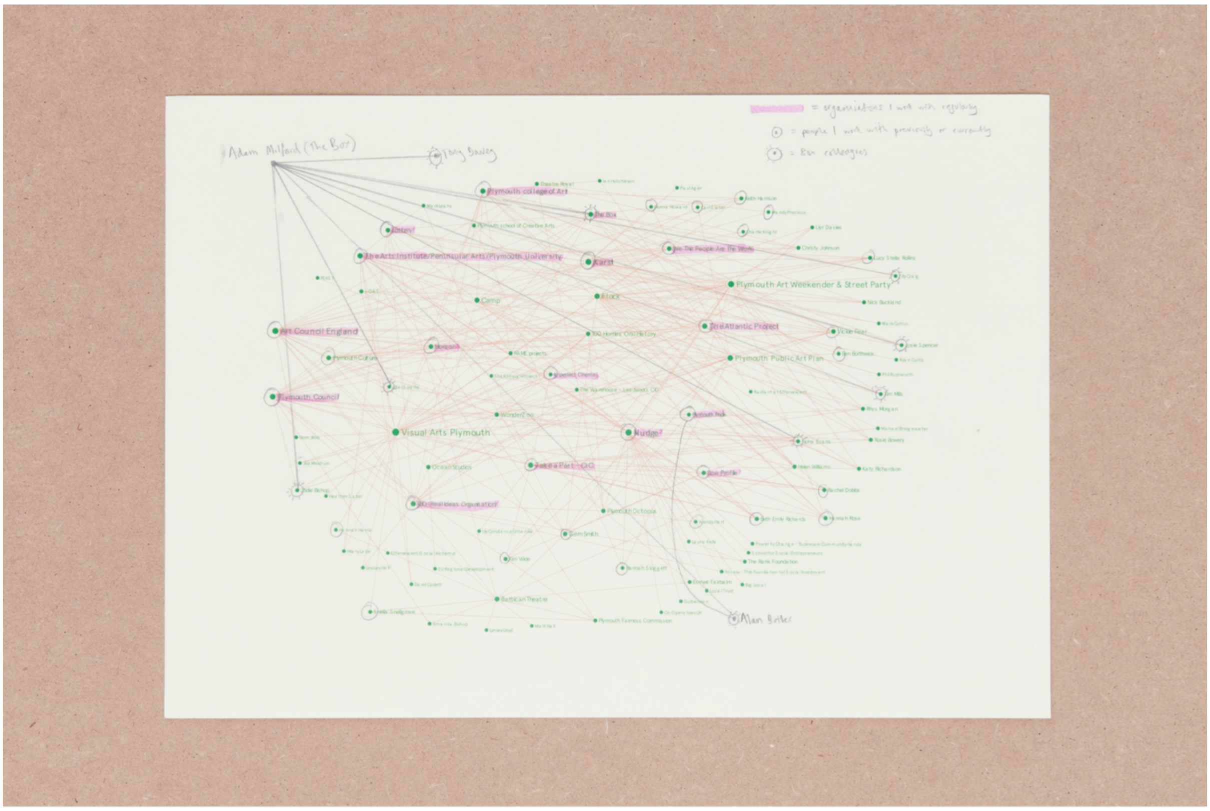
Peltz Exhibition Materials

Installation photographs p.249 – 256

Exhibition texts p.257 - 260

PARTICIPATORY DIAGRAMS

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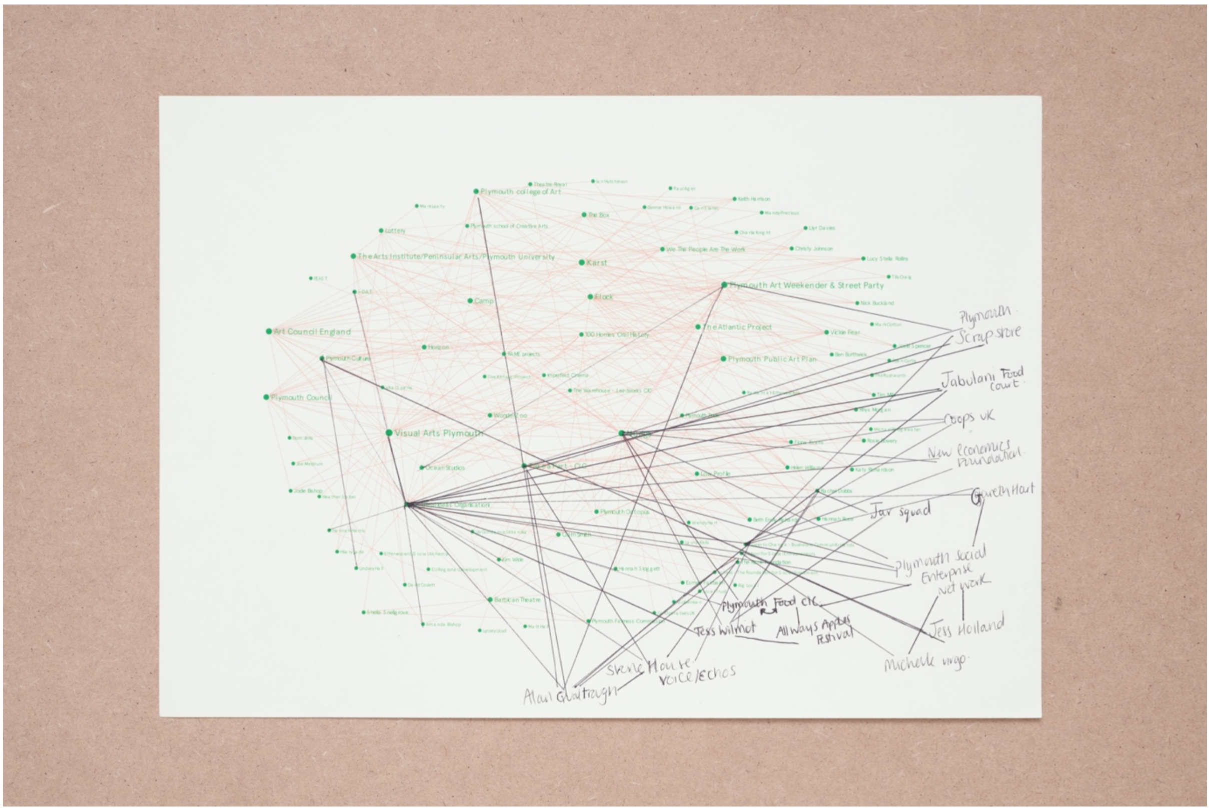
The Atlantic Project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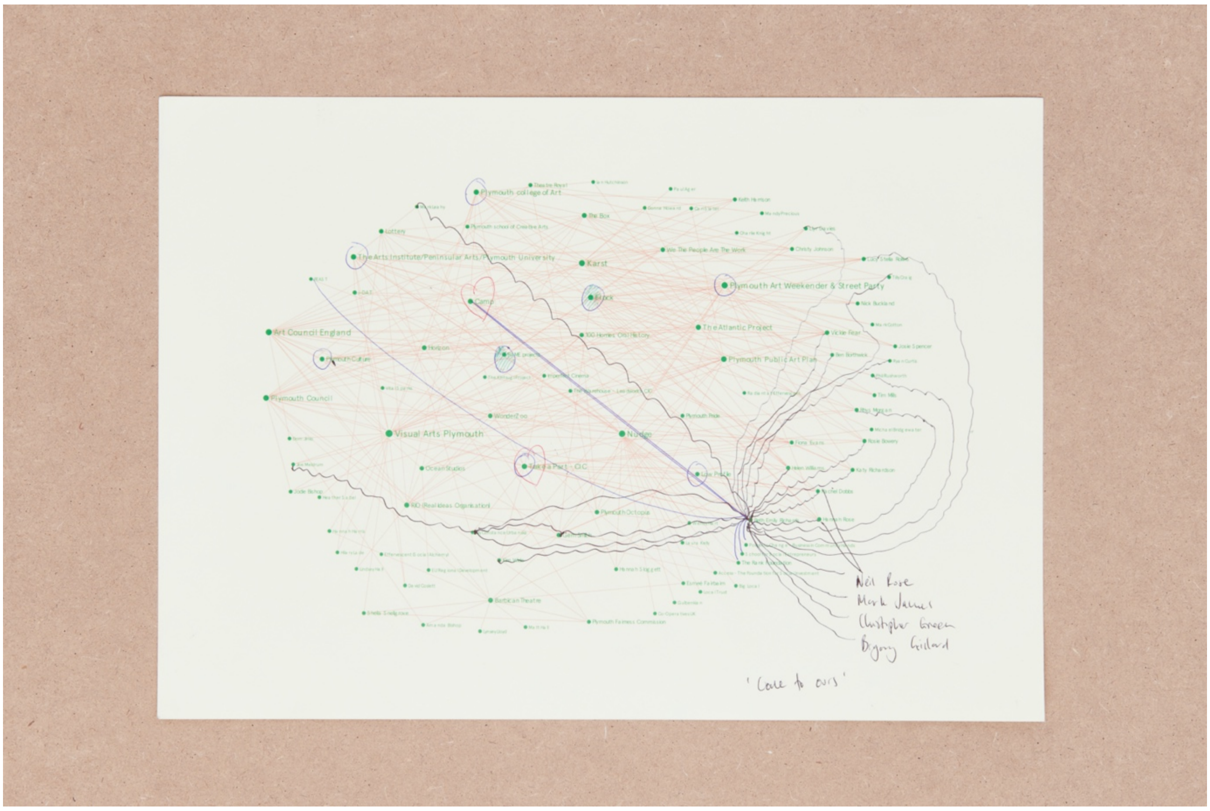
Art Council England
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Plymouth Public Art Plan
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Scrap store
Jabulani Food court
Coops UK
New Economics Foundation
Jar squad
Plymouth Social Enterprise network
Jess Holland
Plymouth Food CIC
Tess Wilmot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The Arts Institute/Peninsular Arts/Plymouth University
Karst
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
Art Council England
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Public Art Plan
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Nudge
Neil Rose
Mark James
Christopher Green
Bryony Gillard
'Come to ours'


Calvin Bedford - photographer
Nick Ridgeway - Musician
Franklin Street - duo - Claire Bowler + Adie
Omnivision Radio
Graeme Kirkup - Police
Respect Festival
Crash Manor - Night Club
Mike Muntaneau - writer
Aaron Valerio - Artist
The Oasis Project
Waleed Mahgoub - Head of Red Cross + writer
Robert Turner - film-maker + painter
Gia Duprano - Snapdragons
Laura Jane - Artist
Slain McGough Davey
Queen Chi Artist
Writer - James Bridgewater
Alan Butler - Pride in Plymouth
Exim Dance
Caitlin Rose Brown Artist
Donna Maughan (voices of Stonehouse archive)
HUTONG
Ellen A R Sims Artist
Rob C Force (musician)
Lord High Admiral Pub
Adelaide Street Artists
Sheila Snellgrove - created Barbican theatre in Stonehouse
Julian Isaacs - Musician + writer
Matthew Pontin - photographer with Fotonow
Go Satta (band)
Mo Love + Phoenix Love
Antonia Nafar - poet
Baz Ahmed - writer - head of Kurdish exile centre
Melanthe RB - poet
Tom Loveder - artist
The Millenium
The Concious Sisters - Karen Evans Fiona Evans
Daniel Hird Calligraphy - Rapper
Mike Vosper - Plymouth Artists Together
Dynamik MC - Rapper
Fotonow
Emma Wislett - photographer
Simon Franks - technician
Blessed Pengelin (Bea Rogers)
Walks with History - Richard Fisher - Historian + artist
Plymouth Dance
Kim Armstrong - writer
Lucy Dafwyn - Sion Dafwyn - Oddstep Deployment
James Ellwood - film maker
Scrap Store
Jabo Butera (DBI)
David Feinduno (Hope)
Bushman Bushman (Tommy Llewelyn)
Union Corner, The Plot
Dan Paolantonio Film-maker
Mary Toon - Artist
Sally Braer - Taylor (artist)
RAAY - Royal Adelaide Arts Yoga
Matt Thomas
Bean Bowles (Extinction Rebellion)
Jak Whitfield (Artist + Radio DJ)
A Taskinha - Portuguese Café
Caitlin Barrow - musician
Queen Chi
Slain McGough Davey
Hip P
Plymouth college of Art
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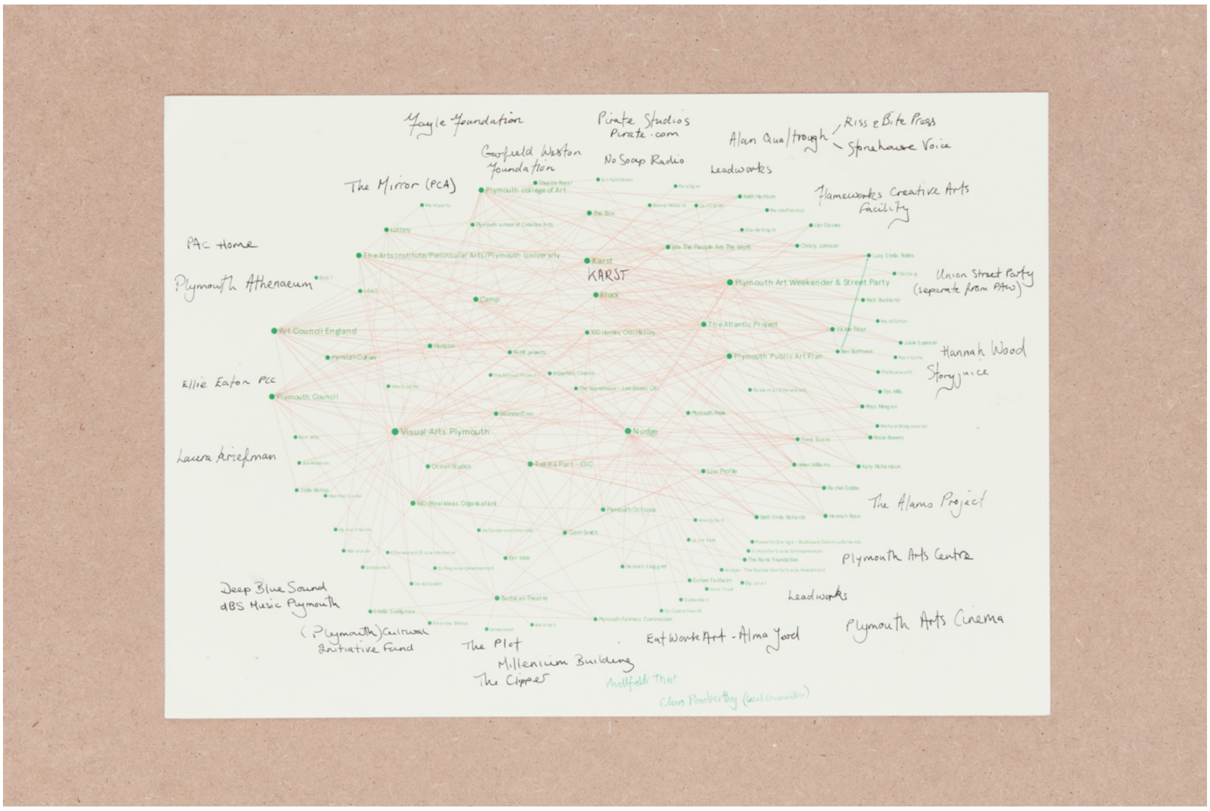
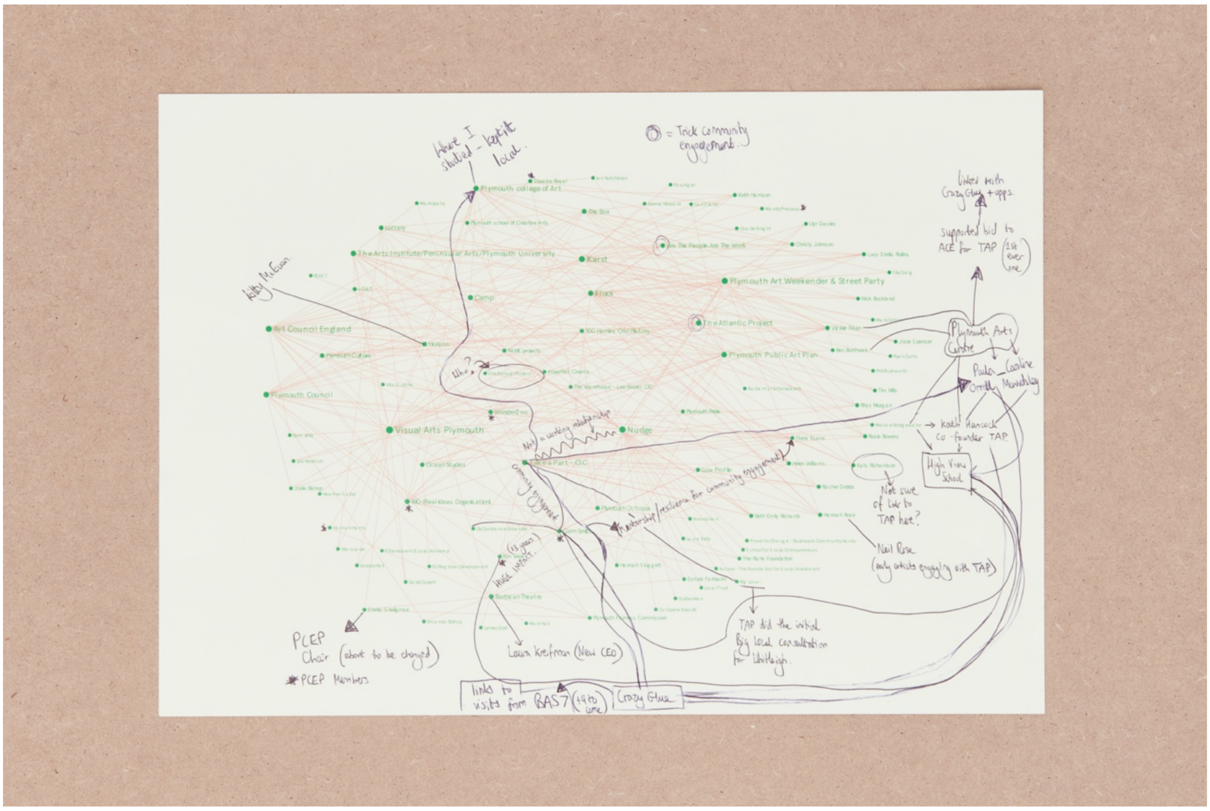
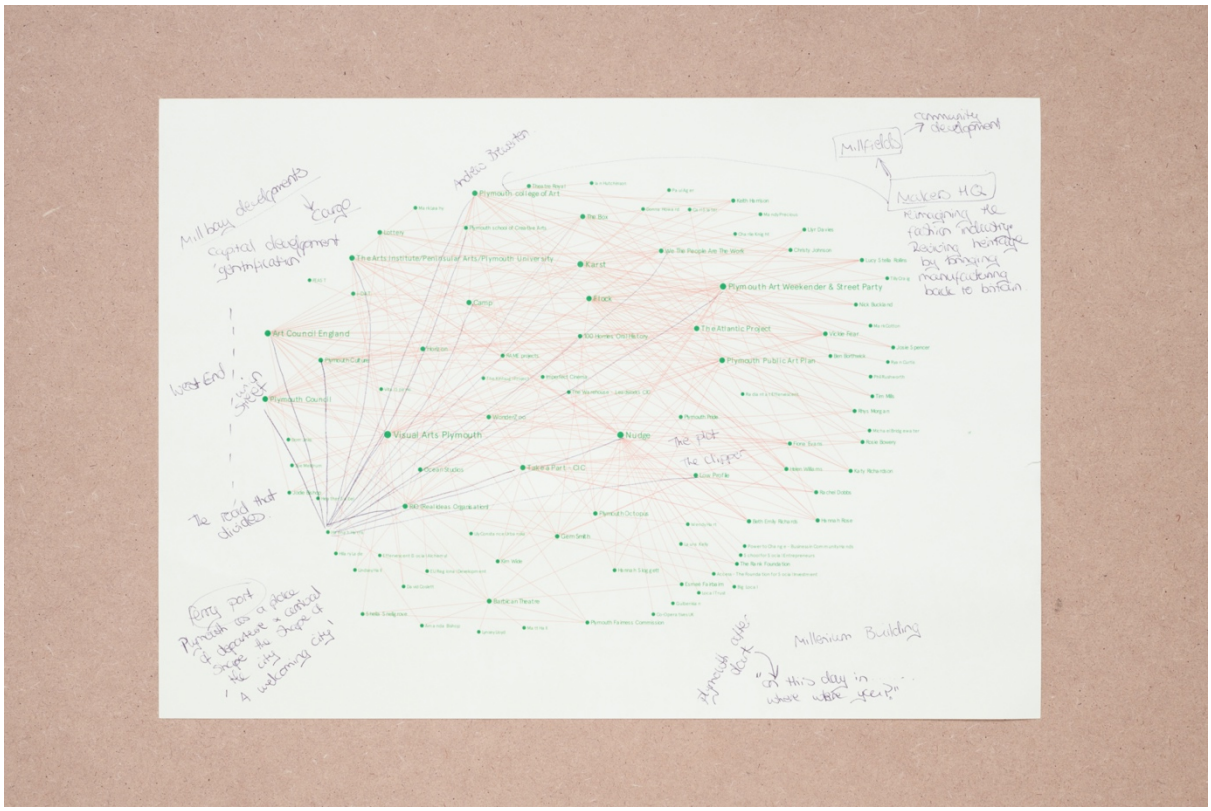
Karst
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
Art Council England
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Public Art Plan
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Nudge



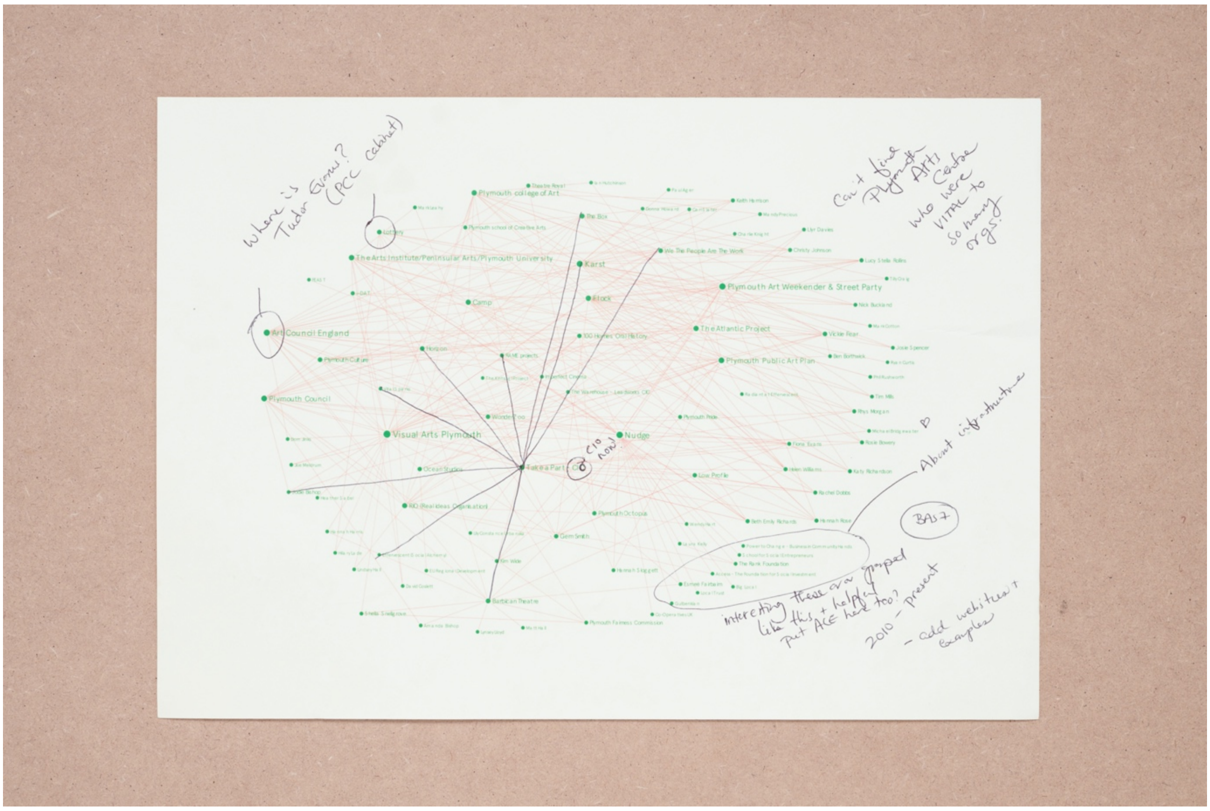
Pirate Studios
Pirate.com
Garfield Weston Foundation
No Soap Radio
Alan Qualtrough
Stonehouse Voice
Leadworks
The Mirror (PCA)
Flameworks Creative Arts Facility
PAC Home
Plymouth Athenaeum
KARST
Union Street Party (separate from PAW)
Hannah Wood
Storyjuice
Ellie Eaton PCC
Laura Kriefman
The Alamo Project
Plymouth Arts Centre
Deep Blue Sound
dBS Music Plymouth
(Plymouth) Cultural Initiative Fund
Leadworks
Plymouth Arts Cinema
The Plot
Millenium Building
The Clipper
Eat Work Art - Alma Yard
Plymouth college of Art
The Arts Institute/Peninsula Arts/Plymouth University
Karst
Camp
Art Council England
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Nudge
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Public Art Plan

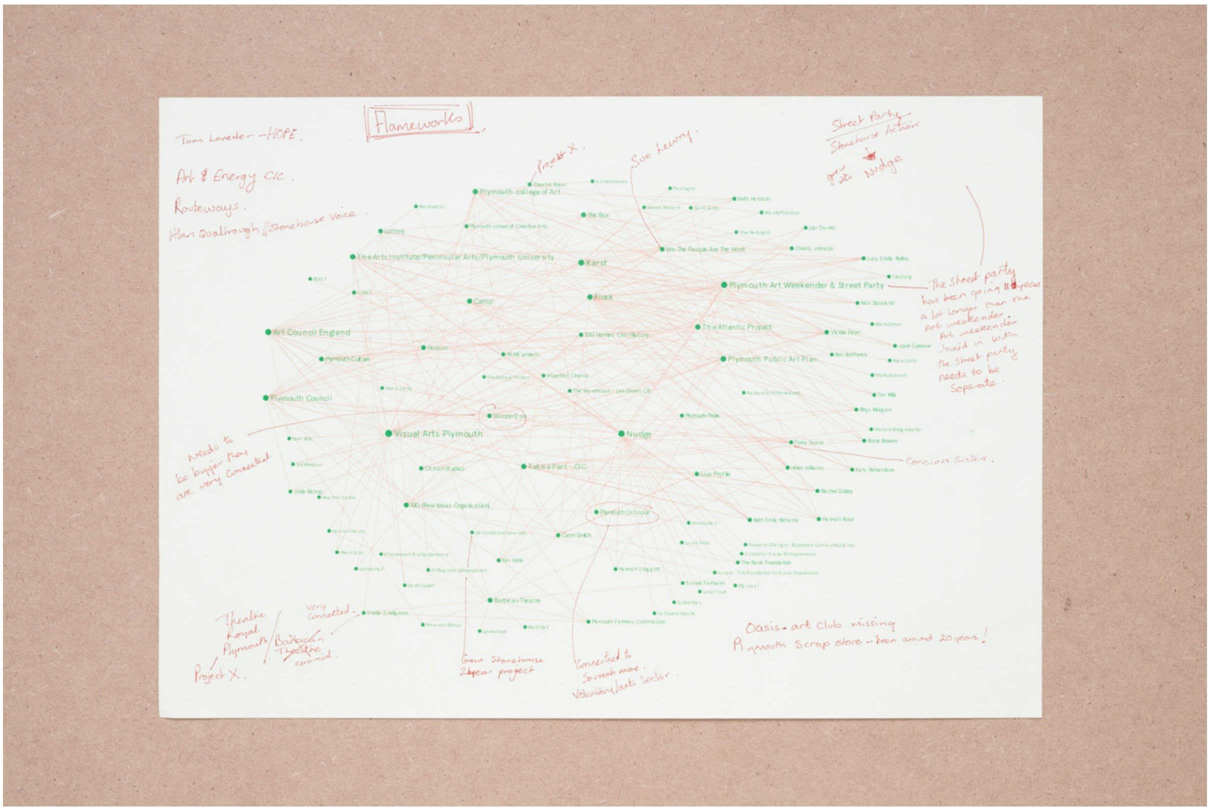


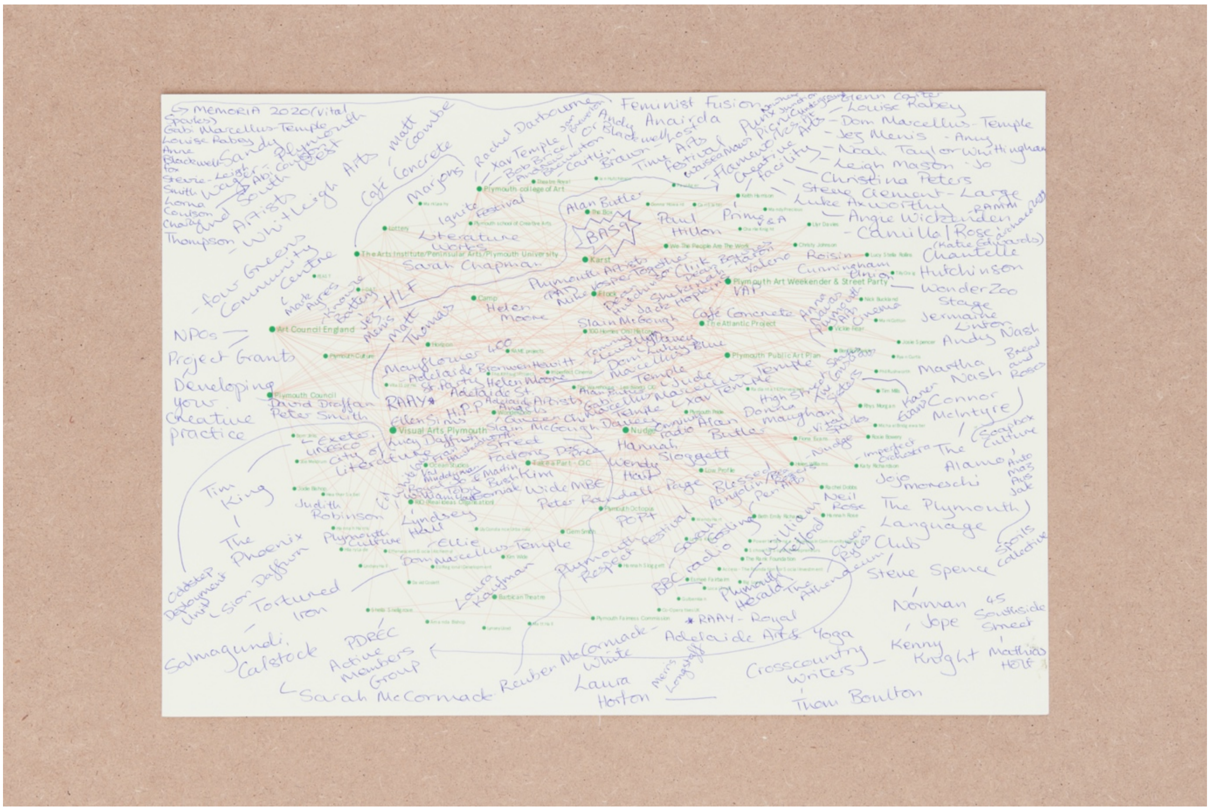
Where I studied - kept it local.
links with Crazy Glue + opps.
supported bid to ACE for TAP
Plymouth Arts Centre
Not a working relationship
High View School
TAP did the initial Big Local consultation for Whitleigh.
Laura Kriefman (New CEO)
Crazy Glue
Plymouth college of Art
The Arts Institute/Peninsula Arts/Plymouth University
Karst
Art Council England
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Nudge
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Public Art Plan

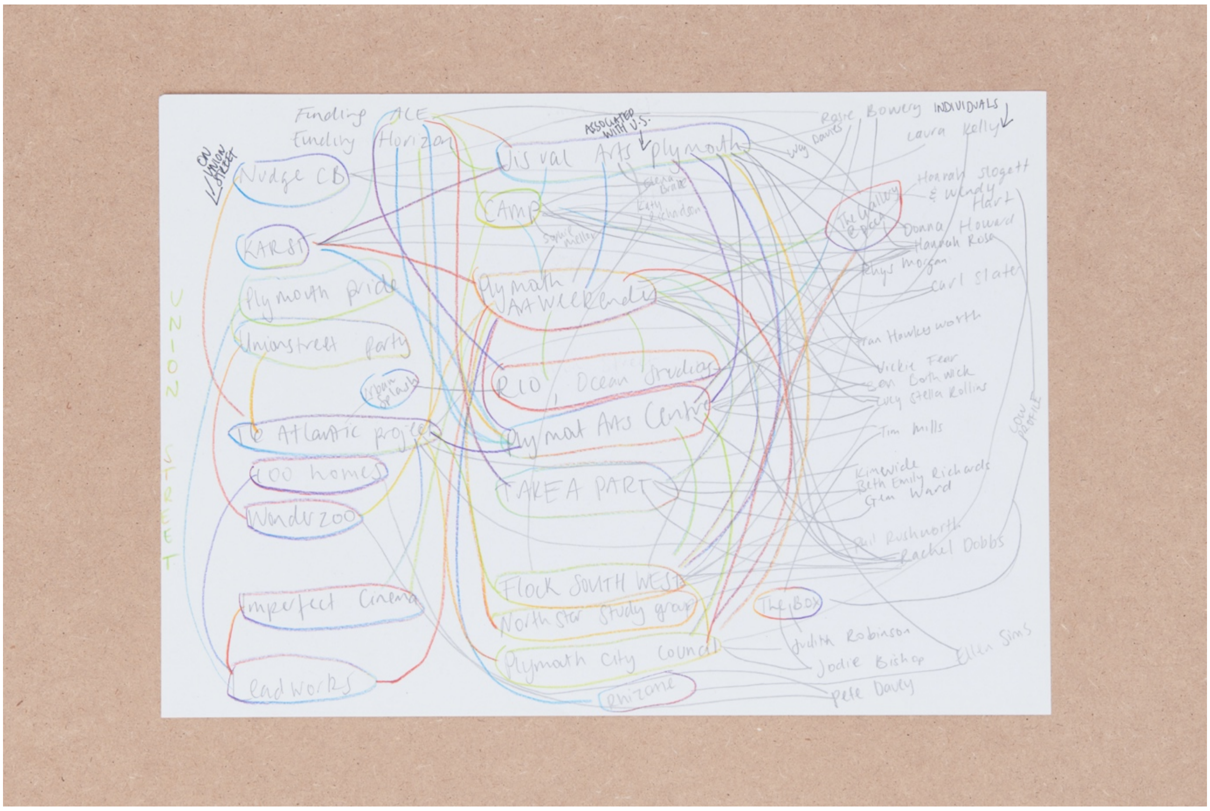

Millfields
community development
Makers HQ
Reimagining the fashion industry
Reskilling Plymouth
by bringing manufacturing back to britain
Mill bay developments
capital development
'gentrification'
Cargo
Andrea Stanton
Plymouth college of Art
The Arts Institute/Peninsular Arts/Plymouth University
Karst
Block
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
Art Council England
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Public Art Plan
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Nudge
Theatre Part - OC
Barbican Theatre
Plymouth Octopus
Millerium Building
"On this day in ... years"
The road that divides
West End
Civic Street
The Clipper
The plot
Pretty port
Plymouth as a place
of departure + central
scope the shape of
the city
A welcoming city!

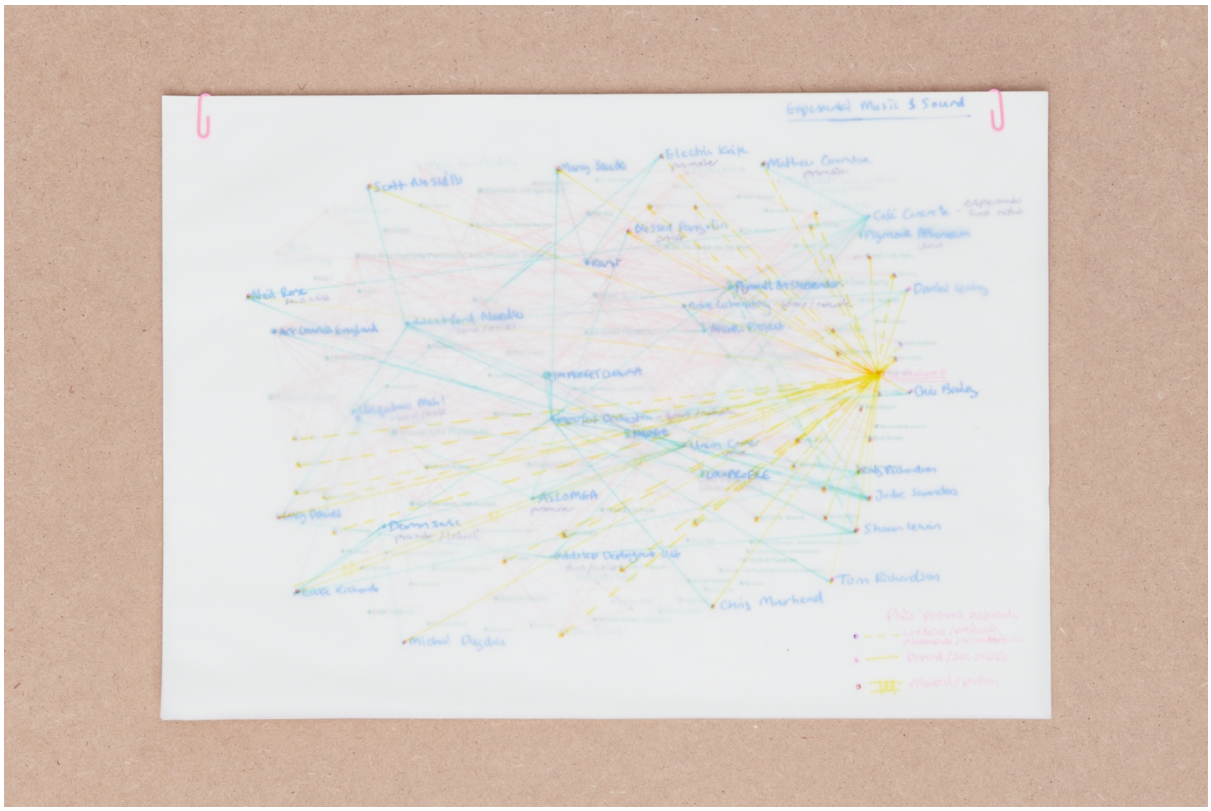

What is culture/what is missing
for example - the bands that
play at the market/street party
@ Taskrah, Union Corner
I dont understand
it all but i Mayflower
Bridge etc at Uni has
big investment
With RIO
Where is
the
community?
-either
groups/or
as one
body?
Kinds of
Not to matter
Warm ups
Personal
Transactional
paid/not paid
Where
Motivation
is important
Must the
Positions should be
Unsaid
Self conscious
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Public Art Plan
Visual Arts Plymouth
Nudge
Geography matters
- Who is in or around
the street
-also needs to be
including the Scrapstore,
Cawfe, @ Taskrah,
Union Corner - all host
various arty things a
the Clipper, Millfields
What do the
connections mean?
The only people/orgs I don't
have connection with are
underlined in green.
All the funders
should be together
some really interesting
Millerium Building


Where is Tudor Evans? (PCC cabinet)
Can't find Plymouth Arts Centre who were VITAL to so many orgs.
Plymouth college of Art
The Arts Institute/Peninsular Arts/Plymouth University
Art Council England
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Karst
Nudge
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Public Art Plan
Plymouth Octopus
Barbican Theatre
The Box
About infrastructure
interesting these are grouped like this + helpful put ACE here too?
2010 – present
– add websites + examples


Flameworks
Art & Energy CIC
Routeways
Street Party
Plymouth college of Art
The Arts Institute/Peninsular Arts/Plymouth University
Art Council England
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Karst
Nudge
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Public Art Plan
Plymouth Octopus
Barbican Theatre
The Box
Project X
Oasis - art club missing
Plymouth Scrap store – been around 20 years!


Feminist Fusion
Dom Marcellus-Temple
Louise Rabey
Christina Peters
Plymouth College of Art
Literature Works
Sarah Chapman
The Arts Institute/Peninsular Arts/Plymouth University
Art Council England
NPOs
Project Grants
Developing your Creative practice
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
Plymouth Public Art Plan
The Atlantic Project
Café Concrete
Helen Moore
Karst
Nudge
Hannah Sloggett
Wendy Hart
Tim King
The Phoenix
Judith Robinson
Lindsey Hall
Ellie Dom Marcellus-Temple
Peter Randall-Page
BBC radio
Plymouth Herald
RAAY - Royal Adelaide Arts
Tortured Iron
Salmagundi
Calstock
PDREC Active Members Group
Sarah McCormack
Laura Horton
Crosscountry Writers
Thom Boulton
Kenny Knight
Norman Jope
Steve Spence
The Plymouth Language Club
Andy Nash
Martha Nash
Connor McIntyre
Jermaine Linton
WonderZoo
Chantelle Hutchinson
Alan Butler
BAS9
Paul Hilton


Funding ACE
Funding
Horizon
ON UNION STREET
ASSOCIATED WITH U.S.
INDIVIDUALS
Nudge CiC
KARST
Plymouth Pride
Unionstreet party
Urban Splash
The Atlantic project
100 homes
Wonderzoo
Imperfect Cinema
Radworks
Visual Arts Plymouth
CAMP
Plymouth Art Weekender
RIO / Ocean Studios
Plymouth Arts Centre
TAKE A PART
FLOCK SOUTH WEST
North Star Study group
Plymouth City Council
Rhizome
The Box
UNION STREET
Rosie Bowery
Laura Kelly
Hannah Sloggett & Wendy Hart
Donna Howard
Hannah Rose
Rhys Morgan
Carl Slater
Ian Hawkesworth
Vickie Fear
Sam Cornwick
Stella Rollins
Tim Mills
Kimwide
Beth Emily Richards
Gem Ward
Paul Rushworth
Rachel Dobbs
Judith Robinson
Jodie Bisher
Ellen Sims
Pete Davey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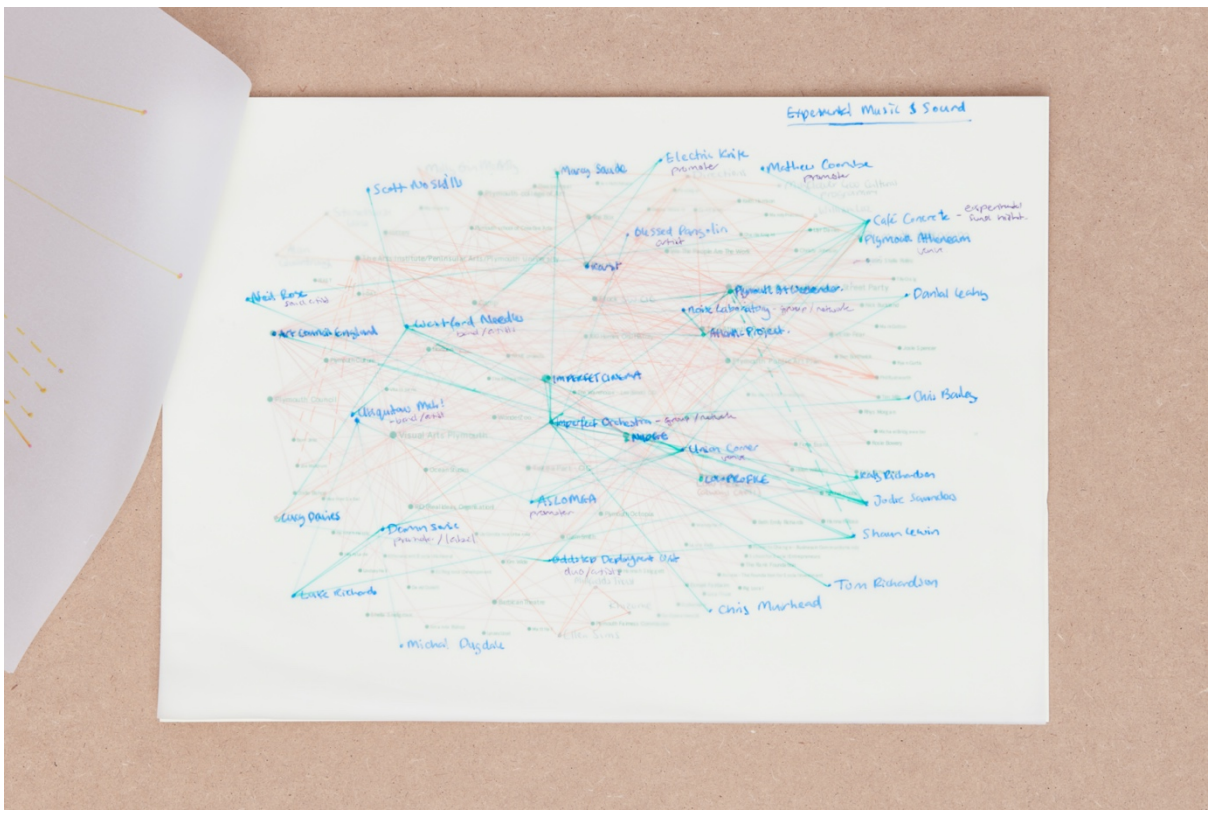
promoter
Mathew Coombe
promoter
Scott Arnold
Mary Sauke
Café Concrete
Plymouth Athenaeum
Blessed Progolin
artist
Daniel Keating
Neil Rose
sound artist
Arts Council England
Westford Needles
sound / artist
Plymouth Art Weekender
Noise Laboratory
sound / network
Atomic Project
Chris Bailey
Chaplains Mob!
sound / artist
Imperfect Orchestra
sound / network
Union Corner
Jodac Saunders
Shaun Lewin
ASLOMEA
promoter
Penny Sorte
promoter / label
Tom Richardson
Chris Muirhead
Michael Digdale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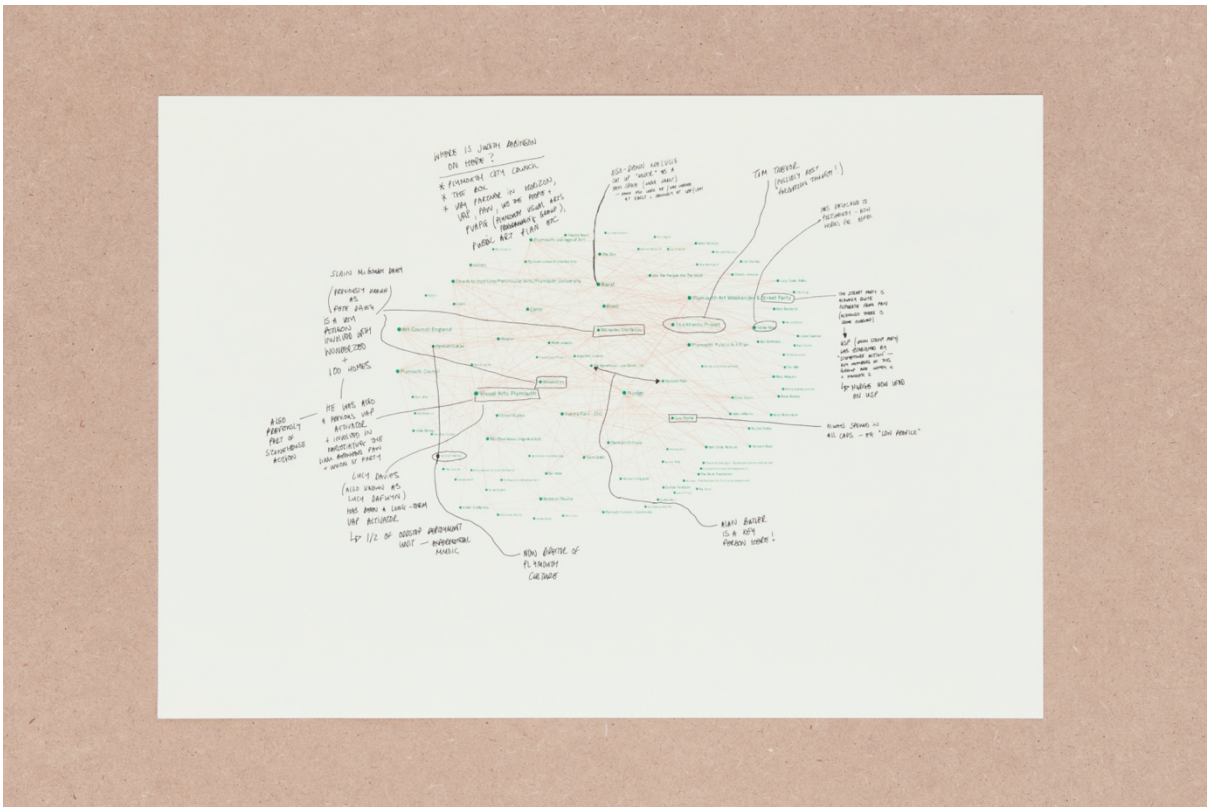
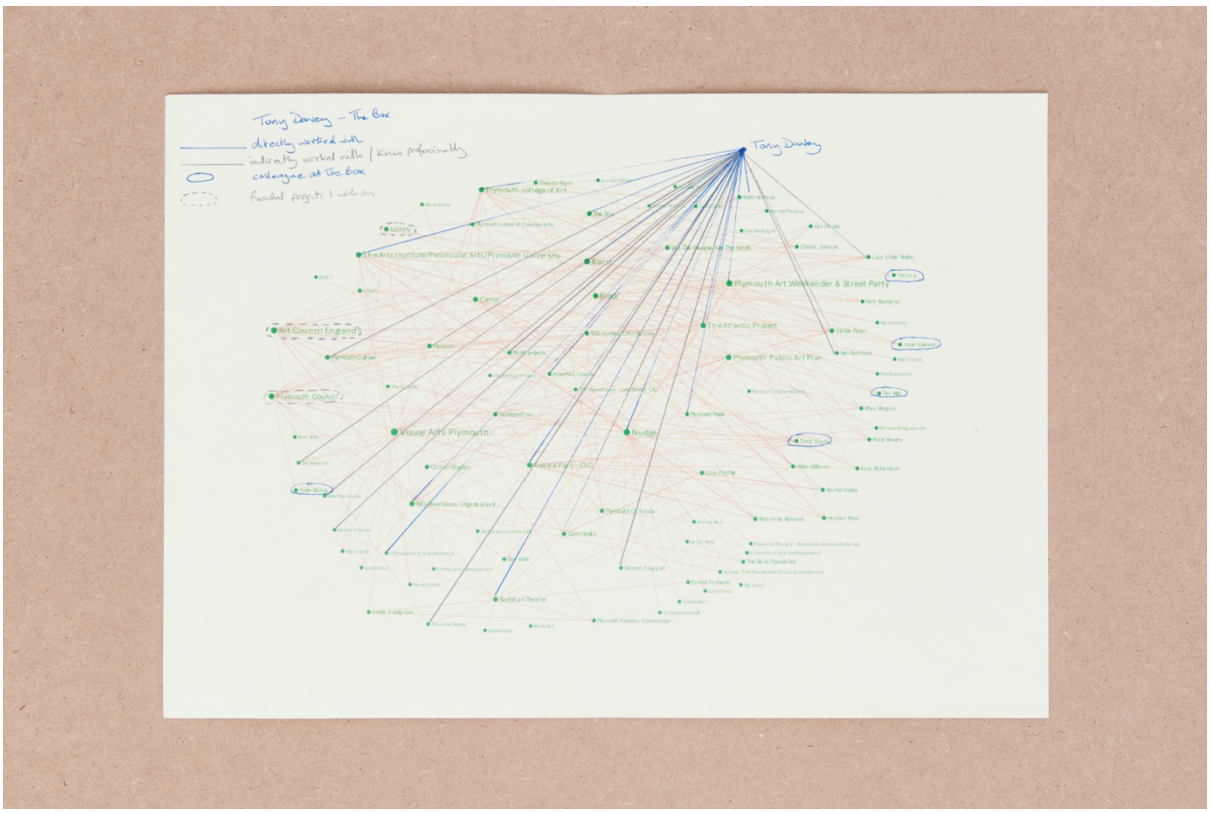
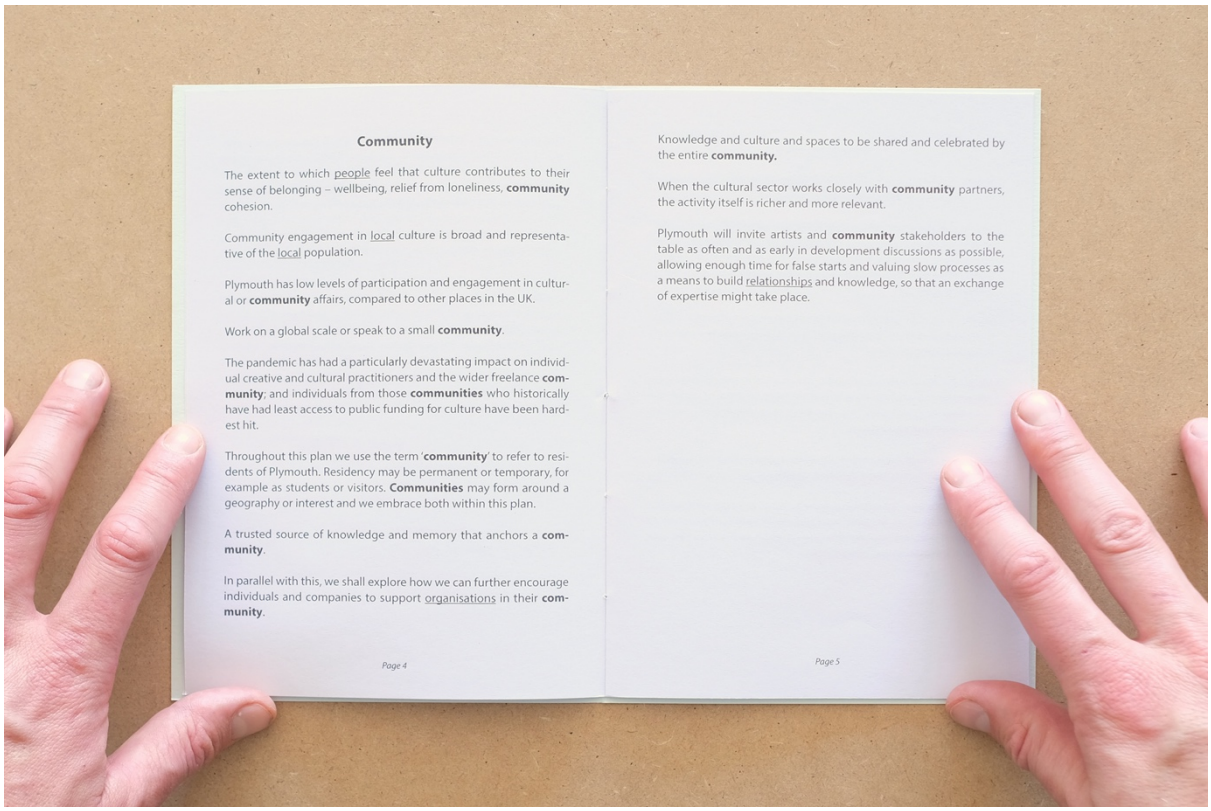



Tony Dawley – The Box
directly worked with
indirectly worked with / Know professionally
colleague at The Box
funded project I worked on
Tony Dawley
Plymouth college of Art
The Arts Institute/Peninsular Arts/Plymouth University
Karst
Plymouth Art Weekender & Street Party
Camp
Arts Council England
The Atlantic Project
Plymouth Public Art Plan
Plymouth Council
Visual Arts Plymouth
Nudge
Maker's Fleet CIC
Barbican Theatre

KEYWORD BOOKLET


Union Street
Keywords
2010-2022
Union Street
Keywords
2010-2022


Union Street
Keywords
2010-2022



Community

The extent to which people feel that culture contributes to their sense of belonging – wellbeing, relief from loneliness, **community** cohesion.

Community engagement in local culture is broad and representative of the local population.

Plymouth has low levels of participation and engagement in cultural or **community** affairs, compared to other places in the UK.

Work on a global scale or speak to a small **community**.

The pandemic has had a particularly devastating impact on individual creative and cultural practitioners and the wider freelance **community**; and individuals from those **communities** who historically have had least access to public funding for culture have been hardest hit.

Throughout this plan we use the term '**community**' to refer to residents of Plymouth. Residency may be permanent or temporary, for example as students or visitors. **Communities** may form around a geography or interest and we embrace both within this plan.

A trusted source of knowledge and memory that anchors a **community**.

In parallel with this, we shall explore how we can further encourage individuals and companies to support organisations in their **community**.

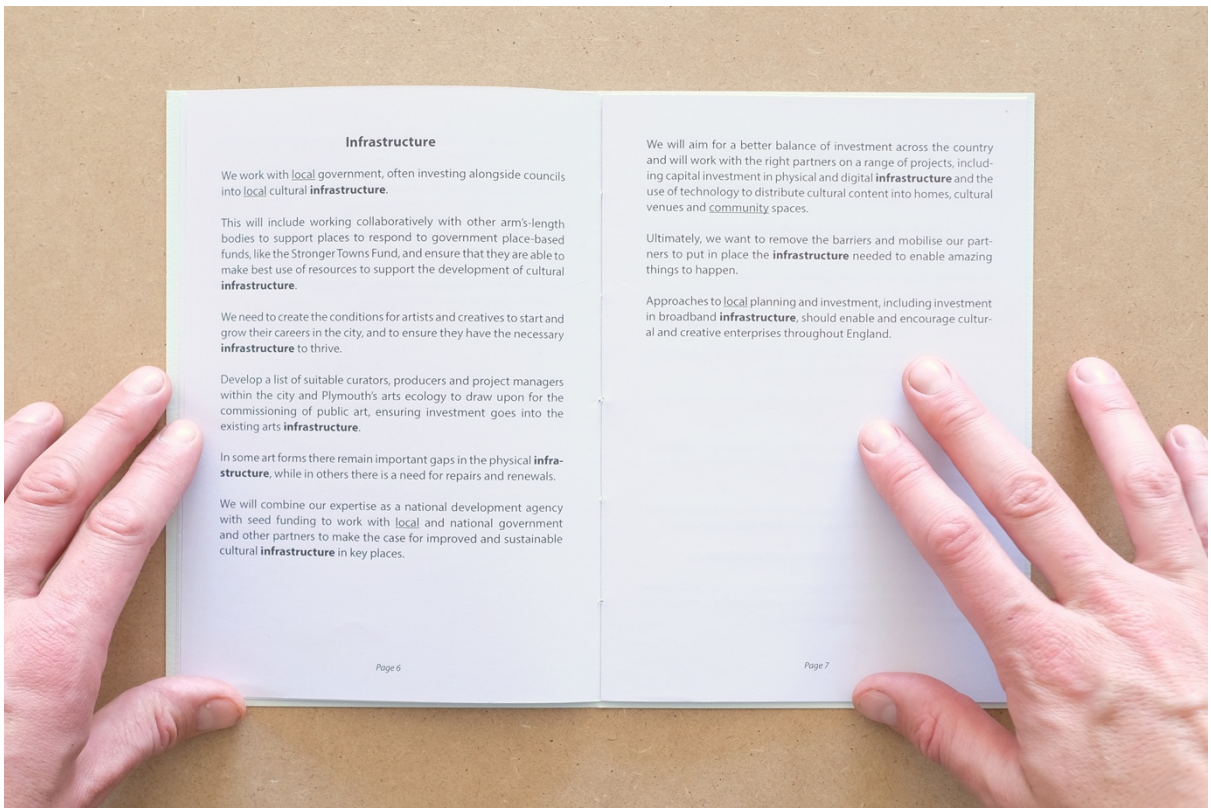
Page 4

Knowledge and culture and spaces to be shared and celebrated by the entire **community.**

When the cultural sector works closely with **community** partners, the activity itself is richer and more relevant.

Plymouth will invite artists and **community** stakeholders to the table as often and as early in development discussions as possible, allowing enough time for false starts and valuing slow processes as a means to build relationships and knowledge, so that an exchange of expertise might take place.

Page 5



Infrastructure

We work with local government, often investing alongside councils into local cultural **infrastructure**.

This will include working collaboratively with other arm's-length bodies to support places to respond to government place-based funds, like the Stronger Towns Fund, and ensure that they are able to make best use of resources to support the development of cultural **infrastructure**.

We need to create the conditions for artists and creatives to start and grow their careers in the city, and to ensure they have the necessary **infrastructure** to thrive.

Develop a list of suitable curators, producers and project managers within the city and Plymouth's arts ecology to draw upon for the commissioning of public art, ensuring investment goes into the existing arts **infrastructure**.

In some art forms there remain important gaps in the physical **infrastructure**, while in others there is a need for repairs and renewals.

We will combine our expertise as a national development agency with seed funding to work with local and national government and other partners to make the case for improved and sustainable cultural **infrastructure** in key places.

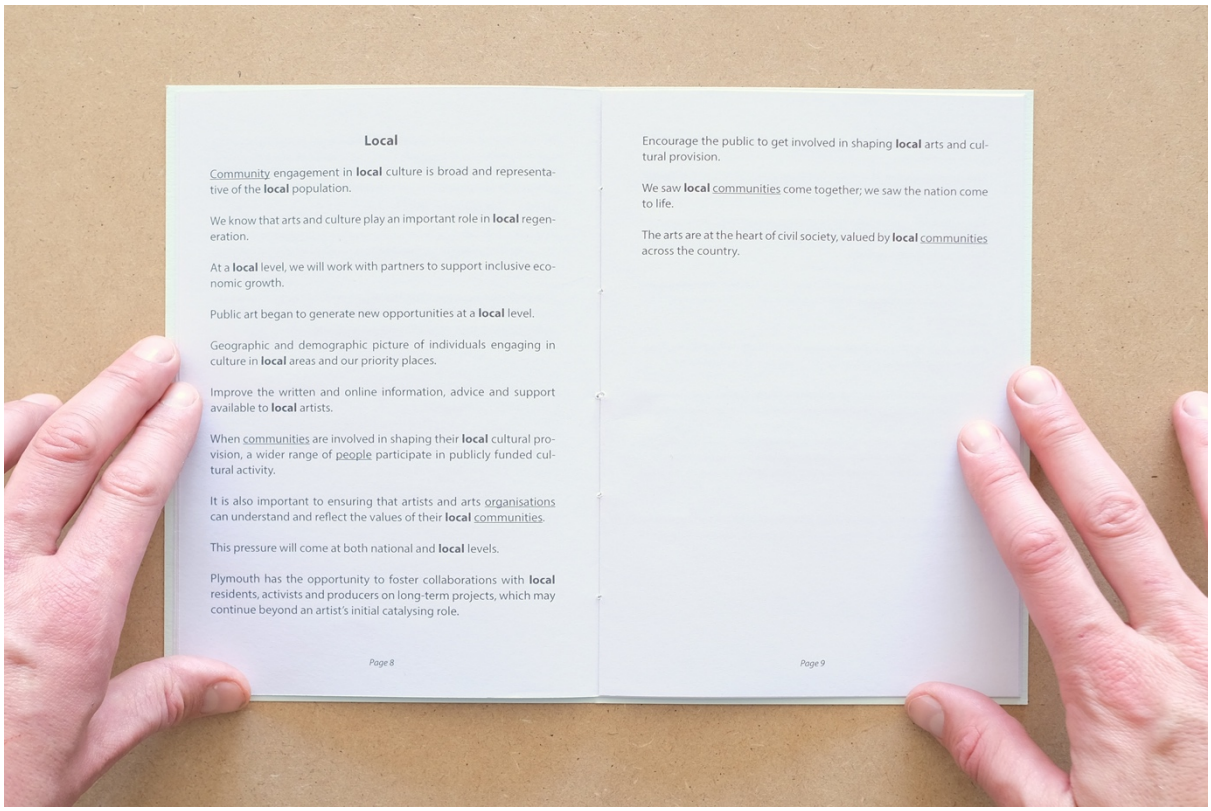
Page 6

We will aim for a better balance of investment across the country and will work with the right partners on a range of projects, including capital investment in physical and digital **infrastructure** and the use of technology to distribute cultural content into homes, cultural venues and community spaces.

Ultimately, we want to remove the barriers and mobilise our partners to put in place the **infrastructure** needed to enable amazing things to happen.

Approaches to local planning and investment, including investment in broadband **infrastructure**, should enable and encourage cultural and creative enterprises throughout England.

Page 7



Local

Community engagement in **local** culture is broad and representative of the **local** population.

We know that arts and culture play an important role in **local** regeneration.

At a **local** level, we will work with partners to support inclusive economic growth.

Public art began to generate new opportunities at a **local** level.

Geographic and demographic picture of individuals engaging in culture in **local** areas and our priority places.

Improve the written and online information, advice and support available to **local** artists.

When communities are involved in shaping their **local** cultural provision, a wider range of people participate in publicly funded cultural activity.

It is also important to ensuring that artists and arts organisations can understand and reflect the values of their **local** communities.

This pressure will come at both national and **local** levels.

Plymouth has the opportunity to foster collaborations with **local** residents, activists and producers on long-term projects, which may continue beyond an artist's initial catalysing role.

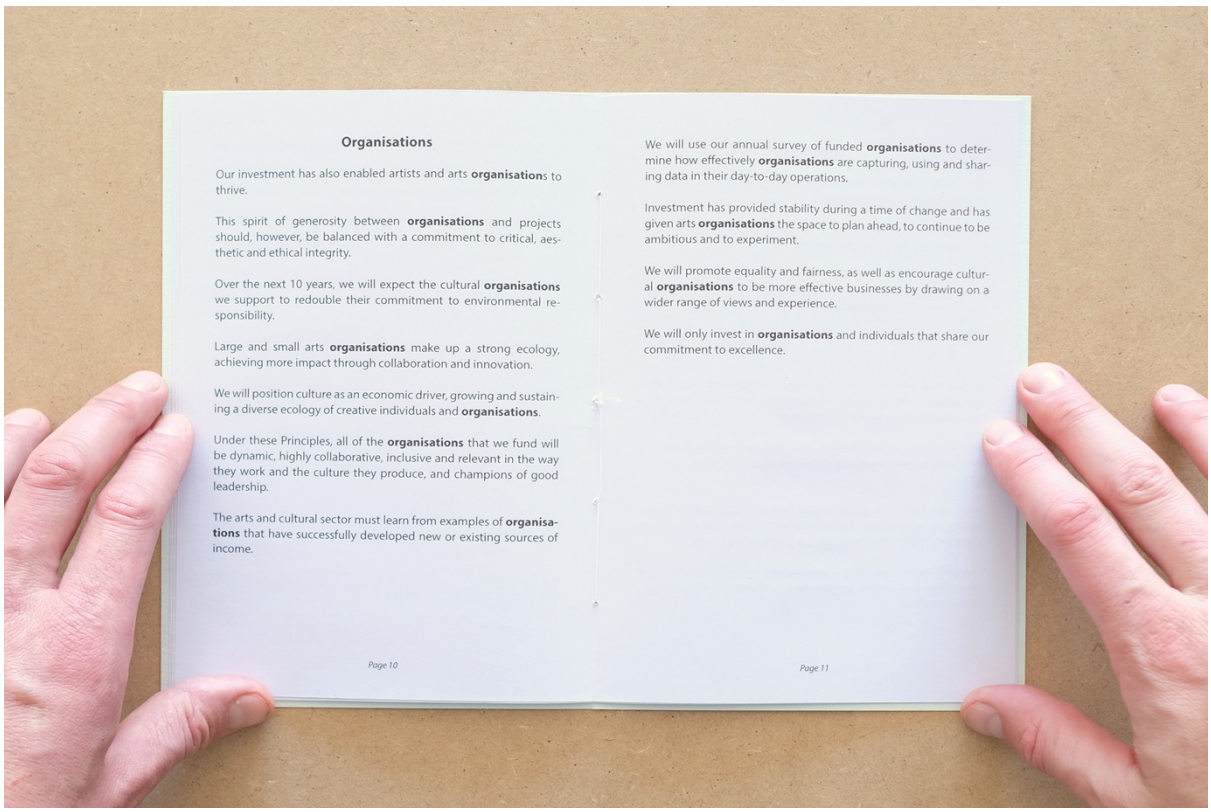
Page 8

Encourage the public to get involved in shaping **local** arts and cultural provision.

We saw **local** communities come together; we saw the nation come to life.

The arts are at the heart of civil society, valued by **local** communities across the country.

Page 9



Organisations

Our investment has also enabled artists and arts **organisation**s to thrive.

This spirit of generosity between **organisations** and projects should, however, be balanced with a commitment to critical, aesthetic and ethical integrity.

Over the next 10 years, we will expect the cultural **organisations** we support to redouble their commitment to environmental responsibility.

Large and small arts **organisations** make up a strong ecology, achieving more impact through collaboration and innovation.

We will position culture as an economic driver, growing and sustaining a diverse ecology of creative individuals and **organisations**.

Under these Principles, all of the **organisations** that we fund will be dynamic, highly collaborative, inclusive and relevant in the way they work and the culture they produce, and champions of good leadership.

The arts and cultural sector must learn from examples of **organisations** that have successfully developed new or existing sources of income.

Page 10

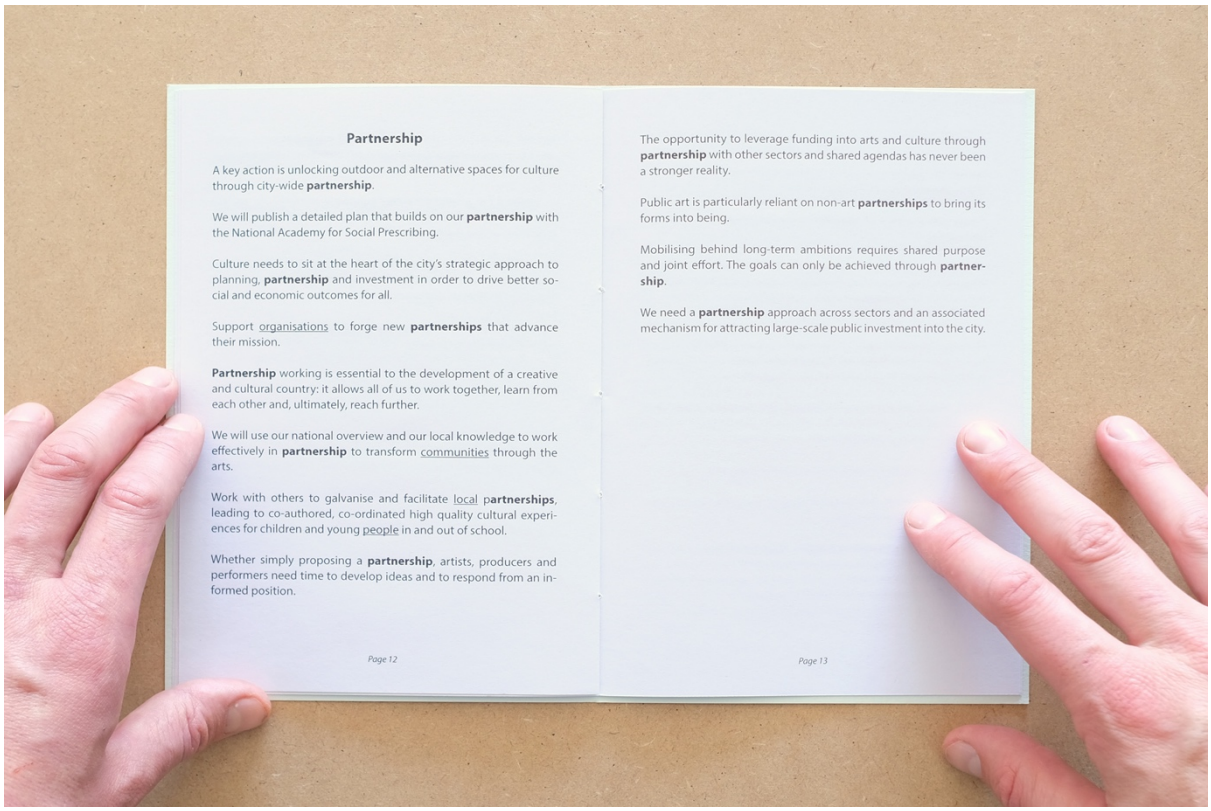
We will use our annual survey of funded **organisations** to determine how effectively **organisations** are capturing, using and sharing data in their day-to-day operations.

Investment has provided stability during a time of change and has given arts **organisations** the space to plan ahead, to continue to be ambitious and to experiment.

We will promote equality and fairness, as well as encourage cultural **organisations** to be more effective businesses by drawing on a wider range of views and experience.

We will only invest in **organisations** and individuals that share our commitment to excellence.

Page 11



Partnership

A key action is unlocking outdoor and alternative spaces for culture through city-wide **partnership**.

We will publish a detailed plan that builds on our **partnership** with the National Academy for Social Prescribing.

Culture needs to sit at the heart of the city's strategic approach to planning, **partnership** and investment in order to drive better social and economic outcomes for all.

Support organisations to forge new **partnerships** that advance their mission.

Partnership working is essential to the development of a creative and cultural country: it allows all of us to work together, learn from each other and, ultimately, reach further.

We will use our national overview and our local knowledge to work effectively in **partnership** to transform communities through the arts.

Work with others to galvanise and facilitate local **partnerships**, leading to co-authored, co-ordinated high quality cultural experiences for children and young people in and out of school.

Whether simply proposing a **partnership**, artists, producers and performers need time to develop ideas and to respond from an informed position.

Page 12

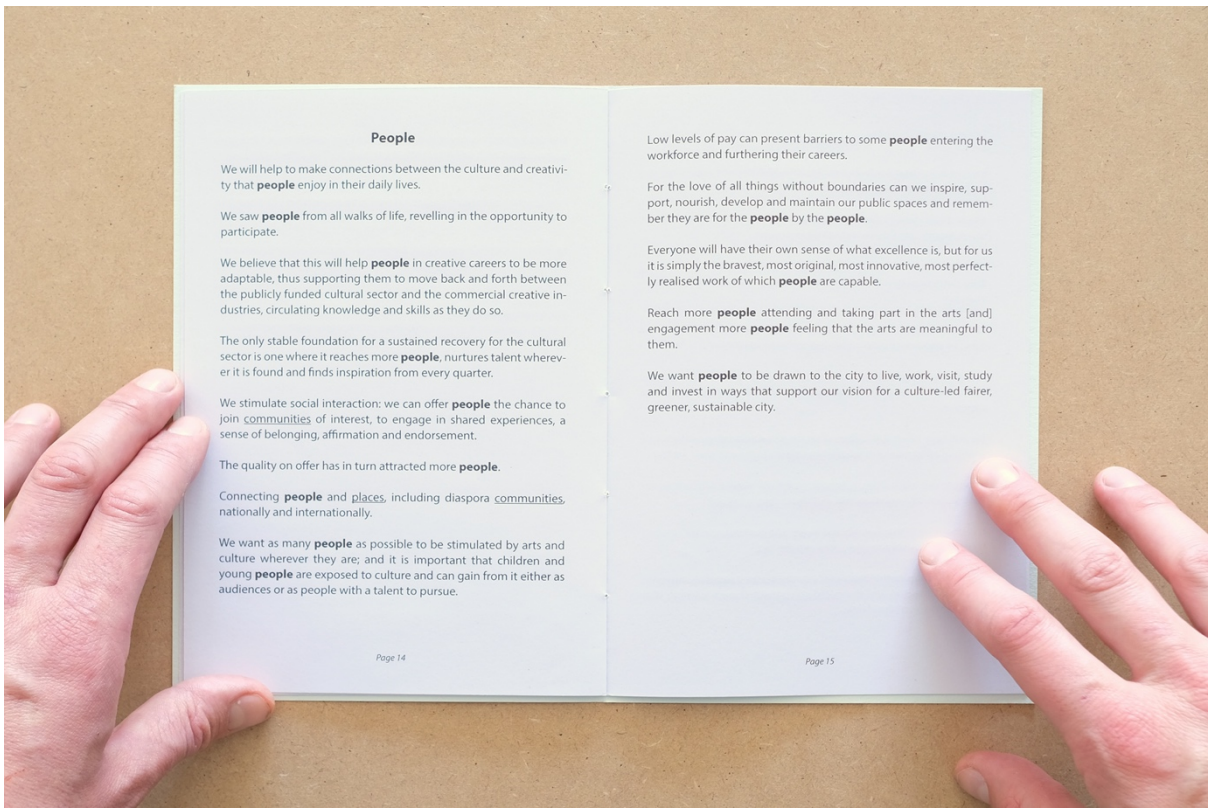
The opportunity to leverage funding into arts and culture through **partnership** with other sectors and shared agendas has never been a stronger reality.

Public art is particularly reliant on non-art **partnerships** to bring its forms into being.

Mobilising behind long-term ambitions requires shared purpose and joint effort. The goals can only be achieved through **partnership**.

We need a **partnership** approach across sectors and an associated mechanism for attracting large-scale public investment into the city.

Page 13



People

We will help to make connections between the culture and creativity that **people** enjoy in their daily lives.

We saw **people** from all walks of life, revelling in the opportunity to participate.

We believe that this will help **people** in creative careers to be more adaptable, thus supporting them to move back and forth between the publicly funded cultural sector and the commercial creative industries, circulating knowledge and skills as they do so.

The only stable foundation for a sustained recovery for the cultural sector is one where it reaches more **people**, nurtures talent wherever it is found and finds inspiration from every quarter.

We stimulate social interaction: we can offer **people** the chance to join communities of interest, to engage in shared experiences, a sense of belonging, affirmation and endorsement.

The quality on offer has in turn attracted more **people**.

Connecting **people** and places, including diaspora communities, nationally and internationally.

We want as many **people** as possible to be stimulated by arts and culture wherever they are; and it is important that children and young **people** are exposed to culture and can gain from it either as audiences or as people with a talent to pursue.

Page 14

Low levels of pay can present barriers to some **people** entering the workforce and furthering their careers.

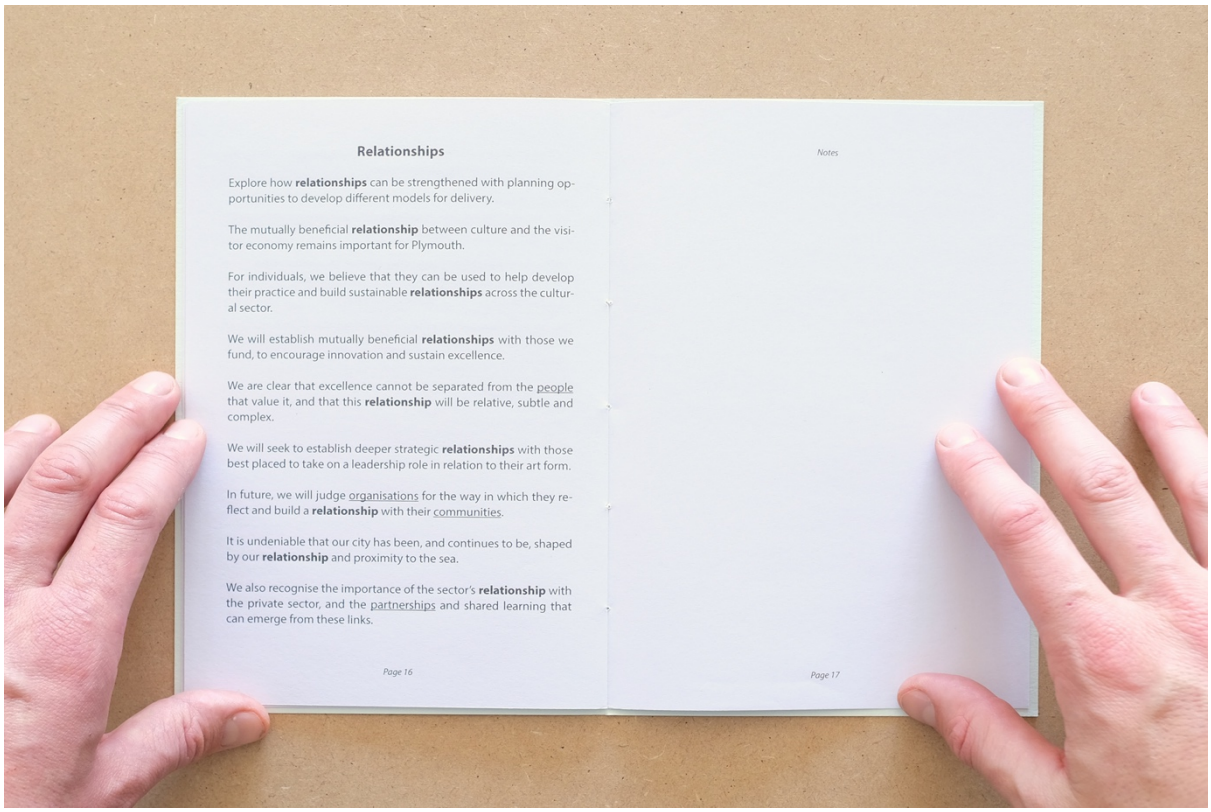
For the love of all things without boundaries can we inspire, support, nourish, develop and maintain our public spaces and remember they are for the **people** by the **people**.

Everyone will have their own sense of what excellence is, but for us it is simply the bravest, most original, most innovative, most perfectly realised work of which **people** are capable.

Reach more **people** attending and taking part in the arts [and] engagement more **people** feeling that the arts are meaningful to them.

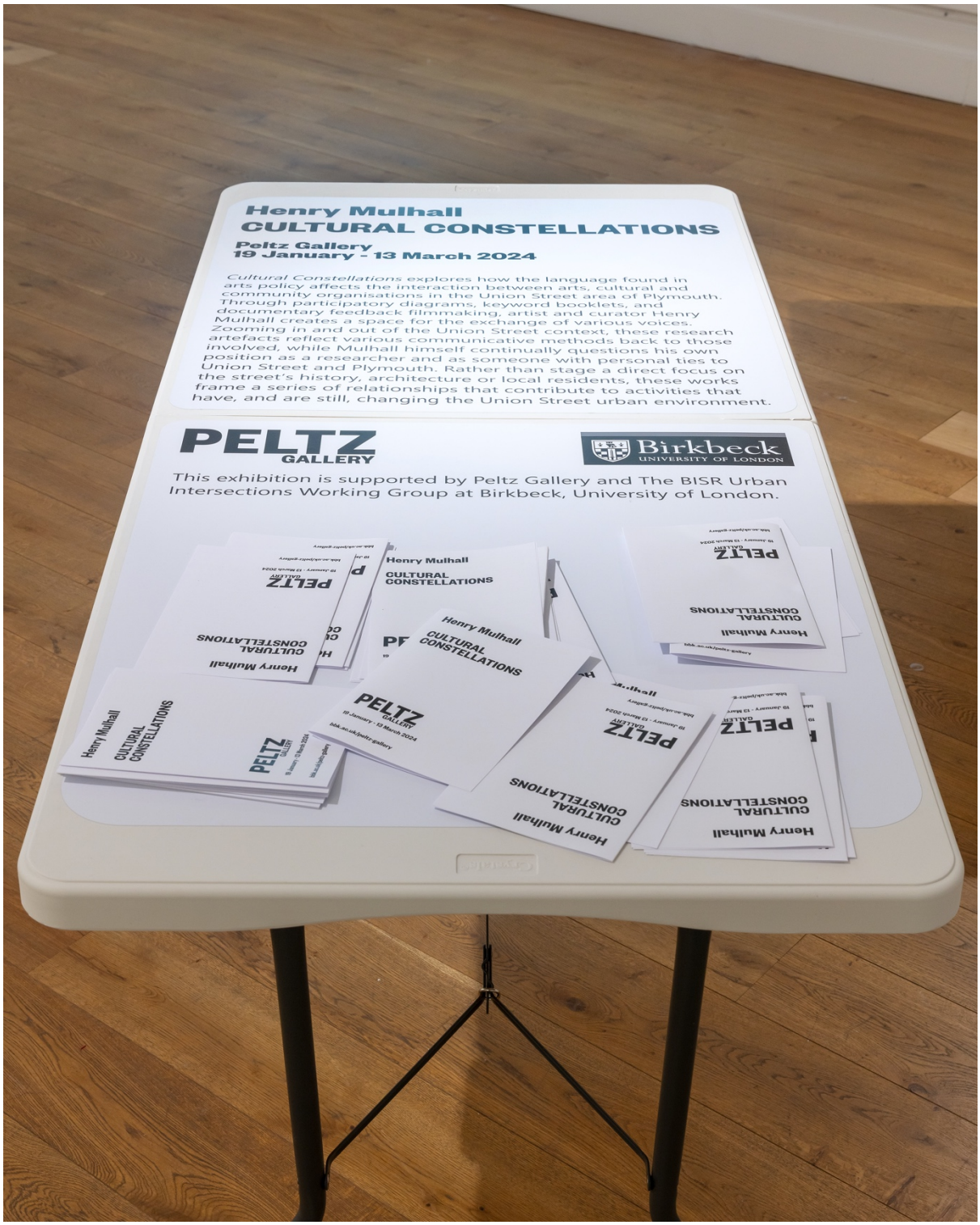
We want **people** to be drawn to the city to live, work, visit, study and invest in ways that support our vision for a culture-led fairer, greener, sustainable city.

Page 15


Relationships
Explore how **relationships** can be strengthened with planning opportunities to develop different models for delivery.
The mutually beneficial **relationship** between culture and the visitor economy remains important for Plymouth.
For individuals, we believe that they can be used to help develop their practice and build sustainable **relationships** across the cultural sector.
We will establish mutually beneficial **relationships** with those we fund, to encourage innovation and sustain excellence.
We are clear that excellence cannot be separated from the people that value it, and that this **relationship** will be relative, subtle and complex.
We will seek to establish deeper strategic **relationships** with those best placed to take on a leadership role in relation to their art form.
In future, we will judge organisations for the way in which they reflect and build a **relationship** with their communities.
It is undeniable that our city has been, and continues to be, shaped by our **relationship** and proximity to the sea.
We also recognise the importance of the sector's **relationship** with the private sector, and the partnerships and shared learning that can emerge from these links.
Page 16
Notes
Page 17


Contents taken from
Achieving Great Art for Everyone, The Arts Council England. 2010
Great Art and Culture for Everyone, The Arts Council England. 2010
A Public Art Plan for the City of Plymouth, Situations. 2016
Let's Create: Strategy 2020 to 2030, Arts Council England, 2020
Let's Create Delivery Plan 21 to 24, Arts Council England, 2021
Plymouth Culture Strategy, Plymouth Culture, 2021

PELTZ EXHIBITION MATERIALS


Henry Mulhall
CULTURAL CONSTELLATIONS
Peltz Gallery
19 January - 13 March 2024
Cultural Constellations explores how the language found in arts policy affects the interaction between arts, cultural and community organisations in the Union Street area of Plymouth. Through participatory diagrams, keyword booklets, and documentary feedback filmmaking, artist and curator Henry Mulhall creates a space for the exchange of various voices. Zooming in and out of the Union Street context, these research artefacts reflect various communicative methods back to those involved, while Mulhall himself continually questions his own position as a researcher and as someone with personal ties to Union Street and Plymouth. Rather than stage a direct focus on the street's history, architecture or local residents, these works frame a series of relationships that contribute to activities that have, and are still, changing the Union Street urban environment.
PELTZ
GALLERY
Birkbeck
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
This exhibition is supported by Peltz Gallery and The BISR Urban Intersections Working Group at Birkbeck, University of London.


COMMUNITY
RELATIONSHIPS
PARTNERSHIPS
ORGANISATIONS
LOCAL
INFRASTRUCTURE
PEOPLE


Union Street
Keywords
2010–2022
Union Street
Keywords
2010–2022
Union Street
Keywords
2010–2022
Union Street
Keywords
2010–2022
Union Street
Keywords
2010–2022


WE ARE CLEAR THAT EXCELLENCE CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM THE PEOPLE THAT VALUE IT, AND THAT THIS RELATIONSHIP WILL BE RELETIVE, SUBTLE, AND COMPLEX
IN FUTURE, WE WILL JUDGE ORGANISATIONS FOR THE WAY IN WHICH THEY REFLECT AND BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR COMMUNITIES
THE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND THE VISITOR ECONOMY REMAINS IMPORTANT FOR PLYMOUTH
WE ALSO RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SECTOR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND THE PARTNERSHIPS AND SHARED LEARNING THAT CAN EMERGE FROM THESE LINKS
EVERYONE WILL HAVE THEIR OWN SENSE OF WHAT EXCELLENCE IS, BUT FOR US IT IS SIMPLY THE BRAVEST, MOST ORIGINAL, MOST INNOVATIVE, MOST PERFECTLY REALISED WORK OF WHICH PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE
FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THINGS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES, CAN WE INSPIRE, SUPPORT, NOURISH, DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN OUR PUBLIC SPACES AND REMEMBER THEY ARE FOR THE PEOPLE BY THE PEOPLE
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how you root that locally
is really challenging


COMMUNITY
RELATIONSHIPS
PARTNERSHIPS
ORGANISATIONS
LOCAL
INFRASTRUCTURE
PEOPLE


And I remember there were obvious tensions in the room that I didn't fully understand
Henry Mulhall
CULTURAL CONSTELLATIONS
PELTZ
Birkbeck


you know, do you still ask permissions

Wall Text

Cultural Constellations: An exhibition that looks at art, culture, and community in the Union Street area of Plymouth.

Cultural Constellations explores how the language found in arts policy affects the interaction between arts, cultural and community organisations in the Union Street area of Plymouth. Through participatory diagrams, keyword booklets, and a documentary feedback filmmaking practice, artist and curator Henry Mulhall creates a space for the exchange of various voices. Zooming in and out of the Union Street context, these research artefacts reflect various communicative methods back to those involved, while Mulhall himself continually questions his own position as a researcher and as someone with personal ties to Union Street and Plymouth. Rather than stage a direct focus on the street's history, architecture or local residents, these works frame a series of relationships that contribute to activities that have, and are still, changing the Union Street urban environment.

This exhibition is supported by The BISR Urban Intersections Working Group

Thanks to everyone who took part in my research but particularly Rachel Dobbs, Hannah Harris, Donna Howard, Gabi Marcellus-Temple and Hannah Slogget for their participation and support. I would also like to thank Lewis Rhodes, Clare Taylor, Mah Rana, Plymouth Athenaeum, Sophie Hope, Louise Owen, Bartek Dziadosz and The Derek Jarman Lab for their help in making *Permissive Space*. Thank you to Alan Qualtrough, Imperfect Cinema, Tony Davey, Adam Milford and the Southwest Film and Television Archive for contributing work to this exhibition. Finally, thanks to Adam Castle and The Peltz Gallery.

Booklet text

Union Street was the centre of Plymouth nightlife and the home of many pubs and nightclubs. By 2006, most of the clubs were gone, and the street was left in almost total economic collapse. Stonehouse, which sits to the North of Union Street, is also socioeconomically deprived. The area accordingly acquired a negative image. Mulhall's research focuses on 2010-2020, a decade within which the area has seen significant change. Key transformations include the foundation in 2012, of KARST, a contemporary gallery and artists' studios which opened just off Union Street and in 2014, Nudge, a community interest company, which started engaging with many locations on Union Street (including former cinema-come-nightclubs, pubs and empty shops) by putting them to community use.

Participatory Diagrams: These artefacts were developed to research with others during the first COVID lockdown. Mulhall used a website called Graph Commons to visualise all the connections he could find using publicly available information on artists, arts organisations, community groups and funders that have a connection to Union Street. He then posted the diagrams to some of the people depicted on the graphs and asked them to edit, add, change, or mess up the diagram in whatever way they saw fit. The diagrams visually display a range of perspectives on the cultural ecosystem of Union Street and illustrate how participants responded to the research method itself.

Keyword booklets and wall posters: For these items reflecting on Union Street, Mulhall extracted seven words from the diagramming process, either from the diagram interventions themselves or from conversations with participants about the diagram method. He then used the most frequently used words to filter through a section of arts policy documents ranging from 2010 to 2020, including Arts Council England strategies as well as Plymouth-specific documents. By clustering together quotes that used the same keywords, Mulhall made a filter to disrupt how he read the language found in the chosen policy documents. The booklet also served as a facilitation tool for the subsequent focus groups. He worked with local Plymouth artist, printmaker and journalist Alan Qualtrough to hand print the booklets and posters using antique, reclaimed letterpress machines. For more information on Alan's work visit: www.alanqualtrough.com

***Permissive Space (30:00 min)*:** Film editing has been an important aspect of Mulhall's approach to facilitation, research, and analysis. *Permissive Space* documents conversations around what art and culture mean on Union Street, as well as a conversation about how to approach such a complex subject. Mulhall formed a group of five people who had been referenced most through the diagram process. They were then invited to meet for two focus groups and discuss various aspects of art, culture and community relating to Union Street and Plymouth generally. Both meetings were filmed, and *Permissive Space* is comprised of edited documentation from the two sessions. In the second, the group watched footage from the first, allowing the participants to start a process of analysis on the subjects discussed and to consider their own performances in the first meeting. Importantly, Mulhall's research approach was also under scrutiny.

Contextualising films

The exhibition also includes two contextualising films. The first is an archival news film circa. 1990 from the Southwest Film and Television Archive (SWFTA) collection held by The Box, Plymouth's city museum. In the video, we follow cameraman John Walmsley spending the night with the police on Union Street. Although shot a few years before Mulhall started going to clubs, it expresses the hedonistic and often tense atmosphere associated with the erstwhile Union Street nightlife. Mulhall came across the film through extended conversations with Adam Milford and Tony Davey, two curators based at The Box. Milford and Davey worked on *Plymouth After Dark,* a project that collected objects and captured people's memories to tell the rich and diverse story of Plymouth's nightlife. For more information on *Plymouth After Dark* visit: www.theboxplymouth.com/past-projects/plymouth-after-dark

The second contextualising film is *BLVD* (2019), which comes from Plymouth-based filmmakers and community organisers Allister Gall and Dan Paolantonio known collectively as Imperfect Cinema. The pair began as an open-access DIY film collective in 2010. *BLVD* stems from their ongoing Union Street based project *Home of Movies*. *BLVD* acts as a document of their time spent with people in an area experiencing high levels of urban development that does not represent the desires and needs of current and former residents. For more information on their work visit: www.imperfectcinema.com

This exhibition is supported by The BISR Urban Intersections Working Group

Thanks to everyone who took part in my research but particularly Rachel Dobbs, Hannah Harris, Donna Howard, Gabi Marcellus-Temple and Hannah Slogget for their participation and support. I would also like to thank Lewis Rhodes, Clare Taylor, Mah Rana, Plymouth Athenaeum, Sophie Hope, Louise Owen, Bartek Dziadosz and The Derek Jarman Lab for their help in making *Permissive Space*. Thank you to Alan Qualtrough, Imperfect Cinema, Tony Davey, Adam Milford and the Southwest Film and Television Archive for contributing work to this exhibition. Finally, thanks to Adam Castle and The Peltz Gallery.

Appendix 1 – Timeline of events

[I leave off Abercrombie and Craigie because they are more methodologically influential rather than contextually influential]

2003 – **Mackay Plan**
2004 – **Millennium** closes
2006 – **Dance Academy** closes
2008 – **Millbay Master Plan** proposed

2009 – First **Union Street Party** organised by Stonehouse Action – Every year since
2009 – **Plymouth Visual Arts Consortium** - funding group made up of University, Art College, Plymouth Art Centre (ACE), KARST (ACE)

2010 – **Achieving Great Art and Culture for Everyone** – ACE strategy 2010-2020

2011 – British Art Show **(BAS)** 7
2011 – **BAS** Fringe

2012 – **KARST** opens
2012 **– Plymouth Culture Strategy** is published – (Keywords)

2013 – **Plymouth Visual Arts Consortium** stops

2014 – **Visual Arts Plymouth** form - a group which represents independent artists, curators and key cultural organisations in the city

2015 – updated **Millbay Master Plan**
2015 – **Plymouth Culture** form [Funded by ACE & PCC]
2015 – **Go Beyond: Visual Arts Plan for Plymouth** [Plymouth Culture]
2015 – First **Plymouth Art Weekender** (PAW)
2015 – ***The Plymouth Plan: 2011-2031*** [Published by PCC]

2016 – **Horizon** was delivered by a partnership between Plymouth Culture, Plymouth University, Plymouth City Council, Plymouth College of Art, Plymouth Arts Centre, KARST and Visual Arts Plymouth, and funded through Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence fund.
2016 – **PAW**

2016 – ***Plymouth Public Art Plan*** (PAP) [Plymouth Culture] - (Keywords)

2016 – **Union Corner** Opens

2016 – **Plymouth After Dark** starts

2017 – **Plymouth Visual Arts Programming Group** (similar to **Plymouth Visual Arts Consortium)**

2017 – **Nudge** formed

2017 – **PAW**

2017 – ***We The People Are the Work*** [funded by Plymouth Visual Arts Programming Group – Horizon]

2018 – **Nudge** buy **The Clipper**

2018 – ***The Atlantic Project* –** [Horizon & PCC]

2018 – **I volunteer at The Clipper during the Atlantic Project**

2018 – **PAW**

2018 – **Horizon** stops

2019 – **Nudge** take over **The Plot**

2019 – **Plymouth Visual Arts Programming Group** stops

2020 – **COVID**

2020 – **Let's Create** – ACE strategy 2020-2030

2020 – **The Box** opens

2020 – **Nudge** buy **Millennium** with **Eat Work Art**

2020 – Last **PAW**

2021 – ***Culture Plan Plymouth (CPP)*** published by Plymouth Culture

2021 – **I volunteer at Union Street Party**

2022 – ***Because The Night Belongs to Us*** at The Box – culmination of **Plymouth After Dark**

2022 – **BAS 9**

2022 – **Nudge** buy **C-103**

Appendix 2 – List of contributors to PAP

Richard Bara, Urban Designer, Plymouth City Council

Jodie Bishop, Public Art Officer, Plymouth City Council

Ben Borthwick, Artistic Director, Plymouth Arts Centre

Andrew Brewerton, Principal, Plymouth College of Art

Michael Bridgewater, Board Member, Take A Part (CIC)

Sarah Chapman, Director, Peninsula Arts, Plymouth University

Alison Cooper, Curator of Decorative Art, Plymouth City Council

Jon Dixon, Investment Planning Manager, Plymouth City Council

Kim Dorian Kemp, Headteacher, High View Primary School

Vickie Fear, Programme Co-ordinator, Plymouth Arts Centre

Donna Howard, Director, KARST

Ian Hutchinson, Visual Arts Plymouth

Dom Jinks, Executive Director, Plymouth Culture

Gabi Marcellus-Temple, Managing Director, Flameworks Creative Arts Facility

Leigh Mason, Business Development Director, Ocean Studios

Connor McIntyre, Co-director, The Alamo Project

Joe Meldrum, Communications Officer, Plymouth Culture

Nicola Moyle, Head of Arts & Heritage, Plymouth City Council

Emma Philip, Curator of Fine Art, Plymouth City Council

Hannah Revell, Director of Development, Plymouth College of Art

Judith Robinson, Arts & Cultural Development Manager, Plymouth City Council

Jemma Sharman, Natural Infrastructure Officer, Plymouth City Council

Carl Slater, Director, KARST

Hannah Sloggett, Neighbourhood Planning Manager, Plymouth City Council

Jessica Vaughan, Planning Officer Strategic Planning & Infrastructure, Plymouth City Council

Gemma Ward, Programmes Manager, Take A Part (CIC)

Ray White, Curator and Senior Producer

Appendix 3 – Keyword table

	community	infrastructure	local	organisation	partnership	people	relationship
Achieving Great Art for Everyone: ACE Strategy 2020-2030 (ACE, 2010)	1	1	2	10	3	16	5
Great Art and Culture for Everyone (ACE, 2013)	5	3	10	26	7	17	4
A Public Art Plan for the City of Plymouth (Doherty, 2016)	2	1	8	6	6	9	3
Let's Create: ACE Strategy 2020-2030 (ACE, 2020)	5	2	4	16	3	15	5
Let's Create Delivery Plan (ACE, 2021)	10	5	11	34	10	17	2
Culture Plan Plymouth: A place-based Culture Strategy 2021-2030 (Plymouth Culture, 2021)	2	2	3	11	6	17	3
SUM	25	14	38	103	35	91	22

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