

QUESTION

ESSAYS & ART FROM THE HUMANITIES



Community

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QUESTION

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Julika Gittner
Cover: *Faces of Regeneration*,
Walthamstow Town Square,
photographed by Dean Brannagan

Designer

Hannah Griffiths
University of Reading
hannahgriff.design

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Community

JUNE 2021

Q

'Community' is the word of the hour. The social disruption of the last year has made us all rethink our relationships with the people and places around us. The concept of 'community' has become central to public discourse, reflecting our newfound enthusiasm for engaging with the surrounding world. We have joined community projects, from support groups to phone box libraries. We have rediscovered our spatial communities and grown to care for the places we inhabit. We have even witnessed the emergence of new political communities, from top-down calls for a 'national community' to bottom-up communities of activism, invigorated by protest both online and in the street.

Yet for all its renewed significance, the word 'community' remains an ambiguous one. For years, it was a kind of buzzword – an often ill-defined if loosely positive term that was deployed to a range of political, social and cultural situations. Now, with 'community' re-emerging as an active principle in society, it is only right that we begin to interrogate its meanings. What is a community? How do we explore the relationships within it? And where do we draw its boundaries?

The sixth issue of *Question* explores a few ways of unpicking this difficult term. One approach is to view 'community' as communal production, such as in public art and design projects. Hester Buck reports on her work with the R-Urban environmental design group in East London, charting the different forms of community that clustered around a communal plan to develop a moss wall that could 'breathe' polluted air. Jayne Gold discusses her involvement in the Brecon Little Theatre community drama group, whose latest project reimagines the town's unique theatrical heritage. Meanwhile, Harry Matthews and Aaron Moorehouse apply a more conceptual lens to communal production, proposing a new method of evaluating socially engaged art projects that blends the experiences of both artist and participants.

Others approach 'community' from the perspective of cultural and national identities. Charles Prempeh introduces us to the online-Asante Kotoka Society and shows how this WhatsApp-based community is revitalising discussions around Asante culture in Ghana. Analysing the 1985 film *My Beautiful Launderette*, Alisha Mathers examines the concept of 'conditional hospitality' and its role in the attempts by the film's Pakistani-British characters to integrate into British society. Taking a more historical approach, Connor Huddlestone turns to the community of privy councillors who governed Tudor England and explains how prosopography – a collective biographical method based around a group's shared characteristics – can redefine our understanding of Tudor politics.

Accompanying these essays are two creative writing pieces that link ideas

of 'community' to the issue of care for the elderly. Writing from an autobiographical perspective, Catherine Cartwright considers the community of the care home and how this environment has sustained a mother-daughter relationship throughout the pandemic. Eluned Gramich turns to rural West Wales in her short story *Ghost Homes*, exploring the difficulties of caring for an aging population in a place where traditional communities have been eroded by the disappearance of young people and the growth of the holiday home market.

This issue is richly illustrated with artwork by Julika Gittner, whose community-led project *Faces of Regeneration* raises questions about the right to develop urban spaces. Recreating the faces of those politicians, business leaders and developers leading the redevelopment of Walthamstow Town Square, Gittner addresses the imbalance of power that gives a small community of officials the ability to overrule the wishes of a much larger community of residents.

The re-emergence of 'community' as a talking point in society holds great promise. As environmental crises, social inequalities and populist politics threaten to overwhelm the individual, perhaps reviving notions of community can lead us to healthier ways of managing society, the economy and the natural world. Yet we cannot truly embrace the communal if we do not first understand it. This issue of *Question* attempts to start that conversation, approaching 'community' not as political jargon but as a term filled with the potential for societal change. The post-pandemic world will not be perfect, but by critically engaging with the ideas of 'community' that have grown so popular since last March, we may at least begin to strive for something better.

Samuel Young
June 2021



HRH The Prince of Wales, Founder of The Prince's Foundation
Medium: tights, duvet filling, foam, cardboard, 61x53x7cm, 2019

“In this damn country, which we hate and love”: The Pakistani-British Diaspora During the Thatcher Years in *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985)

Alisha Mathers, University of Southampton

Adopting Jacques Derrida’s notion of conditional hospitality, this paper examines representations of Pakistani-British diaspora in Hanif Kureishi and Stephen Frears’ 1985 film *My Beautiful Laundrette*.¹ Through textual analysis and critical discourse analysis methods, this paper examines the ways in which *My Beautiful Laundrette* depicts the Pakistani-British diaspora in Britain during the Thatcher years and explores the implications that such rules of Britain’s conditional hospitality had on the agency and cultural identity of the three main characters: Nasser, Hussein, and Omar.

The film depicts the life of a British-Pakistani family in Britain during the Thatcher years and the narrative focuses on Omar who begins on the dole while living with his socialist father, Hussein. As Omar decides to adopt his uncle Nasser’s Thatcherite guidance, he goes on to successfully manage a laundrette with the help of his employee. The film also considers the renewed British nationalism and fascist ideas that were growing in Britain in those years through a group of National Front members – an anti-immigrant and neofascist political party formed in the late 1960s – one of which is a white man named Johnny, who we discover was previously friends with Omar when they were both younger.² The two men manage to cross paths again when Omar drives his uncle’s business associate Salim and his wife home and they are attacked by a group of fascist youths; one of which is Johnny. As Omar is shocked to discover his childhood friend is a member of a hate group, he offers Johnny a job working in his new laundrette which he accepts.

Omar’s immersion into Thatcherism gives him agency that his father – who opposes Omar’s individualistic lifestyle – never achieved during his time in Britain. However, unlike his uncle, Omar does not solely locate his British identity in Thatcherism. While he adopts an entrepreneurial way of life to counteract his experiences of racism by white Britons, he also rejects the Thatcherite nuclear family model as he engages in a gay relationship with white British man, Johnny.

The Pakistani protagonists navigate their Pakistani-British identities to gain agency in Britain in different ways and to varying degrees of success.

Theoretical Framework

During a Conservative Party rally in 1982, Thatcher made it apparent that her government’s plan for Britain was to emphasise that ‘Britishness’ and Britain’s identity as a nation are foregrounded in its colonial past. While reflecting on Britain’s victory in the Falklands war, Thatcher declared that:

*[People thought that] Britain was no longer the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world. Well they were wrong. The lesson of the Falklands is that Britain has not changed, and that this nation still has those sterling qualities which shine through our history.*³

On the surface, this statement functions as a reassurance to white British people that Britain’s identity as a nation was not shifting away from what it was during its colonial period. Having said that, the repercussions of her statement go beyond merely reassuring her audience or warning those who plan to change what Britishness means. As Thatcher envisioned what she wanted Britain to be and symbolise, her statement works as – what spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre would call – a ‘technological utopia’, as it sedimented racist and exclusionary discourse in Britain.⁴ Lefebvre argues that ideologies cannot be literally actualised as they function as ‘a computer simulation of the (possible) future.’⁵ However, he acknowledges that political ideologies have the power to dictate how tangible space is produced and experienced. Spatial organisation begins with an overarching ideology. According to which knowledge and information – like Thatcher’s colonially nostalgic speech quoted above – can be ‘integrated [...] within the framework of the real.’⁶ Therefore, at the moment of suspension, an ideological vision produces knowledge which manifests itself into the real; this is known as ‘discourse’.

Scriptwriter for *My Beautiful Laundrette* Hanif Kureishi discusses discourse in action in Thatcher’s Britain when he says: ‘The British complained incessantly that the Pakistanis wouldn’t assimilate. This meant they wanted the Pakistanis to be exactly like them. But of course, even then they would have rejected them.’⁷ In other words, Kureishi observes that some newly arrived Pakistani migrants – like many other migrant communities – were only welcomed into Britain according to a set of certain conditions. This phenomenon is what philosopher Jacques Derrida coined ‘conditional hospitality’; where the ‘other’ is only welcomed into a space via a host/guest power dynamic.⁸ Jonathan Darling reflects on this

phenomenon and argues that to be ‘hospitable’ is to ‘claim a particular space as one’s own [...] to assume that one has the right to both welcome a stranger and conversely reject such a stranger’.⁹ For example, a migrant’s ability to assimilate was of major concern to Thatcher and her government. In July 1979, during an informal discussion on Vietnamese refugees seeking refuge in the UK, Thatcher was quoted saying the following in meeting minutes:

*The Prime Minister mentioned the problem which would face the UK over the refugees from Rhodesia, following independence, but said that she had less objection to refugees such as Rhodesians, Poles and Hungarians since they could more easily be assimilated into British society.*¹⁰

Consequently, in the Thatcher years, some newly arrived migrants were forced to occupy an ambivalent space in Britain; being simultaneously physically welcomed to live in Britain via Commonwealth and EEC rights, yet also having to resist imperial discourse that functioned to demonstrate that they did not belong there. As Rahul Gairola summarises:

*[During the Thatcher years] [m]ass privatization of council housing estates, anti-black, anti-gay, and anti-immigrant sentiments, and the proliferation of free-market policies and ideologies made clear on the national stage which kinds of peoples were considered eligible to be ‘British’.*¹¹

In this sense, the rules of conditional hospitality in Thatcher’s Britain shaped the way in which British people lived their lives. Therefore, such conditions impacted the formulation of British identities and diasporas. Although it is true that such ‘conditions’ encouraged those living in Britain to fit into this framework or standard, it also led to the creation of British identities that completely opposed the dominant model. The film exemplifies this phenomenon through the behaviours of its three main male characters: Nasser who adopts Thatcherism as much as possible; Hussein who attempts to challenge Thatcherite ideals; and Omar who has an ambivalent and selective relationship with Thatcherism.

Nasser and Colonial Mimicry

In the film, the character Nasser is not only aware of what the dominant idea of Britishness was under Thatcher, but also actively tries to fulfil said model as much as possible. When he gives a Thatcherite pep-talk to his nephew Omar, Nasser demonstrates that his observance of the white dominant powers is the source of his power. Nasser states to Omar:

*In this damn country, which we hate and love, you can get anything you want. It’s all spread out and available. That’s why I believe in England. Only, you need to know how to squeeze the tits of the system.*¹²

Due to the Conservative Party government’s constant reiteration of what is accepted as ‘British’, Nasser understands and manipulates Britain’s imperial power structures. While he hates the oppression that he receives as a Pakistani subject, he loves the fact that he can gain agency in Britain by adopting the government’s idea of ‘Britishness’. In Homi Bhabha’s words, this ‘double gaze’ – being both oppressed but also aware of the systems in place which oppress him – allows Nasser to prosper in Thatcher’s Britain as a successful businessman.¹³ The Conservative Party’s concerns for Britain exceeded a desire for imperial control as they also incorporated middle-class values as a marker for British identity. In doing so, newly arrived Pakistani migrants were able to fulfil the criteria to become what Thatcher’s government considered ‘British’ which then enabled them to gain agency in Britain. Ymitri Mathison observes that:

*Having attained a veneer of cultural whiteness, the assimilated middle-class immigrant British Asians consider themselves to be “British” culturally having attained an Englishness-therefore, racially not “black.” They distance themselves from the lower class “peasant” immigrants, who, having created an India-in-England and maintained their Indianness, are on the frontlines of white British racism.*¹⁴

Nasser and the other businessmen are no different as they also did not adopt British cultural habits to undermine or overthrow the middle-class white subjects in power. Rather, they tried to blend in with middle-class Britons and differentiate themselves from lower-class Asians in the UK.

Hussein and Anticolonial Discourse

Hussein, on the other hand, engages in a counter-discursive approach to living in the UK as he attempts to resist Britain’s imperial discourse altogether. Being both metaphorically on the peripheries of Thatcher’s neoliberal Britain (being unemployed) and literally on the peripheries of the plot in the film (as he is predominantly alone in his flat), the film emphasises his lack of agency in Britain and ostracization from his family and society. Crucially, Ashcroft et al. argue that counter-discourse is an ‘examination of the ways in which [discourse] operates as naturalized controls’ which exposes their ‘contingency and permeability’.¹⁵ In other words, discourse is the political framework through which knowledge

and power relations are produced. However, throughout the film, it becomes apparent that Hussein's counter-discursive approach to oppression negatively impacts his life in Thatcher's Britain. When talking to his son Omar about working in Britain, Hussein reveals his strategy for resisting imperial legacies whilst living in Britain. The discussion goes as follows:

Omar: Going to Uncle's house, Papa. He's given me a car.

[...]

Hussein: Don't get too involved with that crook. You've got to study. We are under siege by the white man. For us education is power.

[Omar shakes his head at his father]

Hussein: Don't let me down.¹⁶

Having been a journalist and government advisor in Pakistan, he claims that 'education is power'. Indeed, Hussein's educational background served him well in Pakistan as it enabled him to access powerful positions such as working for the Prime Minister Bhutto. However, Hussein's educational background does not provide him with same positions of power when living in Britain. Consequently, it is no surprise that Omar does not follow his father's advice to invest in his education as opposed to following in the footsteps of his successful uncle Nasser. While Hussein is aware that Thatcher's plans for Britain are rooted in imperial discourse, his recognition of this fact and his warning to others (like his son Omar) are not enough to challenge the powers of the imperial centre. Rather, his resistance to adopt a Thatcherite way of life in Britain causes him to become static and powerless over his career, his son, and his life overall. This is evident in Hussein's position in the film, as he is mainly depicted in bed drinking vodka from the bottle and smoking a cigarette, as pictured in **Figures 1 and 2**.

Salim – one of Nasser's business associates – makes it apparent that Hussein's powerlessness is due to his educational skills and experiences which have no worth in Thatcher's neoliberalised Britain. For example, when Salim is in conversation with Omar, he puts it bluntly:

Salim [to Omar]: How's your Papa? So many books written and read.

Politicians sought him out. Bhutto was his close friend. But we're nothing in England without money.¹⁷

Crucially, the film demonstrates that the statement above is a reality as it depicts Hussein as someone who is wasting away in Britain. In this sense, Hussein's powerlessness in Britain provides a visible representation of socialism and social solidarity in Thatcher's Britain. During an interview in 1987, Thatcher made such desires for British people clear as she stated: 'who is society? There



Figures 1 and 2. Both are screen captures from *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Figure 1 depicts a shot of Hussein drinking and smoking in bed in his apartment while he speaks to his son, Omar, about education and power in Britain. Figure 2 depicts a later scene in which Hussein remains in the same position as before, having not left his bedroom.

is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first'.¹⁸ Read through Thatcher's rhetoric on society and individuals, the Pakistani businessmen in the film understood and adopted Britain's rule of conditional hospitality to avoid such neglect from Britain. Hussein, on the other hand, did not construct his British identity to emulate Thatcher's ideal 'Britishness', and therefore, is left powerless in a perceived individualistic and colonially nostalgic Britain.

Omar and Colonial Ambivalence

Having received advice on living in Britain as a Pakistani man from both his father Hussein and his uncle Nasser, Omar decides to adopt his uncle's Thatcherite approach to life and soon becomes an owner of a successful laundrette. However, Omar's British identity is not as straightforwardly Thatcherite as his uncle's way of life. Instead, in Daniela Berghahn's words, Omar is 'doubly different and doubly marginalized'.¹⁹ Omar resists oppression as an Asian subject by adopting his uncle's celebration of entrepreneurs and individual success, yet he also resists his uncle's heteronormativity as he engages in a gay relationship with Johnny, a white ex-National Front member. Unlike Nasser, Omar profits both from the opportunities produced by neoliberalism, while also resisting the expectations of his gender set out by his family and Thatcher's notion of the 'ideal' British family as heteronormative, traditional and white. Omar's relationship with white subject Johnny goes totally against this ideal, as Berghahn summarises: 'The Tory government discriminated as much against family diversity (in the shape of single mothers, and other non-traditional family types) as it did against ethnic and sexual diversity'.²⁰

Therefore, Omar's selective engagement with Thatcherism demonstrates a completely different way of living in Britain as a diasporic subject than his uncle and father. Rather, Omar publicly works from within the power dynamic in Britain to overthrow his experiences of racism yet also does not abide by Thatcher's framework for Britishness in his private life. The scene in which Omar and Johnny have sexual intercourse at the back of the laundrette demonstrates his ambivalent engagement in Thatcherite Britishness.

Adding to Berghahn's claim that '[t]he moment of seduction crystallizes into a moment during which Omar reassesses his ethnic and familial loyalties', this scene is a crucial moment in which Omar's reassessment and navigations of his loyalties to Thatcherism become clear.²¹ The window in this scene divides the two couples yet is blacked out from Nasser's side and transparent from the view of Omar and Johnny. This window functions to illustrate Omar's ambivalent



Figure 3. Screen capture from *My Beautiful Laundrette* which depicts Omar and Johnny having sex in the back of the laundrette while his uncle Nasser and his mistress dance the waltz on the main floor of the laundrette.

and fluid relationship with Thatcherism. As observed by Kenneth Kaleta, the film sets up a symbolic association with Nasser and his mistress Rachel, and black, prison-like grid lines. Kaleta writes that:

*Both the scene in which Rachel and Nasser make love and the one in which they break up are shot through a grille of black square bars that simultaneously imprisons and visually fragments the couple. These rigid rectangular bars stand in stark contrast to the permeable [...] 'liquid window.'*²²

This moment seen from Omar and Johnny's perspective (see Fig 3) shows Nasser and Rachel (Nasser's mistress) behind a bar-like beaded curtain, emphasising the imprisoning effects of Thatcher's standards for British families. The frame above in particular depicts a striking image of Thatcher's heteronormative ideal family as something which is unattainable for all subjects as Rachel fades ghostly into the background as though Nasser is dancing alone. Her silhouette flickers from visible to invisible throughout the dancing scene, suggesting that Thatcher's heteronormative and white vision for British families was merely an unattainable desire. Jacques Lacan's observations of desires are helpful to consider in this context, as he puts it:

*The enigmas that desire [...] poses for any sort of "natural philosophy" are based on no other derangement of instinct than the fact that it is caught in the rails of metonymy, eternally extending toward the desire for something else.*²³

Thatcher's ideal for British families is no different. Although Nasser tries to divert from his Pakistani family to a more Thatcherite ideal by engaging in a relationship with a white middle-class woman, the depiction of Rachel in the scene demonstrates that Thatcher's notion of the heteronormative white British family is unattainable. This ghostliness of Rachel in the scene emphasises her instability and uncertainty in Nasser's life, as if she is merely a desire. As Berghahn acknowledges: '*My Beautiful Laundrette* challenges this homogenizing fantasy by making the point that there are no families that come even close to this ideal'.²⁴ Following Berghahn's framing, Nasser's desire to fulfil Thatcher's ideal forces him onto 'the rails of metonymy' as he is locked behind metaphorical bars which restrict his relationships in Britain.²⁵ Comparatively, Omar's identity – like the window between them – is more fluid. Omar crosses over to his uncle Nasser's Thatcherite and neoliberal way of life in order to avoid the effects of racism. However, Omar is also able to resist the familial expectations of his gender both as a Pakistani subject and as a Briton living under Thatcher's government. In this sense, the window in the scene above represents Omar's navigation of his diasporic identity in Britain.

Conclusion

My Beautiful Laundrette suggests that Thatcher's colonially nostalgic, individualistic, and heteronormative vision for Britain shaped the way in which some Pakistani-British people constructed their Britishness. Whether that be through an attempt to fulfil those conditions fully or partially, or by rejecting the 'rules' entirely, the main diasporic characters in the text are given no choice but to engage with Thatcher's conditions for welcome in Britain in order to gain agency. Nasser adopts an absolutist approach to Thatcherite Britishness and succeeds financially in doing so, yet cracks in his relationship with Rachel and their break-up shows that Thatcher's model of Britishness was an unattainable goal. Hussein, on the other hand, is isolated and neglected by Britain as he rejects Thatcher's notion of Britishness altogether. As Hussein decides to return to Pakistan as a result of his treatment in Britain, the film emphasises why many other Pakistanis in the film adopted a Thatcherite lifestyle. Omar's character – being somewhere in between and being a second-generation migrant – functions to illustrate how power dynamics in Britain were negotiated to create a coexisting ethnically diverse society under the complex oppression produced by Thatcherite neoliberalism and colonial nostalgia. In this sense, Omar's success in the film suggests that adopting Thatcherite Britishness was a mandatory move for some newly arrived Pakistani-Britons to have agency and avoid ostracization. Having said that, Nasser's failure to become the ideal Thatcherite model shows

that Britishness or any cultural identity cannot be as fixed and rigid as Margaret Thatcher and her government hoped. Additionally, *My Beautiful Laundrette* suggests that Thatcherite discourse did not produce her ideological vision for Britain in exactitude. Rather, the film proposes that Thatcher's anti-immigrant and heteronormative definitions of Britishness heavily shaped the ways in which some newly arrived Pakistani migrants spatially experienced Britain and constructed their British identity. In this sense, the film supports Henri Lefebvre's understanding that overarching ideologies – like that of Thatcher and her government – are 'integrated [...] within the framework of the real' and determine how people live their lives within a particular space.²⁶

Evaluating Socially Engaged Practices in Art: The Autonomy of Artists and Artworks in Community Collaborations

Harry Matthews and Aaron Moorehouse, Bath Spa University

Overview

This article outlines a number of important issues concerning socially engaged practices in art. It first introduces core ideas from art historian Claire Bishop and her critique of *relational art*. It then investigates a pre-existing conceptual framework from the community arts, one which proposes a non-hierarchical platform for communities to develop their own narrative contributions both collectively and individually. We amend the proposed framework and apply it to a reading of composer Brona Martin's project *Sowing Seeds*. This allows us to provide the necessary stimulus for better understanding how socially engaged practices may be discussed and evaluated in the community. Crucially, we are concerned with how an artist's work transmits their experiences of working with a community through the creative process itself. We also wish to revise the pre-existing conceptual framework to pay greater attention to the experiences of the artist in their work.

Context

The social turn in contemporary art, whereby outreach programmes, community projects, and participatory works became the new vogue, was arguably predicated on two false dichotomies. The first of these centres on audience behaviour, and the argument that *active* spectatorship (in which an audience contributes creatively to the form and content of an artwork), is of more value than *passive* spectatorship (in which an observer encounters an already completed work). Secondly, the social turn is built upon the foundations of conceptual art and its preference for art-processes (situated in time) over art-objects (which are situated in space).¹ Taken together, these inclinations led to an avalanche of artists tumbling out of the galleries and into communities, to facilitate experiences that primarily posited the act of art-making as *the artwork*, rather than generating material intended for an audience situated outside of these experiences. Additionally, such artworks often hope to affect changes in society at either an individual or community level. For this reason, works are often socially-engaged ideologically, while this label

simultaneously refers to the site of action. This raises the question of how to quantify these kinds of engagement, and how they might be analysed in art?

As well as accommodating sociological aims, socially engaged practices are often positioned as disrupters of the art market, whereby experience itself is authored in order to evade the creation of objects which can easily be commodified, reproduced, and sold. In reality, the market subsumes these experiential practices with a dispiriting ease, as noted by the art critic and curator Lucy Lippard with regards to the dematerialisation of the art object in 1960s conceptual art.² However, socially engaged practices depart from conceptualism in the artform's approach to collaboration and accessibility. Somewhat counter-intuitively, we propose that socially-engaged artists should reaffirm the authorship of their experiences when working with communities. We argue that it is crucial for an artist's subjective reflections on the work to become identifiable in the artwork itself. Otherwise, the artist risks falling into hypocrisy, *othering* the artwork's participants in a manner which places a troubling tension between the two groups, the artist and the community with which they are working.

The Critique of Socially Engaged Practices in Art

Claire Bishop, well-known for her article 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', illustrates how artists working in community contexts often designate 'social events, publications, workshops, or performances' as the products of their artwork.³ This departure from material form, as Bishop notes, problematises the preconceived link between art and the artmaker. Instead, the resulting 'work' reflects both the process and product of its own socially created environment. Furthermore, these types of artistic output continue to fuel debates concerning the role of the artist, their relationship to their work, and the precedence given towards either creative processes or the sociological changes desired by socially engaged practices. Bishop suggests that this art is borne out of a value system that opposes repressive capitalism, and that it often escapes criticism by using community inclusion and political engagement as principal measures of value.⁴ Bishop argues that socially engaged art should not be exempt from critical enquiry simply because it is participatory and politically active.

Bishop positions her critique against Nicholas Bourriaud's theorisation of *relational aesthetics* – art that establishes meaning through the relationships it generates between people and societal groups.⁵ Relational art often considers its audience to be the community that participates in its creation or realisation, rather than situating the audience outside of these processes. Bishop is dismissive of this approach, instead advocating for transgressive, risky, and even

ethically problematic works.⁶ She states that art which raises consciousness is of far more value than ultimately ineffectual articulations of exemplary and demonstrative political gestures. For this reason, Bishop implies that even in socially engaged practice, its separation from social praxis is ultimately integral to its pursuit of sociological aims.⁷

Taken together, Bishop and Bourriaud illustrate two approaches to the evaluation of socially engaged practice. Where Bishop focuses on evaluating an artwork as autonomous, Bourriaud focuses on evaluating the experiences of individuals who participate in such work. However, we suggest that such a separation between these two approaches is disadvantageous for two reasons. Firstly, art that denies its sociological implications (or its inescapable sociological mediation) likely results in the same political inefficiencies that Bishop criticises. Secondly, collaborative art preoccupied with generating positive experiences for its participants is in many ways indistinguishable from social work, and in these cases, the purpose of a work's artistic designation needs further investigation. Instead, it is perhaps more appropriate that an artist deals with these contradictions over the course of an artwork's creation, and that these explorations are present in the work's documentation. By these means, an artist may highlight their own experiences of the work in a way that further validates their claim to meaningful art-making processes, whilst also quenching a desire for authorship and validation that lies latent in socially engaged practices.

The 'Collaborative Stories Spiral' as a Socially-Engaged Framework

It is clear that Bishop and Bourriaud have opposing views towards the nature and importance of social engagement in art practice. However, by shifting our attention towards social engagement as a staged process for producing non-hierarchical and meaningful self-evaluated experiences, we suggest there are compatibilities between these previously opposing views. The following framework from the community arts, termed the *Collaborative Stories Spiral* (CSS), outlines a process for how academics and youth workers should work with communities to produce collaborative stories. We have chosen this framework and translated it to an art-making context because it focuses on the experiences of community members over arts academics, and its promotion of shared engagements over the individual successes of an artwork.

The framework, authored by Paul Gilchrist, Claire Holmes, Amelia Lee, Niamh Moore, and Neil Ravenscroft demonstrates the importance of pairing non-hierarchical community projects with academic research methodologies, in order to generate self-told narratives authentically.⁸ The study, while chiefly

aimed at the community arts, is arguably relevant to socially-engaged artists (educated in the gallery arts) pursuing similar aims through participatory artworks.

The study grouped two youth workers with three academics as a way of co-producing research. These collaborative projects were developed into a 'co-designed multi-method conceptual framework for organising the generation of data about personal and community narratives'.⁹ ¹⁰ The CSS framework seeks to instrumentalise non-hierarchical methods to create academic research that encourages narrative inquiry from communities, avoiding the need for further academic mediation.¹¹ CSS is made up of four stages:

1. Situating Stories

Conducting background research – understanding historical context and how communities produce/experience stories. Conducted by the academic researcher and not involving the community.

2. Generating Stories

Involving active participation as central to the narrative-building phase. Completed at either an individual and/or community level, and concerned with the sensitive production of information that may connect multiple actors within a community.

3. Mediating Stories

A process of retelling captured narratives to the collective community. A peer-review process whereby participants are encouraged to interpret and dispute narratives, perhaps leading to multiple individual narrative strands.

4. Remediating Stories

Formulating each strand into a collective final narrative which is distributed for wider consumption. This process is ongoing and encourages further communication, collaboration, and exchange.¹²

In summary, CSS generates research that is created and owned by those who participate in the project – it is not then reinterpreted by academics – and its conceptual four-stage structure could similarly be utilised by artists to present self-generated and socially-engaged narratives in participatory art. However, while the CSS makes it necessary to distance any academic remediation, we see artists as participants within socially-engaged projects and, as such, believe it is necessary to add a fifth stage to this framework. We also note that academic remediation is often continuously present, through blogs, social media, documentation, impact studies, grant applications, job applications, papers, and

books and rather than gloss over this fact, we want to highlight this type of remediation. This fifth stage, therefore, would embed the artist's own reflections on the collaborative process within the artwork, offering artists the opportunity to foreground their own stories and evaluations of the collaborative experience as concrete elements of the work itself. These outputs would take the form of either artworks (sound, installation, film etc.) or publications (possibly in journal format), but most importantly, would be presented in the style and voice that best embodies the artist's own personal narrative. Our proposed fifth stage highlights experience as somewhat more idiomatic whilst, vitally, positioning an evaluation of the collective and participatory processes as a fundamental element of the experience for the artist as well as the community, thereby bringing the two into closer contact.

***Sowing Seeds*, by Brona Martin**

Brona Martin's *Sowing Seeds*, from 2018, exemplifies the ways by which to produce a platform for community-focused workshops while also providing the opportunity for the artist and participants to create independently-produced, autonomous work in response to their reflections on the collaborative process. The work explores narrative principally through electroacoustic musical means – sounds that are recorded and manipulated using digital audio workstations (DAW). Electroacoustic works are often presented as digital recordings and focus on developing unique connections between studio techniques and their relationship to real-world acoustic sounds or soundscapes.¹³ Martin's project offers us, the authors, the opportunity to critique the creative process of engagement alongside individual artistic output, this without either relying upon participatory involvement as the sole predictor of its success, or dismissing these elements entirely.

Commissioned by Seeds Studio and the Vonnegut Collective for MANTIS Festival in Manchester, the two-part project consists firstly of a variety of collaborative workshops devised by Martin and delivered to members of local Manchester communities. It then directs a response from Martin reflecting on the communal experience by creating an artwork using the compiled narratives from those involved in the workshops. In the following case study, we underpin how the CSS framework's stages are present in Martin's project.

Aligning *Sowing Seeds* with the CSS framework

1. Situating Stories

During workshops, attended by 8–10 participants, the first stage acted as a communication forum in which information was shared about growing up

in Manchester. Themes such as industrialisation and the climate crisis emerged as significant changes affecting the participants' lives.¹⁴ This initial stage of the project aligns closely to the first stage of the CSS framework, 'Situating Stories': where researchers grasp an understanding of how communities communicate when engaging with their historical and cultural identities. This approach is used by Martin in order to understand which aspects of living in Manchester are affecting the participants. However, Martin's work departs slightly from this framework, by instead situating this stage within the workshop itself.

2. Generating Stories

The next stage of the workshops focused on outlining a process by which participants could author their own narratives surrounding industrialisation and climate change. In this instance, each participant was provided with sound-recording equipment and asked to capture audio from their environment that contributes to their personal experiences of change.¹⁵ Martin mentions that participants were taught how to use them during the workshop itself, and beyond the simple mechanics of operating this technology there is no prior knowledge needed to capture material.¹⁶ In fact, this format of narrative-building is neutral in comparison to other forms of story-making, with field recording providing an autonomy and novelty in comparison to the production of literary or visual narratives which are inescapably tied to the weighty traditions of literature and the visual arts. Generating stories using neutral methods is a useful and effective strategy for allowing participants to craft original stylistic presentations of their own narratives, and pursuing this neutrality while using language and image materials may be an interesting point of departure for works that utilise mediums other than field recording. Furthermore, Martin found that although participants used different means of recording sounds (for example, some making instruments, some using found objects to generate sounds, and others recording conversations), when collected and presented together they also generated a collective image of the community and the stories discussed together during the earlier phase of the workshop process.¹⁷

3. Mediating Stories and 4. Remediating Stories

The final stage of Martin's workshops included the collection of all recorded material, including her own, which was then combined into a shared 'sound library'. These recordings were then distributed to the participants, who were taught the techniques by which they could create their own electroacoustic soundwork using the sounds they had recorded. The recordings became invaluable tools for storytelling. Martin suggests that these recordings, whilst giving a necessary formal creative restraint to the nature of the participant's soundworks,

are combined, manipulated (using studio techniques), and given a structure that nonetheless presents the unique narrative of each participant.¹⁸ These soundworks were produced over a three-month period, with participants able to request technological support from staff and volunteers at Seed Studio throughout.¹⁹

Aligning directly with the third and fourth stages of the CSS framework, participants here begin to mediate and remediate stories with the potential to generate their own narrative strands. Interestingly, rather than these stages becoming a process of live dialogue between participants, what emerges is a private, creative experience. The combination of both a shared and a private reflective period allows all participants to pursue their own narrative strands, without interference from voices that would have otherwise been more dominant in group contexts. Furthermore, by giving participants the opportunity of continued engagement with the generated material, the process of remediating becomes a self-perpetuating process, a recognised step in stage four of the CSS framework.

5. Fifth Stage Proposition

Finally, during the three-month process where remediation takes place, Martin was herself making an electroacoustic work utilising the sound library of recordings. Referring to our advocacy for an additional fifth stage to the CSS framework – in which an artist provides their own creative reflections on the collaborative experience – we argue that Martin is entering a different reflection process to that of her participants.

Sowing Seeds generates a retelling of Martin's own experiences highlighting the community's attitude towards industrialisation, climate change and social inequalities – a community to which Martin is an outsider. Her creative process also utilises the sound library as a creative restraint, with an understanding that this approach avoids a distinction between her output and the work of the participants.²⁰ This process, while not an ongoing intervention, and more akin to conventional artistic output, is an important aspect of working with communities through collaborative projects as it provides a novel outlet by which such work can be disseminated. Notably, it provides an opportunity for Martin to present her work to an audience of outsiders, allowing space to critically reflect upon the art that is ultimately presented to those situated outside of the experience. This, we believe, is important in that it gives space for Martin's art to ultimately take risks and push boundaries without the distractions of an eye-catching participatory model, while simultaneously highlighting the social implications uncovered through this participation.

At the core of Bourriard's relational aesthetics, the role of the participant

is foregrounded above that of any final art object, whereas we wish to place greater focus on the evaluatory experiences of the artist. Our proposed fifth stage should, in this context, be seen as a direct metaphor for the foregrounding of artists' emotions. Although it could be argued that our proposal for a fifth stage consists of the kind of academic (although in this case artistic) remediation that the CSS framework prohibits, we question where the researchers draw this line and posit whether an explicit engagement is ultimately more honest. Community collaboration facilitated by an outsider inevitably results in an authored experience, and it is better to recognise and direct this inevitability, rather than denying its implications. This becomes especially pertinent when socially engaged practices are documented and presented using the same techniques and contexts as the visual arts, as has often been the case in the tradition of socially engaged practices.²¹ Furthermore, we think that the democratisation of evaluatory experiences between the artist and participant can be further supported if careful attention is paid to the ways in which each are allowed the space to reflect, evaluate, share, and ultimately collaborate on meaningful art projects as one single community.

Conclusions

This article illustrates some of the challenges posed during the conception and criticism of socially engaged practices. Firstly, we consider the provocations of Claire Bishop and Nicholas Bourriard simultaneously, rather than placing them in direct competition to one another. Taken together, they effectively intertwine various meanings of an artwork – on individual, collective, and aesthetic levels – and it is logical that thorough explorations of these will result in more meaningful art. We argue that addressing these positions as separate results in a considerable rift, or distance, between the experiences of the artist and the community with which they might be working. Throughout this article we have hoped to clarify that artists should not shy away from their participatory experiences within socially engaged practice, and should remain actively aware of the issues surrounding hierarchy and the evaluation of collective experiences through structured frameworks for social engagement.

With this in mind, we have used the CSS framework in order to propose that artists working in social contexts should make greater use of research relevant to their practice, even if it is located outside of the literature surrounding the gallery arts. Although artists intentionally occupy novel perspectives from which to work with a community, too often artists remain unaware of existing material that could navigate their existing concerns. However, in order to bridge this distance, we introduce a theoretical fifth stage to the CSS framework which

encourages the artist to reflect on their experience through the production of their own, independent art. In the case of Martin's project, we evaluated and highlighted the uses of a community-generated sound library, foregrounding both the artist's and community's experiences.

We understand that the process of critiquing art outside of social praxis should not be entirely separate, as it represents an inescapable element of the presentation and documentation of socially engaged practice. By engaging with this process explicitly in participatory artworks, we can determine the degree to which artists remain both empathetic and attentive to the communities they are collaborating with, while simultaneously allowing the production of autonomous art and exercising the artist's reflective and expressive capabilities.



Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (2010–15)
Medium: tights, duvet filling, foam, cardboard, 49×40×6cm, 2019

Ghost Homes

Eluned Gramich, Aberystwyth University | Prifysgol Aberystwyth

Judy is carrying the laundry basket upstairs when pain shoots down the side of her body. She drops the basket and stumbles into the bedroom. The pain is sharp and thin, like a long needle sliding up the backs of her legs. Breathing heavily, Judy walks the length of the room, trying to stretch, loosen the muscle. Walking makes the pain worse. Standing still makes the pain worse. Sitting – well, she can't sit at all. Agony. She presses her knuckles into the small of her back, then she kneads the area above her hipbone from where the pain emanates – vice-like, blade-sharp. It alleviates nothing. The pain climbs and climbs, tightens and tightens, as though she is being stretched out on a rack, and there's no possibility of reprieve. It's too late – the damage is done. The stairs. The laundry basket. If only she'd brought the clothes up one by one.

Judy knows how it will go; she's familiar with the trajectory of this particular pain. It will take two weeks. She won't be able to sleep or sit for two weeks.

It's an art, living with back pain. You have to feel around it, inhabit it, test it every day, every hour. Sometimes the pain will relent and allow you to lean against the kitchen doorway, to wash the cup and plate in the sink. Sometimes the pain punishes, doles out a reminder of its power: not letting her stand so she must kneel on the floor with her head on the armchair, listening to her breath.

On the second day, her only child, Will, comes to see her. She reminds him to stay back, leave the shopping by the gate.

“Pam wyt ti'n sefyll fel 'na, Mam?” He asks why she's standing funny.

“Paid â busnesu.” Don't be nosy, she snaps. She hasn't changed her clothes in two days, but Will doesn't notice these details.

“Wyt ti moyn i fi mynd i'r doctors a dod a thabledi i ti?”

“Nadw, wir.”

She has a horror of pills. The last time the doctor got hold of her he put a scalpel to her eyes.

“Oes 'na rhywbeth arall ti moyn? Digon o laeth 'da ti?”

“Mae Danny yn dod a'r llaeth.”

“Nady, Mam. Mae'n shieldo oherwydd ei galon.”

“O, reit.”

Danny is a boy from Aberaeron who brings her a pint of milk three times a week. Not a boy anymore, she corrects herself. A man in his forties, like Will.

He had a heart attack the year before and stayed in Glangwili hospital for a month or so. So he's another one of the lost people, she thinks. The village is empty of tourists and visitors; her nearest neighbours, half a mile or so up the hill, don't venture out. Thinking about the disease intensifies the pain. She ducks inside the house so he can't see the pain in her expression.

“Mam?”

“Gad y pethau ar bwys y gât. Mae 'na digon o waith da ti wneud, siŵr o fod.”

He does as he's told; coughing, he leaves the shopping by the gate and heads back to his car, back to work. She regrets asking him to buy so much. The bags look heavy.

He's about to get in the car when he stops and says, “Allai symud mewn gyda ti, Mam. Helpu 'da'r tŷ. Mae'n dipyn o daith o'r dref.”

The pain is bad from all the standing, but she mustn't let on. Will wants to move in with her and help with the house. He's saying it's too far away, the thirty-minutes it takes him to drive from town every day.

“Paid â bod yn dwp.”

Don't be stupid. What's he going to do here? There's nothing to do in the old house. How's she going to feed him? There's no room in the wardrobe for his things. Where will he sleep? She hasn't opened the door to his old bedroom in decades; it will need cleaning and clearing. There's damp and mould and little dead flies. Where will he sit in the evenings? She only has the one armchair now. The sofa is covered in old issues of *Y Gambo*.

She clutches her back.

“Iawn,” her son says, raising his hand dismissively, or sadly.

He's forty-five years old; his hair has turned quite grey. He has a pained air about him, drawn and wilted, as though the world is set against him and there's nothing he can do. He's been like that since birth, she thinks: a melancholy child who stared at adults and never smiled. A hard-to-love child.

She waits for his car to disappear around the hillside before walking slowly to the top of the path. She leans on the gate. From here the sea is visible, a slip of cool whiteish blue. It has been a calm few days; the sort of mild, dry weather that would have brought visitors to the cove below. She thinks of the seals and dolphins, swimming and playing in the water, with no humans to witness their shenanigans. Years ago, when she was a young girl, a seal appeared beside her when she was out swimming with her brothers and sister, gliding against her legs with his blubbery hide. The warmth had surprised her, the leathery touch. She remembers crying afterwards, humiliated, frightened, thinking the seal had tried to hurt her, push her away. But perhaps it had been a kind of animal affection?

It's good to remember. It distracts her from the pain in her back. She takes each item from the shopping bags into the kitchen in turn. She carries the box of Black Magic to the TV with both hands, like an offering.

The fourth night she spends awake. The pain has her in its grip: stretching and twisting her spine and hip. It won't allow her to lie on the bed, not on her side or back. It won't allow her to sit. The fourth night she spends pacing the bedroom. She worries she can't carry on. The moon is high, cloudless. Judy goes to the bathroom. In the cabinet there are medicines from years ago, when she trusted doctors a little more than she does now. The white cardboard boxes are yellowing and curling with age. Among the old prescriptions is one for pain-relief; she doesn't remember which one. She spreads them out on the side of the bath. Two spiders live in the bath; she hasn't washed for a week, not even a flannel to her face. It started before the pain, the not-washing. The spiders don't move. They haven't noticed her. She selects two pills and swallows them with a handful of water from the tap. She waits for a few minutes. No curtains in the bathroom and the moon illuminating the drooping washing line, the curve of the hill beyond, the sliver of path that leads down to the ghost houses. The pain whips the backs of her legs. She takes two more pills.

Downstairs, she puts the kettle on. Three in the morning is still the morning. On the wall behind her is an old photograph of the family: her father, mother, three older brothers and younger sisters. Her parents died in the late eighties: her Mam first and then her Da not six months later. Her brothers have gone too. The eldest of advanced tuberculosis they diagnosed too late. Only the sisters have survived; her sister, Non, lives in England with her husband. No children.

The photograph shows their similarities: the round faces, the slightly too-large mouths, and the curly brown hair, although you couldn't see the colour in the black-and-white image. Judy was two years old and Non just a bundle of white in Mam's arms. It was her Christening. Behind them, the brothers decked out in their Sunday Best, three stout, puff-chested pillars, protecting the little ones.

No protection now. No one to rely on but her son. The water has gone cold. She's forgotten to pour it, switches the kettle on again. Where is Will's father? He found another woman and moved away when Will was small. The less said of him the better.

She pours the tea but as she pours a new pain bubbles up from inside her. Burning her throat. She clutches at her chest – what is this now? A wave of acid, stripping her stomach and gullet. When she takes a sip of the tea to calm it,

she throws it up immediately. She wants to lie down, survive this new pain, but her back won't allow it. She stands, frozen, by the back door. An owl calls outside, low and reedy.

The pills, she thinks. Medicine. It always makes you worse! Charlatan doctors. Liars. Poison-peddlers. Murderers.

She's sweating now. Cold.

I'm dying, she thinks. Dying alone. Her family's gaze is on her: from the photograph they leer down at her. What? Did you think you were going to get away? Did you think you're an exception? She senses their ghostly presence. Her brothers drawing her away; swinging her over their shoulders and off to safety.

No, not yet. No.

Will.

The phone is in the living room. She shuffles over in the half-dark. It's an old phone where you put your fingers in the holes, move it around in a circle to find the number. Will. She hears the ring, loud and insistent. It goes on a long time before she gives up.

"Ble yn y byd mae e?" Where is he? It's four in the morning and her son is not at home.

Who else can she call? Only Non, in Coventry. And what can Non do? Nothing.

She calls her son again, with each ring the agonies in her body seem to double, until she finds herself on the floor, her legs pushed up against a chest. The carpet is thin and old and smells of coal.

Judy prays. *Ein Tad, yr hwn wyt yn y nefoedd...*

But even as she prays, she's filled with un-Christian thoughts: rage and hatred. Why is she alone? This was the family home: five children lived and grew here and now it's a house of rubbish and closed-up rooms. This was part of a village: fishermen and farmers and preachers and housewives and now it's a village of silences and keys locked up in boxes. Where is Will? She knew it – from the day he was born, she knew he would fail her. He would abandon her. Always she had felt it. He would abandon her like his older brother abandoned her, dying too early, going off suddenly in the night when she had just settled him so carefully on his front for sleep, Where is Will? Run away. Ungrateful. Unloving. When he was five years old, he asked her: *Beth sy'n digwydd ar ôl i chi marw?* He'd lost two Uncles by then. What happens after you die? You go to heaven. Are you going to die? Yes, she'd told him. Even me? She looked away then: yes, she said, even you. I won't mind, he said, if it means I can meet my brother. That's when she clipped him, harder than she'd intended. *Paid*, she warned. Don't.

A wave of sickness and acid overcomes her; she splutters and something wet and stringy leaves her. She can't make out the colour in the dark. She retches

again. Rolls from side to side to relieve the ever-climbing agony in her back and legs.

O Arglwydd...

After some time, she clambers to the phone. Still, no answer. No answer. No answer.

It's morning when the phone finally rings. Judy stirs, lifts her head; her limbs are numb from cold. When she lifts the receiver to her ear she can hardly speak.

"Mared?"

Judy clears her throat.

"Mared, are you there?" She forgets her sister calls her 'Mared' – Judy's official first name that she abandoned as a teenager, preferring the more fashionable 'Judy'. It's strange – the way Non insists on the Welsh names but no longer speaks the language; at least, not when her husband is close by.

"Yes." It comes out as a croak, as though she's crying.

"So you've heard then."

"Heard what?"

"About Will in hospital."

Judy doesn't know what to say. Hospital! Should she admit ignorance or claim knowledge?

"How do you know?" she asks sharply.

"They phoned me in the early hours. I said, have you phoned his mother? They said yes but couldn't get through."

The phone-calls in the night... had she left it ringing for as long as that?

"So you don't know then?" Non went on.

There's a sticky pool of brown-red mucus on the carpet; the soreness is still there, in her chest, from where it came up, hot and scratching. "No," she says.

"He's got Covid," she says matter-of-fact. "They're giving him oxygen and steroids. The ambulance brought him in last night."

"He was here the day before last," Judy says quickly, as though that would solve things. "He was fine then."

"He's in Carmarthen."

"They took him to Carmarthen?" There's a bus that goes from town every two hours; she used to take it when her Mam was ill, when her brother broke his hip.

Non reads her mind. "You can't visit him there else you might catch it. Do you want us to come up, Mared?"

"There's no need."

"Are you sure? Do you have someone going to the shops for you?"

"Don't worry about me."

"Are you alright for money?"

"Yes," she says. Judy has no idea – Will goes to the bank for her – but she hates the way her sister says the word 'money' under her breath, as though she expects her to be poor as a church mouse. Non gives a little tut, annoyed with the answer; Judy imagines her looking over at her husband, shaking her head.

"Well, you let us know." That's how they left it.

She makes tea; the pain in her stomach returns. It has climbed to the back of her throat like a bird of prey, clawing its way up. When was the last time she ate? There's food here... Will's shopping. The milk is covered in beads of sweat; she must have forgotten to put it away properly. She retches; there's blood on her bottom lip. She could take two more of those pills and stop the pain for good. What did she say to him, to Will? *Paid a bod yn dwp*, she said. He raised his hand in the sad way. Her little boy. What did he have to go get sick for?

A strange light floats into the room, red-tinged. The colder months are settling. The trees and bushes seem flat, buffeted by wind, rain-soaked. The line of sea beneath the horizon is grey. She leaves her coat but takes the walking stick that once belonged to Da. Outside, the air is like balm, distracts from the heat in her chest. She makes her way to the crest of the hill from where she can see the cove and the village. A road snakes its way down to an empty car park and the sea. The pain rises and falls, like labour pains. It's almost unbearable. From here she can see the Chapel where her family are buried and where, as a child, she had gone to learn the Bible every Sunday, and where her two sons were christened. They cancelled services several years ago, locked up the doors.

The wind whistles against the washing line. It reminds her of down in the harbour: the wind making the flag-posts rattle and sing, the sails of the boats. She hasn't been down to the sea in a long time either, even though it is only twenty minutes' walk. The pain is bad; she kneels on the grass. In those days, they swam often – four children, with the eldest being too unwell and watching from the beach with Mam and Da. There was no thinking about the body in those days – no pain to remind her that she had a body. And yet she'd been anxious and easily frightened, crying about the seal. Like Will, she sees now, already thinking the worst things, with her older brother sitting on the beach, watching them all, pale as paper.

She lies on the grass on the rise of the hill in front of her house, the house where she was born, and follows the different trajectories of pain. Stomach, chest,

legs, back. A voice says to her: *Mared*, like that, on the wind. It's a judgmental voice: Mam's voice. *Mared – why did you clothe yourself in another name?*

The sound of an engine breaks across the wind. She glimpses a battered silver car between the empty houses. Will's car. It comes and goes, the sound and the dash of silver, as it makes its way up the hill. Is it Will in the car? Stupid Will, she thinks. He wasn't sick after all. He's coming to fetch me now, bring me back in. He'll put the shopping away, and get the central heating going, and clear up the sticky mess on the floor. Will, you can stay. Will, you can have your room back, she thinks she says. *Will, dere 'nôl nawr, bach. Dere at dy fam.* Will, come back. The hum of the engine and the hum of the wind against the washing line roll into one suffocating hum. *Dere 'ma.* Come back. She doesn't feel any pain now, knowing her son is nearby. Silly boy, you're late. *Ti'n hwyr. Dere 'ma nawr.* Come here now. Come to your mam. *Dere at dy fam.*



Image author's own

From Offline to Online Imagined Community: Recuperating Asante Culture and History for Development in Ghana

Charles Prempeh, University of Cambridge

Since the popularization of social media in Ghana over a decade ago, the medium has become an important channel of communication in the country, as it has around the world. Today, around half of Ghana's population of 31 million people are internet users, and around 26% (8.2 million people) use social media.¹ Young men and women form the majority of these social media users. However, it is not only literate young people, but also people who cannot read and write in English – the main language of communication on social media in Ghana – and who are not savvy in their use of the internet, that have deployed social media to communicate. In many parts of Africa, including Ghana and Uganda, young people are embracing technology and digital platforms as spaces to challenge what they perceive as political dictatorship in their respective countries.² This use of digital technology has arisen because while they have contributed to initiate collective action through serving as political party supporters, their contribution has hardly been acknowledged.³ In Ghana, the national call for cultural restitution as the basis of development has encouraged people of Asante origin – of which I am included – to reinstate the historic Asante Kotoko Society (historic-AKS) through online mobilization to ensure the socio-economic development of the Asante Region.

In this article, I discuss the centrality of online communities in articulating human sociality and cultural recuperation, focusing on the reconstitution of the historic Asante Kotoko Society (historic-AKS) as an online community (online-AKS). More specifically, I discuss the features of online communities, especially as they foster significant equal space for the production and consumption of cultural epistemes (cultural knowledge production). Equally important is the extent to which online community, focusing on the online-AKS, is imbued with inclusivity that transcends ethnic and geographical boundaries to include Asante men and women in the diaspora. I argue that consumers of modern communication technology have demonstrated creativity in using technology to foster a better world to recuperate indigenous cultures and pursue development.

Social Media and Society

Social media has facilitated the transition of many activities, such as economic transactions, from offline to online spaces, resulting in the decline of in-person social interactions. This migration has been accelerated by the outbreak of COVID-19, when most political elites and other stakeholders have asked people to work remotely.

While some young people deploy social media to achieve socio-political goals, some of the “conservative” older generation in the country have complained about what they perceive to be inappropriate use of social media, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, by young people. In March 2020, for example, as Ghana was devising strategies to ensure national conformity to coronavirus protocols, a 24-year-old man posted a video of himself on Facebook claiming that COVID-19 was not real, but only the government's strategy to illegally curtail Ghanaians' freedoms. The video went viral to the point of attracting the attention of security operatives, who eventually arrested the man.⁴

This story reinforced concerns that some of the older generation have about the wrong use of social media. For example, on May 12, 2020, during her vetting as Supreme Court judge nominee, Professor Henrietta Joy Abena Nyarko Mensa-Bonsu complained about the difficulty that had saddled the state in regulating the use of social media by young people to make incendiary comments and circulate falsehood. She referred to this as signaling the death of the era of “Book No Lie” and of the crosschecking of facts in publications including newspapers, which used to be one of the main means of public communication until two decades ago.⁵

Notwithstanding Prof Mensa-Bonsu's concerns about the wrongful use of social media by young people, it is important to mention that it is through social media that young people mobilise support online – leading to real physical movement – in order to challenge government policy. A good example is the use of social media (largely Facebook) by some young people in Ghana to challenge the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government's initiative to construct a new 450-seater parliamentary chamber, expected to cost around \$200 million in 2019. Citing extreme poverty and inadequate supply of social services, the young people, alongside other civil society groups like the Ghanaian policy thinktank Imani Africa, expressed outrage against the proposal by mobilizing social media using the hashtag #DropThatChamber. Out of this, a movement was formed that demonstrated on the streets and picketed at the parliament house in Accra. In the face of mounting pressure and outcry from the public, the government was

compelled to suspend the proposed project.⁶ This example highlights the extent to which social media has enabled young people in Africa to negotiate their place and space with patterns of authority and control.⁷

Social Media and Human Community

At the heart of the pervasiveness of social media is the issue of human community. Sociologists have long observed that human beings are social beings who find meaning in life by identifying and interacting with fellow humans.⁸ In Ghana, the idea of the sociality of people is consolidated by kinship ties, where individuals derive their “humanity” from belonging to a group, thus emphasizing the centrality of communitarianism to modeling society. According to the leading Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye, communitarianism immediately sees the human as a communal being who lives in a context of social relationships and interdependence.⁹ This idea of grounding the individual in a social context is expressed in proverbs and folklore. One Akan proverb maintains that “when a person descends from heaven, he descends into a human society.” The proverb presumes that the existence of an individual is based on the existence of a human community. The sense of communalism does not dissolve individual subjectivity as individuals have fundamental rights, but the individual right is usually defined in light of a perceived communal right.

Among the Akan and other Ghanaian ethnic groups, the idea of human sociality is fashioned along sociogenic activities, including marriage, naming ceremonies, funerals, and religious activities. Equally, these social activities are modelled along shared values. Through these shared values, individual and group identities are consolidated, while communities are defined.

However, as Ghanaians increase their social media use, concerns have been raised about the future of human communities and shared values. This is not unique to Ghana. As I showed above, these concerns include those of the “conservative” older generation that some young people deploy social media to make incendiary comments, defame, and peddle falsehood against people they disagree with. Others have also expressed concerns about the increasingly inaccurate use of Ghanaian languages, including widely spoken ones like Akan (Twi), Ga, and Hausa (which, though non-Ghanaian, is widely spoken in virtually all the Muslim communities in Ghana). The increasing case of code-mixing Twi with English remains a concern to some Ghanaian linguists. Western education and the prestige associated with English – the language frequently used by social media for online communication in Ghana – have raised concerns about the possibility of some Ghanaian languages becoming endangered. When young people employ code-mixing in online communication, the majority of Ghanaians feel that local

languages tend to be used in ways that do not conform with linguistic rules and norms. For example, some young people say, *I am tired kraa* instead of *I am tired koraa* (*I am very tired*). But these developments should not necessarily be read as signifying the demise of indigenous cultures and languages. This code-mixing should rather be read as part of the creative use of language to resonate with the repertoires of contemporary communication, including linguistic eclecticism.

Contrary to all these concerns about social media are the important ways young people and some Western-educated older people are redeploying the medium to build online communities. Social media has become instrumental in fostering online communities where human sociality is rearticulated and expressed. One way this has been done is through the formation of online WhatsApp groups that are used to rally people belonging to the same cultural, religious, and political groups to forge communalism, as well as disrupt the decline of face-to-face social interactions that social media portends to most users. While this is similar to how people interact in offline communities (or “real world”), social media affords greater opportunities to interact with more people online.

In all this, I argue that the use of social media to foster cultural community is a creative continuity of the call by the United Nations in the 1990s for developing economies to use culture as the foundation of socio-economic development, through its declaration of “International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People”.¹⁰ It also resonates with Thabo Mbeki’s African Renaissance initiative for cultural revivalism, and the need to consolidate the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEAD) on cultural foundation. Online-AKS should, therefore, be seen as part of reinstating indigenous cultures for socio-economic development.

Asante Kotoko Society: Historical Context

The history of the online Asante Kotoko Society (online-AKS) sits within a much longer history of the historic Asante Kotoko Society (historic-AKS). Highlighting the continuity and discontinuities between them, I argue that the online-AKS is an attempt at revitalising the historic-AKS.

The historic-AKS was formed in 1916 by a group of educated elite Asante which included E.P. Owusu, Agyei Kyem, S.T. Afrane, and J.W.K Appiah (the father of Anthony Kwame Appiah, the philosopher). Emerging from a self-conscious professional class, it was engaged in various forms of charity activities, such as funding the education of children.¹¹ As Owusu has pointed out, the historic-AKS aimed at promoting education so as to support the chiefs in the development of Asanteman (Asante Kingdom), supporting the study of Asante history, laws and traditions, and assisting in the upgrading of agriculture.¹²

The historic-ASK also campaigned for the repatriation of Nana Agyeman Prempeh I, Asantehene (King of Asante) from Seychelles, to which he had been exiled for resisting British imperialism in 1896.¹³ Alongside other prominent Gold Coast nationalists like J.E. Casely Hayford, the group succeeded in prevailing over the British colonial governor, Gordon Guggisberg, to repatriate Prempeh on November 11, 1924. After achieving its aim of ensuring the repatriation of Prempeh I, the historic-AKS worked alongside the colonial governor to defend the interest of Asante Kingdom. The group provided lawyers to negotiate between Asante and the colonial governor in trading activities. They also worked with the chiefs and the British government to institutionalise Indirect Rule in Asante Kingdom. But by the 1940s when militant nationalism surged in the Gold Coast, the activities of the historic-AKS diminished as a new “radical” Asante Youth Association surfaced.¹⁴

Online Asante Kotoko Society: Cultural Revivalism and Reshaping of Communities

The online-AKS is a WhatsApp chatroom and cultural community formed in 2019. Founded by Osei-Bonsu Safo-Kantanka, the group aims to foster an online community that encourages the study of Asante language (Asante Twi – Akan), Ghanaian history, culture, and traditions. The online-AKS seeks to revitalise the historic-AKS, but unlike the historic-AKS, the online-AKS is open to all Asante and non-Asante citizens who share the vision of Asanteman.

As part of fostering an inclusive online community, the online-AKS has members across the world, including Asante citizens in North America and Western Europe. There are prominent academics and chiefs who are responsible for explaining and sharing ideas about Asante culture with young people, such as chieftaincy norms, the use of indigenous clothing, etymological origin of some Asante words. Online-AKS has fostered the travelling of cultures between rural and urban areas, as well as international relations.¹⁵ For example, through the streaming of cultural festivals on Facebook, people in rural areas are informed about the tapestry of changes in indigenous cultures. The deterritorialization of non-material Asante culture, such as proverbs, myths, beliefs, legends, music, and folklore, through this online community, has contributed to reconfiguring national identities that are progressively breaking down ethnic cultural boundaries. This has been made possible as a result of the participatory communication and the interactive nature of online community mediated by WhatsApp. One might see the formation of online community using modern technology as privileging the elite over people with no Western education, but I have observed

that those who cannot read and write in English and Asante (Akan) participate in conversations by recording and posting voice clips on issues under discussion.

As far as young people are concerned, the online-AKS has contributed to the democratisation of cultural epistemes. The online community has a democratic element that promotes inter-generational sharing of traditional cultures, language, customs, arts, crafts, folklore, music, religious systems, beliefs, and values. Traditionally, the older generation had been the holders and distributors of these Asante cultural epistemes, but through the complementary roles of western education and social media, young people have negotiated space to (re) shape cultures to meet their aspirations. They seek to maintain connection with Asante cultural history which they believe will help them to deal better with their own problems of cultural retention, and yet enjoy the opportunities offered by the global market. As part of the transformative process of social media, they are breaking gerontocratic boundaries to contribute to the “cultural revolution” in Ghana. This breaking of gerontocratic boundaries is upsetting the customary ethics of communication that requires young people to go through a series of traditional protocol and strict formal procedures, and to defer to the older generation when cultural histories are under discussion. For example, discussing the extent to which phones have eased the access young people have to chiefs, the Ghanaian linguist Kwesi Yankah asserted that: “It [phone] has transformed communication habits and enabled access to individuals and places previously declared incommunicado.”¹⁶

This use of online community to subvert gerontocracy is in tandem with how young people in the Middle East and North Africa (e.g. Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain) have appropriated social media for freedom of expression. While the “Arab Spring” partly failed to subvert dictatorship and gerontocracy, social media provided young people with the chance to attempt reform.¹⁷ In the Ghanaian context, as was shown earlier, young people have sometimes succeeded in using social media to register their discontent with government policies. However, young people’s use of social media in Ghana for advocacy has not recorded any significant nationwide uprising as it happened in the case of the “Arab Spring”. All the same, the online-AKS has facilitated space where cultural issues are produced, reproduced, distributed, and discussed. The online-AKS has provided an accessible platform that allows for greater participation in the cultural revivalism in Ghana.

The general online community, including online-AKS, challenges the metanarrative of a top-down flow of values from the Global North to the Global South. Contrary to the social progress narrative of modernising values moving

from the Global North to the Global South, online-AKS has made it possible for young people to engage with global cultures with the cultural particulars of Ghana to forge an identity that is both locally and globally significant. For example, it is now a common practice to find young people in three-piece suits that include Asante indigenous Kente cloth as the waistcoat. In the end, young Ghanaians, like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, are becoming hybridised in an era of global cultural travelling through the media. They have also become creatively eclectic in their consumption of cultures. This is primarily because the globalisation of the world through e-participation and e-discussion has identified strengths, such as the value of group solidarity, and weaknesses, such as gerontocracies, in Ghanaian cultures. This development is contributing to the rapid exchange of cultural ideas across different geo-cultural spaces.

In November 2019, there was video footage shared on the online-AKS WhatsApp group that showed Chinese children playing a 'traditional' Ghanaian (Asante) children's game. Given that the game is rarely performed among Ghanaian children in cities, particularly Accra, I – as a member of online-AKS myself – commented the following on the WhatsApp chat: 'Is this a case of cultural reversal: Confucius studies everywhere in Africa (as China is sponsoring the study of its language and culture to enhance their trade relations with Africans, as they compete with the West over the material resources of the continent) and Akan folklore in China. What is happening?' My question elicited a range of responses which included people suggesting the need for the Asante culture to be repackaged for global consumption. As I asked this question, my intention was to show how online community has sustained the globalisation agenda of shrinking geo-cultural and political spaces. This has taken place in the context of an ethno-nationalism that makes cultural exchange between cities and countryside in Ghana uneven and unequal. But while globally there is some provincialising and marginalising in the globalization processes, it is equally true that, through online communities, Africans can participate in global cultural exchanges. In sum, through online community, the Asante and many other groups are not just passive consumers of global cultures from the Global North. They are involved in a cultural dialogue that encourages national and international mutual co-existence. This leads to participatory communication, which shifts the axis from a top-down (Global North-Global South) approach to cultural diffusion and participation – leading to the formation of global online communities.

While online communities are mediating transnational national unity, it is also helping to revitalise ethnic pride and cultural histories. The online-AKS seeks to reinforce ethnic identity through the re-enactment of culture, history,

and the socio-economic development of Asante and Ghana. While regular discussions on culture and development take place virtually, which help in connecting people across geographical spaces, those in Ghana also occasionally meet in a physical location. They meet to explore ways of reconciling culture and development in a country that is experiencing rapid social changes. However, this ethnic pride may also potentially feed into national politics to further polarise Ghana on partisan lines. This is because, since some Asante elite formed the National Liberation Movement (NLM) in 1954 to demand Asante's political and economic independence in the emerging state of Ghana, the Asante people are said to politically identify with the centre-right and liberal conservative party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The identification of the Asante with the NPP is also because some of the founding fathers of the NPP were members of the NLM, while currently the political stronghold of the NPP is the Asante Region. This potential threat of ethnic politics has been demonstrated by scholarly works that indicate that ethnic undercurrent plays a role in elections in contemporary Ghana.¹⁸ The founders of online-AKS have been at pains – through written codes – to discourage members from using the community to advance national partisan interest. But this has been difficult to regulate, and ethno-nationalism remains part of the cultural revivalism and awareness in Ghana. As such ethno-cultural revolution is (re)shaping religious and national discourse on culture, and also sustains the continuous relevance of indigenous socio-cultural structures, including chieftaincy. This is because the online-AKS looks up to chiefs and other traditional political leaders as the patrons of their cultural activities.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that young people in Asante use social media – focusing particularly on WhatsApp – to recuperate the historic-AKS that was first established in 1916 and to promote Asante cultural revitalisation. This creative use of social media is part of promoting human flourishing, especially as post-independence Asante Region and Ghana at large continues to face the grim challenges of poor sanitation, squalid living conditions and extreme poverty. It could therefore be concluded that young people's use of social media in the online-AKS project represents part of a much wider ongoing cultural response to the challenges facing both contemporary Asante and the nation of Ghana itself.

A Community of Councillors: Tudor Government and Prosopography

Connor Huddleston, University of Bristol

Both the general public and many historians perceive the Tudor court as having been a hostile and bloodthirsty place. David Starkey claimed factional struggles were ‘omnipresent at court’ and that courtiers and councillors were engaged in ‘restless struggles for power and profit.’¹ Similarly, Eric Ives described faction as a pervasive force which divided the Tudor elite into various groups, all of which competed for spoils and preferment.² Undoubtedly, the Tudors could be capricious and ruthless with those who failed them, and their relations with their servants were often unpredictable. However, this does not mean that relations between their courtiers and councillors were always hostile. In fact, they were more bound together by shared characteristics and mentality than previously appreciated. Prosopography, a form of collective biography which investigates the common characteristics of a group of historical actors, offers one of the best ways of revealing these connections. In this article, it will be contended not only that such an approach revises previous thinking of Tudor politics but also that it has important implications for how we view other historical communities.

The privy council, the English state’s executive board, is an ideal focus for an examination of the nature of Tudor politics. Its purview covered all aspects of national government, from foreign and financial policy to the makeup of the royal household and private land disputes. While it was sometimes possible to exert some influence from outside the council either through the monarch directly or in a highly localised manner, to be a councillor was recognised as the pinnacle of a political career in this period and was the only way to ensure a role in the discussion and implementation of royal policy. Given their unrivalled role in policy implementation and their authority to settle disputes, it is vital to understand the relationships between the privy councillors in order to understand Tudor government and politics.

Narratives of Tudor political history are often constructed in a monochromatic way. Factions are rarely identified as isolated responses to particular events but rather are treated as endemic to Tudor politics.³ In attempting to place councillors into factional units or treating an individual in isolation, historians miss the essential fluidity of personal relationships. This narrow focus fails to consider

the whole range of interpersonal relationships and biographical details that characterise human interaction. Several historians have proposed alternative models which embrace social and cultural approaches to history.⁴ However, the relationships and connections between the Tudor elite still receive little attention outside of individual biographies and factional narratives. In a classic article, Steven Gunn identified several different political structures in which individuals operated.⁵ These included a small intimate group, perhaps based around kinship or royal service; a looser, predominantly local, structure of affinities; another court-based ‘political unit’; and a fourth, even more informal, affiliation which one might call a ‘faction’.⁶ Only within the context of an individual’s interaction within and across these structures can a political narrative that spans multiple decades be accurately constructed. This paper builds on Gunn’s structural framework and advocates prosopography as the best method for understanding political action and institutional change.

That is not to deny the importance of factionalism, at least as a means of explaining specific relationships and episodes. For example, the rivalry in the 1590s between Robert Cecil (1563–1612) and Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex (1565–1601), both of whom sought Elizabeth I’s favour, did result in the creation of rival parties at court.⁷ The two men strove to have their supporters appointed to key offices and tried to neutralise the influence of their rival. This particular conflict resulted in an emphatic victory for Cecil, whereas Essex was executed for treason in 1601.⁸ It would be wrong, therefore, to reject entirely the concept of factionalism as a way of explaining specific political developments.

However, too often, the interpretation of one event is extrapolated to the rest of the period without appreciating how circumstances or personalities had changed. For instance, John Neale described Elizabeth I’s reign as factional but drew most of his evidence from the 1590s.⁹ By characterising Elizabeth’s 45-year reign based on the circumstances of a single decade, he created a somewhat misleading picture. Research by Simon Adams has revealed that Robert Devereux was the disruptive element, and that before his rise to prominence the Elizabethan establishment was broadly agreed on public policy.¹⁰ Prosopography can add a personal dimension to these political conclusions, further strengthening the argument for a more united body politic.

Prosopography gathers biographical information pertaining to a defined group of individuals and then analyses this data in order to uncover broader trends and patterns. What sets prosopography apart from collective biography is its focus on multivariate analysis.¹¹ Whereas collective biography focuses on full-length biographies of a small number of individuals, prosopography is concerned with multiple variables across many individuals. Its purpose is to identify

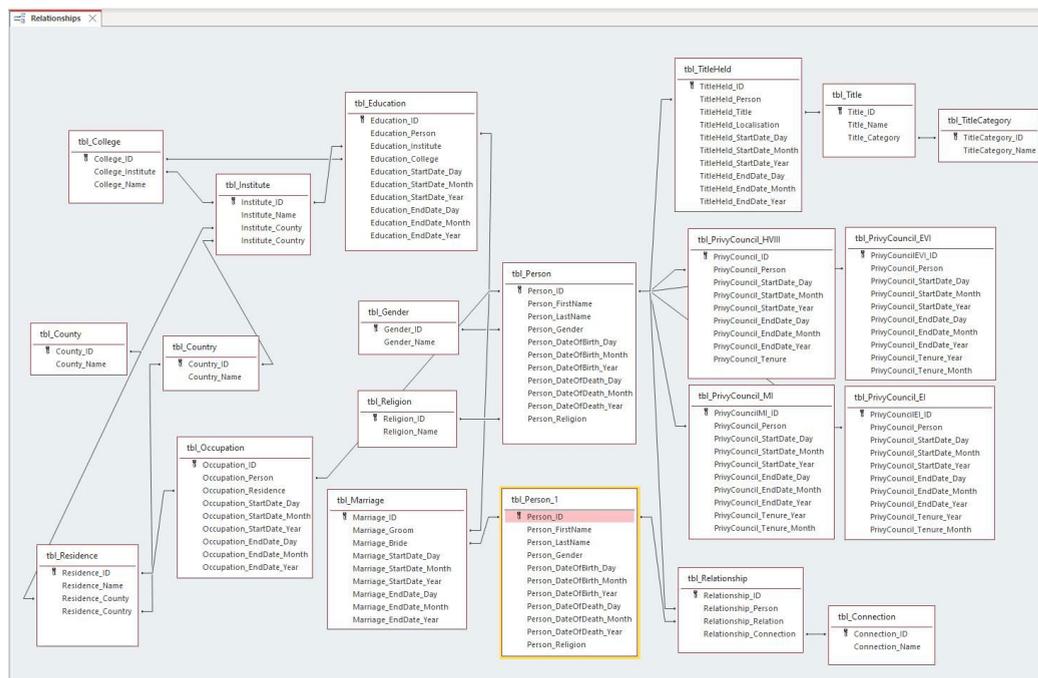


Figure 1. The relationship map of the Tudor Privy Council Database. It shows the different tables containing biographical information and how they are linked together.

Person	Person_FirstName	Person_LastName	Person_Gender	Person_DateOfBirth	Person_DateOfDeath	Person_Religion
161	William	Parr	Male	14	8	1513
257	Thomas	Parry	Male	0	0	1515
224	Amias	Paulet	Male	0	0	1532
162	William	Paulet	Male	0	0	1474
74	John	Peche	Male	0	0	1450
172	Edmund	Peckham	Male	0	0	1495
203	Robert	Peckham	Male	0	0	1516
41	Henry	Percy	Male	0	0	1478
168	Henry	Percy	Male	0	0	1502
241	John	Perrot	Male	7	11	1528
301	William	Peryam	Male	0	0	1534
163	William	Petre	Male	0	0	1505
142	Thomas	Pigott	Male	0	0	1478
9	Arthur	Plantagenet	Male	0	0	1472
84	Lewis	Pollard	Male	0	0	1465
100	Richard	Pollard	Male	0	0	0
242	John	Popham	Male	0	0	1531
75	John	Port	Male	0	0	1472

Figure 2. An extract of the population table of the Tudor Privy Council Database. It shows the standardised names of each councillor, their unique ID number and their birth and death dates. This table serves as the foundation of the database and links all the records together.

particular groups and explain what binds them together.¹² Subsequent analysis can then explore how members interacted with each other, and with members of other groups. Such an approach reveals the inner workings of a society or political system much more clearly than taking an individual or institutional approach. Human interaction lies at the heart of all systems and societies, and prosopography reveals these interactions and allows historians to understand their significance.

Using these principles, I constructed a database of all the privy councillors active between 1485 and 1603. The goal was to reconceptualise how historians view the characteristics and interactions of Tudor privy councillors. The tool which facilitated this reappraisal was a relational database containing all the primary biographical factors of the approximately 320 councillors who held office across this period. Digital relational database software, such as Microsoft Access, allows a researcher to collect and store a vast quantity of data in an easy-to-use format. This data can then be modified and organised in a vast array of different ways to answer the project's specific research questions.

The first step to constructing a relational database is the identification of the 'population'. The 'population' is a group of individuals to be studied: in this case, Tudor privy councillors. Identifying the 'population' is not always a straightforward exercise, and for historical communities, research and standardisation are often required. For instance, the privy council's official register did not begin until 1540, so councillors before this date were identified from correspondence contained within the government's 'state papers'.¹³ A further issue that had to be addressed for this group was the many ways – names, nicknames, titles and so on – by which its members were known. As demonstrated by Figure 2, a standardised format for referring to individual councillors was created.

Following identification of the target population, the creation of a uniform 'questionnaire' is required. The 'questionnaire' is the list of biographical factors or fields that the researcher wishes to include for each individual. In the case of the Tudor privy councillors, this included fields such as birth and death dates, educational institute attended, offices held, property owned, and familial relations.¹⁴ Once the database has been created, it is possible to focus on specific fields within it, or to conduct queries which combine different factors. A relational database's particular strength is that the data can be accessed and reassembled in many different ways swiftly, and without requiring a reorganisation of the underlying data. For instance, as shown in Figure 3, officeholding can be filtered by education to see if alumni of a particular institution dominated a particular position. A more targeted query is shown in Figure 4: here the data has been searched for those councillors who served Henry VIII and held property in Kent, Sussex

Councillor Name	Office	Entered Office	Left Office	University Attended	University Start Date	University End Date
Richard Foxe	Principal Secretary	1485	1487	University of Cambridge	N/A	N/A
Richard Foxe	Principal Secretary	1485	1487	University of Oxford	N/A	N/A
Oliver King	Principal Secretary	1487	1495	University of Cambridge	1449	1465
Thomas Ruthall	Principal Secretary	1500	1516	University of Oxford	1488	1493
Thomas More	Principal Secretary	1518	1526	University of Oxford	1492	1494
William Knight	Principal Secretary	1526	1529	University of Oxford	1491	1495
Stephen Gardiner	Principal Secretary	1529	1534	University of Cambridge	1511	1525
Thomas Wriothesley	Principal Secretary	1540	1544	University of Cambridge	1522	1524
William Paget	Principal Secretary	1543	1547	University of Cambridge	1522	1526
William Petre	Principal Secretary	1544	1557	University of Oxford	1519	1535
Thomas Smith	Principal Secretary	1548	1549	University of Cambridge	1526	1547
Nicholas Wotton	Principal Secretary	1549	1550	University of Oxford	1515	1520
William Cecil	Principal Secretary	1550	1553	University of Cambridge	1535	1541
John Cheke	Principal Secretary	1553	1553	University of Cambridge	1526	1544
John Boxall	Principal Secretary	1557	1558	University of Oxford	1540	1554
William Cecil	Principal Secretary	1558	1572	University of Cambridge	1535	1541
Thomas Smith	Principal Secretary	1572	1576	University of Cambridge	1526	1547
Francis Walsingham	Principal Secretary	1573	1590	University of Cambridge	1548	1550
Thomas Wilson	Principal Secretary	1577	1581	University of Cambridge	1542	1549
William Cecil	Principal Secretary	1590	1596	University of Cambridge	1535	1541
Robert Cecil	Principal Secretary	1596	1612	University of Cambridge	1581	1581
John Herbert	Principal Secretary	1600	1617	University of Oxford	1558	1565

Figure 3. Results from a database query that shows where principal secretaries received their education. It is striking that four out of the five secretaries of Elizabeth I were educated at Cambridge.

Councillor Name	Residence	County	Ownership Start	Ownership End
Robert Rede	Bore Place	Kent	1489	1519
John Ernley	Cakeham Manor	Sussex	1498	1520
Edward Poynings	Westenhanger Castle	Kent	1488	1521
John Fyneux	Hawe Manor	Kent	1494	1525
Henry Guildford	Hadlow Manor	Kent	1522	1532
George Neville	Birling	Kent	1469	1535
George Bolyen	South	Kent	1535	1536
Henry Wyatt	Allington Castle	Kent	1492	1536
Thomas Bedyll	Otford	Kent	N/A	1537
Thomas Boleyn	Hever Castle	Kent	1505	1537
Henry Courtenay	West Horsley	Surrey	1533	1538
Richard Weston	Sutton Place	Surrey	1521	1541
William Fitzwilliam	Cowdray House	Sussex	1528	1542
Anthony Browne	Battle Abbey	Sussex	1538	1548
Anthony Browne	Cowdray House	Sussex	1542	1548
Edmund Walsingham	Gomshall Towerhill	Surrey	1539	1549
Edmund Walsingham	Scadbury Manor	Kent	1541	1550
John Gage	Firle Place	Sussex	1479	1556
Thomas Cheyne	Shurland Hall	Kent	1510	1558
John Baker	Sissinghurst Castle	Kent	1489	1558
Nicholas Heath	Chobham Place	Surrey	N/A	1578
Henry Fitzalan	Arudnel Castle	Sussex	1544	1580

Figure 4. Results from a database query that shows councillors with major residences in the counties of Kent, Sussex and Surrey, and their dates of ownership.

and Surrey. Such a query has the capacity to identify relationships and dynamics between councillors in the localities. Thus, connections and patterns can be discovered in seconds rather than after weeks of combing through each individual's data set. Similarly, the database's modular nature allows new fields to be added and existing ones modified without overhauling the underlying structure.

A further benefit of the prosopographical approach is that it does not rely on one set of sources to generate its connections. Often, factional narratives are based on a narrow evidence base that draws on a single source or a single author. For instance, the supposed rivalry between William Cecil (1520–1598), Elizabeth I's chief minister, and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (1532–1588), the Queen's first favourite, in the 1560s and 1570s, has become part of historical tradition.¹⁵ At first glance, this enmity would appear to be the origin of the later feud between their offspring, Robert Cecil and Robert Devereux, as outlined above.¹⁶ However, the evidence to support this interpretation is thin, and accounts fail to consider the changed personalities of the 1590s. Most of the evidence of animosity is drawn from contemporary polemical works such as *Leicester's Commonwealth* and *A Treatise of Treasons* written by the Elizabethan regime's Catholic enemies. It suited the authors of such accounts to portray the Elizabethan establishment as factional, and so one should treat them with considerable caution.

When the full range of the two men's backgrounds and interactions are considered, moreover, no outright hostility is visible. William Cecil and Robert Dudley received a similar education, held the same religious views, exchanged gifts and hospitality regularly, and broadly agreed on domestic and foreign policy. It would not be surprising if there was an element of professional rivalry between the Queen's two leading servants, but to call them enemies locked in a factional struggle is an overstatement. In this way, prosopography can overcome the deficiency in material for individuals and overcome reliance on a narrow source base. By drawing all the strands of an individual's life together, we can discover a more nuanced picture of their relationships.

Digital tools and methodologies enable the modelling of relationships which deepen understanding of historical communities. The following case studies utilise data collected for Tudor privy councillors: they demonstrate how trends and patterns can be identified within the whole cohort and then how that data can be refined to identify specific groups. Additionally, they demonstrate the applicability of prosopography to other historical communities and how explorations of identified trends can prompt a reconceptualisation of past societies, structures, and events.

The changes in the makeup and characteristics of the privy council become visible when their members are subjected to multivariate analysis. The privy

council was never a representative body, but it had contained individuals with a variety of societal and cultural experiences. The clergy were one such subset. However, over the course of the sixteenth century, there was a precipitous drop in the number of clergy who were members of the council. Henry VIII admitted 31 bishops to his privy council over the course of his reign, a sizable contingent. The reigns of his children almost entirely eliminated this clerical component. Edward VI had three bishops and Mary I four. Elizabeth I only permitted one cleric to join her council, and this was her third and final Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, in 1586. Using the data available in the database, we can track this trend across the period.

Conversely, Figure 5 shows that sorting the data by university attendance reveals that the percentage of university-educated councillors rose significantly across the period. Of the 167 privy councillors of Henry VIII's reign, 52 (31%) had attended a university; during the reign of Elizabeth I, this had risen to 32 out of 59 councillors (54%). Therefore, despite Henry VIII having a large number of university-educated men on his council, they actually constituted a minority because of the far larger size of this group. Also, it should be remembered that all bishops were university educated. Thus, in the latter half of the century, councillors were overwhelmingly educated, wealthy, lay males.

This had implications for the relations between members as they were all drawn from the same cultural milieu. Councillors with the same outlook and experiences could more easily develop a collegiality. The restriction of membership to laymen also meant that the majority of councillors were linked together by familial connections as marriage and family preferment were the primary means of growing a political following. It is only through the systematic analysis of the dataset and the application of prosopographical techniques that these trends are fully revealed.

This data can be pushed further to reveal more specific features and groups within it. Figure 6 illustrates that not only can we see who attended university at all, but we can also identify who attended specific institutions, and when. This has the potential to identify different clusters of people who studied alongside each other, and who may well have formed relationships and shared experiences in that context. One such cluster was a group of Henrician bishops who were active in the 1530s during the Break with Rome and the institutionalisation of the Reformation. They included Edward Lee, archbishop of York (c.1482–1544), John Stokesley, bishop of London (c.1475–1539), John Longland, bishop of Lincoln (died 1547), and John Veysey, bishop of Exeter (c.1464–1554). All had attended Magdalen College, Oxford, between 1486–1510, at a time when the University was a hotbed of humanist teaching. Traditionally, these bishops have been

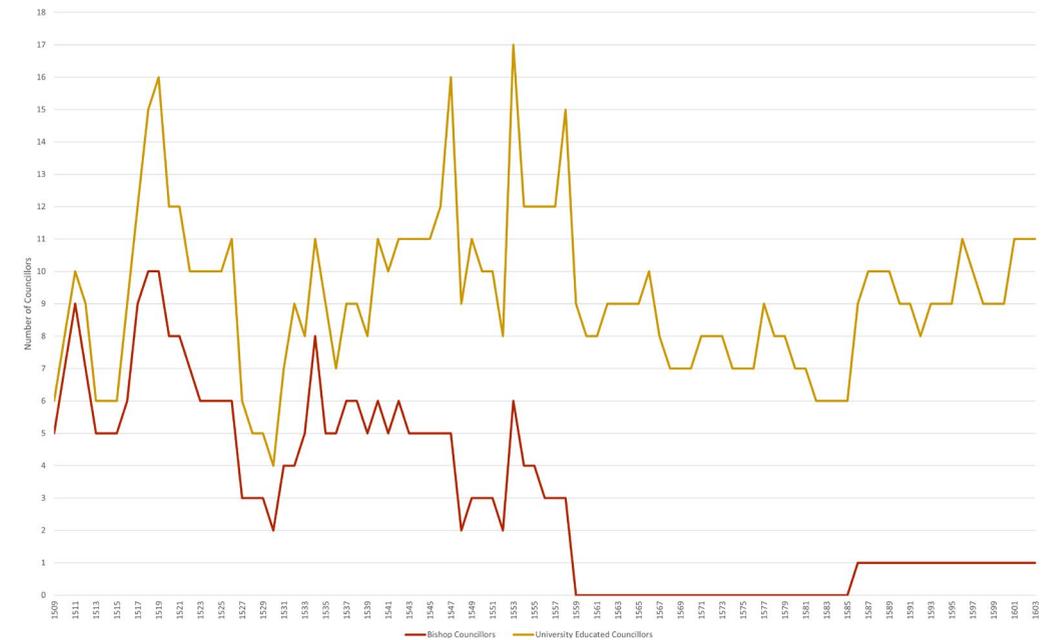


Figure 5. Number of Bishops and number of university educated councillors on the Privy Council 1509–1603.

Councillor Name	First Bishopric Appointed to	Appointed	Died/Translated	University Attended	University College Attended	Entered University	Left University
Nicholas Heath	Bishop of Rochester	1540	1543	Cambridge	Christ's College	1520	1524
Nicholas Heath	Bishop of Rochester	1540	1543	Cambridge	Clare College	1524	1532
Charles Booth	Bishop of Hereford	1516	1535	Cambridge	Pembroke College	N/A	1485
Cuthbert Tunstall	Bishop of London	1522	1530	Cambridge	King's Hall	1496	1499
Cuthbert Tunstall	Bishop of London	1522	1530	Oxford	Magdalen College	1491	1493
Edward Fox	Bishop of Hereford	1535	1538	Cambridge	King's College	1512	1527
Edward Lee	Archbishop of York	1531	1544	Cambridge	N/A	1502	1515
Edward Lee	Archbishop of York	1531	1544	Oxford	Magdalen College	1495	1501
Edward Vaughn	Bishop of St David's	1509	1522	Cambridge	N/A	1474	1487
Geoffrey Blythe	Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield	1503	1531	Cambridge	King's College	1483	1496
John Capon	Bishop of Bangor	1533	1539	Cambridge	N/A	1512	1517
John Clerk	Bishop of Bath and Wells	1523	1541	Cambridge	N/A	c.1498	1502
John Fisher	Bishop of Rochester	1504	1535	Cambridge	Michaelhouse	c.1480	1491
John Kite	Archbishop of Armagh	1513	1521	Cambridge	King's College	1480	1495
John Longland	Bishop of Lincoln	1521	1547	Oxford	Magdalen College	1491	1511
John Stokesley	Bishop of London	1530	1539	Oxford	Magdalen College	1495	1516
John Veysey	Bishop of Exeter	1519	1551	Oxford	Magdalen College	1486	1496
Nicholas West	Bishop of Ely	1515	1533	Cambridge	King's College	1483	c.1500
Richard FitzJames	Bishop of Rochester	1497	1503	Oxford	Merton College	1465	1507
Richard Foxe	Bishop of Exeter	1487	1492	Oxford	Magdalen College	N/A	N/A
Richard Foxe	Bishop of Exeter	1487	1492	Cambridge	Pembroke College	N/A	N/A
Richard Nykke	Bishop of Norwich	1501	1535	Oxford	N/A	N/A	N/A
Richard Nykke	Bishop of Norwich	1501	1535	Cambridge	Trinity Hall	N/A	1473
Richard Rawlins	Bishop of St David's	1523	1536	Oxford	Merton College	1480	1490
Richard Sampson	Bishop of Chichester	1536	1543	Cambridge	Trinity Hall	N/A	1506
Stephen Gardiner	Bishop of Winchester	1531	1551	Cambridge	Trinity Hall	1511	1525
Thomas Cranmer	Archbishop of Canterbury	1533	1555	Cambridge	Jesus College	1503	1515
Thomas Cranmer	Archbishop of Canterbury	1533	1555	Cambridge	Buckingham College	1515	1516
Thomas Goodrich	Bishop of Ely	1534	1554	Cambridge	Jesus College	1510	1529
Thomas Ruthall	Bishop of Durham	1509	1523	Oxford	N/A	1488	1493
Thomas Thirlby	Bishop of Westminster	1540	1550	Cambridge	Trinity Hall	1521	1530
Thomas Wolsey	Archbishop of York	1514	1530	Oxford	Magdalen College	c.1486	1502
William Atwater	Bishop of Lincoln	1514	1521	Oxford	Magdalen College	c.1476	1482
William Warham	Bishop of London	1501	1503	Oxford	New College	1475	1488

Figure 6. Results from a database query that shows councillors of Henry VIII who were bishops and the university they attended.

judged as conservatives and enemies of church reform.¹⁷ However, this is hard to square with their enthusiastic support for the Break with Rome and the Royal Supremacy. They all preached in favour of Henry VIII's Supreme Headship of the English Church and voted for the legislation that abolished papal authority.¹⁸ This apparent contradiction is more easily understood when viewed in relation to their shared educational background. The humanism to which they were exposed at university emphasised that the Church had fallen below the standard expected and thus required radical reform. The Royal Supremacy presented a chance to implement these reforms and so support for it was entirely consistent with humanist principles. By attempting to force these clerics into a conservative religious faction, historians have missed the nuance of their theological beliefs.

In addition, it is highly possible that these bishops, all of whom were contemporaries at university, had formed a social connection there. No more than a few hundred students attended England's two universities at this time. The fact that these men all attended the same college makes it even more probable that they knew each other. Veysey is recorded as a fellow from 1486 and remained at Magdalen until 1496. Lee and Stokesley were both admitted in 1495, with the former migrating to Cambridge in 1501 and the latter leaving in 1515 to become chaplain to Bishop Richard Foxe. Longland moved from Eton to Oxford in 1491 and was awarded his doctorate of theology in 1511.

On several occasions during their careers, we have evidence of them working together. For example, in February 1537, Lee, Stokesley, and Longland were appointed to a commission to devise a permanent religious settlement.¹⁹ They were also often found on the same diplomatic assignments: most notably all four were present at Henry VIII and Francis I's famous meeting at the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520.²⁰ It is evident, therefore, that these men formed a coherent group within the Henrician episcopate; and it is also clear that they were united more by their shared educational experience and social connections than their membership of a conservative religious faction.

Thus, the combination of prosopography and digital tools allows historians to reveal underappreciated patterns and trends relating to the 320 men who served the Tudor monarchs as their privy councillors. As the sixteenth century progressed, the privy council became increasingly dominated by educated, wealthy, laymen. These characteristics had the capacity to create coherent groupings of councillors united by shared education, experience and outlook. Such connections would be invisible if only dealing with individuals or institutions and cut across previous assumptions regarding political factions.

While the Tudor privy council represents but one group, the trends discovered suggest a revision of our notions of interpersonal relations more broadly

in the early modern period. Historical actors operated within overlapping structures, such as family, social circle, and professional network, and it is only by exploring these connections that an accurate picture of political life can be revealed. It is now widely recognised that an approach focused on people and their interactions is the most fruitful way of understanding historical communities and societies. The use of new digital tools combined with prosopography presents a highly effective method to achieve these aims. The same data gathering and analysis techniques employed here can easily be extrapolated onto other groups and communities. Such an approach can facilitate new questions and interpretations of previously well-trodden fields.

Community and Connection in the Care Home (During a Pandemic)

Catherine Cartwright, University of Exeter

First a little background... it has been 14 years since my mum's diagnosis of early on-set Alzheimer's and for the past 6 years she has been living at Parkland House in Exeter. In this piece of auto-biographical creative writing, I reflect on how the community of the care home sustains our daughter-mother relationship.

Before (the Pandemic)

I used to draw pictures of mum that were about connection. Whispers of a relationship borne through holding hands, rubbing palms and fingers, and, if I was lucky, a look in my direction and a brief caress on the side of my face.

At her care home, it used to be that I would sit as a resident for an hour. Know that there was nothing else to do but sit and gently look around me and observe the other residents. Look out for their needs from the side lines. The weak-legged lady who easily stumbles, the gentleman with the tilted teacup and saucer that threatens to capsize.

I learnt the residents' names and those of the carers too. Because to know the people living with her, was to know her a little too. The carers who see her dressed, fed, watered and rounded up with chocolate buttons and Coca Cola, and friendly (loving) gestures.

Now (the Pandemic)

I dread another socially distanced visit, sitting metres away in a carpark looking up to a balcony, a death of silence between us. Without touch, I am unknown to my mother. But I resolve to make a final visit before Lockdown #2, while I still have the chance.

The visit goes better than expected, well, even. This time I am not alienated by a face-mask and I sit inside the home, behind a perspex screen, much closer than before. For this visit I have brought along my husband. One of mum's biggest fans, he envelops the distance between us with his chirpy cheerfulness. My sister joins us on WhatsApp, and together we chatter to mum and her carers, who she sits beside. The cook and the manager pass by, pause to say hello with smiles, at us and my mother – I know they are fond of her.

And so, I find that, in spite of my fears, I am not isolated or bereft. Instead, I continue to feel a part of my mother's life, and her care home community.



Learning About Moss: Forming Communities of Inquiry

Hester Buck, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University |
Ysgol Pensaernïaeth Cymru, Prifysgol Caerdydd

Multiple communities came together around the participatory process of designing and constructing the moss wall that surrounds the garden at R-Urban Poplar. Based in the Teviot Estate in East London, R-Urban Poplar is part of a research project between *L'atelier d'architecture autogérée* (Paris) and *public works architecture* collective (London) which develops environmental prototypes through public workshops. This paper explores how a network of different communities formed around the construction of this moss wall, applying Bruno Latour's 'actor-network theory' to assess this process.¹ The wall sat at the centre of this network as what Latour terms a 'non-human actor', building links between the different communities involved in its development.² To better understand the network of communities that developed around the wall, we shall here discuss how different social actors participated in the project and reflect upon the transformative impact of their involvement, with regards to both themselves as communities of actors and the wall as an object.

Different actors engaged with the moss wall in different ways. This paper identifies three broad communities of actors according to the attributes of the wall with which they were most 'concerned'.³ The first kind of community – a *Community of Location* – was based around the wall's physical place within the Teviot Estate. As a piece of architecture, the wall existed as an element of the urban realm, creating a threshold between the garden and the estate's public open spaces. This first community developed among local actors who engaged with the wall because of its presence within the geographical area.



Moss prototype designed to filter air as it enters the site at R-Urban. Photo author's own



Moss panels, within the wall, filtering the air as it enters the site. Photo author's own

The purpose of the wall was to respond to the poor air quality resulting from the adjacent A12 road, which cuts through this area of London. This initial concern was informed by a Tower Hamlets-funded programme of public talks and events held on-site at R-Urban, which developed into a plan to use moss experimentally within the wall to 'breathe' the polluted air as it entered the R-Urban garden. A *Community of Concern* made up of those with an existing interest in air quality gathered to support and develop the process of the wall's design. While Latour frames 'concern' as a quality that moves through a network of actors, this paper explains how this second community joined the moss wall project with a pre-existing 'concern' for its main objective, being interested in exploring the effects of poor air.⁴

The final community involved in the moss wall was a *Community of Practice* – a term which draws on Etienne Wenger's theories of constructivist learning.⁵ Following the initial planning stages, the wall was physically developed through participatory workshops held at R-Urban, which produced a series of prototypes that informed the final design. These more focused periods of experimentation formed a community of actors who learned together through an iterative process of construction, leading to transformative developments both in the group itself and in the moss project's design. As a designer on the project myself, this process of learning and constructing is also something in which I am currently embedded – an actor within the very network I am studying.

The varied nature of the groups involved in the project does not follow the traditional definition of a 'community'. They do not hold attributes or interests

in common. Their shared objective, however, can be understood in relation to Latour's concept of 'things' – that is, material objects around which social relationships build and gather.⁶ By focusing on the R-Urban moss wall as a central 'thing', we can reflect upon how this diverse and varied network of different communities together constitutes a wider *Community of Inquiry*. As such, this paper seeks to do more than simply examine the development of the three communities outlined above, but also to draw them together around their common engagement with the moss wall to explore how they were linked by a shared endeavour to transform this central object.

Community of Location

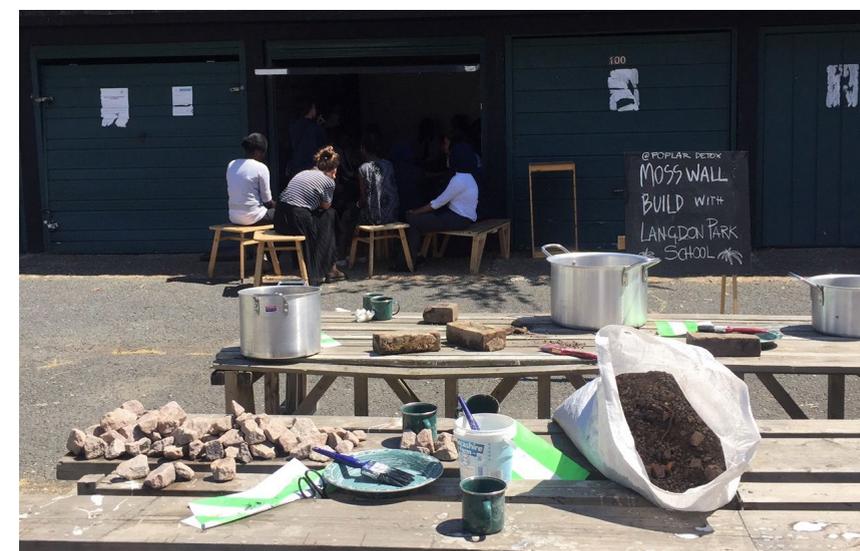
R-Urban is a community space consisting of four converted shipping containers. Establishing a new local community around it was a key concern following the project's relocation from outskirts of the Olympic Park in Hackney Wick to the Teviot Estate in Poplar. Shortly after the move, we secured funding for a public programme of events, Poplar Detox, to better understand the condition of poor air through a series of public workshops and talks. These events aimed to use what cultural theorist Irit Rogoff describes as the 'performative function of observation' to discuss the effects of the A12 road, which runs along the edge of the site. These talks reflected on the nature of the location in which the project took place as a form of embedded criticality.⁷

Initially, the Poplar Detox programme focused on working with residents of the Teviot Estate to develop a *Community of Location*, based around involvement in the moss wall. A series of family activities and meals aimed to attract residents, supported the visibility of the project, and proposed the wall as a 'thing' within the estate around which relationships could develop. These events were not well attended, however, and only attracted small groups of residents, most of whom already knew one another. Through conversations when door-knocking, it became clear that some residents were wary of their location, and felt uncomfortable letting their children play on the estate and would often prefer to meet in networks based on ethnicity, religion, or interests. There was not a strong pre-existing relationship between residents and the estate itself as a 'non-human actor' around which a *Community of Location* could develop.⁸ Instead, local networks had formed almost entirely around common interests or goals, rather than the location itself.

Based on these findings, we decided to extend our understanding of the term *Community of Location* to include local schools, a community centre, a pub, and a youth centre. By building on these pre-existing networks, we started working with people who often lived further afield but were nonetheless connected to

the same general location. Developing relationships with the leaders of these pre-existing groups soon became an integral part of the project. However, as the funding for Poplar Detox was awarded in a series of lump sums, we could not guarantee that we could continue to support events with these local groups. As a result, we had to find a more sustainable way of working with these groups that would retain their interest in the moss wall project. With this in mind, we began to design workshop activities that considered the existing needs or interests of each different group. These included testing the construction of the gabions at the base of the moss wall as part of a discussion around ecology with Langdon Park Year 5 science class, as well as running a fitness wall-building session with Aberfeldy Football Club.

This collaborative way of working meant we had to consider how the project could be understood through other agendas, in this case ecology and fitness. The project was actively altered and informed by the groups involved. Building a local network around the moss wall became a 'transformative' process for both the project and for those taking part.⁹ By attracting specific groups, often with defined age ranges and abilities, we were able to tailor the workshops to fit each group's ability. This consideration for the groups' prior interests enabled us to design the workshops to 'thicken' the network of connections between the wall and the local actors with whom we worked. This, in turn, allowed us to be ambitious in terms of what we could confidently discuss with them and what we could feasibly achieve in each session.



Gabion wall building workshop with Langdon Park Primary School. Photo author's own

Nonetheless, this method of working meant there was little continuity between who attended each workshop. While some residents would regularly visit the site after their initial engagement, a larger majority could only be reached by holding subsequent events with their specific community groups. Such networks were also too reliant on the relationship between the project and a single actor, in this case the local group leader who facilitated each workshop. While the *Community of Location* developed between these group leaders and the moss wall project successfully built on existing social relationships, it was also overly reliant on a single individual rather than encouraging wider interest. This method of engagement certainly allowed us to engage with large groups of local people to discuss air quality, but there was little lasting impact as few participants felt a sense of ownership for the moss prototypes we had been building after the workshop was completed. Returning to the importance of ‘transformation’ within the *Community of Location* that formed at R-Urban, we can see that while the workshops themselves evolved due to the input of the groups we worked with, they produced relatively few opportunities to alter the design of the wall itself due to the lack of long-term engagement with participants.

Community of Concern

Unlike the *Community of Location*, the actors constituting the *Community of Concern* joined the project with an existing interest in air quality, whether as academics, members of cultural institutions or members of activism groups. Here, the term ‘*Concern*’ focuses on the abstract ambition of engaging with questions of air quality, as opposed to being drawn to the wall’s presence within the city as a physical object. Interactions with these ‘concerned’ actors were not defined by the ‘tyranny of distance’, as outlined by Latour, where physical closeness is equated to a necessary connection to the project.¹⁰ Developing this network nonetheless became an important way to expand the project’s design process, placing the wall within wider ecological agendas and considering how it could support existing work by other interested groups, whether in Poplar or elsewhere. The growth of this second community was supported by the institutions and organisations within which these ‘concerned’ actors were embedded, including the arts organisation Arts Catalyst, the housing association Poplar Harca and the Sustainability Department at the University of East London.

An initial launch event for the moss wall was developed in collaboration with Arts Catalyst, a group who commission works addressing environmental issues facing communities across the UK. This event included a walk around the site, a workshop installing air-quality sensors, and a discursive meal that hosted



Sharing concerns for air quality at the Poplar Detox launch event. Photo author’s own

a talk between each course. Arts Catalyst advertised the launch event and further workshops via social media, attracting a new and interdisciplinary group of participants to the R-Urban site made up of activists, artists, residents and students, many of whom continued to attend the workshops and build-days throughout the summer months. These participants had a clear interest in experimental approaches to environmental design and air quality and benefitted from the sharing of knowledge that took place within this new network gathering around the project. This network was then sustained through the continued flow of knowledge between actors, with the moss wall acting as the central point around which ideas could be applied and tested. As such, Arts Catalyst played a ‘transformative’ role by actively bring together the actors who would then become the moss wall’s *Community of Concern*, linked by common interest.

R-Urban also worked closely with the local housing association, Poplar Harca, leasing the site from their estate. As a large institutional network, Poplar Harca ran many of the community projects in the local area. From the beginning, it was important to consider how we presented the power relationship between Poplar Harca and R-Urban: while we worked together, the R-Urban moss wall project still had the autonomy to define its own agenda. As a result, Poplar Harca did not present their work as part of the launch event discussed above, but instead joined the discussion informally between talks at the meal. Drawing again on Latour, the R-Urban team were faced by the challenge that Poplar Harca were neither ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’ the network of the project, but instead supported it via these

more informal conversations.¹¹ These conversations were of equal importance to the event's formal talks. They created connections between the 'concerned' parties who attended the meal, weaving a network strengthened by multiple interactions around the moss wall project which, as Latour describes, 'becomes strategic through the number of connections'.¹²

At the time, Poplar Harca were also in the process of developing the new role of an air quality officer for their housing association. This role would be charged with exploring how air quality could be improved through the everyday maintenance of properties, individual behavioural change supported by community outreach, and longer-term construction projects. Poplar Harca's presence at the launch meal provided an opportunity to gather ideas that would inform the creation of this new role through the informal conversations had with attendees. The development of this role then continued via regular meetings between R-Urban and Poplar Harca, exploring how the moss wall project could be funded as part of a longer-term vision for improving local air quality. Poplar Harca's 'transformative' engagement with the central 'thing' of the moss wall was therefore twofold: firstly, it further developed the 'Community of Concern' gathered around the project via the housing association's informal participation in the launch event; secondly, it helped Poplar Harca to develop the air quality officer position – a role which then led to further collaboration with R-Urban and the moss wall.

Lastly, Poplar Harca introduced us to the members of the Sustainability Department at the University of East London, with whom they had already worked to record air quality across the borough. This group had perhaps the greatest transformative impact upon the design of the wall itself, as they explained the movement of air around the R-Urban site and proposed the use of moss within the structure. The Department also supported the development of the design, situating it within their own scientific research and using the R-Urban project as a chance to test prototypes and observe how they performed over an extended period.

However, unlike the other groups within the *Community of Concern*, the academics from the Sustainability Department did not engage with the local community or wider networks of the project and did not attend workshops. They were primarily concerned with working on the wall as a 'thing' – guiding the project and supporting its research value through analysis and written outputs. The involvement of the Sustainability Department with this central 'non-human actor' was thus highly transformative in terms of the physical design of the wall itself but did not have the same reflexive impact upon the Department as an actor, unlike in the case of Poplar Harca. The *Community of Concern* therefore presents a multiplicity of relationships between actors and the moss wall: Arts Catalyst,



Moss as a material of concern for the Sustainability Department at the University of East London. Image author's own

Poplar Harca and the Sustainability Department were all linked by their shared interest in the project as a work of environmental architecture, but the degree to which they engaged with the wall and used its development to contribute to their own evolution as an actor varied greatly.

Community of Practice

The last of the three communities associated with the moss wall – the *Community of Practice* – was defined by its practical approach to the project. As explored by educational theorist Etienne Wenger, this kind of community is formed through the process of regularly coming together to perform practical activities.¹³ With the R-Urban moss wall, the actors that made up the *Community of Practice* had a sustained period of engagement in the project and were directly involved in its construction as a transformative process of designing and learning together. The capacity of this form of working is explored by M.T. Schäfer's research into the value of participatory projects for the maker, which explores how an object's design is improved through the involvement and critique of other actors.¹⁴ Investment in the project is key to this way of working, creating a situation where every member of the group impacts upon the object's design in some capacity. This section focuses on two summer schools held at R-Urban in 2017 and 2018,



Presenting the moss wall design: 'Prototyping the Civic' summer school at R-Urban. Photo author's own

exploring how each attempted to form a *Community of Practice* through daily construction workshops over a two-week period.

The first *Community of Practice* was formed in 2017 around a summer school linked to 'Prototyping the Civic', a broader project supported by Umeå School of Architecture in Sweden which explored ways of reimagining urban space. The experience of the 'Prototyping the Civic' summer school presented an noteworthy example of the transformative process of creating a *Community of Practice*. Although the school was advertised both locally and to a wider network of university architecture departments, it predominately attracted architecture students interested in the work at R-Urban. Few residents took part initially, partly due to the timing – activities took place during the day when they would otherwise be at work, highlighting the challenge of creating a *Community of Practice* with a group who do not have large amounts of disposable time. Yet this reluctance was also because the summer school's offer to develop participants' DIY skills and knowledge of environmental prototypes did not have the same practical value for residents as it did for the students. The R-Urban moss wall project had a clear link to the architecture students' practice: the knowledge we were collectively developing as part of the summer school could be transferred to their ongoing studies. The value of taking part was simply not as clear for the residents.

R-Urban was, however, able to overcome this issue by inviting residents to lead tours around the local area and teach the architecture students about DIY. It became clear that this teaching role was a better way to engage with residents, as it utilised their existing skills and was equally popular with the students, who had entered the situation with a desire to learn. Though it had been hoped that the 'Prototyping the Civic' summer school would allow us to learn about the moss wall together, it soon became clear that different groups within the school were happier to fulfil the role of either student or teacher, depending on the value they placed on learning or sharing their knowledge. This experience thus highlighted the importance of developing distinct roles within a *Community of Practice* that would allow participants to engage in the project in a way which suited them. In this case sharing knowledge, as well as gaining knowledge, was a transformative process, building links between different groups of participants to form a wider *Community of Practice* in which everyone was involved in working on the central object.

The following summer, R-Urban hosted a second school, this time with Spotlight, a youth centre located in Poplar. This summer school focused on constructing a moss bench, rather than the wall itself, with the aim of encouraging



The moss bench design workshop with Spotlight, exploring how and where we sit in the city. Photo author's own

the young people involved to learn together through the transformative process of constructing the bench. The participants brought different skills sets and knowledge to the process of construction, building a *Community of Practice* through their collective transfer of knowledge and engagement with the project. Informed by Wenger's theories, there was also an ambition among those of us who took part that the Spotlight summer school would create a space with little hierarchy between student and maker – between ourselves as members of R-Urban and the young people we worked with.

We started this project with a series of weekly events, at which we proposed the idea of constructing a bench with the aim of encouraging young people to use the R-Urban site. Through conversations about where this prototype could be located, it became clear that the participants were interested in creating a safe place within the city. Our collaborative design

sessions focused on how the principles of the original moss wall could be applied to construct a space which felt safe, creating a sense of enclosure and privacy while maintaining clear views of the local area. Discussing the seating became a tangible way of developing the design from an experience the young people all shared growing up on the Teviot Estate, creating a direct link between their lived experience and more abstract ideas around air quality. This was a transformative experience, as the project prototype was developed in direct response to issues that were of importance to the Spotlight group, allowing them to form a *Community of Practice* through shared active engagement with the project.

Based on these designs, R-Urban and Spotlight jointly applied for funding to build the bench as a two-week summer project. This extended period of engagement allowed us to further develop the project in response to the young people's experience of living on the Teviot Estate and their growing concerns around air quality in the local area. Involved in the bench design from the outset, they were able to continue to influence the project as they built it on the R-Urban site, learning together through the transformative process of construction. Indeed, the young people living on the estate have continued to use the bench, engaging with it as an element of the local area and continuing to use it as a central point in the development of their own *Community of Practice*.

The two summer schools discussed here represent different experiences of forming a *Community of Practice* in which everyone participates in working on the central object. The challenge of attracting residents to 'Prototyping the Civic' in 2017 highlighted the importance of developing defined roles (in this case those of teacher and student) when forming such a community. These roles rely on establishing the value of taking part for those joining the network and demonstrate how a *Community of Practice* can be developed via the transformative process of both learning and teaching. The development of the *Community of Practice* around the 2018 Spotlight summer school was different. The design for the new prototype of the moss bench developed over a longer period, taking care to respond to the young people's shared experiences of living on the Teviot Estate and their diversity of knowledge, rather than assigning them different roles in relation to the object. This less hierarchical *Community of Practice* took longer to develop, but was nonetheless able to channel the experiences of the Spotlight participants into creating a new moss project (the bench) and even provided a physical space in the local area for communities to continue developing in future.

Conclusion: A Community of Inquiry

The three communities identified in this paper – those of *Location*, *Concern* and *Practice* – were all connected through their interactions with the moss wall at R-Urban Poplar. By focusing on the wall as a 'thing' – a non-human actor at the heart of a network of relations, as defined by Latour's 'actor-network theory' – we have seen how each community underwent a transformative process of development triggered by their engagement with the central object.¹⁵ The *Community of Location* was established through the significance of building within a specific place. We set out with the assumption of an existing relationship with place among residents, which we soon realised did not exist. By developing an understanding of the nature of local neighbourhood networks, we were able to build upon existing community groups and establish a place-based relationship, thus piecing together a *Community of Location* around the moss wall. This community continued to transform through its relationship with the wall, as we organised different kinds of workshops informed by the interests of each group.

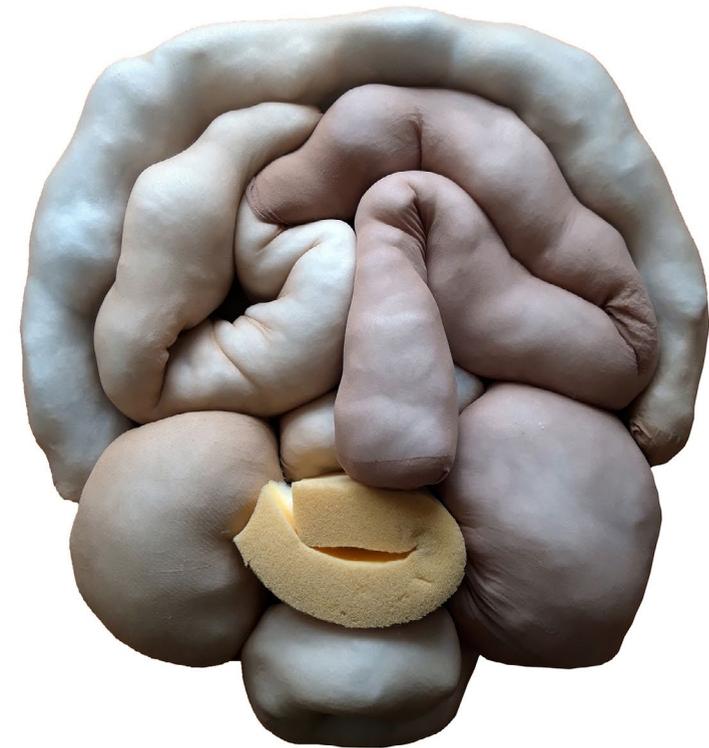
Entering the project with a pre-existing interest in air quality, the *Community of Concern* was established through the flow of knowledge among different actors. The wall acted as a focal point around which a dense network collected with the ambition of turning abstract ideas into physical design. Of the three actors involved in the development of the *Community of Concern*, the transformative power of involvement in the moss wall project was clearest in the case of Poplar Harca housing association. Here, a process of collaboration with R-Urban created a new working community based on shared interest, which managed to articulate our autonomy while also appreciating Poplar Harca's capacity to respond to ideas. The continued development of this working relationship, as evidenced in the creation of the air quality officer role, allowed this *Community of Concern* to continue to develop as work continued on the moss wall.

Lastly, a *Community of Practice* was formed via the two summer schools hosted at R-Urban. The architects and residents of 'Prototyping the Civic' formed a practice-based community through the actions of making and learning together over an extended period. This process actively transformed the summer school community, creating a differentiation in roles based on pre-existing skills and interests that allowed all participants to fully engage with the project. Our work with Spotlight youth centre was less hierarchical, instead revealing the value of engaging with issues that are of importance to participants. Hence, the Spotlight *Community of Practice* was developed by encouraging the young people of the Teviot Estate to draw upon their own lived experiences and desires for the local

area to formulate a new project – a communal moss bench. In both cases, a community was developed through the practical engagement of all actors with the central object, even if the means of doing so varied.

This paper has demonstrated the transformative effect a central ‘thing’ can have on the different communities around it, but what can we learn from the impact these communities had on the ‘thing’ itself? The actors who made up the communities of *Location*, *Concern* and *Practice* all shared the common experience of having transformed the moss wall, in some capacity. Drawing once more upon Latour, we can bring this collective endeavour together under a *Community of Inquiry*, which reflects the sense of community developed via interaction between unconnected actors and the central ‘thing’ of the wall. The workshops with Aberfeldy FC and Langdon Park Primary School may have been angled towards pre-existing interests, but they nonetheless contributed to the development of the wall as a discursive and physical object on the Teviot Estate. The launch event hosted with Arts Catalyst attracted informed ‘concern’ in the moss wall, creating connections with interested actors from Poplar Harca and the Sustainability Department at the University of East London that led to further changes to the wall’s design. Lastly, the ‘Prototyping the Civic’ and Spotlight summer schools played a practical role in transforming the wall, with the youth group even using the same design principles to develop a new project in the form of the moss bench.

Each of these transformative exchanges had a shared impact upon the moss wall, influencing its design, construction and implementation. Viewing the wall as an object at the centre of a broader network of engagement, we can see that it not only played a key role in producing the communities of *Location*, *Concern* and *Practice*, but also acted as a malleable creation that responded to their shared participation in its development. In this way, the R-Urban moss wall brought together actors who would be otherwise unconnected to share in the ongoing development of a pioneering environmental project. Far from being a passive object, the wall played an active role in stitching together a broader *Community of Inquiry* at the heart of the Teviot Estate.



Spencer Winter, *National Development Manager at Capital & Regional*
Medium: tights, duvet filling, foam, cardboard, 59×55×7cm, 2019

Ecology and Community: The Role of Community Performance in Re-telling and Enshrining Brecon's Theatrical Heritage

Jayne Gold, University of Bristol

Brecon as a Theatrical Centre

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Brecon was one of Wales' most important towns. It was an administrative centre with an assize court and had a strong business and military presence. From 1756 onwards Brecon held an established coach transport route to London and other major cities. Part of its cultural make-up was its rich theatre scene. The Anglo-Welsh gentry of Brecon who controlled Brecon's political and commercial governance also patronised and funded the theatre. English was the dominant language of the ruling classes and over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it replaced Welsh as the language spoken by the majority of Brecon's inhabitants. Performers and theatre managers from London and across the UK chose Brecon as a key part of their touring



View from Brecon. Image author's own

circuit. Indeed, the eminent actress Sarah Siddons was born in the town in 1755 whilst her family were performing there. This all took place in front of the majestic backdrop of the Brecon Beacons mountains.

Aside from the name of a pub in the town centre – The Sarah Siddons – much of this history has been forgotten by local residents and overlooked in theatre history scholarship. My doctoral research at University of Bristol is funded by the local historical society, Brecknock Society and Museum Friends, and the Ursuline Order, in memory of Sister Bonaventure (1923–2019) of the Ursuline Convent in Brecon. Sister Bonaventure was a prolific local theatre historian whose extensive body of research of English-speaking theatre in Brecon from 1699–1870 remains largely unpublished. She is the original curator of an archive of material that I have gained privileged access to for the research project. As a resident of Brecon and celebrated within the community for her energetic approach to her roles as educator, historian and as a local campaigner, Sister Bonaventure herself is a key part of the town's heritage.

As well as creating an academic record, I have been exploring ways of engaging Brecon's community with the process of enshrining and retelling the stories of the town's theatrical heritage. I want the history contained within the archive to be accessible to the wider community, not just held within the confines of academia. As such, I am currently undertaking a collaborative project with a local community theatre charity, Brecon Little Theatre. In this article I will offer an introduction to the Heritage Lottery Funded project, Brecon Little Theatre's *A Time Traveller's Guide to Theatrical Brecon*. This project will produce a promenade performance around Brecon's streets alongside open-access digital resources. I will provide an overview of the process of sharing archival research through a community-led promenade performance, reflecting on the strengths of this way of working and briefly exploring how this practice might fit within the wider discourses around community, heritage and ecology.

Ecology and Theatre

The term "ecology" was first used by German Scientist Ernst Haeckel in 1866 in his book *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen* [*General Morphology of Organisms*] to describe the scientific study of the interaction between organisms and their environment.¹ The phrase is taken from ancient Greek "οἶκος" (home) and English "logy" (study of). As a researcher investigating Brecon's history whilst living in the area, this direct translation provides a literal resonance. As a resident of the area, I have the wonderful privilege of being able to immerse myself in its historical sites as I investigate them and be part of a project to celebrate Brecon's heritage. The town's geographical location within Brecon Beacons National

Park, with mountains visible from its streets, lends itself to ecological analogies. The fabric of Brecon is its landscape, its people past and present and the historic buildings which have survived change and development, several of which provide a focal point for my theatre history research. Although Brecon's population is small (approximately 8000 people) its rich history contributes to its ongoing importance as a market town.² All of these factors create Brecon's unique ecology.

Helen Nicholson et al. apply the term ecology to the study of amateur or community theatre: "An ecology of practices recognises the shared knowledge [...] the friendships and informal networks it inspires, the ways in which it shapes lives, defines communities and contributes to place-making".³ As part of my research, I chose to collaborate with Brecon Little Theatre, a group of community-based theatre makers and enthusiasts. This presented an opportunity to engage the community of Brecon celebrating the skills, interests and creativity already present in their town.

Brecon Little Theatre

Originally founded in 1930, Brecon Little Theatre is a charity completely run by volunteers. They have a strong commitment to enabling as many people as possible to be involved in the performing arts and over the years have produced over two hundred community cast shows for local audiences. There are around forty performing members in the company and an additional twenty volunteers from different parts of the community including teachers, farmers, artists, dinner ladies, members of the military, students, healthcare professionals and pensioners. Members range in age from eight to eighties. The theatre group is run by a managing committee who are voted in by members and governed by a small board of community trustees. Shows are directed and often written by members. Membership is free and open to all parts of the community with a small voluntary annual donation.

In Autumn 2020 I approached the Chair of Brecon Little Theatre with an idea to collaborate on an outdoor piece of promenade theatre. By producing an interactive show with an accompanying map and educational resources, the aim was to engage the people of Brecon with the town's rich theatrical heritage. There is a strong tradition of promenade theatre in Wales. Perhaps most notably, National Theatre Wales' 2011 production of *The Passion* in Port Talbot which involved 1000 community volunteers. An outdoor promenade performance was an ideal medium to build on this tradition and integrate Brecon's historical buildings as backdrops for the scenes, whilst also enabling us to adhere to Covid-safe measures. Brecon Little Theatre have been doing some small things online during the pandemic, but otherwise have postponed all their planned shows and events.



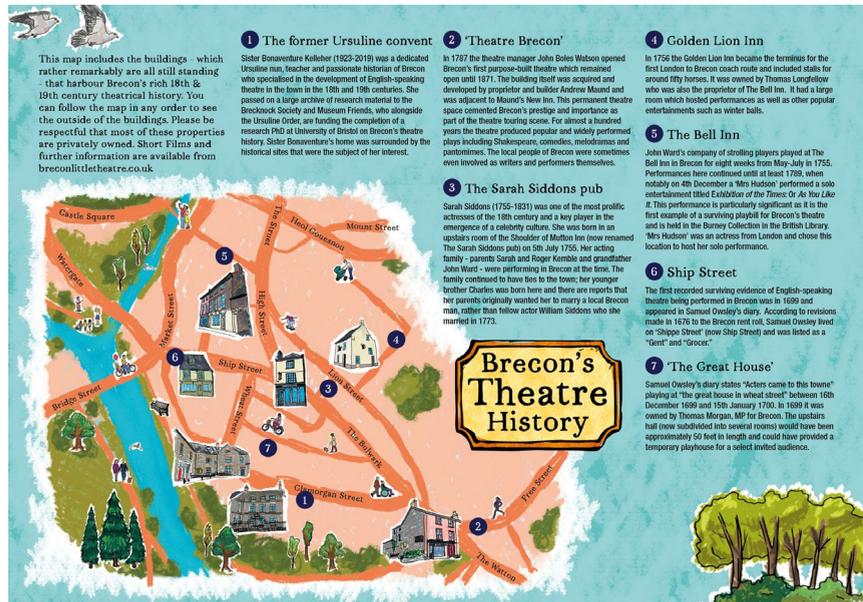
Brecon Little Theatre's *Stepping Out*, 2014.

We wanted this project to be a positive event for the community to focus on whilst all theatres and museum buildings are shut. After discussing the proposal with the trustees and committee members, the charity was very keen to get involved. I researched funding opportunities and assisted the charity with their application. Subsequently Brecon Little Theatre has been awarded funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver the project.

Brecon Little Theatre invited members to offer their services as writers, directors and performers for the project. One member volunteered to be the main writer and director who worked alongside another member who volunteered as the producer. These roles were all agreed by the committee. I produced a document for the theatre makers, essentially an edited down version of the first chapter of my thesis, which gave an outline of Brecon's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatre history. The lead writer, supported by the rest of the creative team, used this as her inspiration to develop the script. The focus was on monologues or duologues which could be more easily rehearsed during the pandemic. Initially, I met the small team online and then had the opportunity to walk around Brecon town centre with the writer and producer developing ideas for the promenade performance and further explaining parts of the history content. As we walked around, shop owners and people we knew from the town expressed interest in what we were doing and began to develop their excitement and curiosity for the project.



One of the locations in the promenade performance will be the Peace Garden, The Watton, Brecon. The original theatre building, which opened in 1787, is seen in the background. Image author's own



Map design by Signe L Design, text Jayne Gold

The promenade performance will take audience members around Brecon's historical theatre sites and relay factual information interspersed with fictionalised scenarios inspired by the history. There will be around thirty different roles depicted by the cast from theatre managers to local gentry and labourers. The performance will be accompanied by online digital resources and a map, creating a walking tour of Brecon's theatre history.

Women and Theatre History

Throughout the process, a feeling of collaboration and shared intentions has been created. This is particularly resonant in the idea of including women's experience and role within theatre history. Whilst scholarship "consistently fails to tell the full story of women's contributions", I was delighted to see the fervour with which the writer, Joan, created scenes inspired by the historical research I had shared.⁴ Her writing details the imagined lives of female theatre performers, managers and writers:

SCENE 4

Exterior of Shoulder of Mutton Inn, now the Sarah Siddons public house.

SARAH

[...] That afternoon, I ran my acting roles through my head for that evening's performance. I rested in my rooms on the first floor of the Shoulder of Mutton Inn. I had barely shut my eyes when I was contorted in pain. It was the beginning of the labour for my first child. All afternoon and night I struggled until just as dawn broke, my darling girl came into the world. My girl, Sarah, my namesake. I fell in love at first sight.
 [...] As I lay exhausted in the birthing bed, my tiny girl clasped to my breast; I could hear Roger, Pa and the rest of the Company shouting and laughing, singing the praises of my Sarah's beauty and thanking God for my safe delivery.

SCENE 6

1787 *Golden Lion Coaching Inn, Brecon.*
Myfanwy Havard, a young woman approaches
Frances Brooke.

MH

[...] My apologies for approaching you Mrs Brooke. My father is landlord here and I saw your name on the passenger manifest and I just had to speak with you...

FB

I am Frances Brooke...

MH

And I am Myfanwy Havard – a writer – an aspiring writer. To meet a true writer, such as yourself is truly exciting!

FB

Do sit, Mistress Harvard.

MH

Thank you. I have with me your two novels “The History of Lady Julia Manville” and “The History of Emma Montague.” They are precious to me. I write myself.
 T’was my mother who first introduced me to your work. She has all the copies of your essays [...]⁵

In these extracts, we see the blending of documented historical facts and creative writing penned by a current resident of Brecon as she imagines how history may have unfolded on Brecon’s streets just a few moments’ walk from her own doorstep. Joan was keen to focus on women’s experiences of childbirth in the eighteenth century: the dangers, the joys and how it fitted into everyday working life. Sarah Siddons’ birth provided an iconic example for this. Whilst there is no evidence that Frances Brooke ever visited Brecon, it is documented that in 1787 she was most likely the first female playwright to have a play produced here. In scene six, Joan creates a fictitious interaction exploring the impact on a local young woman.

An Interdisciplinary Approach

This project converges two disciplines of theatre academia, Theatre History and Applied Theatre, with Heritage Studies. Through historical inquiry I aim to present a reasoned record of Brecon’s theatre history. Using my Applied Theatre background in “forms of dramatic activity that primarily exist outside conventional mainstream theatre institutions, and which are specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies”, I hope to support Brecon Little Theatre in their process of engaging and enriching the community of Brecon with their heritage.⁶ As Rodney Harrison describes, “heritage is formed in the present and reflects inherited and current concerns about the past”.⁷ Certainly, by re-telling Brecon’s theatre archive through a feminist lens which acknowledges biases and forgotten histories, a sense of present concerns and interests are brought into this heritage. There is a longstanding practice of museum theatre broadly defined as “the use of theatre and theatrical techniques as a means of mediating knowledge in the context of museum education” which brings together theatre and history.⁸ In their praxis, Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd marry “the disciplines of drama and performance studies [with] museum and heritage studies”.⁹ In this project I am exploring ways of implementing an interdisciplinary approach which aims to honour theatre history and the importance of archive, whilst championing ways of engaging the local community of Brecon in the re-telling and enshrining process.

Community, Performance and Heritage

As Petra Kupperts and Gwen Robertson outline in their introduction to *The Community Performance Reader*, “community” is a complex term which can be exclusionary, and lead to empowerment and a sense of shared identity.¹⁰ There is a similar duality in the notion of “performance”. Performance events can often be based on oppressive hierarchal structures or give individuals the opportunity to freely express themselves and be empowered. It is the sense of shared identity, empowerment and freedom of expression that I am working towards in this project.

Whilst I am placed as an academic advisor for the content of the material, like all other stakeholders, I am also a member of



Collaborative model for Brecon Little Theatre theatre history project.

the community of Brecon and care about and am part of its ecological make-up. When working within the communities of Brecon, embracing Phillip Taylor's approach whereby "good praxis in applied theatre works toward a joint partnership in which knowledge, talents, and skills are shared" is really important.¹¹ This is particularly true when working with residents who have lived in the area far longer than I have and those who have their own expertise and experiences of theatre. I have passed on information from the research freely. It belongs to the people of Brecon rather than to me and Brecon Little Theatre members as local residents have ownership over the creative process.

A community-placed writer and director ensures that the creative control and exploration remains within the parameters of Brecon's own ecological community. As part of the charity's remit, Brecon Little Theatre will be taking measures to ensure that the project is as inclusive as possible. The promenade performance will be ticketed to safely manage numbers but will be free of charge and the accompanying digital resources will be available free to access online. This project is for the people of Brecon; to encourage them to walk around the town and engage with the rich heritage on their doorsteps. The content might interest tourists too and help to promote and celebrate the town's history more widely. The aim is to ensure a legacy for future generations to enjoy through the creation of digitalised performances and accompanying resources.

The process of creating and maintaining this legacy relies on the community's engagement with the material. A 2010 special edition of the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* focused on community engagement. In this edition, Elizabeth Croke explores the notion of authority and control and cites the think tank *Campaign for Learning through Museums and Galleries'* work in challenging assumptions: "their proposal is that museums should be transformed so that the public can move from 'consumers to creators' and 'from readers to authors' [...] [enabling] the formation of a two-way dialogue between visitors and institutions".¹² This two-way dialogue is typical of Applied Theatre methodologies and is another important factor in this project. Through engaging the community, the hope would be to move towards this transition.

There are several barriers to overcome in order to achieve this. In exploring the ways in which heritage projects work within working class communities, Sheila Watson has pointed out that "[h]eritage [...] has long been a site of power relations – in which the establishment selects and interprets the material and intangible culture it prefers as part of its method of hegemony".¹³ The topic of the history itself, 'English Speaking Theatre in Brecon 1699–1870' is predicated on inequality and paternalism: the English-rule of Brecon and the myriad connections to Britain's colonial power typify exploitative practices. The focus

of the history in this case is dictated by the content of the archive and there are many other stories which deserve to be told that fall beyond the remit of my research: particularly the stories of Welsh-speaking performance history. By creating bi-lingual Welsh and English resources and honouring people from all walks of life involved in the theatre, the aim is to celebrate Welshness within this Anglicised content. Although of course the imbalance will remain. There is too the concern of the wider dynamics to consider, not least my role within the community and its effect on the project. Moreover, as Nicholson et al. point out, an organisation like Brecon Little Theatre "can both reflect and challenge wider issues with access, inclusion and diversity in society".¹⁴ This is another concern which I will analyse within my doctoral project.

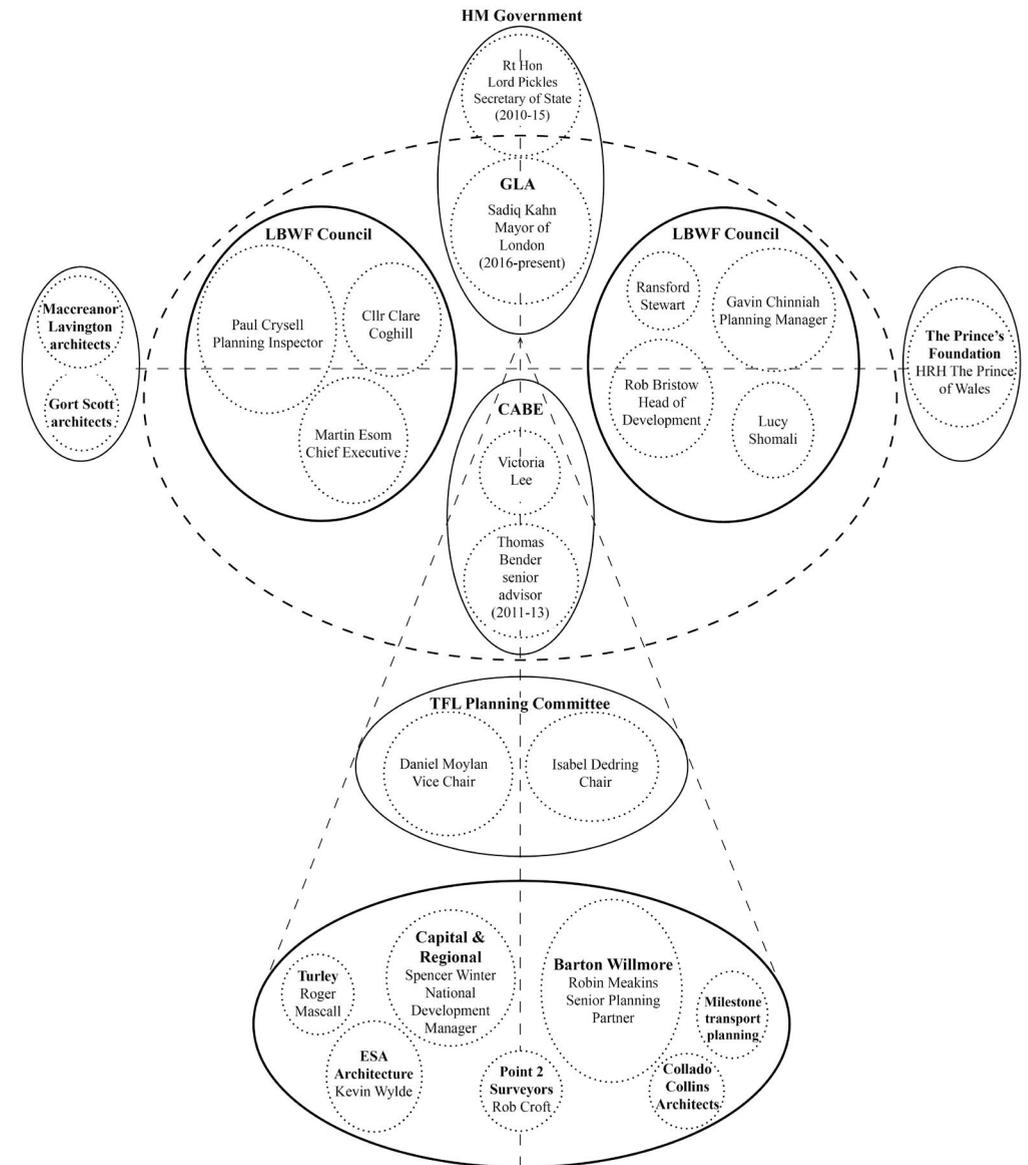
Discussions around community, ecology and heritage remain complex. In this short introduction to the project, I have only begun to explore some of their implications and there is a great deal to consider as I continue with my doctoral research. But as I write, Brecon Little Theatre are emerging after months of hibernation to eagerly prepare for this weekend's online open auditions. I am content to park those thoughts for now as I enjoy getting caught up in their excitement.



Julika Gittner practices and teaches across the disciplines of art and architecture. Her sculpture, performance, sound and video works have been shown internationally and she has been teaching as a design fellow in architecture at the University of Cambridge since 2010 and is currently undertaking a practice-based PhD in Fine Art and Architecture at Reading and Cardiff University. The question of ‘Community’ and how art relates and contributes to community-led campaigns has been at the heat of her artistic practice for the past decade and is also a central focus of her PhD.

Faces of Regeneration

Faces of Regeneration is a sculptural project developed as part of a community led campaign against the planned redevelopment of Walthamstow Town Square in East London. The sculpture consists of 22 objects portraying the key people involved in the decision-making process that shaped the current plan for the square. The portraits are mounted onto a large-scale diagram, grouping them according to the institutions they represent and their interconnections. The object was displayed on Walthamstow Town Square in August 2019. The piece questions the privilege awarded to the community of decision makers over the community of local residents to determine the future of a space that the majority of them will never physically inhabit.



Faces of Regeneration, Diagram
CAD drawing, variable, 2019

Endnotes

“In this damn country, which we hate and love”: The Pakistani-British Diaspora During the Thatcher Years in *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), pp. 8–17

Alisha Mathers, *University of Southampton*

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- 2 As concerns grew about the possible loss of British identity because of the rise in migration, the 30s saw the rise of far-right nationalist parties in the country starting with Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists (BUF) in 1931. Around 20 years later, Britain saw another resurgence of far-right nationalism due to fears about the growth of immigration from Commonwealth nations to the UK. In line with such continually growing concerns, 1967 saw the rise of The National Front Party which was ‘formed as a coalition of tiny parties which had existed on the extreme right fringe of politics for some time’ (Fielding 1981: 19). Nigel Fielding summarises the ideology of the party as being ‘firmly traditionalist, emphasizing imperialism and militarism and a heavily dated view of great power relations’ (85). The party used the terms nation and race interchangeably (86), meaning that their aim to maintain Britain’s identity meant preserving its whiteness. Only a year after the birth of the National Front, Conservative MP Enoch Powell delivered his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech in which he spoke of Britain “heaping up its own funeral pyre’ whilst referring to black children as ‘wide-grinning piccaninnies’ and warned of the ‘national danger’ of the growth of a population descended from immigrants” (Taylor 2018: 386). This speech enabled racially divisive language in political addresses to the public, and consequently, gave the National Front party a chance to build on such fearmongering (Taylor 2018). When Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1975, her focus on hardening immigration laws demonstrated a desire to win back the National Front voters to the Conservative Party, and thus, Britain saw another rise in anti-immigrant policy and sentiment during her 10-year premiership.
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- 4 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). p. 9.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 7 Hanif Kureishi, ‘The Rainbow Sign.’ *Hanif Kureishi Collected Essays*. (London: Faber and Faber, 2011). p. 7.
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- 9 Jonathan Darling, ‘From Hospitality to Presence’. *Peace Review*, 26:2, (2014) pp. 162–169. (p. 163).
- 10 The National Archive, Kew, *PREM 19 – Records of the Prime Minister’s Office: Correspondence and Papers, 1979–1997*, ‘VIETNAM. Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong; resettlement in UK; part 2. 1979 Jun 15 – 1979 Jul 19.’ <<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C11522097>> [Date Accessed: 02/05/2021]. p. 59.
- 11 Rahul K. Gairola, ‘Capitalist Houses, Queer Homes: National Belonging and Transgressive Erotics in *My Beautiful Laundrette*.’ *South Asian Popular Culture*, 7:1. pp. 37–54 (p. 38).
- 12 *My Beautiful Laundrette*, dir. Stephen Frears and Hanif Kureishi (Channel Four Television Corporation, 1985).
- 13 Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse’. *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge, 2004) pp. 121–31.
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- 15 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. (London: Routledge, 2002). p. 50.
- 16 *My Beautiful Laundrette*, (1985).
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- 18 Margaret Thatcher. ‘Interview for Woman’s Own (“no such thing as society”).’ (1987) <<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>> [Date Accessed: 23/03/2021].
- 19 Daniela Berghahn, ‘Queering the family of nation: Reassessing fantasies of purity, celebrating hybridity in diasporic cinema.’ *Transnational Cinemas*, 2:2. (2012), pp. 129–146 (p. 132).
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- 22 Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi: Postcolonial Storyteller*. (Austin: Texas University Press, 1998). p. 11.

- 23 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1977). p. 518.
- 24 Berghahn, 'Queering the family of nation.' p. 140.
- 25 Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. p. 518.
- 26 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). p. 9.

Evaluating Socially Engaged Practices in Art: The Autonomy of Artists and Artworks in Community Collaborations, pp. 18–26

Harry Matthews and Aaron Moorehouse, *Bath Spa University*

- 1 Contemporary artists, however, are generally aware of these oppositions and have problematised these distinctions through their artwork since the early 20th century. Marcel Duchamp, for example, placed a urinal in a fine-art exhibition, eloquently drawing attention to the processes by which an observer actively and imaginatively (if often unconsciously) constructs any experience of art, as well as drawing out the temporal and subjective elements of any such experience.
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- 3 Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', *Artforum*, 44.6 (2005), p. 178.
- 4 Ibid, pp. 179–80.
- 5 Claire Bishop, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, (MIT Press, 2004), p. 54.
- 6 Examples include Bishop's analysis of the work of Graciela Carnevale, who trapped exhibition attendees inside an empty glass chamber which they had to destroy in order to escape. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 119–120.
- 7 Readings were generated from comments written by Matthew Shlomowitz in an internal online discussion group between composition staff and doctoral students of University of Southampton and Bath Spa University [4 October, 2018].
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From Offline to Online Imagined Community: Recuperating Asante Culture and History for Development in Ghana, pp. 36–43

Charles Prempeh, *University of Cambridge*

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- 7 Akin Iwilade, 'Crisis as Opportunity: Youth, Social Media and the Renegotiation of Power in Africa', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 16 (2014), pp. 1054–1068.
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A Community of Councillors: Tudor Government and Prosopography, pp. 44–53
 Connor Huddleston, *University of Bristol*

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- 16 Robert Dudley married Lettice Devereux, dowager countess of Essex, in 1578 and became stepfather to Robert Devereux.
- 17 Andrew Allan Chibi, *Henry VIII's Bishops: Diplomats, Administrators, Scholars, and Shepherds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 26–7. Also, the articles on each of these figures in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) mention their conservatism and apparent lack of enthusiasm for reform.
- 18 Longland was recorded denouncing the Pope here Letters and Papers Henry VIII, vol.13, I, 804; Lee preaches against the injuries the Pope has done to the king and has the word Pope struck out of the hymn *Exultet Angelica* here L&P HVIII, vol.8, 869; Stokesley preached a sermon on the invalidity of the Pope's authority to prevent Henry's divorce from Katherine of Aragon here L&P HVIII, vol.8, 1054; Veysey ordered all the canons of Exeter to set forth the King's title of Supreme Head here L&P HVIII, vol.13, 75.

- 19 The commission ran between February and July 1537. Each cleric submitted a written statement of their view on a particular topic and then they debated and agreed on a position. A surviving manuscript of the Bishops' opinions on confirmation outlines this setup: London, British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra E V, f.75.
- 20 Attendance list for the Field of Cloth of Gold: SP 1/19, f.235 and L&P HVIII, vol.3, I, 704. Stokesley, Veysey and Lee at the meeting between Henry VIII and Charles V in 1520: SP 1/20, f.118 and L&P HVIII, vol.3, 906. Lee and Stokesley sent on tour of European capitals as commissioners for a general peace: SP 1/56, f.199 and L&P HVIII, vol.4, III, 6178.

Learning About Moss: Forming Communities of Inquiry, pp. 56–68

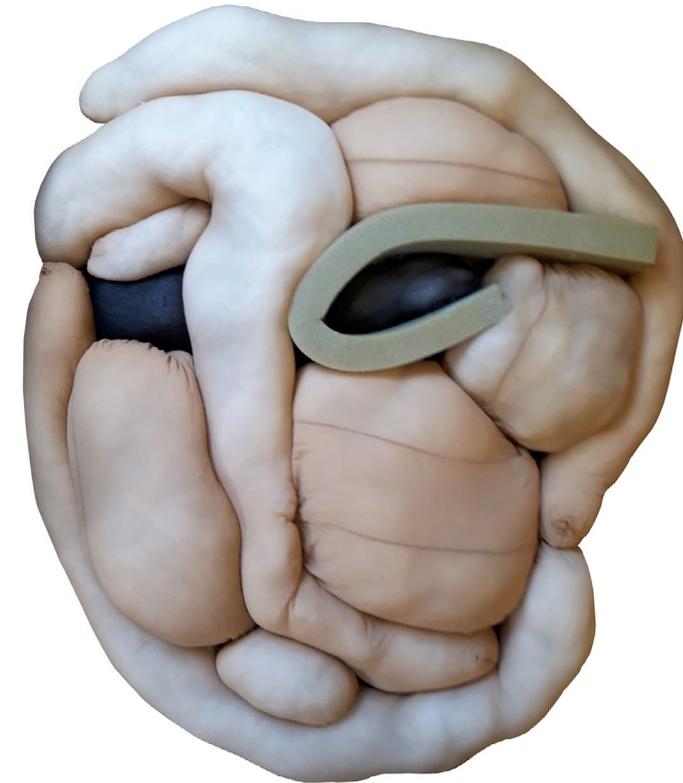
Hester Buck, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University | Ysgol Pensaernïaeth Cymru, Prifysgol Caerdydd

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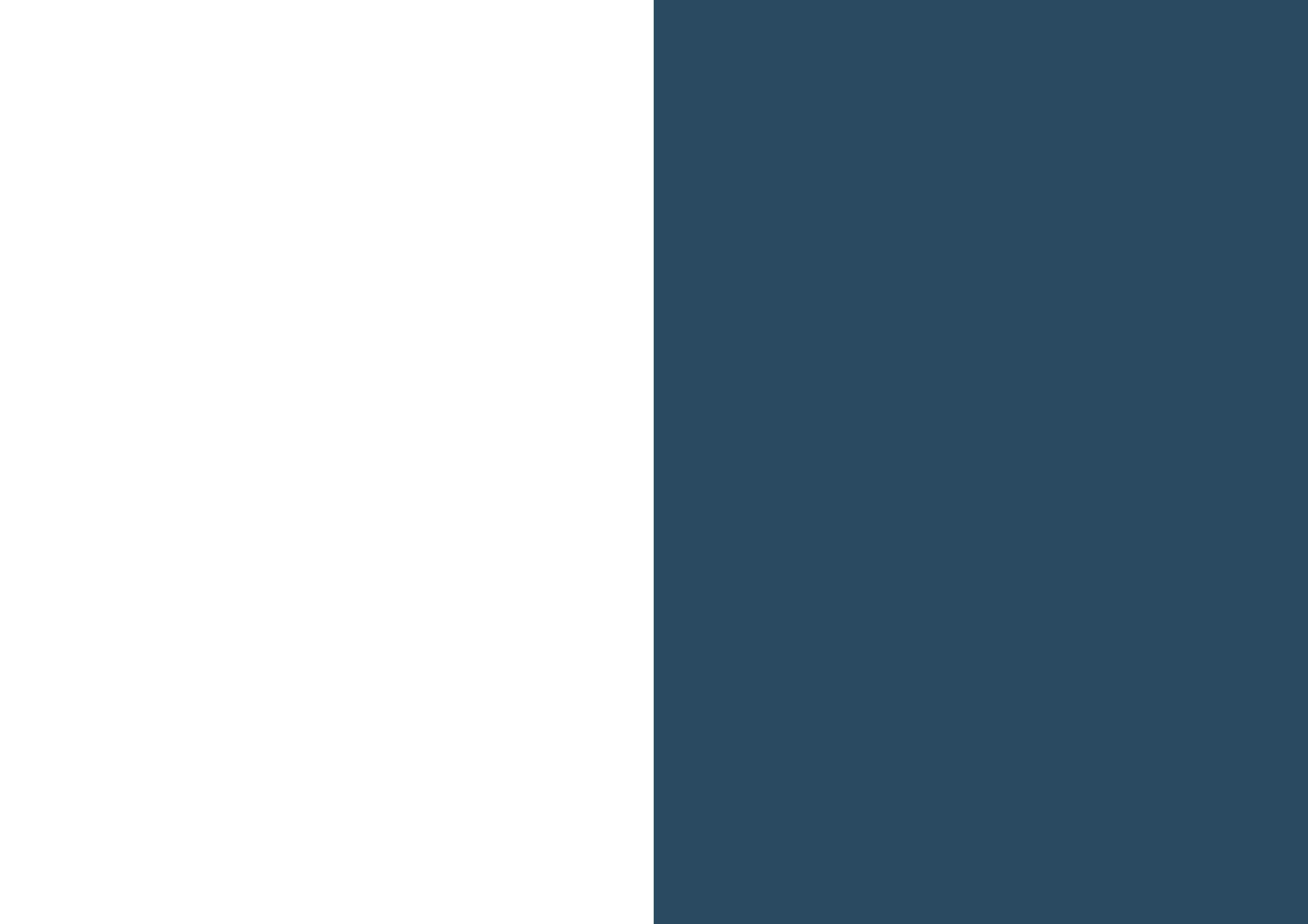
Ecology and Community: The Role of Community Performance in Re-telling and Enshrining Brecon's Theatrical Heritage, pp. 70–79

Jayne Gold, *University of Bristol*

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- 2 Source 2011 census, actual figure 8250.
- 3 Nicholson, H., Holdsworth, N. and Milling, J., *Ecologies of Amateur Theatre* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 6.
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Paul Crysell, *Planning Inspector, LBWF*
 Medium: tights, duvet filling, foam, cardboard, 60x50x6cm, 2019



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