

**TIME**

**MONEY**

*The potential of participatory arts practice  
to challenge complex societal problems  
and imagine alternative futures*

**Time or money? The potential of participatory arts practice to challenge  
complex societal problems and imagine alternative futures**

Doctorate of Philosophy Thesis

February 2022

Toby Phips Lloyd

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND CULTURES NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

## Declaration

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This thesis is submitted for Newcastle University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.



Toby Phips Lloyd

1 February 2022

## Abstract

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This thesis explores how participatory arts practice can engage issues of active citizenship, interrogate current relationships to work and inform understandings of a post-work society. To conduct the research, I used a practice-based approach which in this context manifested as a series of interactive exhibitions that were presented in a variety of public spaces. These interactive exhibitions posed open questions designed to provoke conversation while creating space and time for participants to engage in critical reflection outside of their daily routines.

We live in a climate where we work long hours in demanding jobs, which limits our ability to engage in activities outside of employment and our individual concerns. Universal Basic Income (UBI) could help to challenge this situation by decoupling income from work and providing people with the financial security, enabling them to become active citizens. However, the policy is often viewed as utopian and therefore politically unachievable. Research suggests that this is caused by Capitalist Realism and time poverty which restricts people's ability to imagine alternative ways of living and working, leading to a state of consciousness deflation.

My findings show that through its capacity for mimesis and role-play, participatory arts practice can counteract Capitalist Realism by creating a sense of defamiliarization and estrangement that enables a shift in perspective, allowing alternative visions of the future and new political imaginaries to emerge. My research demonstrated that participatory arts practice can create platforms for participants to interact with others in a process of dialogue and exchange that enables them to challenge personally held narratives and beliefs and to disentangle complex social and behavioural protocols. Through this process I was able to communicate ideas like UBI in a way that did not need to win a debate and could move beyond ideological barriers.

## Dedication

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For Fritz and Ylva

## Acknowledgements

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Due to the participatory nature of this practice-based research, I had the pleasure of working with many people over the course of the PhD. I would like to thank all the participants who engaged with my projects, whether visibly or invisibly, and everyone who contributed to the research directly and indirectly.

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## INTRODUCTION

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This thesis takes as its point of departure, Mark Fisher's theory of *Capitalist Realism*. Fisher argues that under Capitalism we experience time poverty.<sup>1</sup> This leads to a state of *consciousness deflation*,<sup>2</sup> that further restricts our ability to imagine alternatives to the current situation and results in an acceptance that nothing can be done to change society for the better. It is undoubtedly true that many of us are living in a climate when we work long hours in demanding jobs, which limits the time we have for activities outside of work. At the same time, advances in technology and access to the internet has increased the amount of information available to us which has turned our attention into a valuable commodity for a variety of new industries seeking to capture it for economic gain.<sup>3</sup> This situation leaves many of us feeling exhausted from being "always on" and constantly bombarded with information, which arguably restricts our ability to engage in activities outside of our immediate, individual concerns. This practice-led research examines how participatory arts practice can be used to address this situation. This was approached through a series of participatory art projects that explored the question:

*How can participatory arts practice engage with issues of active citizenship and re-evaluate current relationships to work and inform understandings of a post-work society?*

To tackle the issue of our inability to 'imagine alternatives', my research explored the discourse surrounding the policy of *Universal Basic Income* (UBI) - a regular and unconditional monthly payment with no requirement to work, or loss of the income if someone carried out additional paid or unpaid work.<sup>4</sup> In recent years interest in the policy

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<sup>1</sup> Fisher, Mark (2017) *Luxury Communism. A conversation between Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne*. In: H. Gunkel, A. Hameed, S. O'Sullivan. ed., *Futures & Fictions*, 1st ed. London: Repeater Books. P163

<sup>2</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) "Acid Communism (unfinished introduction)", in Ambrose, D (ed.) *k-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P770

<sup>3</sup> Antin, Doug (2020) *Why is "The Media" Becoming Polarized? The attention economy is transforming media in the Information Age*. Medium. [online] Available at: <https://medium.com/memos-of-the-future/why-is-the-media-becoming-polarized-b729ac75843> [Accessed 10 Jun. 2020]

<sup>4</sup> Basic Income Earth Network (date unknown) *About Basic Income*. [online] Basicincome.org. Available at: <https://basicincome.org/about-basic-income/> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2017]

has grown and it has gained high levels of public support,<sup>5</sup> yet mainstream media often presents UBI as a utopian idea that is politically impossible to achieve. This led me to pose a second question:

*How participatory arts projects could be used as an alternative method for communicating ideas like Universal Basic Income?*

Studies to date have indicated that, if implemented, UBI would give people more time and energy to participate in their communities and become active citizens.<sup>6</sup> Currently, “work” (viewed narrowly as paid employment) is what takes up most of our time and restricts our ability to engage in active citizenship. Most of us rely on the income employment provides, creating a dependency on our employers. UBI would challenge this relationship by providing a secure income, giving everyone in society more control over their time and give them the agency to engage in activity outside of the labour market. Currently, our “free time” is defined by employment patterns and is spent recovering from and preparing for work, limiting our ability to engage in self-initiated and autonomous endeavours.<sup>7</sup> UBI would pose a challenge to this situation at the same time as offering a route to reorganising the way society is structured and questioning what activity is valued. Kathi Weeks, the author of *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (2011), observes that work is not only how individuals are integrated into economic, political and social systems, it is also seen as a “basic obligation of citizenship.”<sup>8</sup> This has helped to create an environment where those who do not or are unable to work are viewed with suspicion.<sup>9</sup> I acknowledge that work can inform an important part of our identity and social life, providing a sense of purpose and meaning in life. However, for increasing numbers of people this is no longer the case.

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<sup>5</sup> R&WS Research Team (2021) *Universal Basic Income Supported by a Majority of British Public*. [online] Redfield & Wilton Strategies. Available at: <https://redfieldandwiltonstrategies.com/universal-basic-income-supported-by-a-majority-of-british-public/> [Accessed 28 Oct. 2021]

<sup>6</sup> Hasdell, R., Bidadanure, J. & Berger Gonzalez, S. (2020) *Healthy Communities and Universal Basic Income: A conceptual framework and evidence review*. Stanford, CA: Basic Income Lab. P22

<sup>7</sup> Standing, Guy (2019) ‘Future of Work’ (from Basic Income Earth Network, Nordic conference 2019. Oslo, Norway, 5-7 April)

<sup>8</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism and Antiwork Politics and Postwork*. Duke University Press. Durham and London. P8

<sup>9</sup> Dunlop, Tim (2016) *Why the future is workless*. Sydney: NewSouth. P36

A third of British workers do not find their jobs fulfilling and even more believe that their work makes no meaningful contribution to the world.<sup>10</sup> Work is also the biggest cause of stress and has been linked to the dramatic rise of chronic illness.<sup>11</sup> In the thesis I argue that we need to re-evaluate our current attitudes to work. Here, UBI provides a useful tool for challenging the logic of a work centred society that enables us to question what it means to make a valuable contribution to society and to be an active citizen.

The public discourse around UBI has moved dramatically over the course of my research. I will frame this thesis around the events that have caused this shift, bookending with the situation as it stood at the start of the research in 2017 and the current time of writing, late 2021. The clearest example of an event that has affected the discourse is the Covid-19 pandemic. When I started the PhD, in January 2017, UBI was seen as a fringe idea, but since then the policy has gradually gained public recognition, partly due to a high-profile Basic Income trial in Finland (2017-18) and the, largely negative, media coverage it drew.<sup>12</sup> Once the Covid-19 pandemic struck, Basic Income started to receive more positive media coverage and surveys found an increase of public support for the policy.<sup>13</sup> The thesis will reflect on how these events have changed the view of UBI and what effect they have had on the public perception of similar policies, like the *Four Day Week*<sup>14</sup> (FDW) and *Universal Basic Services* (UBS),<sup>15</sup> which could be used to enable a transition to a post-work society.

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<sup>10</sup> Dahlgreen, Will (2015) *37% of British workers think their jobs are meaningless*. YouGov.

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2015/08/12/british-jobs-meaningless> [Accessed 30 Oct. 2018]

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, Elliott & Matthew (2018) *Stress, domination and basic income: considering a citizens' entitlement response to a public health crisis* <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41285-018-0076-3> [Accessed 6 Jul. 2021]

<sup>12</sup> Butterworth, Benjamin (2018) *Universal basic income: why did Finland's free money experiment fail?* i-news. [online] Available at <https://inews.co.uk/news/world/universal-basic-income-why-did-finlands-free-money-experiment-fail-147707> [Accessed 3 Sep. 2019]

<sup>13</sup> Nettle, Daniel (2020) *Why has the pandemic increased support for Universal Basic Income?* London School of Economics. [online] Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/covid19-support-ubi/> [Accessed 1 Jul. 2020]

<sup>14</sup> "The four-day week is a 32-hour working week (or less) worked over four days with no reduction in pay for workers that have switched from working five days a week." From *What is a four-day week?* (Date unknown) Available at: <https://www.4dayweek.co.uk/faqs> [Accessed 15 Sep. 2021]

<sup>15</sup> "[T]he provision of sufficient free public services, as can be afforded from a reasonable tax on incomes, to enable every citizen's safety, opportunity, and participation." [online] Universalbasicservices.org. Available at: <https://universalbasicservices.org/> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2020]

The origins of this research grew from several years of collaborative artistic practice between me and Andrew Wilson under the name: *Lloyd & Wilson*.<sup>16</sup> The most influential experience was a live/work artist residency which lasted for two and a half years. The residency, *Artist House 45* (AH45),<sup>17</sup> included a house and a small stipend which was enough to live off without needing to look for regular employment. The security of knowing we had a regular income from the residency felt similar to having a UBI. The financial security this gave us was extremely emancipatory because it provided us with the freedom to engage in activity that gave us a voice, and access to people in power who were making decisions that affected the community we were living in. In other words, it enabled us to become active citizens in the community we were based in, using our artistic skills in the activity carried out. This included attending council meetings, organising litter picks, distributing leaflets, writing newspaper articles, and making art. The essential element of the residency was *time*. It gave us time and the freedom to use it how we wished. (Lloyd & Wilson's collaborative practice is described further in Chapters 5.4, 6.3 and 6.10. Examples of work we made during the PhD can be found in the project portfolio 9.2, 9.4 and 9.9).

The AH45 residency was a consciousness raising experience that had a transformative effect on me and has significantly influenced the research I have undertaken during the PhD. By *consciousness raising*, I mean that my relationship with the world had shifted, in a productive sense.<sup>18</sup> The experience pushed me outside of my comfort zone, which meant I gained a better understanding of myself, the people around me and the environment I was situated in. I became more aware of my own personal views and the contradictions within them, along with the social and political issues that influenced these views and the impact my environment had on them. I was able to engage in consciousness raising activity because I was not exhausted from work or caring responsibilities, and because I had more time, and control over this time, which is what evidence from pilot studies has shown a UBI would give people if it were implemented.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lloyd & Wilson <http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/>

<sup>17</sup> Lloyd & Wilson (2015) *Artist House 45* <https://artistlivework.net/artist-house-45/>

<sup>18</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) "No Romance Without Finance", in Ambrose, D (ed.) *k-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P421

<sup>19</sup> Ferdosi, M., McDowell, T., Lewchuk, W. and Ross, S. (2020) *Southern Ontario's Basic Income Experience*. McMaster University, Canada. [online] Available at: <https://labourstudies.mcmaster.ca/documents/southern-ontarios-basic-income-experience.pdf> [Accessed 2 Apr. 2020]

UBI has therefore been a central theme in my research and how I have framed my practice. The findings of my research suggest that a well implemented UBI would provide people with the financial security and time needed to become active citizens and engage in the activities that would give them more access to voice, power and decision-making processes. If the focus of your time and energy must be spent on tackling short-term and immediate issues, it is difficult or impossible to develop longer-term strategies to resolve more structural problems that affect you. UBI on its own would not solve this problem, but my research and experience strongly suggest that UBI would provide the financial security and autonomy to engage in consciousness raising activities. On an individual level this would have benefits for physical and mental health, reducing stress and giving people the ability to say no to exploitative work and leave abusive relationships.<sup>20</sup> On a societal level it would create opportunity for more participation and collective action that could start to address bigger issues that are posed by an ageing population and climate change.

My belief in the emancipatory potential of UBI has been informed by two of my own experiences of financial security and personal autonomy which I would compare to having a Basic Income. The first was AH45 residency, described above, the second was the stipend I received during the PhD. Although the latter had stricter requirements than the former (the production of a thesis and limit on hours of paid work you could do outside of research), I was able to carry out forms of active citizenship during my research. This included volunteering at a community centre, working with Tyne & Wear Citizens on their Real Living Wage campaign, and advocating for Basic Income as part of UBI Lab Network. Both the PhD and AH45 gave me the time and financial security to engage in activity which would not be possible if I had had to do a full-time job, or multiple part-time jobs, to cover my cost of living and fund my art practice. Many of these activities did not look like art, or even research for that matter, but they influenced and feed into the work that I have produced over the course of the PhD.

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<sup>20</sup> Womack, Amelia (2018) *How a universal basic income could help women in abusive relationships*. [online] The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/domestic-violence-abuse-bill-theresa-may-financial-independence-a8260736.html> [Accessed 14 Sep. 2021]

## Thesis Structure and Research Methodologies

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The thesis is formed of three parts. The first is a critical commentary that supports the research carried out through practice. In this, I detail the context that informed the research, outline the research and the ways in which it addressed the research questions. This is followed by a description of my research methodologies and a discussion on how they fit into the wider discourse of practice-based research. From this I consider the findings of the research in respect of my core questions and how the methodologies manifested in the projects I created. The third part is a project portfolio which catalogues the artworks I created during the course of my research, listed in chronological order with links to external resources, including websites, videos and PDF publications.

The critical commentary begins through first exploring the literature, practice and ideas that have informed the research. This is arranged into core thematics namely: participatory arts practice, active citizenship, current relationships to work and ideas of a postwork society. With regards to **participatory arts practice** (Chapter 1), I use Claire Bishop's interpretation of *participatory art* to describe the field of arts practice I am working in and place my research in the context of contemporary art. To expand on Bishop's interpretation and to develop the term *participatory arts practice*, I use the work of Bill Drummond as an example. To frame my interpretation of participatory arts practice in a theoretical framework, I refer to Pascal Gielen and introduce his notion of *friction*. Building on this, in Chapter 2, I consider **active citizenship**. Citizenship is a contentious concept with seemingly fixed interpretations. My use of the term active citizenship is an attempt to push the boundaries of what it means to be a member of society and to act as an antidote the competitive logic of Neoliberalism, enabling people to build bonds of belonging and friendship that go beyond traditional understandings of citizenship and identity. To place the term in the context of participatory arts practice I use *The Glasgow Effect* (2016) by Ellie Harrison and the public discourse that emerged around the project. This forms the foundation for considering our **current relationships to work** (Chapter 3). Although the word *work* is used to describe almost any kind of activity, whether it be paid or unpaid, work is predominately understood as employment. Over the last 40 years, the material conditions of employment have changed dramatically, resulting in rising levels of income equality and

in work poverty.<sup>21</sup> Despite this, our attitudes to work have not kept pace with these shifts, as they are deeply ingrained in our social psyche. I explore the factors that have contributed to the worsening materials conditions of work and the reasons why our attitudes to work have not adapted to them. To frame my argument, I use Mark Fisher's theory of Capitalist Realism which he describes as a psychic infrastructure that restricts our ability to imagine alternative ways of living and working.<sup>22</sup> From this, I move on to consider the idea of a **post-work society** (Chapter 4). For many of us, it is impossible to imagine a world that is not structured by the logic of Capitalism, where we do not need to work to earn a living. In this chapter I outline my reasons for using the term *post-work society*, rather than of post-capitalism. I argue that art can function as a form of utopian thought which can enable us to imagine and demand alternatives to the society we currently inhabit. To place my research in wider discourse I outline two contrasting proposals for a potential post-work society and describe the friction that arises from these different visions of the future. To conclude this first section of the thesis, I outline three policy proposals (Universal Basic Income, Universal Basic Services and Four-day week) that could be implemented in the immediate future to enable a transition to a post-work society.

Having established this context and important reference points, the second section of the thesis considers in detail the research methodologies (Chapter 5), how the research unfolded and its findings (Chapter 6 & 7). My research adopted a practice-based approach that is multi-stranded. The strands of work did not manifest in a linear fashion but, as is the case with much artwork, emerged concurrently and permeated into one another. The writing here focuses on key projects, but all works are included in the project portfolio. For ease of description the primary research approaches have been:

- Interactive exhibitions
- Printed materials
- Filmmaking

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<sup>21</sup> Inman, Philip (2020) *Number of people in poverty in working families hits record high*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/feb/07/uk-live-poverty-charity-joseph-rowntree-foundation> [Accessed 9 Mar. 2020]

<sup>22</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) *Time-Wars* in. Ambrose, D (ed.) *K-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P519

- Collaboration

An aspect of the methodologies that cut across all the above approaches was the creation of space for discussion outside of everyday experience and routines. This was used to engage members of the public in conversations around my research themes. The projects posed open questions that were designed to elicit responses that could lead to participation. They purposefully used accessible language that was designed to be open to interpretation so that unexpected lines of enquiry could be explored.

The discussion in this critical commentary that explores these research methods, and their findings is structured around my two core research questions. First in Chapter 6:

*How can participatory arts practice engage with issues of active citizenship and re-evaluate current relationships to work and inform understandings of a post-work society?*

This question is addressed in two parts. First, I discuss how participatory arts practice can be used to challenge societal norms by creating *space and time* for conjecture and critical reflection without needing to realise concrete solutions. To do this I will demonstrate how my projects used context, language and word play to create friction in public space and everyday routines to create events that could lead to consciousness raising experiences and shifts in perspective. I argue that a barrier to participation in political processes and active citizenship is paid employment. In the second stage of responding to the primary research question (Chapter 6.10), I argue that Universal Basic Income (UBI) would provide financial security and the time needed to become active citizens by discussing how the PhD stipend and AH45 residency could be compared to Basic Income experiments, which enabled me to engage in consciousness raising experiences and become an active citizen. I use these examples as the basis for a discussion on how participatory arts practice and UBI could help inform understanding of a post-work society. Once this is completed, I move to my second research question in Chapter 7:

*How can participatory art projects be used as an alternative method for communicating ideas like Universal Basic Income?*

In this chapter I explore the limits of debate and the effectiveness of empirical data gathered from pilot studies and academic research when making an argument for UBI. I contrast this with how methods used in participatory arts practice (my own and others) can present the policy to participants in ways that resonate with their own lived experience, which can then help to circumnavigate ideological barriers and confirmation bias.

The significance of this chapter will be a contribution on how the arts can play a role in the discourse around UBI and the possible effect it can have on cultural participation. Up until now the discussion around UBI has paid little attention to the impact it would have on the arts and cultural participation, beyond the understanding that more people would have the opportunity to become artists if it were implemented.<sup>23</sup> Many of the reports on Basic Income pilots present data on how the policy affected participation in the labour market (increases in entrepreneurship for example), yet none have measured the effect on cultural participation. This highlights the privileging of employment and how it contributes to the economy. In the thesis conclusion (Chapter 8) I reflect on why this is an oversight and the benefits of valuing the arts as a contribution to society.

## Conclusion

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Through this research it is demonstrated that, through its capacity for mimesis and role-play, participatory arts practice can counteract Capitalist Realism by creating a sense of defamiliarization and estrangement that enables a shift in perspective, allowing alternative visions of the future and new political imaginaries to emerge. Under the logic of Neoliberalism, we are viewed as consumers who must be self-reliant and see ourselves in competition with one another. This ignores the value of activities that fall outside of capitalist exchange relations which form below the waterline economies that sustain our

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<sup>23</sup> Bennett, Natalie (2020) *Battersea Arts Centre: Universal Basic Income debate*. nataliebennett.org [online] Available at: <https://www.nataliebennett.org/latest/battersea-arts-centre-universal-basic-income-debate> [Accessed 15 Dec. 2020]

social, material, and environmental well-being.<sup>24</sup> I describe how engaging in forms of active citizenship can build bonds of belonging and friendship that go beyond traditional understandings of citizenship and identity. Similarly, participatory arts practice can gather people together and provide productive ways of dealing with disaffection we experience in our daily lives that can help to overcome obstacles that we face collectively.<sup>25</sup> I argue that work and time poverty are the main barriers for people to engage in activities beyond their own individual concern, and that UBI could provide the necessary time and energy for more people to become active citizens. I compare my experience of receiving the PhD stipend to a Basic Income experiment and propose that future trials should explore the policy's impact on cultural production and participation, rather than focusing on effects in the labour market.

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<sup>24</sup> Gibson-Graham, J. K, Cameron, Jenny & Healy, Stephen (2013) *Take back the economy: an ethical guide for transforming our communities*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. P11

<sup>25</sup> Gilman-Opalsky, R. and Shukaitis, S. (2019) *Riotous Epistemology: Imaginary Power, Art and Insurrection*. Leipzig: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest. P17

## CHAPTER 1: PARTICIPATORY ARTS PRACTICE

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Participatory art comes in many forms and has multiple interpretations. In her book, *Artificial Hells Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Claire Bishop uses the term *participatory art* to describe several forms of post-studio art practices including, socially engaged art, community-based art, interventionist arts, collaborative art and social practice.<sup>26</sup> In the thesis I have extended the term to *participatory arts practice*, so the definition can encompass activities which may not look like or even self-identify as art but use creative methods to communicate ideas and foster interactions with the public. This can include non-art making activities which can feed into and influence the work.

Bishop states that the projects and artistic practices she explores in *Artificial Hells* involve many people as participants and spectators, as opposed to the one-to-one relationship of interactivity of the viewer experiencing an artwork.<sup>27</sup> The projects that I refer to as “participatory arts practice” involve a deeper level of audience engagement that would be experienced by an individual viewing an artwork. I acknowledge that looking at and thinking about an artwork is a valid form of participation and recognise that all participation will start with this level of interaction. However, the projects I discuss invite the audience to go further than this. I also acknowledge that just because the invitation to participate further is made, not every audience member will participate beyond the initial point of interaction. The term participatory art can also be used to refer to work that is co-produced with the audience, in which the participants collaboratively make the work with the artist, at times having an equal say as the artist in the production of the work. It is important to state here that co-produced projects are not something I will focus on in the thesis. Many of the projects I have made and researched involve active contributions from participants, but these are often within a framework that has already been defined by the artist, so it would be disingenuous to claim that the work has been co-produced.

Participatory art projects are often not single “works” of art but can be made up of multiple elements including “a fragmented array of social events, publications, workshops or

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<sup>26</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Verso: London. p1

<sup>27</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Verso: London. p1

performances..."<sup>28</sup>, which can take place over an extended period of time. This multifaceted approach gives audiences, and potential participants, multiple opportunities for engagement and participation. Bishop observes that participatory art often focuses on the process that the artist(s) and audiences go through, and values this over finished "products" or artworks. Instead, value is placed in "what is invisible: a group dynamic, a social situation, a change of energy, a raised consciousness."<sup>29</sup> The emphasis on process, especially when experienced as a group, is important to me and the research I have undertaken. This is a key reason for why I have adopted the term *participatory arts practice*, as I want to explore how activities outside of but connected to projects, and the contexts they take place within, can play an important part in the practice of making and experiencing the work. Therefore, the addition of "practice" is taken to purposefully encompass this broader sphere of reference. Of course, these factors will also play a role in the production and reception of non-participatory art works, but my reason for using *participatory arts practice* in my research is because the process and the context that it happens within are so intrinsic to the work.

Therefore, by *participatory art practice*, I will refer to artworks that involve people interacting with the work, beyond just viewing it. The artworks discussed will often (but not exclusively) have multiple manifestations, take place over extended durations, and value the process that the participants and artist's experience whilst engaging with them, over a final product or artwork. This can include non-art making activity that may fall outside of the artworks themselves but can be important part of the creative process. This chapter will elucidate further on this expanded notion of participatory arts through an examination of the work of Bill Drummond as a vehicle to establish the context and approach that has informed my own research.

## 1.1 Conversation as Art

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The participatory art practices I have explored in this thesis create frameworks that invite audiences in to participate in their own way, often this activity will not appear to be or manifest as *art*. This approach has resonance with the work of the artist Bill Drummond and

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<sup>28</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso: London. P2

<sup>29</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso: London. P6

particularly his project *The 25 Paintings* (2014-2025). The project is a twelve-year world tour, starting in Birmingham in 2014, and will visit a different city each year, ending in 2025. Each stop on the tour will last 3 months, in which Drummond will live and work in the city and engage in activities that will include, “Construct Cake Circles”, “Make beds on the streets from wood”, “Knit blankets”, “Perform lectures” and “Exhibit The 25 Paintings.”<sup>30</sup> The first location of the tour was *Eastside Projects* in Birmingham. Drummond was present in the gallery space every day during opening hours to talk to visitors and carryout the above tasks. As part of the exhibition, Drummond had a desk he could work from when he was not interacting with visitors. However, his practice also included activity he undertook outside of the gallery and the interactions he had with members of the public.

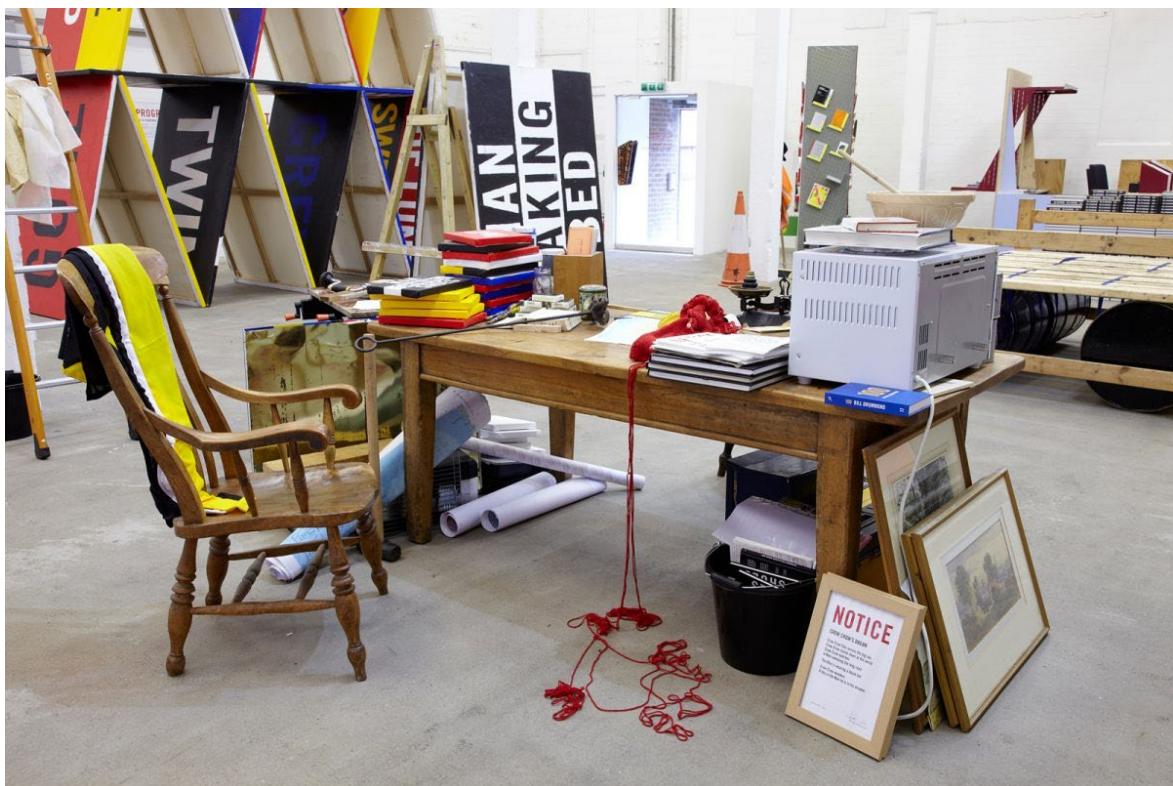


Figure 1.1: Bill Drummond *The 25 Paintings* (2014) Eastside Projects - Installation photograph

Describing his work, Drummond states that “... if there’s anything creative, it’s the conversation.”<sup>31</sup> In the case of *The 25 Paintings*, the physical artworks are used to instigate

<sup>30</sup> Drummond, Bill (2014) *Notice - Bill Drummond World Tour: 2014 - 2025*. Eastside Projects. [online] Available at: [https://eastsideprojects.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/EASTSIDE\\_PROJECTS\\_BILL\\_DRUMMOND\\_25\\_PAINTINGS\\_2014\\_PENKLIN\\_BURN\\_POSTER\\_SET.pdf](https://eastsideprojects.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/EASTSIDE_PROJECTS_BILL_DRUMMOND_25_PAINTINGS_2014_PENKLIN_BURN_POSTER_SET.pdf) [Accessed 10 Feb. 2018]

<sup>31</sup> *Best Before Death - a film about Bill Drummond*. (2019). [Film] UK: Paul Duane. (1:18:42)

these conversations, and act as a framework for organising them, which he describes in the introduction of the exhibition catalogue:

The central motif of the exhibition is the 25 paintings alluded to in the title. But the actual paintings are not the important bit. The important bit is what I will be doing in and around Birmingham - including Eastside Projects, for those three months. What I will be doing are all the ways of working that I have developed at various times over my life. The 25 paintings exist primarily to act as *markers*, *signposts* and *advertisements* for what it is I will be doing for the period I will be there.<sup>32</sup>

Drummond's statement is important to my thinking as it displays the value of the audience's involvement in his work beyond the physical objects it contains. Drummond does not draw boundaries around where the art begins or ends, leaving this open for participants to decide. Bishop identifies this is a hallmark of participatory art, in which the artist is, "conceived less as an individual producer of discrete objects than as a collaborator and producer of *situations*."<sup>33</sup> The "conversation" that Drummond refers to as the creative aspect of this work, could take place within the designed parameters of his project, whilst experiencing or participating in a situation. However, it could also include conversations that happen outside the project or in the future, which are sparked by his work, either describing the live "situation" of participating in the work or responding to documentation of it. My addition of "practice" is to reference these non-art-making processes that sit around the participatory art I have investigated, drawing them purposefully into the understanding of the art projects and how audiences interact and respond to them.

Identifying "conversation" as the creative part of Drummond's practice, or the work itself, might sound woolly or superficial, but this depends on how much is invested in the process of making the work, the engagement with participants and the value that is placed on these interactions. As stated above, participatory art often values the invisible process over the visible product. Drummond's emphasis on conversation as the creative element of his work is an example of this. This is also the case for my participatory art practice and the way that I

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<sup>32</sup> Drummond, Bill (2014) *25 Paintings*. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P7

<sup>33</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso. P2

have used it as a research methodology. The value of the invisible process of art and research is expressed by Tim O'Riley in this paper, *An inaudible dialogue, Research Into Practice*, where he states that "...art is as much an activity as a thing, in terms of both making things and engaging with things, places or people around it."<sup>34</sup> By stressing the nature of art as an activity, O'Riley acknowledges that the context this activity takes place within, the activity that surrounds it and the people taking part in this activity, all influence and should be seen as part of the work.

An example of how Drummond engaged with the "things, places or people around" him during the exhibition at *Eastside Projects*, was his reaction to a controversial advertising campaign that the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) ran in the lead up 2014 European elections. One of the adverts, which many saw as overtly racist,<sup>35</sup> appeared on a billboard on the same street as the gallery. Drummond said that "[the] billboard not only offended me morally and aesthetically it also went against everything that I feel political discourse should be about."<sup>36</sup> This was because its message was, "cynically trying to pander to us at our most vulnerable and negative and not to our better selves."<sup>37</sup> Drummond responded to the billboard by painting over it, then posing for photographs, before and after his actions (Figures 1.2 and 1.3). These were published in the local paper, with one of his weekly columns during the exhibition, describing his actions and reasons for carrying them out. When asked about the importance of documenting his artwork, Drummond stated that:

An artwork becoming a news story is how it is validated in the public's imagination.

... The real artwork exists in the news story, and subsequently in the conversations

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<sup>34</sup> O'Riley, Tim (2006) *An inaudible dialogue, Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006.

[https://www.herts.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/12390/WPIAAD\\_vol4\\_oriley.pdf](https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/12390/WPIAAD_vol4_oriley.pdf) P1

<sup>35</sup> Euractiv.com (2014) *UKIP launches election campaign with controversial posters*. [online] Available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/uk-europe/news/ukip-launches-election-campaign-with-controversial-posters/> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2019]

<sup>36</sup> Drummond, Bill (2014) *Why I covered a UKIP billboard poster with my International Grey*. The Guardian. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/08/ukip-billboard-poster-international-grey-paint> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2019]

<sup>37</sup> Drummond, Bill (2014) *Why I covered a UKIP billboard poster with my International Grey*. The Guardian. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/08/ukip-billboard-poster-international-grey-paint> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2019]

we have between each other.<sup>38</sup>



Figure 1.2 & 1.3: Drummond before and after 'modifying' UKIP poster in Birmingham. Photographs by Tracey Moberly

<sup>38</sup> Drummond, Bill (2012) 100. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P108

The validation of the audience that Drummond describes leads to the conversations which he values and sees as the creative aspect of his work. This validation creates a dialogue that is needed for the work to be completed, which is described by Marcel Duchamp in his essay *The Creative Act*:

the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.<sup>39</sup>

The value Drummond places on process and participation with the audience over a finished product can be seen in his remark that, "the only reason to have a physical artwork, is to have something to sell to a wealthy art collector."<sup>40</sup> Drummond has stated that he never wanted to make work just to go on rich man's walls,<sup>41</sup> instead seeking validation from the interactions his work has with a wider audience. This reveals how art is a form of communication, and how this dialogue can be viewed as a form of participation. Drummond's act of painting over the billboard, along with other actions that he engaged with during the exhibition, created discussions in the public realm, not just for those who saw the defaced billboard, but also those who read about it in the media.

When asked if his artwork is political, he responded, "I do not know if it is art let alone political art."<sup>42</sup> I see Drummond's questioning of whether his work is actually art, as an attempt to make it more accessible to the public and avoid the elitism that art can be associated with. The question of whether Drummond's work is political or not is answered by Pascal Gielen where he states that:

an artist's 'message' absolutely need not be political. Simply by the act of pushing the otherwise conceivable, by lending it a possible expression, the public and the

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<sup>39</sup> Duchamp, Marcel (1957) *The Creative Act*. [online] Ubu.com. Available at: [https://www.ubu.com/papers/duchamp\\_creative.html](https://www.ubu.com/papers/duchamp_creative.html) [Accessed 10 Aug. 2020]

<sup>40</sup> Drummond, Bill (2012) *100*. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P108

<sup>41</sup> Drummond, Bill (2012) *100*. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P47

<sup>42</sup> Drummond, Bill (2014) *Why I covered a Ukip billboard poster with my international grey paint*. The Guardian. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/08/ukip-billboard-poster-international-grey-paint> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2019]

political emerges. This otherwise conceivable can be formal, ethical, ecological or political in nature. The point is that the artist introduces something singular, with the result that everything regarded as ‘normal’ before suddenly no longer seems to be so evident.<sup>43</sup>

Some would view Drummond’s actions as vandalism, but *Subvertisers*, who believe that advertising is a form of visual pollution, would see what he did as “simply an act of tidying up”.<sup>44</sup> Subvertisers make artistic and political interventions in public space by manipulating or replacing adverts with their own images and messages. By making his intervention, Drummond challenged the authority of the billboard and its message, consequently making the public question these things too. By coming into contact with his work, the audience completes it, which is where the public and the political emerge. If done anonymously, Drummond’s intention is for the viewer to decide. By publicly announcing his actions in the local paper, Drummond was looking for validation by creating an invitation for a wider conversation with the public. His article starts with the statement: “By the time you are reading this I may have been arrested.”<sup>45</sup> Here he acknowledges his transgression outside what is “normal” behaviour, and the consequences of his, potentially, criminal act.

## 1.2 Creating Friction

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For Gielen, the role of art in public space is to create *friction* which makes us step back and question what is normal. As the starting point for his argument, Gielen uses an observation made by Richard Sennett in his book, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity & City Life*,<sup>46</sup> that cities need spaces where we are faced with “the other”, people we would not usually encounter, those who do not look like us or share are political beliefs, in order to create a “friction” that forces us to challenge our opinions and re-evaluate them. Without this

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<sup>43</sup> Gielen, P. (2015) *Performing the Common City*. In: Editors: S. Bax, P. Gielen, B. Ieven, ed., *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis. P278

<sup>44</sup> Kleinfeld, Philip (2015) *Dismaland Artists Are Protesting the World's Largest Arms Exhibition*. Vice [online] Available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/jmadi8/dsei-posters> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2019]

<sup>45</sup> Drummond, Bill (2014) *Why I covered a Ukip billboard poster with my international grey paint*, The Guardian [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/08/ukip-billboard-poster-international-grey-paint> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019]

<sup>46</sup> Sennett, R (1970) *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity & City Life*. New York: Knopf.

friction we remain adolescents who, “shut out chaos or disorder to safeguard their individuality.”<sup>47</sup> By creating friction, art can:

pull the adolescent city-dwellers out of their comfort zones. By making them see, smell, feel and hear that everything that is can also always be different, in other words, can time and again make the public space anew.<sup>48</sup>

Gielen believes that this is increasingly necessary as our 21<sup>st</sup> Century consumer lifestyles, with individualized services which promise frictionless convenience, providing more opportunities for us to safeguard our individuality and avoid contact with the “other.” When our identity is no longer questioned or challenged, politics becomes a strictly private affair, making it easier to ignore or disregard the needs of other people.<sup>49</sup> Public space plays an important role in challenging this situation by providing friction, as it is an arena for creating collective and shared cultural values. Subvertisers, Joseph Seiler, believes that increased privatisation of public space (which comes with more space for advertising) has had a detrimental impact on our cultural and political discourse, as this places an emphasis on “passive consumption over political participation.”<sup>50</sup> In an attempt to counteract this, Subvertisers take the everyday culture of adverts, and manipulate them, to create alternative messages that aim to give the viewer a visual jolt, similar to a “skip on a record that the needle passes over with a minor interruption.”<sup>51</sup> This is often done by hijacking billboards or advertising spaces on bus stops, meaning that their work can be hidden in plain sight or act subliminally, in a similar way to the messages of private companies that they are critiquing (figure 1.4). In this sense, the work of Subvertisers is similar to Drummond’s defaced billboard, but their work is more overtly political, and their messages (when noticed) are made more explicit. Therefore, using everyday culture to create an interruption in the daily routine, can open space for conjecture and questioning which can act as an

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<sup>47</sup> Gielen, P. (2015) *Performing the Common City*. In: Editors: S. Bax, P. Gielen, B. Ieven, ed., *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis. P274

<sup>48</sup> Gielen, P. (2015) *Performing the Common City*. In: Editors: S. Bax, P. Gielen, B. Ieven, ed., *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis. P278

<sup>49</sup> Gielen, P. (2015) *Performing the Common City*. In: Editors: S. Bax, P. Gielen, B. Ieven, ed., *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis. P276

<sup>50</sup> Raoul, V and Bonner, M (2017) *Advertising Shits In Your Head*. London: Dog Section Press. P14

<sup>51</sup> Gilman-Opalsky, R (2013) *Unjamming the Insurrectionary Imagination: Rescuing Détournement from the Liberal Complacencies of Culture Jamming*. Theory in Action, Vol. 6, No. 3, July 2013. P3

entry point to wider political discussions for people who may be “alienated by institutional systems like voting, lobbying, political campaigning, and legislation.”<sup>52</sup> Subvertising, which is also referred to as *Brandalism*,<sup>53</sup> can be viewed as a form of *Artistic Activism* that draws from everyday culture, to create and make an impact on culture that can help to shift cultural norms.<sup>54</sup> These are examples of activity that may not look like or even self-identify as art but use creative methods to communicate ideas and foster interactions with the public, which is what I want to encompass with my use of the term *participatory arts practice*.



Figure 1.4: Example of Subvertising by Darren Cullen - *PPE Now* (2020)<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Duncombe, S and Lambert, S (2018) *Why Artistic Activism*. The Centre for Artistic Activism. P7

<sup>53</sup> Brandalism (2017) Available at: <http://brandalism.ch/> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2020]

<sup>54</sup> Duncombe, S and Lambert, S (2018) *Why Artistic Activism*. New York, USA: The Centre for Artistic Activism.

P12

<sup>55</sup> Cullen, Darren (2020) PPE Now. Spelling Mistakes Cost Lives. [online] Available at:

<https://www.spellingmistakescostlives.com/single-post/2020/04/16/ppe-now> [Accessed 10 August 2020]

## 1.3 Public Space and Participation

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Participation in the art projects I have described is not guaranteed, and as the artist Thomas Hirschhorn states, participation should not be the intention of the work. He believes that “participation can only be a lucky outcome.”<sup>56</sup> This is because placing the work in the public realm addresses, what Hirschhorn describes as a “non-exclusive” audience. He states that to do this is to “face reality, failure, unsuccessfulness, the cruelty of disinterest, and the incommensurability of a complex situation.”<sup>57</sup> By addressing the non-exclusive audience, Hirschhorn wants to create friction for himself, as well as the audience. He wants his work to challenge his understanding of reality, and in a similar way that Gielen has described above, for it to pull him out of his comfort zone. Hirschhorn’s desire to explore “incommensurability of a complex situation” captures why the term participatory arts practice is more apt for my purposes as it enables me to discuss the events and contexts that influence the work, directly and indirectly, acknowledging that these will be complex and often invisible. The work that I will discuss is not directed exclusively at an arts audience, but “the opposite of a pre-determined, selected, and initiated public,” a non-exclusive audience or public that Hirschhorn describes as “the other.”

“The other” is the one who is unknown, the neighbor (*sic*), the next person, the foreigner, the person who is hostile to me, the person who frightens me, the uninvited, the person who appears unexpectedly, who happens to pass by, the unanticipated. “The other” is ALSO ALWAYS the one with whom I had not reckoned. I want to work for that person.<sup>58</sup>

Placing the work outside of the gallery invites unexpected outcomes and potentially hostile audiences, creating friction for both the artist and the public, or potential participant. This is important because it creates the opportunity for a two-way dialogue which can be consciousness raising for both the artist and the public.

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<sup>56</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2014) *Presence and Production*. [online] Thomashirschhorn.com Available at: <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/guideline-presence-and-production/> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2018]

<sup>57</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2010) *Spectrum of Evaluation*. [online] Thomashirschhorn.com Available at: <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/spectrum-of-evaluation/> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2018]

<sup>58</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2010) *Spectrum of Evaluation*. [online] Thomashirschhorn.com Available at: <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/spectrum-of-evaluation/> Accessed 10 Feb. 2018]

The examples of Drummond's work and Subvertising I have described above may not appear to be participatory art because they may not directly involve participants in their creation and dissemination. This is one reason why I have used them, as I want to push at the boundaries of what is defined as participatory art. I feel that Drummond's work is participatory because it fosters conversation and interaction through the actions of the artist and how he engages with audiences through his practice overall. I recognize that participation with Drummond's work is largely invisible, so I will now discuss a project which uses participation to engage a non-exclusive audience in a much more visible way.



Figure 1.5: Redhawk Logistica - *Measure of Us* (2018) scoreboard in Seacroft. Photograph by Toby Lloyd

*Measure of Us* (2018) by Redhawk Logistica,<sup>59</sup> took the form of a week-long poll, which asked the public to respond to a different statement each day, ("There are people who really understand me", for example) by stating whether they "agree," "disagree" or were "neutral" to it (figure 1.5). The audience could respond by using voting boxes (figure 1.8) that were placed in public spaces like cafes, shops, libraries, community centres and pubs.

<sup>59</sup> *Measures of Us* is an artwork by Redhawk Logistica which was originally created through a collaboration between Orit Azaz, Rob Hewitt and Lisa Koeman on behalf of Birmingham Cathedral in 2016 where the first iteration of the artwork took place. <https://redhawklogistica.com/measures-of-us/>

The poll took place in six neighbourhoods across Leeds as part of *Compass Live Art Festival*,<sup>60</sup> with daily results being displayed on scoreboards in these areas and the city centre. At the end of the week, all the scores were displayed in the city centre so that participants could see how other areas had responded to the same questions (figure 1.6). This allowed residents from across the city, and visitors, to reflect and contemplate all five statements and the responses to them collectively. The project's intention was to connect local areas to other parts of the city, and hopefully reveal similarities they shared rather than expose any differences between them. Rob Hewitt, lead artist and curator of Redhawk Logistica, stated that the public's participation in the project was key to its success.

It has a very direct relationship with people as they are integral to creating the work and via the display boards the collective results will also be visible for everybody to see. I hope it will create a kind of city-wide conversation focusing on some of the important things in life.<sup>61</sup>

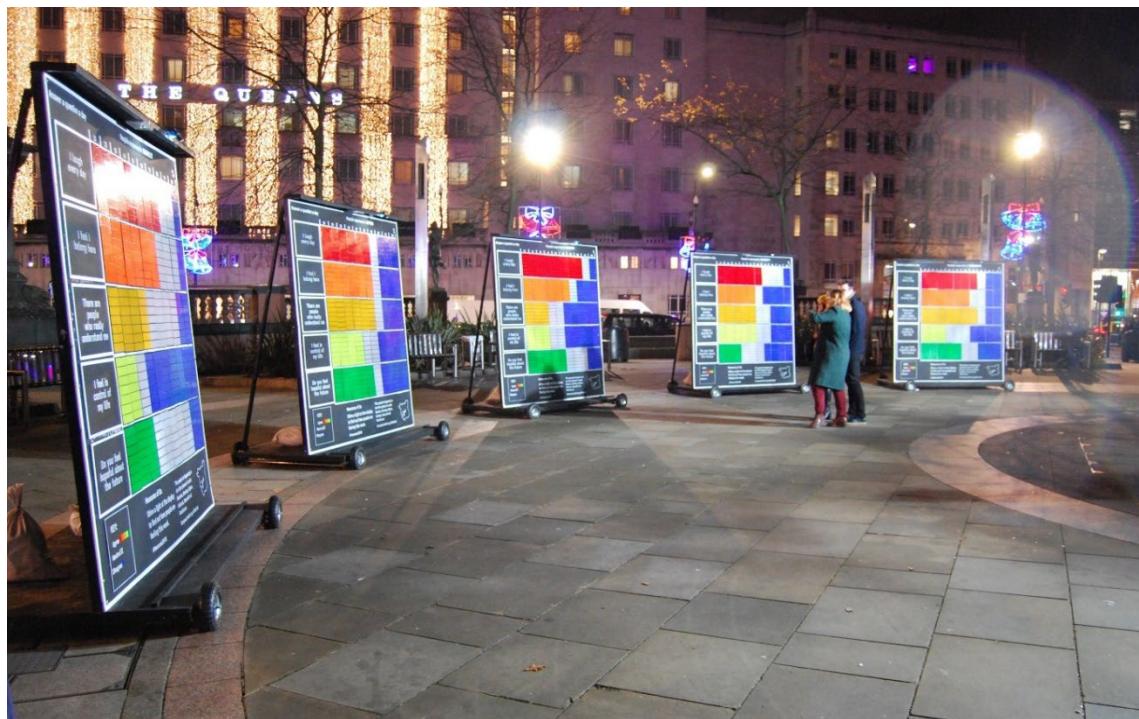


Figure 1.6: Redhawk Logistica - *Measure of Us* (2018) City centre scoreboards. Photograph by Redhawk Logistica

<sup>60</sup> Measure of Us (2018) Compass Live Art Festival. [online] Available at: <https://archive.compassliveart.org.uk//festival/events/measures-of-us> [Accessed 24 Jan. 2022]

<sup>61</sup> Murray, Andy (2018) Preview: *Compass Live Art Festival*. [online] The Big Issue. Available at: <https://www.bigissuenorth.com/centre-stage/2018/11/preview-compass-live-art-festival/#close> [Accessed: 3 Mar. 2019]

In this sense, *Measure of Us* is the embodiment of Duchamp's observation that the creative act is not performed by the artist alone and the audience is needed to complete the artwork. This is done when the audience come into contact with the work and respond to it. Part of the project's appeal was that it blossomed over the course of a week so that participants could see how others responded to the statements. This visibility and direct responsiveness to audience participation is how *Measure of Us* differs from Drummond's practice where participation remained largely invisible to the wider public.



Figure 1.7: Redhawk Logistica - *Measure of Us* (2018) volunteer with placard. Photograph by Redhawk Logistica

When I went to visit Hewitt on the third day of *Measure of Us*, he told me that on the first day people were confused by the boards, especially as they did not show any results and most people had not seen the voting boxes yet. However, as the results started to appear on the boards, the community could see what was going on which prompted further discussion and participation.<sup>62</sup> each day, volunteers distributed flyers and displayed a placard with the day's statement in the local areas to promote the project (figure 1.7). During my visit, Hewitt and I spent some time in Seacroft. We witnessed families walking

<sup>62</sup> Rob Hewitt (Redhawk Logistica) interviewed by Toby Lloyd, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018

past the board after the school pickup. Children were gathering around the board, and we could see other groups pointing and discussing the questions. For Hewitt, these interactions are what the project was really about. Even though the project included the voting boxes and display boards, Hewitt recognized they would only capture a fraction of the engagements with the project and that most of the interactions would remain invisible to him and the wider public. In this sense, Hewitt is addressing Hirschhorn's "non-exclusive" audience, and by doing so acknowledges the project's invitation to participate visibly will not "necessarily call for an answer."<sup>63</sup>



Figure 1.8: Redhawk Logistica - *Measure of Us* (2018) voting box and promotional material. Photograph by Toby Lloyd

The questions and statements that *Measure of Us* posed acted as talking points which provided an avenue into deeper lines of inquiry which allowed participants to explore topics that might seem taboo or unapproachable in everyday conversation. The project did this by complicating daily life and adding friction, which had the potential to push participants out

<sup>63</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2013) *Dia Art Foundation presents Thomas Hirschhorn's Gramsci Monument from July 1–September 15, 2013*. [online] Dia Art Foundation. Available at: <https://www.diaart.org/about/press/dia-art-foundation-presents-thomas-hirschhorns-gramsci-monument-from-july-1-september-15-2013/type/text> [Accessed: 11 Mar. 2018]

of their comfort zones, and enabled them to “see, smell, feel and hear that everything that is can also always be different.”<sup>64</sup> Hewitt told me that selecting the right questions was key to the project’s success. He wanted the questions to ask people how they “feel” about a topic instead of, what do you “think” about it. For example, “I laugh every day” or “There are people who really understand me.” They are both seemingly benign statements, but they are deliberately open to interpretation to enable more emotional or political subjects to emerge.

Hewitt wanted the project to prompt discussion that could reveal commonalities between people and form spaces where the nuances of feelings and beliefs could be unpicked. “Why do we feel this way” as opposed to “is it good or bad to feel this way?”<sup>65</sup> The statements and questions created the opportunity for this to happen, but for this to work effectively there needed to be a level of trust and care between the people having the conversations. Therefore, the voting boxes were placed in public spaces that had established communities around them. Locations included convenience shops, whose customers might only enter the building to buy what they wanted and leave, probably paying little attention to the voting box and its statement. However, other locations included pubs and cafes where people would gather and debate the statements at length. This meant that conversations could take place between people who had an established level of trust and hopefully a mutual respect for one another. Of course, this was not guaranteed, but the project was designed to incorporate this where possible. The project appeared to work most effectively when the voting boxes were placed in community centres like *LS14 Trust* in Seacroft,<sup>66</sup> as it acted as a stimulus to start conversations about topics which might not easily come up in everyday discussion, for example, stress or loneliness. In each of the five locations that took part in the project around the city, there was a local resident who was involved in the organisations that hosted the voting boxes and was responsible for collecting the results each day and communicating the concept of the project to participants. This helped to increase investment in the project and build trust with the people who interacted with it.

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<sup>64</sup> Gielen, P. (2015) *Performing the Common City*. In: Editors: S. Bax, P. Gielen, B. Ieven, ed., *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis. P278

<sup>65</sup> Rob Hewitt (Redhawk Logistica) interviewed by Toby Lloyd, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018

<sup>66</sup> LS14 Café and Community Hub. <http://www.ls14trust.org/>

For both Drummond and Hewitt, many of the conversations their work provoked would take place outside of the situations and contexts that they created, and both artists acknowledge that an attempt to capture them could also hinder them from unfolding. This means that it is impossible to know or measure the full impact that these projects had on participants and members of the public who engaged with them from a distance. Consequently, this has led critics to claim that politically motivated art projects are a waste of time and energy. They argue that rather than promoting participation in political or democratic processes, these projects create a distraction from these processes. For example, Jodi Dean believes they are, “the artistic equivalent of the 5K and 10k runs to fight cancer, that ... increase awareness of cancer without actually doing much else.”<sup>67</sup> However, the curatorial duo *B+B* (Sophie Hope and Sarah Carrington) dispute claims like Dean’s, stating that “art has the potential to change society.” However, for art to be able to do this, it should be allowed to do what it does best: “ask questions without providing solutions and shift understandings without claiming to empower.”<sup>68</sup> The projects I have described as participatory arts practice achieve this by creating space for conjecture and questioning, which can act as the entry point to wider political discussions and participation. By creating friction these projects can create the conditions for the political to emerge. In this sense, they can be viewed as consciousness raising experiences that have the potential to shift participants perceptions of the world and create new political imaginaries.

## Conclusion

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In summary, I will use the term *participatory arts practice* to describe a variety of post-studio practices, often taking place in the public realm and outside of traditional arts spaces. This is to invite participation from the wider public, rather than exclusive arts audiences, often using everyday culture like advertising to create interruptions in daily routines to achieve this. Projects can take several forms and focus on process over finished products. Outcomes can be visible and invisible, with conversation forming a key element of the work. Participatory arts practice can be used to create friction that pushes participants outside of their comfort zones, making them view the world from a different perspective, challenging

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<sup>67</sup> Dean, Jodi (2018) *The Communist Horizon*. London: Verso. P14

<sup>68</sup> B+B (2007) *Taking Play Seriously*. In: J. Billing, M. Lind, L. Nilsson. ed., *Taking Matters Into Common Hands*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Black Dog. P114

strongly held beliefs and disrupt the established “common sense”. Similarly, this is something that I have attempted to do with my use of the term *active* citizenship, using it to push at the boundaries of what is understood by the notion of citizenship, so that new interpretations could emerge.

## CHAPTER 2: ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

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The idea of citizenship can be contentious, one that is closely linked to our identity and can be used to divide people as much as it can be used to unite them. As the sociologist, Kenneth Plumber observes:

Citizenship is a term that signifies belonging to and participation in a group or community – something that brings with it certain rights and obligations. Identity refers, of course, to a sense of who one is and who one is not.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, the rights and obligations that are associated with citizenship have a strong connection to our common values, which in turn helps us to define who we are and our behaviour. These common values can be intrinsically felt and may seem fixed. However, Raymond Williams points out that their meanings are rarely written down and can shift radically over time.<sup>70</sup> Citizenship is often viewed in a nationalistic sense, used to define groups of people and separate them from one another. In contrast to this, Simon Duffy believes that citizenship can be a useful term to describe how human beings can live together with justice and mutual respect, acknowledging that we are all different and that we make our own unique contributions to society.<sup>71</sup> Duffy's interpretation of citizenship acknowledges the interdependency we have with other members of society (citizens and non-citizens) and that we all have something of value to contribute at every stage of our lives.<sup>72</sup> This interpretation runs counter to the ideology of Neoliberalism which sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations, prioritising the individual over the collective, and believes that market forces should define the structure of society. This has led to citizens being defined as consumers who should see themselves as separate from the rest of society.<sup>73</sup> This sentiment was expressed in Margaret Thatcher's statement that, "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are

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<sup>69</sup> Plummer, Kenneth (2003) *Intimate citizenship: private decisions and public dialogues*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. P50

<sup>70</sup> Williams, Raymond (1983) *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. London: Fontana press. P14 + 17

<sup>71</sup> Duffy, Simon (2010) *Keys to Citizenship*. Centre for Welfare Reform. [online] Available at:

<https://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/keys-to-citizenship2.html> [Accessed 10 Jan. 2021]

<sup>72</sup> The Care Collective (2020) *The Care Manifesto: The politics of interdependence*. London: Verso. P64

<sup>73</sup> Monbiot, George (2016) *The Zombie Doctrine*. [online] Monbiot.com. Available at:

<https://www.monbiot.com/2016/04/15/the-zombie-doctrine/> [Accessed 13 Nov. 2019]

families.”<sup>74</sup> Under the logic of Neoliberalism, it is our personal responsibility to provide for ourselves and we should not expect help from others, including the government. This attitude stems from Liberalism and the idea that individuals need to have complete freedom in order to build a better society. Pascal Gielen observes that Liberalism held the belief that freely acting individuals would produce the best outcomes for the wider collective, whereas Neoliberalism has a “less optimistic view of mankind” believing that we are only interested in our own selfish goals.<sup>75</sup> Instead of restricting selfish behaviour, proponents of Neoliberalism assert that selfishness and competition should be encouraged as it will produce innovation and progress. Some inequalities will be created but this is outweighed by the benefits, and the wealth that is produced will trickle down from the top. Everyone, even those at the bottom, will eventually gain from this process. Conversely, since the 1970s, inequalities have risen dramatically and the gap between rich and poor has grown, which corresponds with the adoption of neoliberal policies.<sup>76</sup>

## 2.1 Understanding Active Citizenship

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The intention behind my use of the term *active citizenship* is for it to act as an antidote the competitive logic of neoliberalism, reflecting a philosophy that seeks to enable people to build bonds of belonging and friendship that go beyond traditional understandings of citizenship and identity. I interpret active citizenship as activity which goes beyond individual needs, and which has the potential for consciousness raising for the individual and/or people around them. Active citizenship can include everyday activities, like making art, gardening, socialising, and caring for friends or family. These activities should be viewed as valuable forms of participation in society whether they are done on an individual or collective basis. This view dovetails with Brian Eno’s concept of *Scenius*, which he uses to describe the collective intelligence of a community and the ecology of talent that is needed to generate the cultural forms that make up the fabric of society. This runs counter to

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<sup>74</sup> Thatcher, Margaret (1987) *Interview in Women's Own* [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-quotes> [Accessed 5th Oct. 2020]

<sup>75</sup> Gielen, Pascal (2015) *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Politics and Post-Fordism* (3rd Edition). Valiz: Amsterdam. P11

<sup>76</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living: For an Alternative Hedonism*. London: Verso. P36

popular perception that this is achieved through the work of individual geniuses.<sup>77</sup> Scenius acknowledges that all our achievements emerge from collective intelligence and are supported by the infrastructure of society. Conversely, doing something that benefits you as an individual may seem selfish, but if this activity makes you happy and therefore improves your mental health, this will have a positive impact on the people around you and can contribute to the community's Scenius. Of course, this argument will not be true in every case, but my intention here is to start a conversation about citizenship that can challenge traditional and divisive interpretations and lead to further enquiry, rather than form a conclusive definition of the term. By framing everyday activities as acts of active citizenship, my aim is to create friction that challenges our understanding of what it means to be a citizen and re-evaluate what it means to participate in and contribute to society.

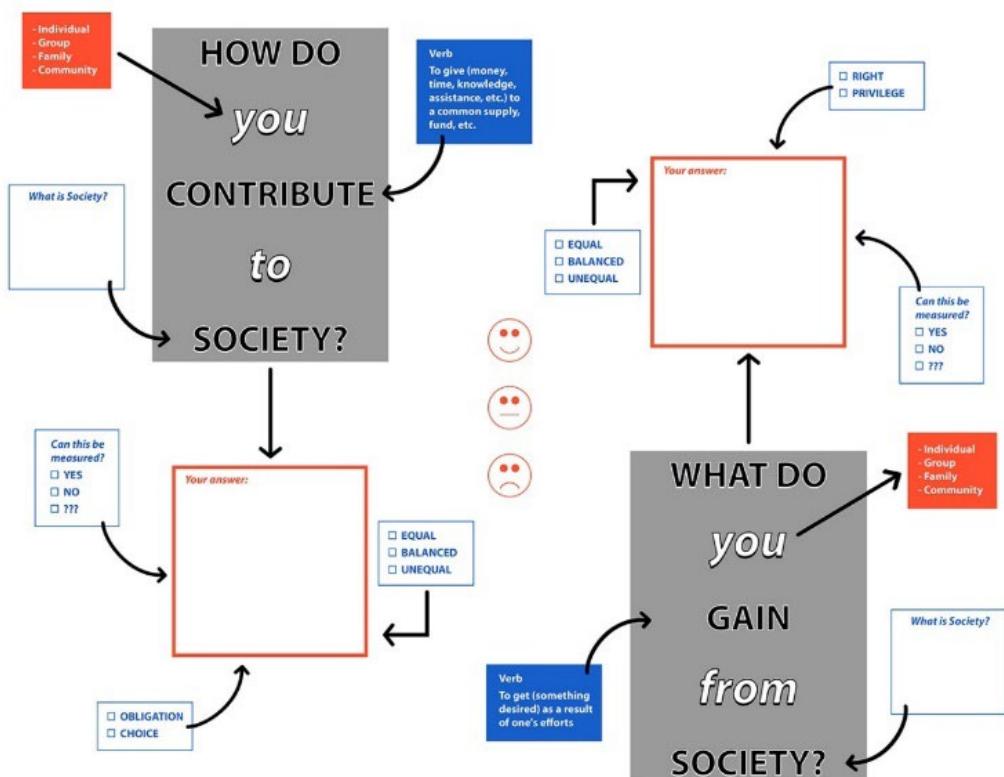


Figure 2.1: Toby Lloyd - Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones? Diagram

<sup>77</sup> Gentry, Alex (2017) *What Is The "Scenius"?* [online] Medium.com. Available at: <https://medium.com/salvo-faraday/what-is-the-scenius-15409eb6ac72> Accessed: 15 Feb. 2020]

An example of how I have created friction to instigate critical discussion in my practice-based research is *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones?* (2018).<sup>78</sup> This diagram (figure 2.1) is one element of a wider project, which includes a video and interactive exhibition with posters for participants to use to respond to the questions. When I showed the diagram to a group of participants, one told me that she felt that it perfectly illustrated the imbalance in society between people who are “givers” and those who are “takers.” However, the intention of the diagram was not to illustrate a division or imbalance in society, but to question what we understand “society” to mean and what common values it represents. How we interpret and respond to these values, along with any subtle or radical shifts in their meanings, is what my diagram attempted to tease out. (More information about the project can be found in the project portfolio 9.6).

Active citizenship acknowledges that everyone contributes to society in their own unique way, and these contributions will change over the course of our lifetimes. Conversely, Neoliberalism only sees value in economically productive activity and uses financial metrics to measure contribution, which critics believe has led to an imbalance in society where the economy is prioritised over the well-being of citizens.<sup>79</sup> Richard Gilman-Opalsky refers to this situation as the “poverty of exchange value.” He states that the capitalist mode of assessing value is incapable of appreciating what human beings value the most, which are the relationships we have with our friends and families, that are built on love.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, feminist economists J.K. Gibson-Graham (Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson) state that the Capitalist economy is dependent on many forms of invisible and non-financial activity for it to function. They use the image of an iceberg (figure 2.2) to represent how visible (Capitalist) forms of activity, like waged labour, are kept afloat by invisible, below the waterline economies and activities, which may not involve financial transactions but contribute to our social, material and environmental well-being.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Lloyd, Toby (2019) *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones?* <http://tobypiphsllloyd.co.uk/project/are-washing-machines-more-important-than-smart-phones/> [Accessed 11 Oct. 2021]

<sup>79</sup> The Care Collective (2020) *The Care Manifesto: The politics of interdependence*. London: Verso. P8

<sup>80</sup> Gilman-Opalsky, Richard (2021) *The Communism of Love: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Exchange Value*. Chico, CA: AK Press. P3

<sup>81</sup> Gibson-Graham, J. K, Cameron, Jenny & Healy, Stephen (2013) *Take back the economy: an ethical guide for transforming our communities*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. P11



Figure 2.2: *The Economy as an Iceberg* (2013). Illustration by Alan Turnbull

By using the term active citizenship, my intention was to reveal the hidden value in these below the waterline economies. However, it is important to stress that I did not want to create hierarchies of value between activities. For example, volunteering at a food bank should not be seen as more valuable than socialising with a friend. The former activity might seem more selfless and worthy than the latter, but value should be recognised in how much energy and time that is invested in the activity, instead of the activity itself. Volunteering is an activity that many are unable to do. In the UK it is largely undertaken by young people from wealthy backgrounds who want to gain experience to boost their CV, or pensioners who have more free time once that they retired.<sup>82</sup> I acknowledge that this is a narrow interpretation of volunteering and recognise that many of us engage in multiple forms of informal voluntary activity which can go largely unrecognized, but which can make valuable contributions to our collective well-being and *Scenius*. For instance, spending time with a friend may not seem like a contribution to society, but it can provide the needed emotional support that helps them get through difficult moments in their life. This will have knock-on effects that will benefit the people around them, which economists would refer to as

<sup>82</sup> Giles, Chris (2020) *Voluntary work comes under spotlight in UK's virus recovery*. [online] Financial Times. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/71791a1f-9b4e-4ded-962d-ac58a39c2d51> [Accessed 10 Feb 2021]

“positive externalities.”<sup>83</sup> The artist, Joanne Lee, states that friendship may appear as small thing, but “to take care and to be a friend” should be viewed as a political act.<sup>84</sup> Lee expresses a hope in the generative power of friendship to create a more care filled and understanding environment because, “friendship is after all a two-way street. It’s also a space for an interesting mix of criticism and tolerance.”<sup>85</sup> Like participatory arts practice, friendship can create space that enables us to engage with friction and critically reflect on our environment and our behaviour within it.

Socialising and volunteering are both acts of care, and one should not be viewed as more valuable than the other. Importantly, they are activities which are motivated by love, not money, and have the potential to build relationships and bonds of belonging that can go beyond traditional understandings of citizenship and identity by creating a sense of *collective joy* that Lynne Segal describes in her book, *Radical Happiness*.

[T]he ordinary nature of joy is enhanced when we are able to rejoice with others. And is even greater, ... in situations we feel we have worked to help create. The desire to move outside and beyond oneself, the search for some sort of shared laughter or joy, one with another, that “we – mode”, is certainly one way of overcoming the gloom that can threaten to engulf us. This is why, from the shakiest to foundations, although with plentiful memories of the joys I have shared with others, I want to reclaim more of those moments in those spaces in public life where collective energy binds us together in ways that transcend our personal worries.<sup>86</sup>

The “we – mode” that Segal describes forms an important part of my interpretation of active citizenship and how it could be used to create a new political imagination that challenges the current “work to consume” lifestyle of affluent nations like the UK, and

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<sup>83</sup> Economics Online (2020) *Positive externalities*. [online] Available at:

[https://www.economicsonline.co.uk/Market\\_failures/Positive\\_externalities.html](https://www.economicsonline.co.uk/Market_failures/Positive_externalities.html) [Accessed 12 Jan. 2021]

<sup>84</sup> Lee, Joanne (2014) *Nine Rather Disconnected Paragraphs: on mental health, capitalism, creative education and the politics of friendship*. In: Lloyd & Wilson, ed., *37 Pieces of Flair*. Newcastle: The NewBridge Project. P8 [http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/PDF/37\\_Pieces\\_Newspaper.pdf](http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/PDF/37_Pieces_Newspaper.pdf) [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020]

<sup>85</sup> Lee, Joanne (2014) *Nine Rather Disconnected Paragraphs: on mental health, capitalism, creative education and the politics of friendship*. In: Lloyd & Wilson, ed., *37 Pieces of Flair*. Newcastle: The NewBridge Project. P8 [http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/PDF/37\\_Pieces\\_Newspaper.pdf](http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/PDF/37_Pieces_Newspaper.pdf) [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020]

<sup>86</sup> Segal, Lynne (2018) *Radical happiness: moments of collective joy*. London: Verso. P25

advocate for a more civically minded understanding of living, which is less harmful to the planet and the people living on it.<sup>87</sup>

## 2.2 Artist Activism and Relationship Building

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The artist, Ellie Harrison states that examining and questioning the world is the first step towards beginning to change it.<sup>88</sup> This is where art can play a role, by disrupting our daily routines and creating friction which makes us step back and question what is normal.<sup>89</sup> Harrison believes that artists have the creative skills needed to become active citizens, as they have the ability to, “perceive, interpret and therefore to change our existence for the better.”<sup>90</sup> In her essay, *Artist as Active Citizen*, Harrison identifies four skill sets artists have and how they are utilised.

- ***critical thinking*** – *enables us to see through the bullshit, to analyse the evidence and offer an alternative perspective*
- ***practical skills*** – *enable us to build our own solutions from scratch if they don't exist elsewhere*
- ***confidence*** – *enables us to 'speak truth to power' and to know how to get our voices heard*
- ***self-motivation*** – *enables our obsessive work ethic – where wage and labour are often completely decoupled – and we keep going for so many other reasons: curiosity, the need to know, the desire to change the world, or simply just for the love of it.*<sup>91</sup>

The attributes Harrison connects to these skills are similar to the outcomes of *participatory arts practice* that I described in the previous chapter. Harrison’s own participatory arts

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<sup>87</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living: For an Alternative Hedonism*. London: Verso. P66

<sup>88</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P201

<sup>89</sup> Gielen, P. (2015) *Performing the Common City*. In: Editors: S. Bax, P. Gielen, B. Ieven, ed., *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis. P278

<sup>90</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P201

<sup>91</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2020) *Artist as Active Citizen*. [online] a-n The Artists Information Company. Available at: <https://static.a-n.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Ellie-Harrison-Artist-as-Active-Citizen.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2020]

practice, can be viewed as a form of *Artistic Activism*<sup>92</sup> which enables her to approach problems from two very different perspectives: “The artist asks questions, and the activist proposes solutions.”<sup>93</sup> Harrison states that the skills she lists are not exclusively held by artists, and that artists should not be viewed as the special ones.<sup>94</sup> She believes that most of us have the ability to develop these skills but have not had the privilege to do so, either through restrictions of time (due to employment and family commitments), or because of class, gender, and geographical inequalities. Harrison states that activism requires “big picture” thinking and a long-term view, “which very few people have the luxury of time and education necessary to do.”<sup>95</sup> Therefore, engaging in forms of activism and participatory arts practice has the potential to build relationships which can be even more important than the outcomes of the activities themselves.

Stephen Shukaitis believes that art can build and extend forms of resistance and protest, especially in terms of the relationships and sense of community that it can generate.<sup>96</sup> Protest movements are inherently creative and can provide many important aspects of social life which may not be available in other routines of daily life. These include, “a sense of community and identity; ongoing companionship and bonds with others; the variety and challenge of conversation, cooperation and competition.”<sup>97</sup> Participants in these movements can gain a sense of individual and collective empowerment, but protest movements are defined and built on struggle against social injustice which can become exhausting, especially when they are not able to achieve their goals. In contrast to this, art can offer opportunities to move beyond struggle by creating moments that are disruptive yet joyful.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, art can provide productive ways of dealing with disaffection we experience in our daily lives and help to build a sense of collective joy that can help to

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<sup>92</sup> Duncombe, S and Lambert, S (2018) *Why Artistic Activism*. The Centre for Artistic Activism. P1

<sup>93</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *Pecha Kucha*. Dundee Rep Theatre, Dundee [video] Available at:

<https://www.ellieharrison.com/pecha-kucha/> (2:38) [Accessed 20 Nov. 2020]

<sup>94</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2020) *Artist as Active Citizen*. a-n The Artists Information Company <https://static.a-n.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Ellie-Harrison-Artist-as-Active-Citizen.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2020]

<sup>95</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P206

<sup>96</sup> Gilman-Opalsky, R. and Shukaitis, S. (2019) *Riotous Epistemology: Imaginary Power, Art and Insurrection*. Leipzig: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest. P10

<sup>97</sup> Jasper, James M. (1997) *The Moral Art of Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. P220

<sup>98</sup> Gilman-Opalsky, R. and Shukaitis, S. (2019) *Riotous Epistemology: Imaginary Power, Art and Insurrection*. Leipzig: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest. P59

overcome obstacles that we face collectively.<sup>99</sup> The friction produced by art and protest can form what Gilman-Opalsky refers to as “riotous epistemology”; unconventional practices and activities that form new kinds of knowledge production that can be used to interrogate conventional understandings of the world and agreed upon realities.<sup>100</sup> New ways of living and alternative visions of the world need to be imagined before they can be demanded or created. Art provides an imaginary power that is needed before real power can be achieved.<sup>101</sup> In this sense, participatory art projects can act as collective exercises in radical re-imagination by creating platforms, space and moments for exchange of attention and knowledge.<sup>102</sup>

However, ideas alone will not produce real social change, but the imaginative power of art can inspire new forms of self-organising and active citizenship that help to bring about change.<sup>103</sup> This is what Harrison attempted to do during her project, *The Glasgow Effect* (2016), where she adopted a low-carbon lifestyle by remaining within the city limits of Glasgow for 12 months, only traveling via public transport, foot, or bike. By doing this she was able to cut her carbon footprint to zero, but more importantly, by not leaving the city, she was able to invest more time and energy in the place she lived, building a stronger connection with the city and its residents. Over the course of the year, she engaged in several forms of active citizenship, which included attending council meetings on public transport policy, campaigning for social justice issues that affected residents of the city, volunteering at a cinema and working on her own art projects. *The Glasgow Effect* was her attempt to live the life that she believes we should all live in order to protect the planet and the well-being of its people.

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<sup>99</sup> Gilman-Opalsky, R. and Shukaitis, S. (2019) *Riotous Epistemology: Imaginary Power, Art and Insurrection*. Leipzig: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest. P17

<sup>100</sup> Gilman-Opalsky, R. and Shukaitis, S. (2019) *Riotous Epistemology: Imaginary Power, Art and Insurrection*. Leipzig: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest. P2

<sup>101</sup> Gilman-Opalsky, R. and Shukaitis, S. (2019) *Riotous Epistemology: Imaginary Power, Art and Insurrection*. Leipzig: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest. P21

<sup>102</sup> Hartelova, Magdalena Jadwiga (2020) *Contextualising The Hologram: Feminist Ethics, Post-Work Commons and Commons in Exile*. In: Cassie Thornton, *The Hologram*. London: Pluto Press. P102 + 104

<sup>103</sup> Diaz, Lara Garcia & Gielen, Pascal (2018) *Precariat - A Revolutionary Class*. In: Editors: N. Dockx & P. Gielen, ed., *Commonism: A New Aesthetics of the Real*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis P176

Despite her good intentions, the project received widespread criticism. This was due to the amount of money she received to undertake it (which I will discuss in a moment) and the project's title, which refers to the disproportionately low life expectancy of poor residents of the city compared to the rest of the UK and Europe. As Harrison is originally from London, it was seen as an insult to pay an artist to willingly stay in a city that many who were born in and experience extreme poverty are unable to leave, even if they wanted to. Although she had to deal with many personal attacks, Harrison did not regret her decision on naming the project, as it was intended to highlight the class divide within the city and wider society, along with the inequalities this situation creates.<sup>104</sup> Harrison believes that the role of the artist is to stick their neck above the parapet to raise awareness of important political and social issues. She makes clear that we need to work together to create the social conditions where everyone can become active citizens and the distinctions "between artist and non-artist dissolve and where art and politics become one."<sup>105</sup> Working together to achieve collective goals can generate fun, pleasure and collective joy, which can build bonds of belonging and friendship between citizens.<sup>106</sup>

Under Neoliberalism, being an active citizen is not possible for many as we need to work to earn a living, which takes up the majority of our time and energy, leaving us suffering from time poverty.<sup>107</sup> David Frayne believes that this situation, in which we have little time to study policies, collectively organise, or find out what is going on in our communities, has had an adverse effect on our ability to participate in democratic processes and informed debate.<sup>108</sup> Building on this argument, Kathi Weeks states that many of us have become so depoliticized that the only way we can agree in collective action or make political choices beyond voting in general elections is through buying ethical products and boycotting corporations that we don't approve of.<sup>109</sup> *The Glasgow Effect* was Harrison's attempt to temporarily counteract this situation in her own life and she used it as a means to become

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<sup>104</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P172

<sup>105</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P208

<sup>106</sup> Duncombe, S and Lambert, S (2018) *Why Artistic Activism*. New York, USA: The Centre for Artistic Activism. P10

<sup>107</sup> Fisher, Mark (2017) *Luxury Communism. A conversation between Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne*. In: H. Gunkel, A. Hameed, S. O'Sullivan. ed., *Futures & Fictions*, 1st ed. London: Repeater Books. P163

<sup>108</sup> Frayne, David (2015) *Refusal of work: the theory and practice of resistance to work*. London: Zed Books. P222

<sup>109</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem of Work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P4

more socially and politically engaged in her community. Indeed, the project was inspired by Patrick Geddes, who believed that citizens had a responsibility to learn about the place they live, and that it was impossible to vote without this knowledge.<sup>110</sup> Harrison successfully applied for a £15,000 grant from Creative Scotland that gave her the financial security to undertake *The Glasgow Effect* and carry out her acts of active citizenship during the project. She distributed this money to herself as an equal monthly stipend, which she felt was like receiving a Basic Income.<sup>111</sup> In this sense, *The Glasgow Effect* is very similar to the *Artist House 45* (AH45) residency that Lloyd & Wilson undertook from 2015-2017, which provided financial security that enabled us to become active citizens. These projects are discussed further in Chapter 6.10 in relation to Basic Income experiments.

## Conclusion

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In summary, active citizenship is a term I have adopted to push at the boundaries of what it means to be a citizen and contribute to society, beyond notions of nationalism and duties of paying taxes and voting in general elections. The term active citizenship is deliberately open to interpretation and aims to function as an antidote to the competitive logic of Neoliberalism, which views citizens as consumers, by recognising the value of non-financial activities and below the waterline economies. Artists possess practical and creative problem-solving skills that can enable them to be active citizens. However, these skills are not exclusively held by artists, and they should not be singled out as exceptional. I have argued that the biggest barrier for many people becoming active citizens is a lack of time which is largely due to long working hours and poor working conditions which leave people exhausted and inhibits their ability to participate in society beyond earning a living. In the next chapter I will build on this by examining our current relationships to work and why they need to be re-evaluated.

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<sup>110</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2020) *Artist as Active Citizen*. [online] a-n The Artists Information Company. Available at: <https://static.a-n.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Ellie-Harrison-Artist-as-Active-Citizen.pdf> [Accessed 30 Nov. 2020]

<sup>111</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P216

## CHAPTER 3: CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS TO WORK

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We have a complex set of relationships to work. The word *work* has multiple uses and interpretations, but it is predominately understood as paid employment. Over the last 40 years, the material conditions of work have changed dramatically resulting in rising levels of income inequality and in work poverty,<sup>112</sup> with growing numbers of people struggling to cover the cost of living and turning to food banks to survive.<sup>113</sup> Despite this, our attitudes to work have not kept pace with these shifts, as they are deeply ingrained in our social psyche. Work is how people are organised in society; it is the primary method of income distribution, how we are expected to contribute to society, and can even be seen as an obligation of citizenship.<sup>114</sup> Like citizenship, the work we do, and the job titles attached to them can form an important part of our identity and social status. Work takes up most of our time and energy, which has led to many of us suffering from *time poverty*. This is a symptom of *Capitalist Realism*, in which our “current social relations are reified to the point that any shift in them is unimaginable.”<sup>115</sup> This not only makes it difficult for us to imagine alternatives to Capitalism and our work to consume lifestyles, but also restricts our social awareness and political consciousness.<sup>116</sup> In this chapter I will explore factors that have contributed to the worsening material conditions of work and the reasons why our attitudes to work have not adapted to them. This is the longest chapter in the first part of the thesis as the subject of work has been a key part of my theoretical research which has underpinned the artworks I have created during the PhD.

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<sup>112</sup> Inman, Philip (2020) *Number of people in poverty in working families hits record high*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/feb/07/uk-live-poverty-charity-joseph-rowntree-foundation> [Accessed 9 Mar. 2020]

<sup>113</sup> Inman, Philip (2020) *Why the road to full employment is lined with food banks*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/mar/23/low-unemployment-rate-economists-statistic-jobs> [Accessed 9 Mar. 2020]

<sup>114</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work: feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press. P8

<sup>115</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) *No Romance Without Finance*. In Ambrose, D (ed.) *K-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P423

<sup>116</sup> Fleming, Peter (2018) *The worst is yet to come: A post-capitalist survival guide*. London: Repeater. P110

### 3.1 What Do We Mean When We Say “Work”?

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Going to *work* and *working* are synonymous with being hired to do a job. Raymond Williams included *work* in his book *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (1976), saying that it is our most general word for “doing something” and can refer to an enormous variety of activities.<sup>117</sup> Although employment is the predominant understanding, Williams states that it is not the exclusive use of the term, as we will naturally refer to unpaid activity as *work*, for example, “working in the garden.” By referring to this activity as *work*, even though it is not financially rewarded, reflects an understanding that effort is used to undertake it and skill needed to perform it well. However, this is not the case for all forms of unpaid work which require effort and skill. Williams uses the example of domestic work, observing that an active woman running a household and raising children would be “distinguished from a woman who works: that is to say, takes paid employment.”<sup>118</sup> Williams’ point is that because this activity is performed in the home, predominately by women, and is unpaid, it is not viewed or valued as *work* by society in the same way as employment. The contradiction of this logic is that if the same woman went into someone else’s home to clean or care for children, then this activity would be considered *work*, and she would be expected to be paid for this work. It must be acknowledged that Williams was writing in 1970s, and significant progression has been made with regards to the division of domestic labour and equal rights between men and women. However, our attitudes have not changed as much as we might like to think. An Office of National Statistics report from 2016 found that women still perform the majority of domestic and unpaid care work.<sup>119</sup> This reveals a wider attitude to work that privileges activity that is “economically productive” and the undervaluing of domestic and care work, which is presented as “unproductive” because it is not financially rewarded and therefore cannot be measured.<sup>120</sup>

The economist Guy Standing attempts to add nuance to the interpretation of *work* by distinguishing it from *labour*. Standing defines *work* as self-directed, autonomous activity,

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<sup>117</sup> Williams, Raymond (1988) *Keywords*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Fontana, p334

<sup>118</sup> Williams, Raymond (1988) *Keywords*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Fontana, p335

<sup>119</sup> ONS (2016) *Women shoulder the responsibility of ‘unpaid work’*. [online] Office of National Statistics. Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/womenshouldertheresponsibilityofunpaidwork/2016-11-10> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020]

<sup>120</sup> The Care Collective (2020) *The Care Manifesto: The politics of interdependence*. London: Verso. P3

done for yourself, and is unlikely to be financially rewarded. *Labour*, in contrast, is done for someone else in exchange for a wage.<sup>121</sup> For Standing, the important distinction between the two terms is the autonomy of the person performing the activity. *Work* should be understood as the self-directed activity of working in your own garden for free, compared to the subordinate activity of labouring in someone else's garden in exchange for money. Standing claims that in recent years, workers have been expected to perform more work as part of their labour. This is not self-directed or autonomous work, but unpaid activity that is required in order for workers to be able to do the *labour* that they are paid for. This includes travelling to and preparing for work, along with retraining and networking to secure future work, all of which is unpaid.<sup>122</sup> A poignant example of this is the number of work-related emails that are read and responded to out of office hours. In 2002 fewer than 10% of workers did this. Now 50% of workers do this before they get out of bed in the morning.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, this trend is reflected in the growth of self-employment and portfolio careers in which workers are expected to be entrepreneurial and compete with one another for work, instead of the security that came with employment. The notion of having a job for life is now a thing of the past,<sup>124</sup> which has led to an expansion of a class of workers that Standing refers to as the *Precariat*; people in insecure work that are unable to meet their basic needs through employment and are not protected by state welfare provisions.<sup>125</sup> This includes highly skilled and educated people who have to accept precarious work as shifts in the labour market have resulted in a reduction of secure and full-time contracts. The increasing levels of precarity has eroded a sense of work-based identity as workers may need to undertake several unrelated jobs at once to earn a living or perform forms of work that fall outside of their traditional class status, and that they believe to be beneath them. This puts more pressure on workers and creates tension between them as they are forced to view

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<sup>121</sup> Standing, Guy (2014) *Understanding the Precariat through Labour and Work*. *Development and Change*, Volume 45, Issue 5, September 2014. P964

<sup>122</sup> Standing, Guy (2019) 'Future of Work' (from Basic Income Earth Network, Nordic conference 2019. Oslo, Norway, 5-7 April)

<sup>123</sup> Marsh, Laura (2018) *The Coping Economy*. Dissent Magazine. [online] Available at: <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/coping-economy-mindfulness-goes-corporate> [Accessed 11 Nov. 2020]

<sup>124</sup> Recruiting Times (2017) *A job for life? It's a thing of the past*. [online] Available at: <https://recruitingtimes.org/business-movers-shakers/21525/job-life-thing-past/> [accessed 03/12/2020]

<sup>125</sup> Standing, Guy (2016) *Meet the precariat, the new global class fuelling the rise of populism*. [online] World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/11/precariat-global-class-rise-of-populism/> [Accessed 11 Nov. 2020]

themselves as competing against each other, rather than a collective with shared interested who could struggle for better conditions. Consequently, workers are required to perform more and more unpaid work to remain competitive.

In summary, work can be a catch all term used to describe any kind of activity, whether it is paid or unpaid, but it is predominately understood as employment. In contrast, labour refers to activity which is undertaken in exchange for a wage. “Work” can refer to unpaid activity which is done autonomously and for pleasure (hobbies for example), but it can also refer to unpaid activities like housework and caring, which are often not seen (or valued) as labour when they are not performed within the market or financially rewarded. Even though many of us intrinsically understand the differences between various forms of paid and unpaid work, they can often go unrecognised in everyday life which has led to an imbalance of how forms of work and labour are valued. The projects that I created during my research attempted to create space for these nuances to be explored and made more explicit (see the project portfolio 9.3, 9.6 and 9.8). I will now explore how the material conditions of work have changed in recent years and the impact this has had on how work is viewed and understood.

### 3.2 The Material Conditions of Work

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In the UK, full-time employment is typically understood as a 40-hour working week with a two-day weekend. Traditionally this work would come with benefits, including paid holiday and statutory sick pay, with the expectation that you would be able to retire at 60 or 65 with a secure state pension. Even though this is still what many people imagine, the reality is that the material conditions of work in 21<sup>st</sup> century has become increasingly insecure and exploitative. More people are working in jobs which define them as “self-employed” rather than employees. This means that companies who hire them can avoid regulations around working conditions and worker rights which are a requirement for full-time and part-time employees. Many of these workers are on zero-hour contracts with no guarantee of the number of hours they will work from week to week. The combined effect of these two factors, means that incomes fluctuate every month making it difficult for workers to plan for their future. This shift in the labour market has become increasingly more pronounced since

the financial crash in 2008, which has resulted in wage stagnation,<sup>126</sup> an increase in the cost of living (largely due to the rising cost of housing),<sup>127</sup> and a growing number of working people living in poverty.<sup>128</sup> Many believe that this negative direction in material condition is set to continue as the age of retirement goes up,<sup>129</sup> along with advances in automation and artificial intelligence which could lead to mass unemployment<sup>130</sup> and further erode the conditions of workers in the jobs that remain.<sup>131</sup> This is extremely concerning as workers are already under huge amounts of pressure, with stress from work being linked to long-term chronic mental and physical health conditions.<sup>132</sup>

For some, the response to this shift in the material conditions of work is to ask workers to work harder. This attitude is supported by the idea (or myth) of meritocracy which claims that hard work will be rewarded, and that anyone can succeed if they work hard enough and play by the rules. Jo Littler observes that the claims of meritocracy rest on the idea that society is a level playing field, which conveniently ignores structural and social inequalities that workers might face due to their economic background, geographic location and their class, race or gender.<sup>133</sup> Even though the idea of meritocracy has been widely discredited, its message continues to be prevalent, and this has influenced society's view of work. This has

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<sup>126</sup> Hazel Sheffield (2016) *UK wages drop 10% - worse than anywhere else in Europe apart from Greece*, TUC says. [online] The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/uk-wages-drop-10-tuc-greece-recession-financial-crisis-brexit-a7157681.html> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2020]

<sup>127</sup> The Telegraph (2013) *How house prices have risen 43 fold since 1971*. The Telegraph. [online] Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/9853747/How-house-prices-have-risen-43-fold-since-1971.html> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2020]

<sup>128</sup> Bourquin, P, Cribb, J, Waters, T and Xu, X (2019) *Why has in-work poverty risen in Britain?* Institute for Fiscal Studies. [online] Available at: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14154> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2020]

<sup>129</sup> Osborne, Hilary (2020) *UK state pension age increases to 66 – and is set to rise further*. The Guardian. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2020/oct/06/uk-state-pension-age-66-rise-men-women> [Accessed 20 Nov. 2020]

<sup>130</sup> Lovink, Geert and Berardi, Franco (2016) *Zero Work is the Tendency, Negative Money is the Tool: To rescue Europe from the abyss of racist war we must design Europe 2.0* <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2899-zero-work-is-the-tendency-negative-money-is-the-tool-to-rescue-europe-from-the-abyss-of-racist-war-we-must-design-europe-2-0> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2017]

<sup>131</sup> Stewart, Emily (2021) *Robots were supposed to take our jobs. Instead, they're making them worse*. Vox. [online] Available at: <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/22557895/automation-robots-work-amazon-uber-lyft> [Accessed 6 Jul. 2021]

<sup>132</sup> Johnson, Elliott & Matthew (2018) *Stress, domination and basic income: considering a citizens' entitlement response to a public health crisis*. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41285-018-0076-3> [Accessed 6 Jul. 2021]

<sup>133</sup> Littler, Jo (2017) *Against Meritocracy: Culture, power and myths of mobility*. London: Routledge. P3

created an atmosphere of insecurity and unrelenting competition, which means that it is difficult to trust other people and develop any long-term vision of the future.<sup>134</sup>

An outcome of this has been growing levels of negative solidarity, where members of society feel resentment and a sense of injustice at the perceived advantages of others.<sup>135</sup> Often this is targeted at benefits claimants or asylum seekers, but it can also be directed towards other workers. An example of this was the backlash McDonalds' workers felt from the public when they went on strike to demand better working conditions and pay increase to £10 an hour. Some felt that a pay raise for McDonalds' workers would devalue the jobs of people paid a similar rate, while others felt that it would erode the social status of people currently earning more.<sup>136</sup> Instead of seeing similarities with the struggles of other workers and collectively demanding better conditions, negative solidarity is committed to the idea that:

because I must endure increasingly austere working conditions (wage freezes, loss of benefits, declining pension pot, erasure of job security and increasing precarity) then everyone else must too.<sup>137</sup>

Indeed, negative solidarity is seen as the result of a deliberate and carefully coordinated political programme of Neoliberal policy to disempower Trade Unions and organised labour movements in order to break down class solidarity.<sup>138</sup> Even if the deteriorating material conditions of work are acknowledged, under the logic Neoliberalism it is the responsibility of the individual worker to solve their own problems, not that of society or the government.

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<sup>134</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) *No Romance Without Finance*. In Ambrose, D (ed.) *k-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P419

<sup>135</sup> Williams, Alex (2010) *On negative solidarity and post-fordist plasticity*. [online] Splintering Bone Ashes. Available at: <http://splinteringboneashes.blogspot.com/2010/01/negative-solidarity-and-post-fordist.html> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2020]

<sup>136</sup> Foster, Dawn (2017) *If the McDonald's strikers' demands are met, it will be a victory for all*. The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/07/mcdonalds-strike-industrial-action-unions-empathy> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2020]

<sup>137</sup> Williams, Alex (2010) *On negative solidarity and post-fordist plasticity*. [online] Splintering Bone Ashes. Available at: <http://splinteringboneashes.blogspot.com/2010/01/negative-solidarity-and-post-fordist.html> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2020]

<sup>138</sup> Williams, Alex (2010) *On negative solidarity and post-fordist plasticity*. [online] Splintering Bone Ashes. Available at: <http://splinteringboneashes.blogspot.com/2010/01/negative-solidarity-and-post-fordist.html> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2020]

Neoliberalism validates the struggle of the individual to get ahead, even if this undermines the wellbeing of others and leads to the deepening of social inequalities.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, supporters of Neoliberalism believe that a certain level of inequality is essential to create a spirit of envy which is a valuable spur to economic activity and innovation.<sup>140</sup>

A focus on job creation and the drive for full employment has been a priority for politicians on both the left and right of the political spectrum, with many repeating the mantra that, “the best route out of poverty is through work.”<sup>141</sup> Work is not just seen as a way to support yourself, but also the primary method of contributing to society. Michael Cholbi refers to this as the *moral duty to work*, which is built on an understanding of reciprocity.<sup>142</sup> In exchange for working and paying taxes, citizens/workers will be protected by the government and have access to public services, like health, education and welfare. The moral duty to work feeds a suspicion of those who do not, and are unable to, engage in paid employment.<sup>143</sup> This attitude was intensified in 2010 by the UK coalition government in its classification of citizens as strivers vs skivers.<sup>144</sup> David Frayne observes that dividing the population into binary categories this way is a well-established method of social discipline used by governments to control citizens.<sup>145</sup> The moral duty to work manifests under the current UK government’s social security scheme, Universal Credit, where job seekers can be required to spend 35 hours a week looking for employment in order to be eligible to receive payments. This effectively turns the search for work into a full-time job.<sup>146</sup> Some view Universal Credit as effectively making it illegal to not have a job, as claimants face sanctions and their benefits being cut off if they do not comply. Indeed, many claimants have been

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<sup>139</sup> Kallis, G., Paulson, S., D'Alisa, G., and Demaria, F. (2020) *The Case of Degrowth*. Cambridge: Polity. P16

<sup>140</sup> Watt, Nicholas (2013) *Boris Johnson invokes Thatcher spirit with greed is good speech*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/nov/27/boris-johnson-thatcher-greed-good> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2020]

<sup>141</sup> Conservative Home (2018) “*Work is the best route out of poverty*” – May and Corbyn debate Universal Credit. [online] Conservativehome.com. Available at: <https://www.conservativehome.com/video/2018/09/watch-work-is-the-best-route-out-of-poverty-may-and-corbyn-debate-universal-credit.html> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2019]

<sup>142</sup> Cholbi, Michael (2018) *The Duty to Work*. Ethical Theory and Moral Practice Vol. 21, issue 5. P1119

<sup>143</sup> Dunlop, Tim (2016) *Why the future is workless*. Sydney: NewSouth. P36

<sup>144</sup> Coote, Anna and Lyall, Sarah (2013) *Strivers v. skivers: the workless are worthless*. New Economics Foundation [https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/Strivers-vs.-skivers\\_final.pdf](https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/Strivers-vs.-skivers_final.pdf) P1 [Accessed 11 Nov. 2020]

<sup>145</sup> Frayne (2015) *The Refusal of Work: The theory and practice of resistance to Work*. London: Zed Books. P99

<sup>146</sup> Wintour, Patrick (2015) *Some benefit claimants face 35 hours a week in jobcentre*. [online] The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/oct/01/benefit-claimants-jobcentre-attendance> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2020]

pushed into unsuitable work and others, who are medically unfit for work, have been forced into employment.<sup>147</sup> Areas where Universal Credit has been rolled out have seen a sharp rise in poverty with many people enrolled on the scheme falling into debt and needing to access food banks to survive. This has led some to question whether the scheme is doing more damage than good.<sup>148</sup> Since the start of austerity in 2010, spending on welfare has shrunk by nearly a quarter,<sup>149</sup> leading critics of the Government to suggest that this is a deliberate attempt to make life without paid work unliveable and to reinforce a work centred society.<sup>150</sup>

Cholbi states that the argument for reciprocity, under the moral duty to work, rests on an idealised picture of work that diverges dramatically from the material conditions that many workers find themselves in.<sup>151</sup> This imbalance leads Cholbi to question, “why workers should be willing to expend irreplaceable goods such as time, energy, ... if work does not lift them over the threshold of basic needs being met.”<sup>152</sup> Yet the image of a level playing field, in which all workers enter equally, is what the concept of meritocracy presents. Under these conditions, employment is not only seen as the means to earn a living and contribution to society, but also regarded as how we should find meaning in our lives. This attitude is made clear in this comment made by the former Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard:

I believe in the importance of hard work; the obligation that we all owe to ourselves and others, to earn our keep and do our best. Life is given direction and purpose by

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<sup>147</sup> Pring, John (2017) *Activists ‘horrified’ by universal credit rules forcing sick claimants into work activity*. [online] Disability News Service. Available at: <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/activists-horrified-by-universal-credit-rules-forcing-sick-claimants-into-work-activity/> [Accessed 23 Jul. 2021]

<sup>148</sup> Butler, Patrick (2019) *Welfare changes drive rising poverty and food bank use, study finds*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/nov/05/welfare-changes-key-factor-rising-poverty-food-bank-use-study-finds> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2020]

<sup>149</sup> Butler, Patrick (2018) *Welfare spending for UK's poorest shrinks by £37bn*. The Guardian. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/sep/23/welfare-spending-uk-poorest-austerity-frank-field> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2020]

<sup>150</sup> Stronge, Will (2020) *Will Stronge on the 4-Day Week and the chances of a UBI*. [podcast] The World Transformed. <https://soundcloud.com/theworldtransformed/will-stronge-on-the-4-day-week-and-the-chances-of-a-ubi> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2020]

<sup>151</sup> Cholbi, Michael (2018) *The Duty to Work*. Ethical Theory and Moral Practice Vol. 21, issue 5. P1131

<sup>152</sup> Cholbi, Michael (2018) *The Duty to Work*. Ethical Theory and Moral Practice Vol. 21, issue 5. P1127

work. Without work there is a corrosive aimlessness. With the loss of work comes a loss of dignity.<sup>153</sup>

The loss of dignity that Gillard describes does not necessarily come from a loss of employment, but from the loss of income that it provides, along with the stigma attached to being out of work and the punitive experience of the current benefits system (as described above).

The belief that all jobs are inherently good for us, and our health, has led to the creation of meaningless and unnecessary jobs, which David Graeber describes as *Bullshit Jobs*.<sup>154</sup> Many of these jobs come with high salaries and social status, but even those doing them believe they are spending most of their working lives doing tasks which do not need to be performed. A YouGov poll from 2015 found that 37% of workers in the UK felt that their work did not contribute any meaningful value to society.<sup>155</sup> Graeber felt that this situation has done significant moral and spiritual damage to the people doing Bullshit Jobs, and society at large, but is an inevitable outcome of a work centred society which connects status to employment and consumption. This has led critics to speculate on what innovations could have been achieved if the time, energy and expertise of those engaged in Bullshit Jobs, was invested in more civically minded and collective endeavours, rather than the endless pursuit of profit.<sup>156</sup> Gillard makes the assertion that without work there is a “corrosive aimlessness,” which propagates the assumption that without a job we would struggle to get out of bed and be unable to engage in any kind of meaningful activity. However, Kathi Weeks believes that the opposite of this is true, pointing out that people struggle to fit in activity that they enjoy and gives their life meaning, into the few hours they

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<sup>153</sup> Dunlop, Tim (2016) *Why the future is workless*. Sydney: NewSouth. P21

<sup>154</sup> Graeber, David (2013) *On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant*. [online] The Sydney Morning Herald. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/public-service/the-modern-phenomenon-of-bullshit-jobs-20130831-2sy3i.html> [Accessed 30 Oct. 2017]

<sup>155</sup> Dahlgreen, Will (2015) *37% of British workers think their jobs are meaningless*. YouGov. <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2015/08/12/british-jobs-meaningless> [Accessed 30 Oct. 2018]

<sup>156</sup> Bregman, Rutger (2019) *A crisis of the imagination*. [video] Novara Media. Available at: <https://novaramedia.com/2019/03/21/a-crisis-of-the-imagination-aaron-meets-rutger-bregman/> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2021]

have left at the end of the day which is not taken up by waged work.<sup>157</sup> Weeks' observation is consistent with my research. For many of the people I spoke to, said that purpose in life was found through activities outside of work and were not driven by financial incentives. These included socialising with friends, caring for pets and family members, volunteering, making art and playing sports.

More free time outside of work has been consistent demand for workers and Trade Unions throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, leading to the standardisation of the eight-hour day in Europe in 1955.<sup>158</sup> However, since the 1980s the working week has plateaued around 40 hours per week (2016 average working week was 37.5 hours a week).<sup>159</sup> Kate Soper argues that this situation is in part down to the focus on job creation and protection of workers' rights in the face of deteriorating material conditions.<sup>160</sup> Some believe we collectively choose to have more disposable income to spend on consumer items, instead of more free time.<sup>161</sup> However, Soper states that, instead of satisfying our needs, this income is used to compensate or substitute for other losses, which she refers to as compensatory consumption.<sup>162</sup> One of the biggest losses is *free time*, which has been shackled to its opposite, *work time*.<sup>163</sup> Under the social conditions of Neoliberalism and meritocracy, we are made to feel guilty if our free time is not used productively. Unproductive free time is seen as wasted time. This is compounded by so much of our free time being used to recover from work or, as Standing states above, spent engaging in other forms of unpaid work needed to perform our labour.<sup>164</sup> Work also manages to creep into our lives outside of work through new technologies like smartphones and emails. Since we are locked in a cycle of working to consume, it is difficult to break out of this situation. This creates a sense of

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<sup>157</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2017) *Universal Basic Income. Part 1: an idea whose time has come?* [podcast] Upstream. Available at: <https://www.upstreampodcast.org/universalbasicincome1> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2019]

<sup>158</sup> Harper, Aidan (2019) *The fight for shorter working hours*. The New Economics Foundation. [online] Available at: <https://neweconomics.org/2019/04/the-fight-for-shorter-working-hours> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2020]

<sup>159</sup> New Economics Foundation (2019) *Average weekly hours fell faster between 1946 and 1979 than post-1980*. [online] Available at: <https://neweconomics.org/2019/03/average-weekly-hours-fell-faster-between-1946-and-1979-than-post-1980> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2020]

<sup>160</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso. P49

<sup>161</sup> Graeber, David (2013) *On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant*. [online] The Sydney Morning Herald. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/public-service/the-modern-phenomenon-of-bullshit-jobs-20130831-2sy3i.html> [Accessed 30 Oct. 2017]

<sup>162</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso. P56

<sup>163</sup> Adorno, Theodor (1991) *The Culture Industry: selected essays on mass culture*. London: Routledge. P187

<sup>164</sup> Standing, Guy (2019) 'Future of Work' (from Basic Income Earth Network, Nordic conference 2019. Oslo, Norway, 5-7 April) [30:30]

neuroses and dissatisfaction that is highly productive for capitalism, as it can provide an endless list of commodities to sell to us, which we can buy in an attempt to compensate for this dissatisfaction.<sup>165</sup> Mark Fisher believed that this cycle, has led to us experiencing *time poverty* that causes *consciousness deflation*, restricting our ability to imagine an alternative to this situation.<sup>166</sup> The way that society has been shaped by our attitudes to work and the prioritisation of employment can be seen in responses to a survey, conducted by the think tank *Autonomy*, on whether we should move to a four-day week. Most respondents agreed that we should but were resolute that it will never happen.<sup>167</sup> This shows that there is the desire for more free time, but that this does not feel achievable. More importantly, asking for more free time was seen as an impossible demand, and therefore should not even be considered.

### 3.3 The Impact of Covid-19 on Attitudes to Work

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The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 created a brief opportunity to rethink our attitudes to work and to question the logic of Neoliberalism. In March 2020, the UK went into its first lockdown in an attempt to suppress the virus, meaning that the economy was put on pause and workers were told to stay at home. As a consequence, jobs which had previously been viewed as low-skilled and menial (cleaners, shop assistants and delivery drivers) were recognised as playing important roles in the functioning of society.<sup>168</sup> Unfortunately, this did not change the general rule of society that, “the more obviously one's work benefits other people, the less one is likely to be paid for it.”<sup>169</sup> The rebranding as key workers and recognition that they were performing “essential” work did not translate into a pay rise or

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<sup>165</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) “We have to invent the future.” In Ambrose, D (ed.) *K-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P677

<sup>166</sup> Fisher, Mark (2017) *Luxury Communism. A conversation between Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne*. In: H. Gunkel, A. Hameed, S. O’Sullivan. ed., *Futures & Fictions*, 1st ed. London: Repeater Books. P164

<sup>167</sup> Stronge, Will (2021) *Postcapitalist Desire: Post-Work: Matt Colquhoun, Will Stronge*. Repeater Books. [video] Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2qRlaNu\\_gw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2qRlaNu_gw) [Accessed 18 Jan. 2021]

<sup>168</sup> News Centre (2020) *Two-thirds of Britons value 'low-skilled' workers more since Covid-19 crisis*. May 2020. King’s College London <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/two-thirds-of-britons-value-low-skilled-workers-more-since-covid-19-crisis> [Accessed 5 Nov. 2020]

<sup>169</sup> Graeber, David (2013) *On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant*. [online] The Sydney Morning Herald. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/public-service/the-modern-phenomenon-of-bullshit-jobs-20130831-2sy3j.html> [Accessed 30 Oct. 2017]

better working conditions.<sup>170</sup> However, this recognition of the contribution that these workers make to society did make a significant impact on how they are regarded by others not working in front line jobs or risking their lives for minimum wage. It is yet to be seen if this will have a longer lasting effect on how these workers are viewed by society and if they will receive better pay and conditions in the future.

Another consequence of the pandemic relates to the discussion above, around free time and how it is interpreted. Between March and June 2020, nearly 9 million workers were furloughed in the UK under the Job Retention Scheme, with the Government paying 80% of their wages.<sup>171</sup> This policy ran counter to the Neoliberal ideology of minimal state intervention and relying on free market solutions to social and economic problems. Since the government had put the UK into lockdown and workers were told to stay at home, the government also had to financially support businesses to prevent them from going bust and to subsidise wages to avoid mass unemployment.<sup>172</sup> This meant that millions of workers suddenly experienced an injection of free time into their lives. It is important to state here that the pandemic exacerbated many existing inequalities in society and the labour market,<sup>173</sup> creating more insecurity for workers, even for those in professions that had seemed secure up to that point.<sup>174</sup> However, for many who were furloughed (effectively paid to stay at home and not work), this was a welcome opportunity to spend more time engaging in self-directed and autonomous activities.<sup>175</sup> Many of them were able to engage in acts of active citizenship, like joining mutual aid groups and helping others in their

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<sup>170</sup> Rahman, Afzal (2020) *The government must give key workers a pay rise and tackle insecure work*. [online] TUC. Available at: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/government-must-give-key-workers-pay-rise-and-tackle-insecure-work> [Accessed 1 Nov. 2020]

<sup>171</sup> Partington, Richard (2020) *Number on furlough in UK may double during England lockdown*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/nov/03/number-furlough-workers-uk-double-england-lockdown> [Accessed 5 Nov. 2020]

<sup>172</sup> Islam, Faisal (2020) *Government pays nearly quarter of worker wages*. [online] BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52539203> [Accessed 5 Nov. 2020]

<sup>173</sup> Langford, Eleanor (2021) *Coronavirus Has “Ruthlessly Exposed And Exacerbated” Existing Inequalities In The UK, Researchers Warn*. [online] Politics Home. Available at: <https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/pandemic-ruthlessly-exposed-exacerbated-inequalities-uk-ifs> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2021]

<sup>174</sup> Thomas, Daniel and Strauss, Delphine (2020) *UK faces white-collar crisis as pandemic ends decades of job security*. Financial Times. [online] Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/596e49d9-1283-47b3-a771-1c0beebd7df5> [Accessed 15 Sep. 2020]

<sup>175</sup> Denyer, Lucy (2020) *Whisper it, but millions of people are enjoying lockdown*. The Telegraph. [online] Available at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/05/07/whisper-millions-people-enjoying-lockdown/> [Accessed 15 Jun. 2020]

communities.<sup>176</sup> This acted as a consciousness raising experience which helped to counter the message of Neoliberalism which tells us that we are, “all selfish, atomized individuals that are rationally pursuing our own ends.”<sup>177</sup>

However, this experience was not felt by everyone. Some workers who had been furloughed said that they felt unproductive and lost without their jobs. Others felt guilty for being paid not to go to work, which was termed “furlough guilt.”<sup>178</sup> Claire Forbes argues that this is because, “work is intrinsic to happiness” and that for many, employment “provides much more than a pay cheque.”<sup>179</sup> On one hand, Forbes’ argument would support the claims made by Gildan, that without work we experience a “corrosive aimlessness.” On the other hand, it reveals the longer-term negative impact of our current attitudes to work and the neuroses that Fisher described above. I would argue that those experiencing furlough guilt did so because work takes up so much of their time and energy, which has restricted their ability to develop interests and a life outside of their employment. If your sense of identity, social status and self-esteem is understood predominately through your job title, and your routine and social network is built around going to work, then it is understandable that you may feel an existential crisis when this suddenly disappears. The inability to enjoy the free time created by lockdown stems from a lack of imagination, that Adorno believed has been “cultivated and inculcated by a society that renders people helpless in their free time.”<sup>180</sup> This lack of imagination is a consequence of what Fisher refers to as *consciousness deflation*, which is a result of *Capitalist Realism*. Fisher describes Capitalist Realism as a psychic infrastructure which has conditioned our lives and normalised the logics of Neoliberalism.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Whitehead, Harriet (2020) *Small mutual aid groups were critical in Covid-19 response, says think tank*. Civicsociety.co.uk [online] Available at: <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/small-mutual-aid-groups-were-critical-in-covid-19-response-finds-report.html> [Accessed 20 Aug. 2020]

<sup>177</sup> Berry, Christine (2020) *Finding hope during and after the pandemic*. [podcast]. Weekly Economics Podcast. Available at: <https://neweconomics.org/2020/12/weekly-economics-podcast-finding-hope-during-and-after-the-pandemic> [Accessed 21 Dec. 2020]

<sup>178</sup> Richardson, Kay (2020) *Furlough guilt...it's real and it's complex*. [online] LinkedIn. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/furlough-guiltits-real-its-complex-kay-richardson?articleId=6678721746775998464> [Accessed 10 Jul. 2020]

<sup>179</sup> Forges, Claire (2020) *Money for nothing will not buy us happiness*. [online] The Times. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/money-for-nothing-will-not-buy-us-happiness-prlk6v8n8> [Accessed 2 May. 2020]

<sup>180</sup> Adorno, Theodor (1991) *The Culture Industry: selected essays on mass culture*. London: Routledge. P192

<sup>181</sup> Fisher, Mark (2011) *Capitalist Realism: In Conversation with Mark Fisher*. [podcast] Novara Media. Available at: <https://novaramedia.com/2011/09/13/capitalist-realism-in-discussion-with-mark-fisher/> [Accessed 14 Mar. 2017]

Fisher believed that this has deteriorated our social imagination and inability to conceive alternative ways of living and working.<sup>182</sup>

The point I want to make here, is that Capitalist Realist does not express itself purely through economic terms. Fisher observed that we internalise the logic of Capitalist Realism through cultural forms like music, art and public space. To emphasize this I will quote Fisher at length. This is his analyses of the song *Party Hard* by David Guetta, which includes the lyric: 'Keep partying like it's your job.' Fisher states that the song is:

the perfect anthem for an era in which the boundaries between work and nonwork are eroded – by the requirement that we are always-on (that, for instance, we will answer emails at any hour of the day), and that we will never lose an opportunity to marketise our own subjectivity. In (not at all trivial) sense, partying *is* now a job. Images of hedonistic excess provide much of the content on Facebook, uploaded by users who are effectively unpaid workers, creating value for the site without being remunerated for it. Partying is a job in another sense – in conditions of objective in immiseration and economic downturn, making up the affective deficit is outsourced to us.<sup>183</sup>

In this short statement, Fisher is able to sum up the complex and multifaceted ways that Capitalist Realism affects us, why it is all encompassing and how we have become agents of our own oppression. As Fisher states, the boundaries of work and leisure have become extremely blurry. The devices that many of us access entertainment through (laptops and smart phones) are the same tools that we use for work. Alongside this, these devices are portable, so they can come with us everywhere we go - meaning that we are "always-on." This feeds a feeling of competition and a need to keep up with our friends and colleagues (are they the same people?), by uploading proof that we are having a good time to our social media accounts, while simultaneously receiving updates and messages about our friends/competitors experiences. Being bombarded with constant low-level stimuli of

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<sup>182</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) "Time-Wars." In Ambrose, D (ed.) *k-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P519

<sup>183</sup> Fisher, Mark (2014) *Ghosts of My Life*. London: Zero Books. 179

information has a destabilising effect on us that keeps us in a constant state of anxiety and exhaustion. This in turn creates a need to engage in forms of compensatory consumption to find solutions to our problems.<sup>184</sup>

### 3.4 The Ideal Neoliberal Worker

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Through the lens of Capitalist Realism, it is easier to understand the fetishization of work and the expectation that we should find purpose and meaning from our jobs. An advert for the website *Fiverr* (figure 3.1), which allows people to offer their freelancing services to others for rates reported to be as low as £5, presented the image of the ideal worker under Neoliberal as *the doer*. They are an aspirational individual who is prepared to go that extra mile and to do whatever it takes to climb the meritocratic ladder to success. The advert attempts to make the precarious material conditions of work, and the stress they can cause, as glamorous, instead of what they actually are: exploitative and unsustainable. It also ignores, or attempts to erase, the socially corrosive effect this ethic of competitive self-interest has on us and the inequalities it creates.<sup>185</sup> In contrast to the *doer*, Silvio Lorusso coined a more appropriate term for the ideal Neoliberal worker: *the Entreprerariat*.<sup>186</sup> The Entreprerariat acknowledges that we live in a social atmosphere where everyone is insecure, and under these precarious conditions everyone is required to be entrepreneurial, marketing themselves as independent and resilient individuals. Bojana Kunst expands on this definition, stating that, in order to stand out from the crowd and become successful, the division between work and life must be erased, so “the once essential qualities of life after work (imagination, autonomy, sociality, communication) actually turn out to be at the core of contemporary work.”<sup>187</sup> Instead of struggling to fit in the activity that gives our lives meaning into the few hours which are not taken up by waged work,<sup>188</sup> we are now encouraged to monetise these activities and use our skills to be more competitive in the

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<sup>184</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) “We Have To Invent The Future.” In Ambrose, D (ed.) *k-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P676

<sup>185</sup> Littler, Jo (2017) *Against Meritocracy: Culture, power and myths of mobility*. London: Routledge. P3

<sup>186</sup> Lorusso, Silvio (2016) *What is the Entreprerariat?* Institute of Network Cultures. [online] Available at: <https://networkcultures.org/entreprerariat/what-is-the-entreprerariat/> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2020]

<sup>187</sup> Kunst, Bojana (2015) *Artist At Work*. London: Zero Books. P101

<sup>188</sup> Upstream Podcast (2017) *Universal Basic Income. Part 1: an idea whose time has come?* Upstream. [podcast] Available at: <https://www.upstreampodcast.org/universalbasicincome1> [Accessed 18 Feb. 2020]

market. This can be seen in the rapid expansion of the gig economy,<sup>189</sup> side hustles<sup>190</sup> and new terms/categories of workers being created like the *Mumpreneur*: "a woman who combines running a business enterprise with looking after her children."<sup>191</sup> The Entreprerariat has to accept the conditions of insecurity and constantly being busy, always looking for opportunities because any time that is not productive or spent hustling is wasted time.<sup>192</sup>

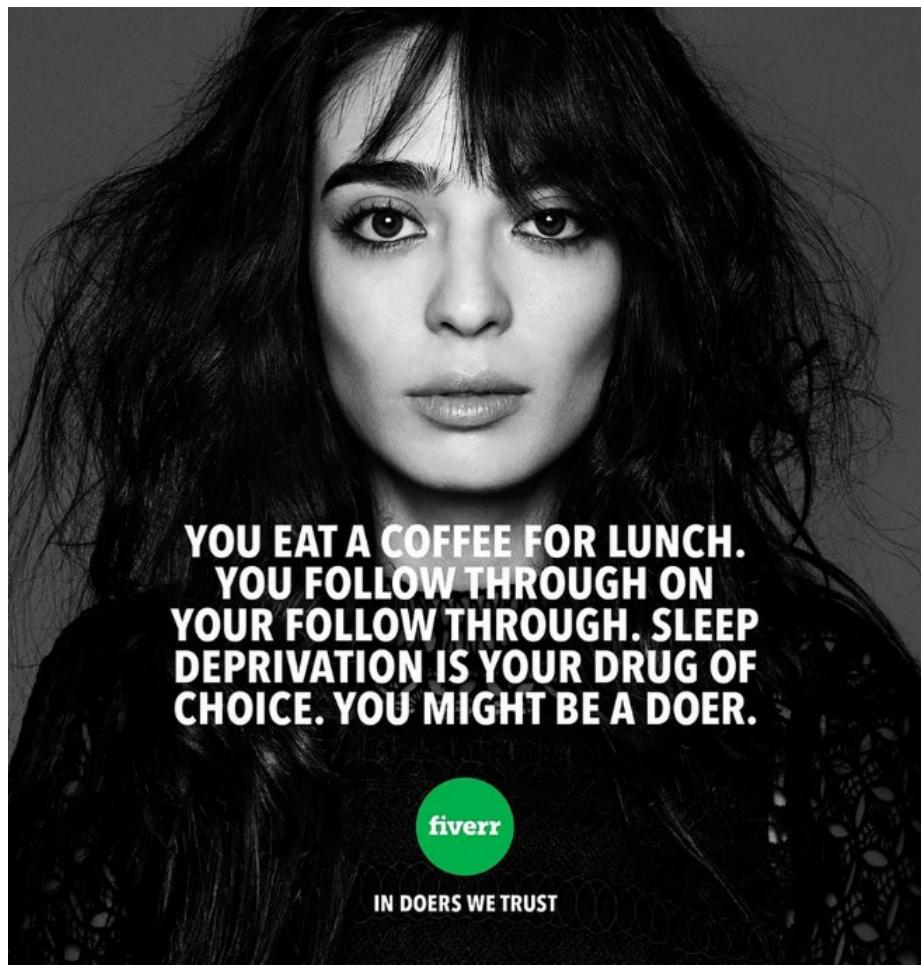


Figure 3.1: Fiverr: In Doers we trust (2017) advert<sup>193</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Partington, Richard (2019) *Gig economy in Britain doubles, accounting for 4.7 million workers*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/jun/28/gig-economy-in-britain-doubles-accounting-for-47-million-workers> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2020]

<sup>190</sup> Adams, R.L. (Date unknown) *50 Ideas for a Lucrative Side Hustle*. The Entrepreneur. [online] Available at: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/293954> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020]

<sup>191</sup> Hoggan, Karen (2018) 'Being called a mumpreneur is patronising'. BBC News [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-46606825> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020]

<sup>192</sup> Fisher, Mark (2014) *Ghosts of my life*. London: Zero. P187

<sup>193</sup> Tolentino, Jia (2017) *The Gig Economy Celebrates Working Yourself to Death*. [online] The New Yorker. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/jia-tolentino/the-gig-economy-celebrates-working-yourself-to-death> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2020]

Under these conditions it is impossible to work less. Even CEOs and the super-rich brag about their 80-to-100-hour working weeks.<sup>194</sup> Being constantly busy and engaging in conspicuous production is seen as a status symbol.<sup>195</sup> Instead of providing a solution or alternative to this situation of time poverty, capitalism offers coping mechanisms or “life hacks.”<sup>196</sup> These are ways to optimise your life, to reduce wasted time and create more room for productive activity. This message of “maximum hustle, minimum friction,”<sup>197</sup> reflects the narrative of neoliberalism, meritocracy, conspicuous production and compensatory consumption. Since we lack time, we need to reduce the friction in our lives by using on demand services that provide convenience. Removing friction from our daily lives is an attempt to shut out chaos to safeguard our individuality, which consequently leads to a loss of empathy for others, especially when they are viewed as competitors.<sup>198</sup> Also, since the reduction of friction is done through compensatory consumption and using on demand services, there is expectation that our individual wants will be met instantly. An office worker who is too busy to make their own lunch, or even leave the office to buy a sandwich, can use a food delivery service, like *Deliveroo*, to bring their lunch to them so they can eat it *al desko*.<sup>199</sup> Deliveroo presents this as serving up *Food Freedom* (figure 3.2), “the idea that food happiness is the freedom to have what you want, when you want it, where you want it”<sup>200</sup> André Gorz would have viewed this as an absurd social division of labour, in which work we could perform ourselves, if we spend less time in employment, is outsourced to others.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Matousek, Mark (2016) *Elon Musk Says You Need to Work at Least 80 Hours a Week to Change the World*. Inc. [online] Available at: <https://www.inc.com/business-insider/elon-musk-says-you-need-to-work-80-hours-a-week-to-save-the-world.html> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2020]

<sup>195</sup> Tarnoff, Ben (2017) *The new status symbol: it's not what you spend – it's how hard you work*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/apr/24/new-status-symbol-hard-work-spending-ceos> [Accessed 14 Apr. 2020]

<sup>196</sup> Entrepreneur.com (2018) *8 Time-Management Hacks to Optimize Your Life In and Outside Work*. [online] Available at: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/slideshow/322152> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2019]

<sup>197</sup> Schlossberg, Tala (2020) *Don't Just Live Your Life, Optimize It*. New York Times. [online] Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/24/opinion/optimize-your-life.html> [Accessed 27 Feb. 2020]

<sup>198</sup> Gielen, P. (2015) *Performing the Common City*. In: Editors: S. Bax, P. Gielen, B. Ieven, ed., *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis. P278

<sup>199</sup> Daoust, Phil (2019) *The new rules of eating al desko*. The Guardian. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2019/jan/10/the-new-rules-of-eating-al-desko> [Accessed Feb 15. 2020]

<sup>200</sup> Deliveroo (2018) Deliveroo Serves Up Food Freedom For 2019. Deliveroo.news [online] Available at: <https://uk.deliveroo.news/news/deliveroo-food-freedom.html> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2020]

<sup>201</sup> Gorz, A (1989) *Critique of Economic Reason*. London: Verso. P157



Figure 3.2: Deliveroo - *Food Freedom* advert (2019)

By redefining workers as *self-employed*, companies are able to avoid regulations around workers' rights and conditions. These companies attempt to present this employment status in a positive light, stating that the worker has the flexibility to choose when they want to work, providing them with more freedom and control over their lives. They can become a *doer*. However, the reality is that these jobs do not provide these qualities or the sense of social identity that work used to create.<sup>202</sup> Many workers now experience underemployment, meaning that they are unable to secure the number of hours needed to earn an income that covers the growing cost of living.<sup>203</sup> This means that they need to work multiple part-time and/or gig economy jobs to support themselves,<sup>204</sup> and are forced to accept the precarious conditions associated with this casual work because "they need the income it provides – however inadequate and however unreliable."<sup>205</sup> In the UK, these conditions have resulted in a fall in life expectancy<sup>206</sup> and more people living in destitution.<sup>207</sup> Food bank usage has increased sharply, and Victorian diseases linked to food poverty have returned.<sup>208</sup> The myth of meritocracy tells workers that their situation can be

<sup>202</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso. P78

<sup>203</sup> Benanav, Aaron (2020) *Automation and the Future of Work*. London: Verso. P55

<sup>204</sup> McBride, Jo & Smith, Andrew (2018) *The Forgotten Workers: Low Paid Workers in Multiple Employment: Implications for employment policy and practice*. Durham University

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/business/research/235099A5Leaflet.pdf>

<sup>205</sup> Dunlop, Tim (2016) *Why the future is workless*. Sydney: NewSouth. P166

<sup>206</sup> Collinson, Patrick (2019) *Life expectancy falls by six months in biggest drop in UK forecasts*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/mar/07/life-expectancy-slumps-by-five-months> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2020]

<sup>207</sup> Fitzpatrick, S., Bramley, G., Blenkinsopp, J., Wood, J., Sosenko, F., Littlewood, M., Johnsen, S., Watts, B., Treanor, M. and McIntyre, J. (2020) *Destitution in the UK 2020*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. [online]

Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020> [Accessed 1 Nov. 2020]

<sup>208</sup> Matthews-King, Alex (2019) *Huge increase in 'Victorian diseases' including rickets, scurvy and scarlet fever, NHS data reveals*. [online] The Independent. Available at:

improved through hard work and determination. If they put in enough effort and play by the rules, they will succeed. As I have outlined above, this is not necessarily the case, but the narrative of meritocracy is still prevalent, which increases the stress felt by workers due to the belief that their situation is caused by their own failings not structural inequalities, which have deepened under Neoliberalism.<sup>209</sup> This situation breeds negative solidarity and leads to a sense of scepticism. Capitalist Realism tells us that society is unequal, but that it is impossible to change this or create a better world. Under these conditions our only option is to try to improve our own position in the society we currently inhabit, even if this means pushing others aside to do this.

## Conclusion

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In this chapter I have outlined the various ways that the term “work” can be interpreted, how the material conditions of employment have changed in recent years, and the complex reasons why our attitudes to work have not kept up with these changes. In conclusion, I believe that we need to re-evaluate our relationship to work and what it means to contribute to society. However, the biggest barrier to doing this is work itself, as it takes up so much of our time and energy, meaning that we suffer from time poverty and do not have the resources needed to imagine alternatives that challenge the status quo. Today, having a job no longer guarantees earning enough money to cover the cost of living.<sup>210</sup> Increasing levels of precariousness in the labour market has put workers under more stress which makes it difficult to plan for their future. If predictions that automation and artificial intelligence will reduce the need for human labour are even partially correct,<sup>211</sup> we will find ourselves in a world in which Capitalism creates the ultimate contradiction, “the

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<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/victorian-disease-gout-rickets-vitamin-d-mumps-scurvy-measles-malnutrition-nhs-hospital-admitted-a8795686.html> [Accessed 10 Mar. 2020]

<sup>209</sup> Monbiot, George (2016) *Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot> [Accessed 2 Apr. 2019]

<sup>210</sup> Innman, Philip (2020) *Number of people in poverty in working families hits record high*. [online] The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/feb/07/uk-live-poverty-charity-joseph-rowntree-foundation> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2020]

<sup>211</sup> Lovink, Geert and Berardi, Franco (2016) *Zero Work is the Tendency, Negative Money is the Tool: To rescue Europe from the abyss of racist war we must design Europe 2.0*. [online] Verso Books. Available at <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2899-zero-work-is-the-tendency-negative-money-is-the-tool-to-rescue-europe-from-the-abyss-of-racist-war-we-must-design-europe-2-0> [17/06/2017]

glorification of work in a world where jobs are rare.”<sup>212</sup> To create a different future to the dystopian one we are currently faced with, we will need to imagine and then demand an alternative. This is where art can play a role, as it does not need to honour reality, meaning that it can provide the imaginary power needed to move beyond the restrictions of Capitalist Realism.<sup>213</sup> In chapter 6 I will describe how participatory arts practice can be used to create joyful disruptions in our daily routines, enabling us to look at the world, and our behaviour within, with critical distance from reality. I argue that participatory art projects can act as collective exercises in radical re-imagination by creating platforms, space and moments for exchange of attention and knowledge.<sup>214</sup> I will now turn to concept of a post-work society and discuss the role this can play in imagining alternative futures.

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<sup>212</sup> Fleming, Peter (2019) *The Worst is Yet to Come: A Post-Capitalist Survival Guide*. London: Repeater Books. P63

<sup>213</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards a Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P24

<sup>214</sup> Hartelova, Magdalena Jadwiga (2020) *Contextualising The Hologram: Feminist Ethics, Post-Work Commons and Commons in Exile*. In: Cassie Thornton, *The Hologram*. London: Pluto Press. P102 + 104

## CHAPTER 4: POST-WORK SOCIETY

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In recent years there has been growing recognition that life under Capitalism is no longer working. This has been fuelled by a confluence of factors, including the growing threat of climate change and deteriorating material conditions of work. In response, a widening post-capitalist discourse has emerged. While the conceptualisation and terminology vary, what is shared is a need to create visions for alternative ways of living and structuring society. I have chosen to think through this using the terms *post-work* and *post-work society*, as they currently do not have fixed definitions and can be open to interpretation. This means that I can avoid ideological objections that might arise from other terms that are used to describe alternatives to our current political and social system, like Post-capitalism, Socialism or Communism. For the purposes of my discussion, I will loosely describe a *post-work society* as:

A world where waged employment is not the dominant source of income or means of wealth distribution. It would be a society where citizens and residents are not expected to *earn a living* by working in a job and there would be a broader understanding of how they could *contribute to this society*.

This definition has been built on the work of several writers from the expansive field of post-work imaginaries.<sup>215</sup> The authors of *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*, Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, state that in recent history, humanity and its social relations have been shaped and constrained by capitalist impulses. For them a post-work world, “portends a future in which these constraints have been significantly loosened.”<sup>216</sup> Srnicek and Williams say that they avoided using the terms socialism and communism to describe the proposals in their book, because both are so politically loaded. They believe that the term post-capitalism, in comparison, is a more neutral term and enables them to move beyond ideological barriers and reach audiences that the previous terms would alienate. Although the terms post-capitalism and post-work may seem

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<sup>215</sup> These include Aaron Bastani, Helen Hester, Kate Soper, Nick Srnicek, Will Stronge Kathi Weeks and Alex Williams.

<sup>216</sup> Srnicek, Nick & Williams, Alex (2015) *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*. London: Verso. P176

interchangeable for many of the arguments I will be putting forward, I hope using the latter term will allow me to avoid them being viewed as strictly anti-capitalist, which could obstruct the reader's imagination. In her critique of what she refers to as "the work society," Kathi Weeks uses the concept of post-work "as a place holder for something yet to come."<sup>217</sup> I believe that post-work is a useful term because it offers an opening to an alternative without restricting possibilities by giving a fixed definition.

Words and their interpretations are important, especially with terms like Capitalism, Neoliberalism, and Socialism, because they describe beliefs and ideologies that are used to understand how society is structured. These terms may feel like they have fixed definitions, but their meanings and interpretations will shift over time. However, these shifts often go unrecognised which limits our capacity to articulate how we understand the world around us. Due to its openness, the term post-work can hold an imaginary power that can be used to counteract the psychic infrastructure of Capitalist Realism which restricts our ability to imagine alternative ways of living and working. The ultimate expression of Capitalist Realism can be seen in Fredric Jameson's observation that, "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism."<sup>218</sup> This statement reflects how our understanding of the world has been constructed around the logic of Capitalism. Capitalist Realism has successfully installed a business ontology on society, so that all decisions must be made through an economic lens and a cost/benefit analysis. This has led to the elimination of value in the ethical sense, meaning that any moral critique of Capitalism only reinforces it. Therefore, the inequalities created by Capitalism are presented as an inevitable part of reality, while the hope that the suffering these inequalities create could be eliminated is presented as naïve utopianism.<sup>219</sup> For example, the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels and global temperatures that will lead to the displacement of people and extinction of animals, are viewed as unavoidable consequences of economic growth and human prosperity. Similarly, any proposed measures to address these

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<sup>217</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work: feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press. P16

<sup>218</sup> Fisher, Mark (2009) *Capitalist Realism*. London: Zero. P2

<sup>219</sup> Fisher, Mark (2009) *Capitalist Realism*. London: Zero. P16

consequences are written off as unachievable or too expensive to implement.<sup>220</sup> George Monbiot believes that Capitalism's need for economic growth will "eat the earth and its people" by "destroying our life-support systems" if it is not replaced by something else.<sup>221</sup> Despite the scientific evidence supporting Monbiot's argument, and growing public support for governments to implement regulations to tackle the effects of climate change,<sup>222</sup> supporters of Neoliberalism remain resistant to change, which has led critics to brand them as a death cult who would prefer self-annihilation than surrender.<sup>223</sup> Lynne Segal interprets the situation in which we are able to imagine the end of the world more easily than the end of capitalism, as a reflection on how people can "no longer see themselves as part of the making of history, or envisage anything other than an endless repetition of the world we now occupy."<sup>224</sup> This is an outcome of a 30-to-40-year war on our political imagination. David Graeber cites achievements of statecraft like the creation of the UN and the space programme from the past, that would be conceived as impossible today.<sup>225</sup> Now we are expected to trust the invisible hand of the market to create economic solutions to political and environmental problems. Again, this lowering of our collective expectations and restrictions on our imagination has been a consequence of Capitalist Realism caused by the implementation of Neoliberal policy and the internalisation of its ideology.

#### 4.1 Imagining Alternatives

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Alternatives to Neoliberal Capitalism, like a *post-work society*, are branded as naïve utopianism that attempt to delegitimise these ideas and to protect the status quo of the work centred society.<sup>226</sup> Instead of accepting this critique, Kathi Weeks believes we should

<sup>220</sup> BBC News (2019) *Climate change: Emissions target could cost UK £1tn, warns Hammond*. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-48540004> [Accessed 22 Sep. 2020]

<sup>221</sup> Monbiot, George (2019) *The Rebel Alliance: Extinction Rebellion and a Green New Deal*. Novara Media. [video] Available at: <https://novaramedia.com/2019/04/22/the-rebel-alliance-extinction-rebellion-and-a-green-new-deal/> [Accessed: 10 Dec. 2019]

<sup>222</sup> Jones, E.-A.; Stafford, R. (2021) Neoliberalism and the Environment: Are We Aware of Appropriate Action to Save the Planet and Do We Think We Are Doing Enough? *Earth* 2021, 2. P331–339

<sup>223</sup> Fleming, Peter (2018) *The worst is yet to come...* . London: Repeater Books. P49

<sup>224</sup> Segal, Lynne (2017) *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy*. London: Verso. P196

<sup>225</sup> DiEM25 TV (2020) *David Graeber and Maja Kantar: Debt, Bullshit Jobs and Political Self-Organisation*. [video] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir7o056ixug> [Accessed 15 Apr. 2020]

<sup>226</sup> Lyngaa, Mikael (2018) *Beyond Work? The Shortcomings of Post-Work Politics*. [online] Cosmonaut.blog. Available at: <https://cosmonaut.blog/2020/07/18/beyond-work-the-shortcomings-of-post-work-politics/> [Accessed 18 Oct. 2021] + Noonan Jeff (2019) *The problem with "post-work"*. *The New Statesman*. [online] Available at: <https://www.newstatesman.com/2019/04/problem-post-work> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2020]

embrace utopian form and thinking as a way to develop demand for alternative futures that can help us to break out of the endless repetition of the world we currently occupy. Weeks describes utopian thinking as a method of estrangement from the status quo. This estrangement has a denaturalising effect which can make rules or systems that are taken for granted or go unquestioned, like Capitalism, appear unnatural. Weeks states that the power of utopian thought, "lies in its capacity to provoke more than prescribe, to animate more than to prefigure."<sup>227</sup> Since proposed utopian alternatives can be intellectual possibility rather than an empirical reality, they allow us to think differently about the world and question why certain rules apply.<sup>228</sup> Weeks states that utopian thought has two functions, "one deconstructive and the other reconstructive, [and that] their simultaneous presence transforms each of them."<sup>229</sup> This means that utopian ideas can hold contradictions and generate a positive imaginative force from this friction. Weeks expands further on the generative power that these two opposing forces can have on our imagination.

The "no" to the present not only opens up the possibility of a "yes" to a different future, it is altered by its relationship to that "yes"; the affective distancing from the status quo that might be enabled is different when it is paired with an affective attachment either to a potential alternative or to the potential of an alternative.<sup>230</sup>

Currently, Neoliberalism states that there is no alternative. Capitalist Realism has reinforced this message by creating a psychic infrastructure which has conditioned our lives and normalised the logics of Neoliberalism,<sup>231</sup> telling us to dogmatically cling to the reality we currently occupy. Even if we are conscious of this and aware of the contradictions in our behaviour that support a dysfunctional system, no alternatives are currently open to us. Cassie Thornton observes that abandoning Capitalism while living within a system it controls, is effectively suicidal, and that swapping the current system for a yet-unimaginable

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<sup>227</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The problem with work: feminism, Marxism, anti-work politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press. P207

<sup>228</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The problem with work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P207

<sup>229</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The problem with work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P207

<sup>230</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The problem with work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P207

<sup>231</sup> Fisher, Mark (2011) *Capitalist Realism: In Conversation with Mark Fisher*. [podcast]. Novara Media. Available at: <https://novaramedia.com/2011/09/13/capitalist-realism-in-discussion-with-mark-fisher/> [Accessed 13 Oct. 2019]

world organised around people and care, is currently impossible for us to do.<sup>232</sup> The purpose of the term post-work is to locate and generate the desire for alternatives and create the space for them to develop. In this sense, a post-work society should be viewed as a utopian form that invites us to engage in a process of critical reflection, beyond provoking desire.

Utopias can inspire new political imaginations and ideas of collectivity to emerge,<sup>233</sup> which can be a form of consciousness raising. Weeks states that the value of utopian thinking is that it does not tell us *what* to want but tells us that we can *want* something different. The creation of this desire is the first step to making it a reality. This is particularly prevalent in science fiction writing, which like art, allows us to view the world with a “critical distance from reality,”<sup>234</sup> which can act as a powerful tool to counter Capitalist Realism and its “invisible barrier constraining thought and action.”<sup>235</sup> As the feminist science fiction writer, Ursula K. Le Guin stated:

We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art, and very often in our art—the art of words.<sup>236</sup>

In this sense, art can act as a form of *hyperstition*, a type of fiction that seeks to manifest its existence in reality by functioning as a navigating tool.<sup>237</sup> This is done by creating speculative images of the future, ones that can be imagined, then desired and created. Through a process of thinking about and discussing superstitions in everyday life, and taking the concepts they contain seriously, these fictions attempt to make themselves real.<sup>238</sup> The idea of a post-work society seeks to function in a similar way. I did not create the term post-work, but my intention of placing the words “post” and “work” together, was to create a

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<sup>232</sup> Thornton, Cassie (2020) *The Hologram: Feminist, peer-to-peer health for a post-pandemic future*. London: Pluto Press. P74

<sup>233</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The problem with work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P207

<sup>234</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) Towards a conceptual militancy. London: Zero Books. P5

<sup>235</sup> Fisher, Mark (2009) *Capitalist Realism*. London: Zero Books. P16

<sup>236</sup> Le Guin, Ursula. K. (2014) *Speech in Acceptance of the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters*. [video] Available at: <https://www.ursulakleguin.com/nbf-medal> [Accessed 30 Oct. 2018]

<sup>237</sup> Hagrebet, Altay (2020) *Solarpunk: Imagining a post-capitalist future*. [online] Honi Soit. Available at: <https://honisoit.com/2020/10/solarpunk-imagining-a-post-capitalist-future/> [Accessed 3 Dec. 2020]

<sup>238</sup> Fisher, Mark (2021) *Postcapitalist Desire*. London: Repeater Books. P226

neoteric phrase,<sup>239</sup> which can achieve a similar effect to what Judy Thorne intended when using the term *Luxury Communism*:

Putting these concepts together doesn't make much sense, and it's from this lack of sense that a new idea comes. By clashing the concept of communism together with the concept of luxury, you create a kind of libidinal energy. *Luxury Communism* provokes you to imagine what would be possible in a world where we held all wealth in common and applied it to advancing the joy of humanity as a whole; where everything was for everyone. 'Luxury' and 'communism' together point towards a system of value other than that of the commodity. Communist luxury isn't going to be exclusive, decadent wastefulness. It's not about signifying high - that is, higher than you - status. Our luxury isn't the pleasure of possessing exclusive goods, but rather the pleasure of luxuriating; the sensual joy of having to do less work, time to be unproductive, and the possibilities for more intense sociality, eroticism and adventure this opens up.<sup>240</sup>

The term *post-work* is incredibly tame in comparison to *Luxury Communism*, but I hope that it can act as a gateway drug to more radical concepts and desires. *Post-work* does not have the seriousness or same political connotations as *Luxury Communism*, but I feel that it contains a similar libidinal energy that can provoke us to "imagine what would be possible in a world where we held all wealth in common and applied it to advancing the joy of humanity as a whole...".<sup>241</sup>

My intention is that the term *post-work* will provoke questions that will challenge our perception of how the world currently is. For example:

- "What would society be like if you didn't need to go to work anymore?"

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<sup>239</sup> Huey P. Newton describes his neoteric phrase "revolutionary suicide" as taking two known words and combining them to create a new unknown that can have the transformative effect, opening up new ideas and dimensions.

Newton, Huey P. (1995) *Revolutionary Suicide*. New York: Writers and Readers Publishing Inc. P7

<sup>240</sup> Thorne, Judy (2017) *Luxury Communism. A conversation between Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne*. In: H. Gunkel, A. Hameed, S. O'Sullivan. ed., *Futures & Fictions*, 1st ed. London: Repeater Books. P146

<sup>241</sup> Thorne, Judy (2017) *Luxury Communism. A conversation between Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne*. In: H. Gunkel, A. Hameed, S. O'Sullivan. ed., *Futures & Fictions*, 1st ed. London: Repeater Books. P146

- “What would you do with your time instead?”
- “How would we form a sense of identity without our job titles?”
- “What would an alternative economic system to capitalism look like?”

These are questions that I, as an artist, can pose to the public, but which would be impossible for a politician to ask if they wanted to be taken seriously. Asking questions like these and creating a space for speculation and conjecture in which answers can emerge through conversation, is the first step to creating a demand for an alternative vision for the future. I will argue that participatory arts practice and active citizenship could be valuable tools in enabling this process and help to develop collective visions for the future that can be demanded. This is important, as Jodi Dean warns that the “absence of a common goal is the absence of a future (other than the ones imagined in postapocalyptic scenarios like *Mad Max*).”<sup>242</sup> Peter Fleming believes that if we do not demand a utopian future, we will sleepwalk into a dystopian one that is created for us by the collapse of Capitalism and unchecked consequences of climate change. This version of a post-capitalist future may be very similar to what we inhabit now, but a much worse variety of it,<sup>243</sup> one which could resemble a Wi-Fi enabled dark age.<sup>244</sup> The intended purpose of the concept of a post-work society is to counter the message of Capitalist Realism and to create the desire for alternative futures.

## 4.2 Post-Work Proposals

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Up to this point I have discussed the concepts of post-work and a post-work society in the imagined and speculative sense. Now I will explore two oppositional approaches which form part of the discourse around post-work. On one side are tech utopias, which centre around the collective sharing of the advances in automation and artificial intelligence. On the other is Degrowth, which is built on the understanding that global resources should be equally shared with a vast reduction of material and energy consumption. Neither side want to create a utopian state separate from the rest of the world, acknowledging that this must be a Global project in which the logic of Neoliberal Capitalism is superseded. Both sides of the

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<sup>242</sup> Dean, Jodi (2018) *The Communist Horizon*. London: Verso. P15

<sup>243</sup> Fleming, Peter (2019) *The worst is yet to come. A post-capitalist survival guide*. London: Repeater. P103

<sup>244</sup> Fleming, Peter (2019) *The worst is yet to come. A post-capitalist survival guide*. London: Repeater. P26

discourse agree there needs to be a reduction of working time and a re-evaluation of what we understand as work. Hence, why I consider them to be post-work projects. I believe that a constructive tension (or *friction*) arises in how these projects could be achieved, which can help to expand the imagination and form the building blocks for what a new vision of the future might look like.

The tech utopians believe that robots could be used to eliminate much of the work that needs to be done for society to function, resulting in more free time to engage in autonomous activities and where any remaining work would resemble leisure and would not be motivated by money.<sup>245</sup> The Degrowth movement believes that technology has a role to play in the transition to a post-work future, acknowledging the need to move to renewable energy sources. However, rather than relying solely on the advances of technology, Degrowth advocates for the adoption of simpler lifestyles with less reliance on consumer consumption, which would enable us to invest more time and energy into meaningful, but currently unpaid work and activities.<sup>246</sup>

There is wide range of literature on both sides of the spectrum. To reflect on the differences in each of the approaches I will contrast Aaron Bastani's proposal for *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*<sup>247</sup> with Kate Soper's concept of *Alternative Hedonism*.<sup>248</sup> I am drawn to these two proposals due to their provocative titles, as they have the potential to create a similar libidinal energy as the term *Luxury Communism*. Subsequently, they build on my original reasons for adopting the open term *post-work*, which is yet to be defined in the public imagination and offer more context which can provoke the imagination further and help to create a clearer vision of a post-work society.

I will start by describing Fully Automated Luxury Communism (FALC), to use it as counterpoint to Alternative Hedonism and the wider Degrowth movement. The argument for FALC rests on the speed that technology has advanced in recent years, meaning that

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<sup>245</sup> Bastani, Aaron (2019) *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*. London: Verso. P50

<sup>246</sup> Love, Shayla (2019) *The Radical Plan to Save the Planet by Working Less*. Vice Magazine. [online] Available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bj9yjq/the-radical-plan-to-save-the-planet-by-working-less> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2021]

<sup>247</sup> Bastani, Aaron (2019) *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*. London: Verso.

<sup>248</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso

political projects that failed or were impossible to achieve in the past, are now within reach. Bastani cites the ubiquity of smart phones which contain technology that is more powerful than that used to land the Apollo spacecraft on the moon. This technology that fits easily in our pockets has now become so everyday that many of us take it for granted.<sup>249</sup> In contrast, Bastani points to other technologies that are not in everyday circulation yet, but are on the horizon like cellular agriculture which will grow synthetic meat (effectively meat without animals).<sup>250</sup> The cost of this technology is falling at a dramatic pace, meaning that in the near future, enough food to feed the whole world could be produced cheaply, using less labour and planetary resources.<sup>251</sup> Bastani argues that this would mean everyone in society could enjoy a luxury lifestyle, at the same time as reducing inequality and addressing climate change. However, Bastani is clear to set his project apart from proposals that believe that a “technological fix” could be used to maintain the economic and social systems of Capitalism as we know it.<sup>252</sup> FALC calls for a drastic change to how the economy is structured and how wealth is distributed. Bastani states that FALC must be a political project, not just a technological one. Indeed, he agrees with those from the Degrowth movement who state that the world’s resources need to be shared more equally, and acknowledges that achieving this, “will require huge levels of consent, alongside the mobilisation of states in something akin to a war effort.”<sup>253</sup> Though Bastani does not believe that we will need to downsize our standard of living. In fact, he believes the opposite, stating that the combining the technologies of artificial intelligence, robotics with renewable energy and new resources that could be obtained from asteroid mining, would enable us to create society of abundance. Indeed, he stresses, that for these technologies to be used for collective gains, they will need to pivot away from how they are currently used for profit, under Capitalism.

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<sup>249</sup> O'Dea, S. (2021) *Do you personally use a smartphone?- by age*. Statista.com [online] Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/300402/smartphone-usage-in-the-uk-by-age/> [Accessed 13 Jul. 2021]

<sup>250</sup> Bastani, Aaron (2020) *Can Lab Grown Meat Save The World? | Aaron Bastani Meets Finless Foods CEO*. Novara Media [video] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGF5MLuBau4> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2020]

<sup>251</sup> Bastani, Aaron (2019) *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*. London: Verso. P167

<sup>252</sup> Bastani, Aaron (2017) *Fully Automated Green Communism*. Novara Media. [online] Available at: <https://novaramedia.com/2017/11/19/fully-automated-green-communism/> [Accessed 5 Nov.2020]

<sup>253</sup> Bastani, Aaron (2017) *Fully Automated Green Communism*. Novara Media. [online] Available at: <https://novaramedia.com/2017/11/19/fully-automated-green-communism/> [Accessed 5 Nov.2020]

Similarly, *Alternative Hedonism* rejects Capitalist ideology and the view that identity should be constructed through the lens of consumption and competitive displays of wealth.<sup>254</sup> However, Soper states that the wider Degrowth movement's call for the reduction of consumption does not necessarily mean a lowering of our living standards, or what Bastani considers to be a "demure from green-primitivism."<sup>255</sup> The authors of *The Case for Degrowth* state that:

Degrowth is not forced deprivation, but an aspiration to secure enough for everyone to live with dignity and without fear; to experience friendship, love, and health; to be able to give and receive care; and to enjoy leisure and nature.<sup>256</sup>

Building on this, *Alternative Hedonism* advocates for finding more rewarding ways of collective living which invites more complex, but civically oriented understanding of consumption.<sup>257</sup> This shift in lifestyle would be difficult for many of us who suffer from *time poverty* and a restructuring of society would be needed for this to be possible, but that is what Soper is proposing. In this sense, *Alternative Hedonism* is advocating for us to embrace the friction that many of us attempt to shut out in order to safeguard our individuality.<sup>258</sup> To achieve this, we would all need access to more free time, to counteract the effects of time poverty and reduce the need of compensatory consumption. The reduction of work would be essential for this to be possible, as it would reduce stress on people and the climate.<sup>259</sup>

Soper acknowledges that it is easier to get excited about utopian technological solutions, proposed by the likes of Bastani, rather than rethink and take responsibility for our own behaviour or restraining our levels of consumption.<sup>260</sup> Even though the tech-based utopias like *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* are presented as greener and with less work, Soper believes that they are still in essence a consumerist society in which "pleasure is tied to the

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<sup>254</sup> Kallis, G, Paulson, S, D'Alisa, G, Demaria, F (2020) *The Case for Degrowth*. Cambridge: Polity. P22

<sup>255</sup> Bastani, Aaron (2017) *Fully Automated Green Communism*. Novara Media. [online] Available at: <https://novaramedia.com/2017/11/19/fully-automated-green-communism/> [Accessed 5 Nov.2020]

<sup>256</sup> Kallis, G, Paulson, S, D'Alisa, G, Demaria, F (2020) *The Case for Degrowth*. Cambridge: Polity. P18

<sup>257</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso. P65

<sup>258</sup> Gielen, P. (2015) *Performing the Common City*. In: Editors: S. Bax, P. Gielen, B. Ieven, ed., *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis. P274

<sup>259</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso. P51

<sup>260</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso. p183

availability and use of machines and hi-tech gadgetry.”<sup>261</sup> Soper points to the downsides of technology that are currently felt and warns that if our new free time was spent looking at screens, this would encourage consumerism, passivity and self-centred behaviour.<sup>262</sup> *Alternative Hedonism* aims to counter this and acknowledges that we gain pleasure from many forms of work, if it is done autonomously and not under duress. Work should be organised in a more equal and fulfilling way, which would create more free time for us to engage in meaningful activities that are intrinsically valuable, but have no economic purpose, measure or outcome.<sup>263</sup> In this sense, *Alternative Hedonism* recognises below the waterline economies as described by J.K. Gibson-Graham,<sup>264</sup> and proposes that they are valued and elevated above the market-based, Capitalist economy.

I believe that *Alternative Hedonism* is effectively advocating for what I had proposed in my interpretation of *active citizenship* by creating the conditions for people to engage in activity beyond individual needs with the potential to build bonds of belonging and friendship. That said, I do not favour Soper’s proposal over Bastani’s *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*. Both have a provocative nature which can create a constructive tension when contrasted with each other. This can form a powerful starting point for a discussion about what the future should look like. Both proposals are calling for a more egalitarian world that is radically different to the work centred society we currently inhabit. Both acknowledge the threat of climate change and the need for a global redistribution of wealth and resources. Where the proposals differ is the means by which these goals should be achieved. Neither *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* nor *Alternative Hedonism* are finished blueprints which could be implemented tomorrow. However, they both act as utopian forms which have the capacity to create a sense of estrangement from the world as it is, at the same time as provoking and animating the imagination to develop alternative visions of the future.<sup>265</sup> To conclude this discussion, I will discuss three policy proposals that could be used to facilitate change in the present and to help the transition to a post-work society; Universal Basic Income (UBI), Universal Basic Services (UBS) and the Four-Day Week (FDW).

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<sup>261</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso. P86

<sup>262</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso. P92

<sup>263</sup> Soper, Kate (2020) *Post-Growth Living*. London: Verso. P87

<sup>264</sup> Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2013) *Take Back the Economy: an ethical guide for transforming the economy*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. P1

<sup>265</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The problem with work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P207

## 4.3 Policy Proposals

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The creation of a post-work society is a long-term goal that will take decades to achieve and involve huge social and political shifts. Implementing policies like UBI, UBS and FDW will not bring a post-work society into being, but they could function as the first steppingstones towards one. They are transitional policies that are future orientated, which if implemented, could act as leverage for wider societal change by shifting the current political equilibrium and constructing a platform for further development.<sup>266</sup> Srnicek and Williams describe them as “non-reformist reforms” that offer an opportunity to pivot away from the status quo. Rather than tinkering at the edges of existing policies or political structures, these policies contain a utopian edge that can push at the boundaries of what is currently considered possible, while still being grounded in a political reality giving them a “viability that revolutionary dreams lack.”<sup>267</sup> This transforms the policies from polite requests into insistent demands, meaning that they can create antagonism that is essential for creating an active agent of change.<sup>268</sup> Even if they are not fully realised or implemented, their existence as policy proposals can function as a form of utopian thought which can help to move our political imagination beyond the confines of Capitalist Realism.

### Universal Basic Income

The premise of UBI is simple, to give every individual in society regular cash payments, “regardless of their family or household relationships, regardless of other incomes, and regardless of their past, present, or future employment status.”<sup>269</sup> However, proposals for UBI and the intentions that motivate them can differ considerably. The elasticity in how UBI can be interpreted has led to the policy gaining equal measures of support and scepticism, from both sides of the political spectrum. Those on the left see UBI as a tool to reduce inequality and insecurity by redistributing wealth and providing a guaranteed income floor

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<sup>266</sup> Srnicek, Nick & Williams, Alex (2015) *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*. London: Verso. P108

<sup>267</sup> Srnicek, Nick & Williams, Alex (2015) *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*. London: Verso. P108

<sup>268</sup> Srnicek, Nick & Williams, Alex (2015) *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*. London: Verso. P107

<sup>269</sup> Van Parijs, Phillippe (1992) *Arguing for Basic Income: Ethical Foundations for Radical Reform*. London: Verso. P3

that no one can fall below.<sup>270</sup> Conversely, others on the right see it as a means to reduce bureaucracy and shrink the state, ultimately leading to a situation where private companies will provide services like healthcare and education that citizens can choose to access on the free market. The latter scenario has led some to accuse UBI of being a Neoliberal Trojan horse,<sup>271</sup> while the former interpretation would act as a disincentive to work which would result in endemic idleness. Evidence from trials conducted around the world has shown the fear of mass laziness to be unfounded. A consistent finding across studies has been increased participation in the labour market, with many participants starting businesses, retraining for better paid jobs, taking up volunteering roles and engaging in civic activity. Trials have also reported improved mental and physical health, along with increases of food security, a sense of purpose, and levels of trust in community and public institutions.<sup>272</sup> However, even though these results are extremely positive, it is important to stress that most trials that are called Basic Income pilots do not fulfil all five characteristics that the *Basic Income Earth Network* use to define the policy,<sup>273</sup> which is the following:

- 1. Periodic:** it is paid at regular intervals (for example every month), not as a one-off grant.
- 2. Cash payment:** it is paid in an appropriate medium of exchange, allowing those who receive it to decide what they spend it on. It is not, therefore, paid either in kind (such as subsidised food or services) or in vouchers dedicated to a specific use.
- 3. Individual:** it is paid on an individual basis—and not, for instance, to households, couples or family units.

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<sup>270</sup> Santens, Scott (2017) *Why we should all have a basic income*. [online] World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/01/why-we-should-all-have-a-basic-income/> [Accessed 20 Jan. 2018]

<sup>271</sup> Battistoni, Alyssa (2017) *The False Promise of Universal Basic Income*. Dissent Magazine [online] Available at: <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/false-promise-universal-basic-income-andy-stern-ruger-bregman> [Accessed 20 Jul. 2021]

<sup>272</sup> Ferdosi, M., McDowell, T., Lewchuk, W. and Ross, S. (2020) *Southern Ontario's Basic Income Experience*. McMaster University [online] Available at: <https://labourstudies.mcmaster.ca/documents/southern-ontarios-basic-income-experience.pdf> [Accessed 15 Apr. 2020] + Kela (2020) *Results of Finland's basic income experiment: small employment effects, better perceived economic security and mental wellbeing*. kela.fi [online] Available at: [https://www.kela.fi/web/en/news-archive/\\_asset\\_publisher/IN08GY2nIrZo/content/results-of-the-basic-income-experiment-small-employment-effects-better-perceived-economic-security-and-mental-wellbeing](https://www.kela.fi/web/en/news-archive/_asset_publisher/IN08GY2nIrZo/content/results-of-the-basic-income-experiment-small-employment-effects-better-perceived-economic-security-and-mental-wellbeing) [Accessed 12 Jun. 2020]

<sup>273</sup> Basic Income Earth Network (date unknown) *About Basic Income*. Basicincome.org [online] Available at: <https://basicincome.org/about-basic-income/> [Accessed 4 Sep. 2017]

**4. Universal:** it is paid to all, without means test.

**5. Unconditional:** it is paid without a requirement to work or by demonstrating willingness-to-work.

Most trials that have been conducted involve a regular cash transfer to a selected group of individuals with some conditionality attached to participation and payments were not universal. For example, in Finland (population 5.5 million)<sup>274</sup> only 2,000 people who were receiving unemployment benefit participated in the experiment.<sup>275</sup> That said, support for UBI has grown internationally in recent years, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has led to more governments intending to conduct more comprehensive trials.<sup>276</sup> However, a consistent point of contention, even amongst ardent supporters of UBI, is how the policy should be funded. The policy's high cost has also been a regular point of resistance, even among progressives, some of whom feel that Universal Basic Services would be a cheaper and most cost-effective alternative to UBI.<sup>277</sup>

## Universal Basic Services

The principle of Universal Basic Services is to extend existing public services (universal healthcare, education and legal services) by expanding them to include social housing, public transport, food, basic phone and internet access, making them free at the point of use. Advocates believe that this would help to build a cohesive society while preserving the incentive to work.<sup>278</sup> Rather than providing everyone with cash payments which could

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<sup>274</sup> Worldometer (2021) *Finland Population*. Worldometers.info. [online] Available at:

<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/finland-population/> [Accessed 15 Nov. 2021]

<sup>275</sup> Kela (2020) *Results of Finland's basic income experiment: small employment effects, better perceived economic security and mental wellbeing*. kela.fi [online] Available at: [https://www.kela.fi/web/en/news-archive/-/asset\\_publisher/IN08GY2nIrZo/content/results-of-the-basic-income-experiment-small-employment-effects-better-perceived-economic-security-and-mental-wellbeing](https://www.kela.fi/web/en/news-archive/-/asset_publisher/IN08GY2nIrZo/content/results-of-the-basic-income-experiment-small-employment-effects-better-perceived-economic-security-and-mental-wellbeing) [Accessed 12 Jun. 2020]

<sup>276</sup> Hayward, Will (2021) *Mark Drakeford approves universal basic income trial for Wales*. [online] Wales Online Available at: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/universal-basic-income-trial-work-20613496> [Accessed 20 Jul. 2021]

<sup>277</sup> Pavanelli, Rosa (2019) *Why should governments give cash-handouts before providing free, quality public services to all?* Open Democracy [online] Available at:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/ubi-without-quality-public-services-is-a-neoliberals-paradise/> [Accessed 18 Jul. 2021]

<sup>278</sup> UCL Institute for Social prosperity (2017) *Social prosperity for the future: A proposal for Universal Basic Services*. University of Central London. [online] Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/igp/news/2017/oct/igps-social-prosperity-network-publishes-uks-first-report-universal-basic-services> [Accessed 15 Aug. 2018]

promote individualistic consumption, UBS would be an investment in public services that everyone can access, functioning as a *social wage*.<sup>279</sup> They argue that this would provide everyone with the resources they need to thrive, building solidarity at the same time as reversing cuts imposed under austerity. Critics of UBS accuse the policy of being paternalistic rather than emancipatory, pointing out that the current proposals would not actually be universal, which would lead to the creation of new layers of means testing in order to access these services.<sup>280</sup> However, many advocates for UBI support the extension of free public services and argue that rather than placing the two policies in opposition, they should be used to complement each other. This has led to advocates of both UBI and UBS to campaign together calling for them to be combined to create a *new social guarantee*, which could build a sense of shared responsibility and solidarity.<sup>281</sup>

## Four-Day Week

Alongside the debate around UBI and UBS, others have campaigned for the introduction of a Four-Day Week. This would not be the compression of a 40-hour week into four days, but a reduction of the working week to 32 hours with no loss of pay.<sup>282</sup> Advocates state that this would form a natural progression of traditional demand for fewer hours at work made by trade unions which resulted in the 40-hour week and a two-day weekend. In the UK, 50% of lost work days at work are linked to work-related stress, anxiety or depression.<sup>283</sup> Studies have found that trials of a FDW not only improved workers mental and physical health by creating a better work life balance, alongside this companies saw increases in productivity by up to 40%.<sup>284</sup> Advocates acknowledge that not all industries will be able to

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<sup>279</sup> Bennett, C., Healy, S., Murphy, E. and Murphy, M. (2021) *Building a New Social Contract*. Social Justice Ireland. <https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2021-09/2020-09-1-newsocialcontract-fullpublication-final.pdf> P152

<sup>280</sup> Standing, Guy (2019) *Why 'Universal Basic Services' is no alternative to Basic Income*. Open Democracy [online] Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/why-universal-basic-services-is-no-alternative-to-basic-income/> [Accessed 12 Jun. 2020]

<sup>281</sup> Coote, Anna and Lawson, Neal (2021) *Post-Covid Britain needs a new social guarantee*. The Guardian [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/11/post-covid-britain-new-social-guarantee-universal-basic-income-pandemic> [Accessed 15 Mar. 2021]

<sup>282</sup> 4 Day Week Campaign. *What is a four-day week*. [online] 4dayweek.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.4dayweek.co.uk/faqs> [Accessed 19 Jul. 2021]

<sup>283</sup> Frayne, David (2019) *Work less, play more*. [online] Red Pepper Magazine. Available at: <https://www.redpepper.org.uk/work-less-play-more/> [Accessed 18 Jul. 2021]

<sup>284</sup> Chappell, Bill (2019) *4-Day Workweek Boosted Workers' Productivity By 40%, Microsoft Japan Says*. NPR [online] Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2019/11/04/776163853/microsoft-japan-says-4-day-workweek-boosted-workers-productivity-by-40?t=1626707751242> [Accessed 19 Jul. 2021]

adapt and shift to a FDW in the same way, pointing out that office-based work will find the transition easier than construction, so proposals for staged transitions including government support would be needed.<sup>285</sup> However, a FDW would enable industries to redistribute existing work so that workers who currently experience underemployment could earn more money, while those that are overworked could avoid burnout. As well as providing more free time, a FDW could help to address current gender inequalities by enabling more men to take up care responsibilities and other forms of domestic work.<sup>286</sup> The policy would also have a positive impact on the environment by reducing the number of people commuting each day and removing reliance on forms of compensatory consumption like pre-packaged sandwiches and takeaway coffee cups.<sup>287</sup> Importantly, like advocates for UBI and UBS, those campaigning for a FDW acknowledge that it would not solve all problems. They believe that a shorter working week would form a practical foundation for change and enable longer-term cultural shifts in society.

Of the three policies, I personally favour UBI as it could challenge the work-centred society we currently occupy, by decoupling income from work. This could create more bargaining power for workers, giving them more autonomy over their time and enabling them to become active citizens. As a result, UBI could help to re-evaluate our relationships to work and what kinds of work are seen as valuable, at the same time as offering a route to reorganising the way society is structured. However, UBI is not a panacea. We must be wary of a badly implemented UBI and unintended consequences that may arise, like the inflation of rents or other forms of price gouging. A key benefit of UBI is that it could be implemented relatively quickly with little or no extra infrastructural changes, so many benefits would be felt immediately. Direct cash transfers could be distributed using existing bank accounts or via credit cards issued by the government. In contrast, UBS would require governments to nationalise services currently run by private businesses who would fiercely resist the policy.

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<sup>285</sup> Calvert Jump, Robert and Stronge, Will (2020) *The Day After Tomorrow: Stress tests, affordability and the roadmap to the four-day week*. Autonomy [online] Available at: [https://autonomy.work/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020\\_DEC01\\_DATv5.pdf](https://autonomy.work/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020_DEC01_DATv5.pdf) P11+17 [Accessed 19 Jul. 2021]

<sup>286</sup> Harper, Aidan and Stronge, Will (2019) *The Shorter Working Week: A Radical And Pragmatic Proposal*. Autonomy [online] Available at: <http://autonomy.work/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Shorter-working-week-docV5.pdf> [Accessed 19 Jul/ 2021] P53

<sup>287</sup> Harper, Aidan and Stronge, Will (2019) *The Shorter Working Week: A Radical And Pragmatic Proposal*. Autonomy [online] Available at: <http://autonomy.work/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Shorter-working-week-docV5.pdf> [Accessed 19 Jul/ 2021] P49

This could be a long-drawn-out process which would run over a government's term of office, meaning that the policy risks being reversed if there was a change in political party.

Similarly, FDW would take a long time to implement and would require significant restructuring of society. However, this is the intended goal. Ideally, all three policies would be implemented as part of the long-term goal of moving to a post-work society. The FDW is a natural continuation of the traditional trade union demand for shorter working week. UBI and UBS would help to enable this move by providing the resources to help workers organise and reduce their dependence on paid employment.

All three of the policies have been supported and promoted by the think tank *Autonomy*. They acknowledge that these policies might not be viewed as politically or socially possible today but believe that they should be realised in the near future. Autonomy's director, Will Stronge, states that they are all logically feasible, and that accepting pragmatic arguments for not implementing them just reinforces the status quo.<sup>288</sup> Since Capitalist Realism cannot offer a better future, its default logic is anti-utopianism.<sup>289</sup> Conversely, policies like UBI have the potential to "generate political effects that exceed the specific reform,"<sup>290</sup> because they change the way that we view society and our position within it. Post-work imaginaries can act as utopian forms by generating a hyperstitional image of progress, which aim "to make the future an active historical force in the present."<sup>291</sup> This can help to shift our mind set away from a Neoliberal model of Capitalist Realism and into another space, which is currently difficult to imagine.<sup>292</sup> This is what excites me about the idea of a post-work society, as it can provide a similar imaginary power and critical distance from reality as participatory arts practice, so that what is currently considered realistic, or pragmatic, does not hinder what could be desired or demanded in the future.<sup>293</sup> However, I acknowledge that art projects and ideas of a post-work society alone will not produce real social change,

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<sup>288</sup> Stronge, Will (2021) *Postcapitalist Desire: Post-Work: Matt Colquhoun, Will Stronge*. Repeater Books. [video] Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2qRlaNu\\_gw&t=3738s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2qRlaNu_gw&t=3738s) [Accessed 18 Jan. 2021]

<sup>289</sup> Bastani, Aaron (2019) *Fully Automated Luxury Communism: A Manifesto*. London: Verso. P18

<sup>290</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work: feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press. P220

<sup>291</sup> Srnicek, Nick & Williams, Alex (2015) *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*. London: Verso. P127

<sup>292</sup> Fisher, Mark (2021) "Lecture One: What is Post-Capitalism?" in, M. Colquhoun ed., *Postcapitalist Desire*. London: Repeater. P67

<sup>293</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards A Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P3

which is why demands for the three policies I have described are so important. All of these factors can work together to create friction that pushes at the boundaries of what is currently conceivable and enable new political imaginaries to emerge.

## Conclusion

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In order to challenge the logic of Neoliberalism and Capitalist Realism, I believe that our current relationships to work needs to be re-evaluated and this research is based on this premise. In a work-centred society, financial transactions are valued over all other forms of contribution. This leads to the undervaluing or disregarding of other below the waterline economies which society relies on to function, including unpaid work, friendship, and other forms of care. As I have outlined above in chapter 3, the material conditions of work have become more insecure and exploitative, making it harder for workers to meet their basic needs and engage in activity which benefits others. To be able to address this and tackle social inequalities, we will need to create a society where citizens have more free time for autonomous activity and the financial security to engage in collective endeavours that are not economically motivated. I have used the term *post-work society*, to describe this society and presented proposals for what this might look like. For a post-work society to be created, first it needs to be desired and imagined, then demanded. This is difficult to do under the atmosphere created by Capitalist Realism, but I will argue that participatory arts practice can play a role in imagining a post-work society and creating the conditions for achieving it.

I have presented two opposing views of an imagined post-work society that could be created. On one side a tech utopian future of abundance, achieved through advances in technologically. On the other a greener Degrowth future where our current resources are equally shared and new understandings of abundance are established. I have described the tension (or friction) between these two proposals, but also note the similarities that they share, which is a vision of a more egalitarian world with more free time and autonomy, that addresses the threat of climate change. I have also described three policy proposals (Universal Basic Income, Universal Basic Services and the Four-Day Week) that could be implemented in the immediate future to enable a transition to the proposed post-work societies.

In the following chapters, through a close interrogation of the practice at the core of this research, I will argue that participatory arts practice can create friction in everyday life that opens space for conjecture and critical reflection, which can cause a shift in perspective or reframing of the participant's thinking. Through its capacity for mimesis and role-playing, art allows for an interaction with political processes and ideas whilst maintaining a critical distance from reality,<sup>294</sup> so that new political imaginaries and utopian visions for the future can emerge which push past the barriers created by Capitalist Realism.

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<sup>294</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards A Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P3

## CHAPTER 5: PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

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My research adopts a practice-based approach that is multi-stranded, using participatory methods to create art projects that seek to instigate conversation and critical reflection. These projects include interactive exhibitions, workshops, public events, printed materials, short films and collaborative performances. Running through the projects are four elements which I have defined as: 1) *space and time*, 2) *open questions*, 3) *being present* and 4) *context*. I will expand on these elements and how they manifested in the research approached in a moment. First, I will explain why I adopted these approaches and how they fit into the wider context of practice-based research methodologies. To do this, I will draw on two texts, *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice-research* (2015) by Sophie Hope,<sup>295</sup> and “*An Inaudible Dialogue*”, *Research Into Practice* (2006) by Tim O’Riley,<sup>296</sup> both of which have informed the understanding and articulation of my practice-led approach.

Hope states that there are multiple interpretations and approaches to “practice-based research”, but the term is often used as catch all for research which uses creative methods. This situation has led to confusion over what practice-based research is and has meant that artists working in academia have had to justify their, sometimes well established, research methods to institutions or reframe their work to fit into more recognised research methodologies. Hope observed that unlike positivist research (that focuses on quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting and analysing data), practice-based approaches might not start with a defined set of questions and methodologies designed to confirm or deny a hypothesis. Practice-based research (particularly when carried out by artists) tends to follow a non-positivist approach which is more explorative and acknowledges the subjective views of the researcher. As an example, Hope draws on Haseman’s description of the practitioner-researchers who “do not merely ‘think’ their way through or out of a problem, but rather they ‘practice’ to a resolution”.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice-research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09548963.2016.1171511>

<sup>296</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “*An Inaudible Dialogue*”, *Research Into Practice*. University of the Arts London. [online] Available at: [https://www.herts.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/12390/WPIAAD\\_vol4\\_oriley.pdf](https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/12390/WPIAAD_vol4_oriley.pdf) [Accessed 15 Aug. 2020]

<sup>297</sup> Hope, Sophie (2015) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice-research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P84

## 5.1 Embracing Uncertainty

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At times I have had to justify my research practice and methodologies, both within and outside the university setting. For example, a member of staff in the Fine Art department questioned if my work was even art, stating that it looked more like political activism. Conversely, when showing one of my art projects to a Human Rights lecturer and social justice activist, they also questioned if it was art, and felt that it looked more like a sociology project. At times this has been frustrating, but I also welcomed this uncertainty around my work as it gave me space to move, the ability to cross boundaries between disciplines and question established ideas or rules. I used my arts practice to create the conditions for exploration and expanding the imagination, instead of providing or searching for quantitative data or concrete facts. By embracing a level of uncertainty, I was able to leave the “door open for the unknown”, which Rebecca Solnit states in her book, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, is “where the most important things come from...”.<sup>298</sup> O’Riley states that art does not offer certainty and using it as a method for research creates a different “way of seeing and imagining the world.”<sup>299</sup> This can create gaps between established ideas which opens up a “conjectural space for understanding” in which new ideas can emerge. In order for this to happen we need to accept and incorporate “the possibility for the unexpected, the unanticipated, and the unlegislated to arise.”<sup>300</sup> By not having a fixed set of methodologies or hypothesis, I was able to embrace the unexpected, unanticipated, and unlegislated outcomes of my practice-based research, and follow these unexpected lines of enquiry as they emerged. There was a useful synergy between the approach of my research and its purpose, as the iterative and exploratory methodologies created a space that enabled participants to embark on an equally unprescribed journey of imagining possibility.

These unexpected outcomes and lines of enquiry appeared largely through conversations with participants of the projects I conducted as part of the practice-based research, many of whom were unaware that they were taking part in an art project. Those who did might not

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<sup>298</sup> Solnit, Rebecca (2009) *A field guide to getting lost*. Edinburgh: Canongate. P6

<sup>299</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “An Inaudible Dialogue”, *Research Into Practice*. University of the Arts London. [online] Available at: [https://www.herts.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/12390/WPIAAD\\_vol4\\_oriley.pdf](https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/12390/WPIAAD_vol4_oriley.pdf) [Accessed 15 Aug. 2020] P6

<sup>300</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “An Inaudible Dialogue”, *Research Into Practice*. University of the Arts London. [online] Available at: [https://www.herts.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/12390/WPIAAD\\_vol4\\_oriley.pdf](https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/12390/WPIAAD_vol4_oriley.pdf) [Accessed 15 Aug. 2020] P4

have realised that this was a method of conducting academic research. This meant that I was able to engage with people who would not normally take part in art projects or traditional research methods like interviews, surveys or focus groups. I believe it was my methodologies, that enabled me to reach, what Thomas Hirschhorn refers to as a non-exclusive audience<sup>301</sup> and listen to their opinions, which might have been missed or overlooked by other, more established, methods of research. Therefore, the uncertainty, or what Mike Watson describes as the apparent uselessness of art, was where its power lay as it gave me the ability to use unorthodox methods in my research and “ask ‘if it’s like *this*, why can’t it be like *this* instead?’”<sup>302</sup>

When faced with questions of whether what I was doing should be considered art, I referred to Bruce Nauman’s description of his artistic practice: “If I was an artist and I was in the studio, then whatever I was doing in the studio must be art. At this point art became more of an activity and less of a product.”<sup>303</sup> By this logic, I was an artist working in studio within a university, so the activity I was doing should be considered to be both art and research. Nauman’s emphasis on art as an activity chime with O’Riley’s interpretation of art as a method of research in his paper, “*An Inaudible Dialogue*”, *Research Into Practice* (2006), which he starts by asking “can the process and methods that are characterised as “research” be identified with art making?”<sup>304</sup> O’Riley’s response to his own question is that “...art is as much an activity as a thing, in terms of both making things and engaging with things, places or people around it.”<sup>305</sup> O’Riley believes that, in terms of research, there needs to be an “expanded understanding of what an art practice might be...”.<sup>306</sup> In my case, this expanded understanding needs to include all the forms of research and the other activities I have engaged in during the PhD. This was partly due to the fact that the boundaries between

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<sup>301</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2010) *Spectrum of Evaluation*. [online] Thomashirschhorn.com. <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/spectrum-of-evaluation/> [Accessed 29 Mar. 2019]

<sup>302</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards a Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P5

<sup>303</sup> Bruce Nauman (1966) *Bruce Nauman – Make Me Think Me: Exhibition guide*. Tate [online] Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/bruce-nauman-make-me-think-me/bruce-nauman-make-me-think-me-1> [Accessed: 10 Apr. 2019]

<sup>304</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) *An inaudible dialogue*, *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P1

<sup>305</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) *An inaudible dialogue*, *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P1

<sup>306</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) *An inaudible dialogue*, *Research Into Practice*, University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P1

research and life were blurry, making it hard to distinguish between activities as they became entwined. In this sense, emphasis and value was placed on the process of doing this activity (whether this was art, life or research) over the outcomes or products of this process (artworks and writing). This is similar to the work of artists discussed in the participatory arts practice chapter who value aspects of their practice which remain invisible, for example “a group dynamic, a social situation, a change of energy, a raised consciousness.”<sup>307</sup> O’Riley builds on this argument by stating that: “the entirety of the project is the product of the research, not just those things that have the conventional appearance of artworks.”<sup>308</sup> The final outcomes of the PhD are a series of art projects and a written thesis, but these are just manifestations of my experience during the PhD research. I am the real product of the research. Only I will experience the full breath of the project with a large proportion of this remaining invisible to others. In this sense, the PhD has been a consciousness raising experience for me, in a similar way to the AH45 residency.

Throughout the PhD, alongside making art projects and conducting research, I volunteered at a community centre, engaged in local activism with Tyne & Wear Citizens, and worked with UBI Lab Network<sup>309</sup> on a local and national level to advocate for Universal Basic Income. At times these activities were deeply rooted in and motivated by my research questions and methodologies, whilst at other times they were completely separate. However, in both cases, the experiences I had during these activities fed into and informed the practice-based research I carried out. As stated above and referenced previously in chapter 2, *participatory arts practice*, O’Riley observes that "...art is as much an activity as a thing...".<sup>310</sup> This is the same for the practice-based research I have conducted as it has, "...engaging with things, places or people around it."<sup>311</sup> This is particularly true when viewing the stipend attached to my PhD candidature as a form of Basic Income and viewing my activity as evidence of how someone would behave if they were receiving a Basic

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<sup>307</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso: London. p6

<sup>308</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) *An inaudible dialogue, Research Into Practice*, University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P4

<sup>309</sup> Necessity.info (2020) *The UBI Lab Network*. [online] Available at: <https://necessity.info/the-ubi-lab-network> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2020]

<sup>310</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) *An inaudible dialogue, Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P1

<sup>311</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) *An inaudible dialogue, Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P1

Income. Through this lens my activity can be viewed as the embodiment of research, or if rigorously documented and commented upon, like Harrison's *The Glasgow Effect* (2016), as an "extreme lifestyle experiment."<sup>312</sup> I have not documented all my activity during the PhD in this thesis, but the blurriness around the edges of defining what was and was not research, was useful for me in the process of carrying out the research. By accepting that everything could be considered research, it meant that I was open to new ideas and concepts entering the research. However, this also meant that understanding (or justifying) what I was doing was research (or art) to an outsider became difficult at times. This was true even to myself as the methodology of my practice-based research was developed over the course of the PhD. In other words, because the research methods were experimental, the products of the research were experiments which did not necessarily fit into the defined categories of academic research. This is true for other practice-based researchers, so when presenting our work to other academics this can lead to situation described by Raymond Williams where we feel we are speaking a different language. Williams states that neither groups' use of language is wrong, but this does not diminish the frustration or unease felt by either party.<sup>313</sup>

## 5.2 Forms of Practice-based Research

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Hope's paper, *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice-research* (2016),<sup>314</sup> is an attempt to give more clarity to what is understood by practice-based research and demonstrate how it has the same rigour as positivist approaches to research. To illustrate this, Hope uses definitions of three approaches to practice-based outlined by Haseman and Rolling, which are depicted as the primary colours: Yellow: *research into practice*, Red: *research through practice*, and Blue: *research for/as practice*. Hope then builds on these definitions using case studies from Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded projects and an example from her own practice to illustrate how hybrid methods emerge when the established approaches mix in the adjacent segments of the colour wheel:

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<sup>312</sup> BBC News (2017) *Glasgow Effect* artist 'used anger' to fuel work. BBC. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-38530606> [Accessed 17 Apr. 2020]

<sup>313</sup> Williams, Raymond (1988) *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Fontana Press.

p11

<sup>314</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice-research*. *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice-research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2.

Orange: research *into and through practice*, Purple: *through and for/as practice* and Green: research *for/as and into practice*.

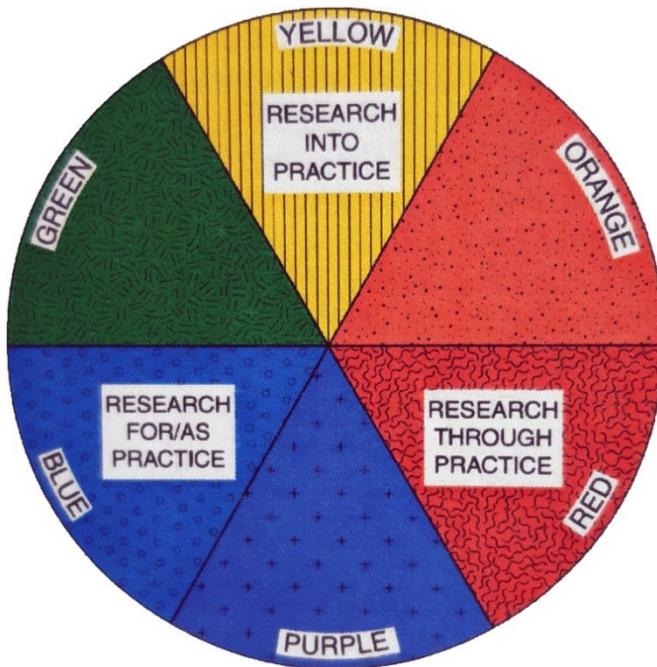


Figure 5.1: Colour wheel of practice-research

In order to locate the position of my practice-based research methods within the colour wheel, I will give a brief outline of the definitions that each colour depicts and describe how they relate to my work and research methodologies. I will start by describing the primary colours which depict the established or more recognised approaches, and then talk through the colours and methods that emerge when they start to mix.

### Yellow: research into practice

This can be traditional academic research where art or the practice of making art is the subject of the research. An interpretation of Yellow is that creative methods are used for engaging participants and gathering evidence for the research.<sup>315</sup> An example of this would be to use participatory workshops instead of traditional interview or focus group methods. Hope states that even though artists may be involved in the research process, they are often

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<sup>315</sup> Hope, Sophie (2015) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice-research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P80

brought in to deliver the creative methods used in the project, but the actual research and processing of data may be done by non-practiced-based researchers.

### Red: research through practice

Here the researcher can be an artist using their own practice to carry out research, instead of bringing in collaborators to help with the process of gathering data. The artist may use their practice to illustrate the findings of their research, but the outcomes will be traditional academic formats like a thesis, article or conference paper, instead of an artwork.

### Blue: research for/as practice

This approach focuses on the practice being produced, for example, an artist using research methodologies to gather data that feeds into the production of artworks in which “thinking is embodied in the artefact”.<sup>316</sup> In her paper, Hope does not provide an example of this approach, but I would regard Jeremy Deller’s *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) as an artwork where research is embodied in the artefact. To create the work Deller needed to undergo extensive historical research into the event and the context around it in order to produce an authentic re-enactment of the day and the activity it involved.

The three definitions depicted as primary colours are clear, but it is easy to imagine how quickly they could blur, when methodologies begin to overlap. For example, at what point does using artworks or creative means to illustrate the findings of research (Yellow) start to cross over into using the research as a method for the creation of an artwork (Blue)? Hope attempts to address this in the definitions of the remaining three segments.

### Orange: into and through practice

In this approach, the subject of the research can be art or artistic practice, but not exclusively. The research is carried out by or with artists, using creative methods to do this. Hope states that in the examples she analysed, the framing of the research was done

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<sup>316</sup> Hope, Sophie (2015) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P83

through the lens of social sciences and largely carried out by academics within that field.<sup>317</sup> In examples where artists carried out their own practice-based research, Orange would describe their work if the outcomes of this research remained with traditional academic manifestations: articles and conference papers for example, instead of artworks. Although my research uses methods that fall into the above description (analysing the work and practices of other artists / presenting my research at academic conferences), I believe that my practice-based approach on the whole sits outside of this category and is reflected more naturally in the purple and green segments of the colour wheel (figure 5.1).

### Purple: through and for/as practice

This approach involves creative practice as a means for conducting research, which is then translated into the production of an artwork. Hope states that the methods for “finding out are inextricably linked to the focus of the research.”<sup>318</sup> Through this process, the production of knowledge and artwork becomes closely entwined, rather than using creative methods to gather information, illustrate or present the research. As an example of this approach, Hope uses her *Performance Interviews* (2007 - ongoing) project where she interviewed artists and curators about their experiences of projects that were deemed to have failed or went “wrong”. The interviewees were filmed wearing a mask to disguise their identity, or their words were read back by an actor. By giving the interviewee anonymity, Hope was able to give them a sense of freedom to express their true feelings without fear of repercussions whilst at the same time the project was able to question the fallibility of interviews as research method.<sup>319</sup> Hope describes this process below:

The interviewing, performing, filming, and editing were not a means to an end, rather they were the research. Embedded in them was a research process which

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<sup>317</sup> Hope, Sophie (2015) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P81

<sup>318</sup> Hope, Sophie (2015) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P83

<sup>319</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P76

emerged because of an engagement with the practice itself. Research is entwined through and for/as practice and not easily separated out.<sup>320</sup>

Hope's approach to making these films and the intentions behind them, in terms of practice-based research, was similar to the interactive exhibition format I used in my project, *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2017-8) (see project portfolio 9.3). The exhibition format of the project was an outcome of my practice-based research and method of presenting my findings of the research at the same time. This process of researching *through practice* and also *for/as practice* created a situation which required me, as the artist and researcher, to shift perspectives or oscillate between positions. As Hope describes, "the artist is having to stand outside the artefact (to communicate it) and within it (to make it)." <sup>321</sup> This oscillation between the two positions, standing outside and within the artefact, acted as a form of dialogue. Importantly, it was through this dialogue or conversation that the work's meaning was revealed, which O'Riley states is the "conjunction of viewer, work and world" that is, "fluid, dynamic and mobile."<sup>322</sup> This dialogue took place with audiences engaging with the work and talking to me about it. A conversation also took place with me in the dual role of artist and researcher, through the process of oscillation between the two positions. This situation fits Haseman's description of the practitioner-researcher who "do not merely 'think' their way through or out of a problem, but rather they 'practice' to a resolution".<sup>323</sup>

To expand on this, I would like to go back to Nauman's description of his activity as an artist in a studio, and how he came to the understanding that this process was more about the activity than the product. Nauman stated that he needed a different way to approach the idea of being an artist. This led him to the conclusion that:

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<sup>320</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P83

<sup>321</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P82

<sup>322</sup> O'Riley, Tim (2006) "An Inaudible Dialogue", *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P2

<sup>323</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P84

you can make something that appears to be functional, but when you try to and use it, you can't figure out what its function might be. And that's in the end what the function is, for you to figure out what to do with it.<sup>324</sup>

Nauman's observation of the artwork fulfilling a function, in which the function is for the viewer to discover its function or provide the conditions for this discovery, is an apt description of my approach to practice-based research. This was an experience I felt as both the viewer and the maker of the work. Due to the fluid nature of the research practice and the oscillation between positions, it was difficult to draw clear boundaries around what was and was not part of the research or part of the practice of carrying out the research. Therefore, I feel that my working methods reflect the approach set out in Hope's description of the purple segment of the colour wheel, which are the combination of red: *research through practice* and Blue: *research for/as practice*. That said, at times I needed to step outside of the work I was making to write about the practice I have been engaging in and compare it with the work of other artists. At this point my practice-based research started to move into Hope's definition of the green segment of the colour wheel, "...when researchers employ creative methods and practice to further develop the practice itself (blue) but also to further the research into (yellow) the art practice."<sup>325</sup>

### Green: for/as and into practice

To illustrate this approach Hope uses an example of a theatre project that used creative workshops that invited participants to reimagine sections of a play they had watched to express their own experiences. Through the process the researchers were able to learn about the audience experience of theatre by creating a piece of theatre with the audience members. Hope states that in this method, the practice "gets at an issue through an embodiment of that practice while also resulting in a manifestation of that practice."<sup>326</sup> In this case, by making a piece of theatre in response to the content of a play. The workshops

<sup>324</sup> Nauman, Bruce (2001) *Bruce Nauman in "Identity"*. [online] Art21.org. Available at: <https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s1/bruce-nauman-in-identity-segment/> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019]

<sup>325</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P83

<sup>326</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P84

acted as a device which, “unlocked memories and reflections for discussion which perhaps surveys and/or interviews might not have been able to do.”<sup>327</sup> By asking the audience members to use their own lived experience when reflecting on the content of what they had watched, and using role play methods to do this, the participants were able to engage in the process in a much deeper and meaningful way, which uncovered information that would not be revealed through traditional interview methods.



Figure 5.2: *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2018) The NewBridge Project, Gateshead

In the case of my project *Between Eating and Sleeping*, the interactive exhibition format was an outcome of my research and method of presenting my research at the same time (as described in the purple approach above). It also acted as a means for gathering further research by providing a platform for me to interact with participants and talk to them about the research themes that the project explored. Participants helped to create the exhibition by answering the project’s three questions<sup>328</sup> and contributing their responses by writing them on post it notes and adding them to the collection on the exhibition walls. Through this process I was able to gather further information from participants to answer my research questions. I was also able to analyse the effectiveness of the research practice and

<sup>327</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P84

<sup>328</sup> “What did you want to be when you were growing up?”, “What gets you out of bed in the morning?” and “What would you do if you had a year off?”

practice of creating an exhibition and/or artwork (green). Being present in the exhibition space throughout its duration, meant that I could talk to participants in the dual role of artist and researcher. Again, this process of dialogue (between myself and participants, and myself in the dual roles) created a situation of oscillation where I needed to stand within and outside the artifact, but it was also through this process that the meaning of the work was revealed. The conversations between myself and the participants revealed information that would have been unlikely to emerge if the research had been conducted through a survey, interview or focus group. Several of the projects I made during the research did create spaces for group discussion that acted in a similar way to a focus group, enabling participants to compare and reflect on their opinions (see project portfolio 9.3, 9.4, 9.7 and 9.10 for examples). These group discussions were valuable to my research but took place between exclusive audiences who had been invited or had chosen to take part in them. However, as my intention was to engage with non-exclusive audiences, who might not normally engage in art or research projects or debates on social issues, the methodology of interactive exhibitions, the methodology of interactive exhibitions in public spaces created a more productive means of engagement.

Like the theatre workshops described by Hope, I believe that the use of the interactive exhibition format moved into the category of green (*using for/as and into practice*) because I used practice as a research method, at the same time as analysing the success of this practice a method for research. The green approach came through particularly when writing about the activity I had engaged in and the work I produced over the course of the PhD. When not reflecting on the activity in this way, I believe that my approach was closer to Hope's definition of purple: *through and for/as practice*. In both cases, I feel that Haseman's description of the practitioner-researcher illustrates my approach to practice-based research as I was not thinking my way through problems but practising to a resolution to them.<sup>329</sup>

As stated above, I did not start the research with a fixed set of methodologies or hypothesis to test. Instead, I experimented with methodologies I had been using prior to starting the

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<sup>329</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P84

PhD with Lloyd & Wilson and applied them to the field of research I was exploring. These methods were rooted in participatory arts practice, which O'Riley observes, through its nature "engenders viewer activity..."<sup>330</sup> This activity was a circular and reflective process that acted like a conversation or dialogue with the audience. This allowed me to test and develop theories throughout the PhD, feeding my findings back into the research practice and artworks I created. This process is in line with the *participatory arts practice* that I described in Chapter 2, in which invisible processes are valued over physical artworks and conversation is viewed as an integral part of this creative process. Understanding practice-based research as a form of dialogue also meant that activities outside of my research but connected to it and the contexts it took place within, could play an important part in the practice of making and experiencing the work that I have made throughout the PhD.

### 5.3 Research Methods

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Now that I have established how my approach fits into the wider context of practice-based research, I will expand on the methods I utilised to conduct this research. Firstly, I created a diagram (figure 5.3) to illustrate the four elements that run through the approaches utilised in each of my research projects. I will start by briefly describing the four elements within the diagram and then discuss how they manifested within the primary research approaches listed at the start of this chapter. In the following chapters I will go into more detail about how these approaches and methods were utilised in specific projects to answer my research questions.

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<sup>330</sup> O'Riley, Tim (2006) "An Inaudible Dialogue", *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P2

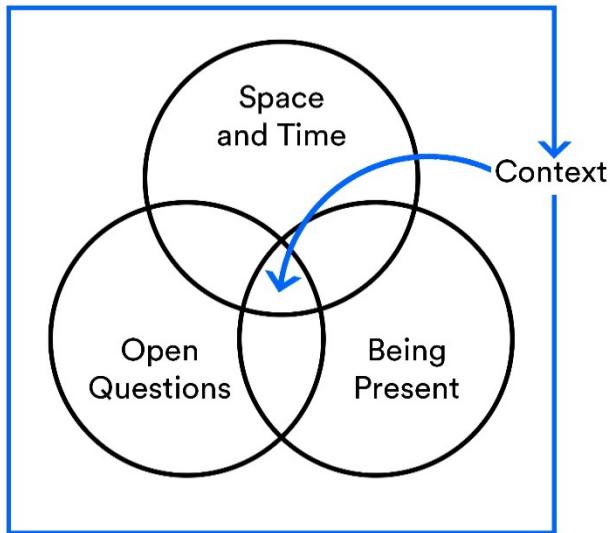


Figure 5.3: Methodologies Venn diagram

The Methodologies Venn diagram is similar to Hope's *Colour Wheel of Practice-Based Research*, in that it depicts several approaches that can be separate from one another but can also overlap and influence the other elements in the diagram, creating new approaches.

### Space and Time:

*Space and time* should also be understood in terms of the experience participants have when coming into contact with the projects. The projects, and the methods I used to create them, aimed to establish a liminal space where the “normal” rules of the everyday could be suspended, to enable participants to view and imagine the world differently.<sup>331</sup> In this sense, space and time could be a physical or imagined space and time. For example, an art gallery or in the imagination of the participant when interacting with the project. My understanding of space is similar to the view of community artist, Stephen Pritchard, who states that his work attempts to move away from a concrete understanding of “a place” in order to create a *space* that is entirely relational. Pritchard states that it is “impossible to know what will emerge” from this relational space, since this creates the conditions and potential for conversations to happen between people that would not be possible outside of this space.<sup>332</sup> This space for uncertainty to be experienced follows O’Riley’s observation that

<sup>331</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “An Inaudible Dialogue”, *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P6

<sup>332</sup> Pritchard, Stephen (2020) *Heart of the Matter online symposium. Participatory and Community Art*. Northern Heartlands. [video] Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEQfW3NEn9I&feature=youtu.be> [Accessed 10 Oct. 2020] (10:00)

art does not offer certainty, which provides a different way of imagining the world.<sup>333</sup> Art can create the space and time for uncertainty to be explored safely, where “what if” scenarios can be played out beyond daydreams and discussed seriously without fear of consequences, which may not be possible in everyday contexts. Mike Watson believes that the power of art lies in its ability to have a critical distance from reality.<sup>334</sup> My projects aimed to create the conditions for liminal and relational space and time to emerge in multiple levels and contexts; for example, as part of a group of two or more people in a conversation or part of a workshop event, or as a conversation an individual could have with themselves, in their imagination oscillating between two positions. In this sense, my projects aimed to create the conditions for the participant to experience friction which could have the potential to change their thinking, perceptions or attitudes.

### Open Questions:

The projects used questions that were deliberately open to interpretation, so that they were as accessible as possible and would not exclude anyone from participating in the projects. They deliberately used language and subject matter that would appear to be everyday and unthreatening when first read, meaning that they could be responded to on a pragmatic level. However, the questions often touched on aspects of our lives that are rarely discussed and were phrased so they could also be interpreted in more philosophical sense, so they could lead to further and unexpected lines of inquiry. For example, “what gets you out of bed in the morning?” The questions the projects posed were not intended to produce definitive answers, instead they created space for ambiguity to emerge. Like the liminal and relational *space and time* described above, the questions intentionally invited uncertainty with the intention of provoking conversation and critical reflection.

### Being Present:

The projects were designed so that I could be physically present in the exhibition spaces. *Being present* meant I was able to engage participants in conversation, listen to their responses to the *open questions* and introduce other concepts and themes into our

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<sup>333</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “An Inaudible Dialogue”, *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P6

<sup>334</sup> Watson, Mike (2015) *Towards a Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P8

discussion. The artist, Thomas Hirschhorn, adopts a similar approach that he describes as “Presence and Production.” Hirschhorn states that his presence in the production of the work creates the conditions for, “involvement, implication, exchange, dialogue, confrontation, contact!”<sup>335</sup> Being present, shows commitment to the work that he is making, which in turn “obligates” the viewer to reciprocate by engaging with him and his work. However, Hirschhorn acknowledges that just because the conditions for participation have been created does not mean it should be expected from the artist. He warns that participation “can only be a lucky outcome.”<sup>336</sup> The projects I created were all intended to invite participation from members of the public. Being present increased the chance of this “lucky outcome” and meant that any participation would be more meaningful and engaging than if I were absent. The conversations I had with participants were recorded in note form at the end of each day. The majority of these interactions were short and transitory in nature, because of this I did not ask participants to fill in consent forms as I realised that this would create a barrier to participation and could stop any interaction happening at all. I realise that this raises several ethical issues, in terms of participants consenting to take part in the work and what I did with their contributions. Throughout the research I followed the ethical procedures set out by Newcastle University and I was careful not record any personal details of participants and made sure that all contributions were anonymized. No photographs or recordings of participants were taken or used without consent. All of the projects printed, and online materials included my contact information along with links to websites with more information about the projects and research which made potential participants aware of the research’s objectives and intentions.

### Context:

Context is represented twice on the Methodologies Venn diagram (figure 5.3), at the centre of the three elements and in the space surrounding them. This is to represent the dual role or two states that context could take in the projects. The gap between the two states of context could expand and contract or oscillate in a similar way that I shifted between

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<sup>335</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2014) *Presence and Production*. [online] Thomashirschhorn.com. Available at: <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/guideline-presence-and-production/> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2019]

<sup>336</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2014) *Presence and Production*. [online] Thomashirschhorn.com. Available at: <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/guideline-presence-and-production/> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2019]

positions as artist and researcher, standing outside and within the work simultaneously.<sup>337</sup> This movement within context(s) helped to create an internal and external dialogue, or friction, which revealed the meaning of the work through “conjunction of viewer, work and world.”<sup>338</sup> The context at the centre of the diagram represents how all the separate elements were interconnected and would impact the way they were experienced and interpreted by participants. The context that surrounds the other three elements is depicted by a square arrow to represent the fact that context was not static. It was always moving and shifting, in the same way that the environment the projects were situated in were in constant flux. This was also true for the potential participants who brought their own contexts and experiences to the projects, refracting the work and interpreting it in their own way.<sup>339</sup> The interaction of these contexts would help to shape or completely define the experience participants would have when encountering the projects. This is illustrated by the concept of “set and setting” which Wade Davis uses to describe the impact of cultural context when having a psychedelic drug experience.

The ‘set’ is the mental set that you bring to the experience and the setting is the physical ambience in which you experience the explosion of consciousness. Part of the ‘set’ is your own cultural predispositions to the experience.<sup>340</sup>

Davis states that the experience will be profoundly different for someone who has taken the drug for purely recreational purposes, compared to another who has taken the same drug as part of a spiritual or cultural ritual. The concept of set and setting can be applied to almost all experiences, not just psychedelic ones. To understand the role of an individual’s mental state (or “set”), we can refer to O’Riley’s observation that we all carry our own worlds with us, and these worlds impact how we respond to events and experience them.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Hope, Sophie (2016) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research*. Cultural Trends, Volume 25, Issue 2. P82

<sup>338</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “An Inaudible Dialogue”, *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P2

<sup>339</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “An Inaudible Dialogue”, *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P1

<sup>340</sup> Davis, Wade (2010) *Interview with Wade Davis: Part I – altered states*. [online] Mindhacks.com. Available at <https://mindhacks.com/2010/12/06/interview-with-wade-davis-part-i-altered-states/> [Accessed 20 Jun. 2019]

<sup>341</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “An Inaudible Dialogue”, *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P1

Therefore, any seemingly mundane object has the potential to deeply affect us in a transformative way, given the right *context, space and time* or “set and setting.” Davis uses eating hallucinogenic mushrooms that grow in northwest rain forests of Oregon as an example:

Those who go out into the forest deliberately intending to ingest these mushrooms generally experience a pleasant intoxication. Those who inadvertently consume them while foraging for edible mushrooms invariably end up in the poison unit of the nearest hospital. The mushroom itself has not changed.<sup>342</sup>

Indeed, the artworks I created were like the mushroom and remained unchanged. However, the combination of the participant and the environment they were experienced in would create a unique *set and setting*, or context(s), which would define how the artwork was experienced and interpreted. The point I am trying to make here is that I only had a limited amount of control over how participants responded to my projects, especially when they were presented in public spaces. The uncertainty this situation created was something I embraced in the work and which I believe was beneficial for the research process. The interactive exhibitions printed materials and films all had the potential to have a transformative effect on those who came into contact with them, but the extent to this effect was largely, if not wholly down to the context they were experienced in and the context the participant brought with them. This was why *being present* was such an important element of the methodologies, as it enabled me as the artist/researcher to take care of the participant when they experienced the work and create the necessary conditions for it to potentially be a transformative, consciousness raising experience. This required me to create and maintain, what experience designer, Ida C. Benedetto, describes as a magic circle, “the invisible perimeter between everyday life and an experience where different rules of engagement are at play.”<sup>343</sup> As an example, Benedetto describes playing a card game with a group of friends in which “you might be able to verbally abuse them in ways

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<sup>342</sup> Davis, Wade (1987) *The Serpent and the rainbow*. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins. P151

<sup>343</sup> Benedetto, Ida C. (2017) *The Magic Circle*. [online] Patterns of Transformation: Designing Sex, Death, and Survival in the 21st Century. Available at: <https://patternsoftransformation.com/vocabulary/mc-overview.html> [Accessed 10 Jun. 2019]

that would be considered offensive outside the game.”<sup>344</sup> In my diagram, the magic circle is represented by the *context* square arrow that surrounds the other three elements and holds them together. All four elements were integral to the projects, and they needed to function together, intersecting and influencing one another. Like the magic circle, the elements were invisible to the participant, and they needed to remain invisible to be effective. In this sense, they acted like a cloaking device allowing participants to engage with the projects outside of the “normal” rules of everyday life and enable them to see the world differently. Now that I have outlined the four elements contained within my methodologies, I will discuss how they manifested in my practice-based research.

## 5.4 How Methodologies Manifested in Practice

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All of the projects I created were designed to create *space and time* for discussion. This discussion should be understood both in the sense of *conversation*, seen as the creative part of artworks discussed in Chapter 2, and in relation to *dialogue* as a method of practice-based research, as discussed above. Discussion was prompted using participatory methods, which predominately took place with an audience or participants, but also took place between myself as the artist and researcher, oscillating between states. It is important to stress that all discussion was a two-way dialogue. My aim was to create space that could cultivate a similar mix criticism and tolerance that accrues in friendship.<sup>345</sup> I deliberately did not present myself in the position of an expert that was imparting knowledge. I learned as much, if not more, from the people who engaged with my projects. The projects provided a space for me to listen to participants views and opinions which acted as a consciousness raising experience for me, and hopefully for participants as well.

*Space and time* for discussion between participants and myself (*being present*) was created within exhibitions, interventions in public space and events. I also attempted to create *space and time* for discussion without *being present* through printed materials and filmmaking.

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<sup>344</sup> Benedetto, Ida C. (2017) *The Magic Circle*. [online] Patterns of Transformation: Designing Sex, Death, and Survival in the 21st Century. Available at: <https://patternsoftransformation.com/vocabulary/mc-overview.html> [Accessed 10 Jun. 2019]

<sup>345</sup> Lee, Joanne (2014) *Nine Rather Disconnected Paragraphs: on mental health, capitalism, creative education and the politics of friendship*. In: Lloyd & Wilson, ed., *37 Pieces of Flair*. Newcastle: The NewBridge Project. P8 [http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/PDF/37\\_Pieces\\_Newspaper.pdf](http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/PDF/37_Pieces_Newspaper.pdf) [Accessed 10 Feb. 2020]

Similar to the methods used by artists discussed in the *participatory arts practice* chapter, my projects did not consist of single works but were made up of a multifaceted array of elements, which gave audiences and potential participants, multiple opportunities for engagement.<sup>346</sup> The multifaceted nature of the projects meant that they could co-exist in more than one context and cross contextual boundaries. The projects, and their individual elements, were designed to sit comfortably in the context of an art gallery but would also not look out of place in more vernacular contexts, like a pub or community centre, for example. The artworks were created through an iterative approach meaning that interactions I had with participants, along with other research I conducted, was fed into the design and content of future projects. This process also functioned as a way for me to analyse the research I had done and enabled me to reflect on and develop the methodologies I used throughout the research. For example, the methods for engaging participants from *Between Eating and Sleeping* (9.3) were honed for *Paint By Numbers* (9.8) to be more effective and provide more points for engagement and participation.



Figure 5.4: Lloyd & Wilson - *Convention, Habit or Custom* (2013). The NewBridge Project, Newcastle. Photo: James Sebright

<sup>346</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso: London. p6

Before I go into detail of the specific approaches, I would like to briefly reflect on where they emerged from. The foundations of my methodologies were developed as part of collaborative practice of Lloyd & Wilson and the *Artist House 45* residency, described in the introduction. Lloyd & Wilson utilised the context of the pub to create frameworks and build environments that encourage others to communicate with one another in order to open up shared and conflicting experiences of everyday life<sup>347</sup> (*space and time*). We recognised that the pub was unlike other social institutions in that once you have entered and bought or been bought a drink, you have entered an environment in which you are a participant rather than a spectator.<sup>348</sup> Using the context of the pub helped to encourage participation and discussion, as the sociologist Kate Fox observed, the pub is one of the few places in the UK where it is acceptable to strike up a conversation with a stranger.<sup>349</sup> Our aim was to flatten social hierarchies and suspend the normal rules and etiquette of other environments, particularly art galleries which Thomas McEvilley compared to a church in which, “one does not speak in a normal voice; one does not laugh, eat, drink, lie down, or sleep; one does not get ill, go mad, sing, dance, or make love.”<sup>350</sup> This was achieved by building fabricated public house installations inside art galleries and other contexts (figure 5.4). These installations were used as a platform for holding events and activities, including philosophy discussions, a daily breakfast club<sup>351</sup> and panel discussions around the bar where the bartender acted as the facilitator.<sup>352</sup> Using the context of the public house and the social dynamics associated with it allowed us to create new methods of engagement in which everyone who entered became a participant rather than a spectator. This ethos manifested in other works that we created and has been a strong influence on the projects I have developed over the course of the PhD. In my practice-based research, bridging the gap between spectatorship and

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<sup>347</sup> Lloyd & Wilson (2013) *About*. Lloyd-Wilson.co.uk. [online] Available at: <http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/about.html> [Accessed 12 Feb. 2019]

<sup>348</sup> Mass Observation (1970) *The Pub and The People*, Welwyn Garden City: Seven Dials Press Ltd. P17

<sup>349</sup> Fox, Kate (2004) *Watching the English: the hidden rules of English behaviour*. London: Hodder. P89

<sup>350</sup> McEvilley, Thomas (1986) *Introduction* in B. O'Doherty *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. Santa Monica, San Francisco, USA: The Lapis Press. P10

<sup>351</sup> Lloyd & Wilson (2013) *Convention, Habit or Custom*. The NewBridge Project, Newcastle upon Tyne [http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/convention\\_habit\\_custom\\_events.html](http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/convention_habit_custom_events.html)

As part of the events programme for *Convention, Habit or Custom*, we opened the gallery every weekend morning between 7 - 9am for Tea and Toast. This was one of the busiest events we had during the two-week exhibition.

<sup>352</sup> Lloyd & Wilson - *EU Broadcast Bartender* (2015) Patrick Studios, Leeds [http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/eu\\_broadcast\\_bartender.html](http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/eu_broadcast_bartender.html)

participation was largely achieved by posing *open questions* and *being present* so that I could respond and interact to viewers when they engaged with the work.

Now that I have given some background to where my approaches emerged, I will outline how they were utilised and intersected with the four elements of the Methodologies Venn Diagram.

### Interactive Exhibitions

The exhibitions were presented in a variety of settings, in both art and non-art spaces. They invited participation by posing open questions and providing several frameworks for people to respond to them. These included printed materials which could be filled in and added to the exhibition. In many of the exhibitions I gave myself a task, painting the project's questions onto the walls of the space for example (figure 5.5), which meant that I could be present and available to talk to participants about their responses to the questions. Carrying out these tasks acted as a form of durational performance and method to start conversations around my research themes, particularly what is understood as work and how time is valued. The exhibitions were also used to host other activities including workshops, public discussions and collaborative performances. See project portfolio 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.7 and 9.9 for examples.

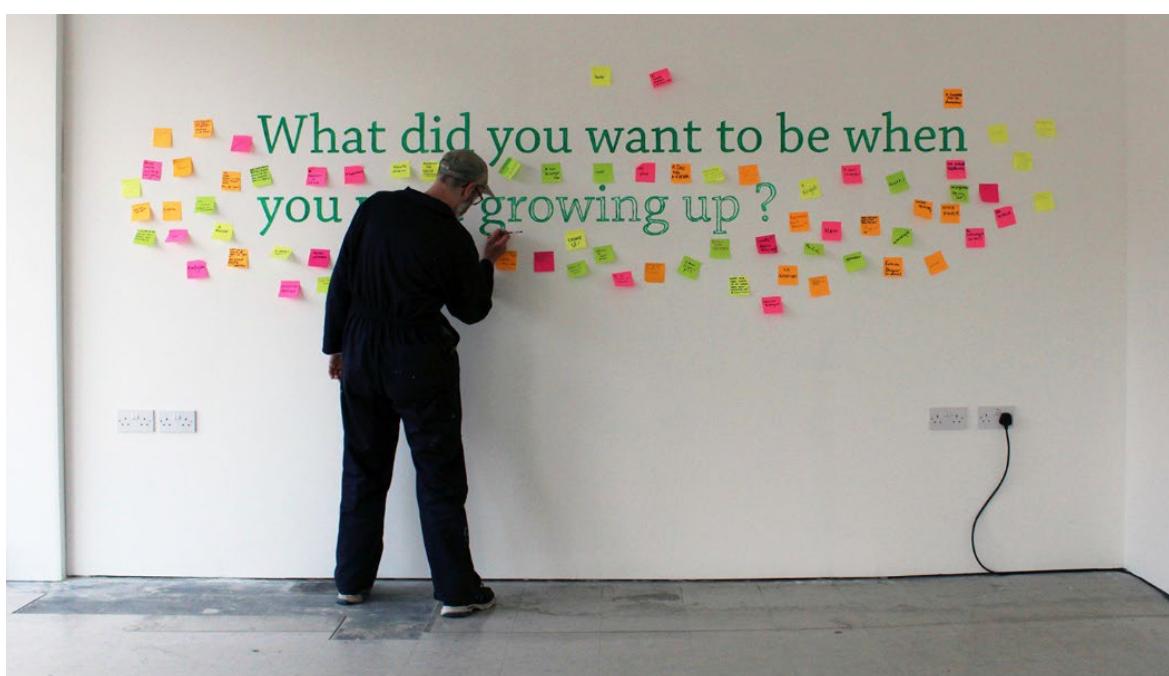


Figure 5.5: *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2018) The NewBridge Project, Gateshead.

## Printed Materials

The printed materials manifested in a range of formats including posters, newspapers, and zines.<sup>353</sup> They acted as tools to provoke discussion outside and within of the context of exhibition spaces. Many of the printed materials contained short texts, ranging between 350 - 3000 words, that used playful and accessible language. This enabled me to present the research I had conducted to audiences and potential participants in a digestible form. In this sense, the printed materials fell into the blue segment of Hope's colour wheel, as the research was embedded in the outcome. The printed materials also acted as a method for gathering data. They were designed to be interactive, inviting readers to become a participant rather than a spectator, providing opportunities for them to contribute to the research and respond to the project's open questions. The printed materials could also be experienced outside of the exhibition context and acted as signposts back to the projects, so that new audiences who had not experienced the exhibition context could be drawn into the research and new lines of inquiry could emerge. An example of this is the *Which currency is more valuable: Time or Money?* beer mats (figure 5.5) which also doubled as a business card.

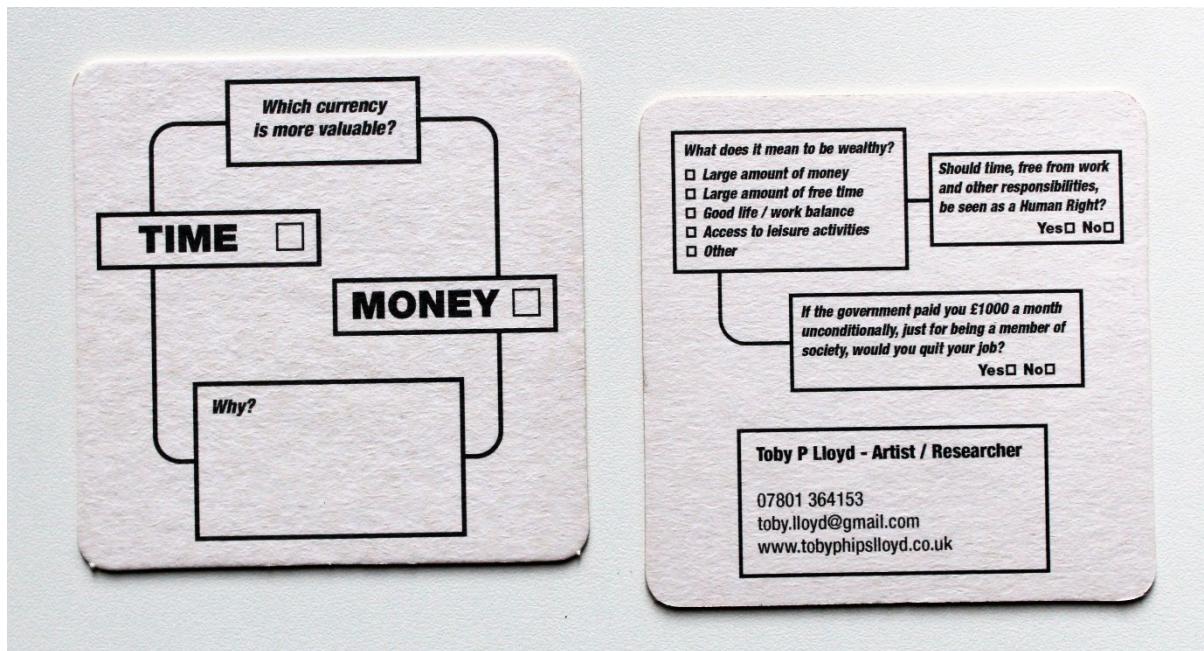


Figure 5.6: *Which currency is more valuable?* (2019) beer mats

<sup>353</sup> A zine (pronounced zeen) is an independently or self-published booklet. <https://blog.flipsnack.com/what-is-a-zine/>

## Filmmaking

The films that I made during the PhD followed a similar method as the texts in printed materials. Their aim was to present my research in an easily digestible way and to stimulate discussion with participants. Both the films and printed materials allowed me to present a multitude of ideas and perspectives simultaneously. In the films this was done by a method of moving collage that used speech, text and images that floated in and out of the screen (figure 5.8), creating juxtapositions and new meanings when elements were placed together. When experienced within the exhibition context, the films enabled participants to engage with the project without having to talk to me. This meant that they could think about and process the themes that the project explored from a safe distance, and then approach me, if and when they felt comfortable. Both the films and printed materials acted as a route to participation by providing an entry point into the research within the context of the exhibition. Outside of this context, on social media for example, they acted as signposts to the wider project. (Examples of films can be found in the project portfolio 9.3 and 9.6).



Figure 5.7: *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2017) Newcastle University installation photograph

The printed materials and films were also a method for folding data and experiences gathered during the exhibitions back into practice-based research (as outlined in the purple approach of Hope's colour wheel). For example, the *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2018) video took responses from the first *Between Eating and Sleeping* exhibition in 2017 (see figure 5.7) and presented them back to new audiences, online and in further exhibitions. The film used the text from the project's printed material as a script and built on it by adding responses from participants and images to provide more depth and new layers of meaning to the original text. This allowed new audiences from a wide range of contexts to respond to the research, broadening it out and developing my thinking.

Creating the films and printed materials was a method for me to analyse interactions I had with participants and other written contributions they made, along with other research I conducted. The conversations I had with participants during the *Between Eating and Sleeping* exhibitions directly influenced the development of *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones? Part One* video and printed material (see project portfolio 9.6). For example, several participants I spoke to stated that they felt that going to work and paying taxes was how they contributed to society. However, they also felt that other activities they did, like caring for children and friends, were more valuable to them, and were frustrated that these activities were not seen as a contribution to society. Creating *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones? Part One*, enabled me to process these interactions and present them back to future audiences and participants in a form that they could respond to.



Figure 5.8: *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2018) video still

## Collaboration

Over the course of the research, I invited other artists and musicians to respond to the research and projects I created. This acted as another form of dialogue and a method to fold back and analysis research that was gathered into the practice-based research to create new artworks and open new lines of enquiry. I saw the interactive exhibitions as a form of collaboration. Audience members and participants became collaborators by contributing to the projects and research. However, this was a closed form of collaborative production in the sense that I had designed a framework which I invited participants to respond to. They had the freedom to contribute what they wanted, but within the parameters that I had set. In *Between Eating and Sleeping* this was by writing answers to the project's questions on post it notes and adding them to the collection of responses. Once I had gathered a large bank of data in the form of responses to the *Between Eating and Sleeping* questions, I invited other artists and musicians to respond to them, to broaden out the research and to open other routes of investigation by injecting uncertainty back into the project. This resulted in several one-off musical performances by Andy Abbott and Bradford Scratch Orchestra (see project portfolio 9.3). The process of invitation also led to a longer-term collaboration with Yol and Posset (figure 5.9) which was more co-productive in nature as we all had an equal role in developing and making work together. This started as a direct response to the *Between Eating and Sleeping* project but moved into new territory and

resulted in the creation of an improvised performance band, *Yol/Posset/Lloyd*, that released several recordings<sup>354</sup> and created an exhibition.<sup>355</sup> This collaboration was a way for me to leave the “door open for the unknown”<sup>356</sup> and helped me to explore themes that I would not have otherwise uncovered and engaged new audiences that I would not have encountered by myself. At times, this method of research appeared to sit outside of my main research methodology, but it feed back into the process and made a valuable contribution to my thinking in a similar way to the volunteering and activism work I engaged in.



Figure 5.9: Yol / Lloyd / Posset performance (2018) The NewBridge Project, Gateshead. Photo: Simon J. James

It is important to stress that I consider the outcomes from all of these approaches (zines, posters, films and performances) to be artworks in their own right, at the same time as functioning as prompts for discussion and signposts to the larger projects that they were part of.

<sup>354</sup> Yol/Lloyd/Posset (2020) *Live At The Horse Improvised Music Club*. Sound Holes - Live Editions <https://sndhlslive.bandcamp.com/album/live-at-the-horse-improvised-music-club>

<sup>355</sup> *Between Gas Canisters and Personal Identity Lanyards* (2019) BasementArtsProject, Leeds <https://www.basementartsproject.com/between-gas-canisters-and-personal-identity>

<sup>356</sup> Solnit, Rebecca (2009) *A field guide to getting lost*. Edinburgh: Canongate. P6

Now that I have described my approach to practice-based research and how this manifested in my projects and methodologies, the following chapters will focus on key projects and how they address my primary research questions. A full list of all the work I created during the research, including links to PDFs of printed materials and films, can be found in the project portfolio.

## CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH QUESTION 1 - PARTICIPATORY ARTS PRACTICE, ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND A POST-WORK SOCIETY

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*How can participatory arts practice engage with issues of active citizenship and re-evaluate current relationships to work and inform understandings of a post-work society?*

The terms *active citizenship* and *post-work society* represent alternatives to concepts in society that are currently viewed, under Neoliberal Capitalism, as fixed. A structural, but largely invisible way that Neoliberalism influences society is through employment, as the way we work is a fundamental feature of Capitalism.<sup>357</sup> In this chapter I will argue that participatory arts practice can challenge Capitalist Realism's claim that *there is no alternative*,<sup>358</sup> by creating the *space and time* for alternatives to be imagined and developed so that they can become a reality. Designers Michelle O'Higgins and Kaiya Waerea believe creative practice can be used to establish temporal realities where fictional visions of the future can be formed. They insist that these should not just be used to describe a fantasy that can provide a momentary escape, but to design "fictions that allow you to touch your feet down and begin to navigate."<sup>359</sup> These fictions can enable the imagination to expand beyond daydreaming and be used to build the foundations for concrete alternatives. Indeed, art needs to be recognised as a form of "experimental activity" that overlaps with the world.<sup>360</sup> This means that participatory art can interact with the world at the same time as being one step removed, allowing participants to engage with ideas whilst maintaining a critical distance from reality.<sup>361</sup> Claire Bishop stresses that it is not the responsibility of art to implement social change, but that it can be used to start the process or conversation that leads to change in the real world. By using people as a medium, participatory art creates a process of exchange and dialogue that enables participants to have encounters that are both uncomfortable and pleasurable, increasing their capacity to imagine the world

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<sup>357</sup> Horgan, Amelia (2021) *Lost in Work: Escaping Capitalism*. London: Pluto Press. P16

<sup>358</sup> Fisher, Mark (2009) *Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative*. London: Zero Books. P8

<sup>359</sup> O'Higgins, Michelle and Waerea, Kaiya (2019) *Materiology, Care and Procrastination: The Future of Practise*. (from *Challenging the Work Society: An Interdisciplinary Summit*. Birkbeck University, London, 27-28<sup>th</sup> September 2019)

<sup>360</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London: Verso. P284

<sup>361</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards A Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P3

differently and experience transformative events. These events can be physically felt but the real shift they cause will take place in our minds. This view is supported by the philosopher and political theorist, Slavoj Žižek, who states that events which act as radical turning points often remain invisible.<sup>362</sup> Each individual will experience events subjectively on different scales and timelines. Tim O’Riley describes how we experience an artwork in a comparable way, stating that we all carry our own worlds around with us.<sup>363</sup> The context, or “set and setting”, that an event or artwork is experienced in, the viewer or participant’s cultural background and personal taste are all important factors in the shaping of the experience of an artwork and, similarly, their interpretation of an event. Žižek observes that in a transformative event, “what changes is the very parameter by which we measure the facts of change, i.e., a turning point changes the entire field within which facts appear.”<sup>364</sup> Participatory arts practice can play a role in interrogating aspects of life that seem fixed or impossible to change by creating temporal realities in which new political imaginaries can emerge.

Mark Fisher stated that culture prefigures political change by challenging the status quo and opening portals to new worlds. He felt that Capitalist Realism had created a psychic infrastructure that normalised the logic of Neoliberalism, inhibiting our social imagination and the ability to conceive alternative ways of living.<sup>365</sup> This psychic infrastructure has been reproduced through cultural forms like music, art and public space, repeating the message that “there is no alternative.” However, it is also possible to challenge Capitalist Realism through these cultural forms. Fisher believed that the *Sex Pistols*, and the Punk bands that followed them, managed to change the world, “not by starting a war or revolution, but intervening in everyday life.”<sup>366</sup> When their single *God Save the Queen* was released in 1977, the same year as Queen Elizabeth II’s silver jubilee, the song caused a rupture in the accepted structure of reality. What was considered impossible up to that point - questioning

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<sup>362</sup> Žižek, Slavoj (2014) *Event*. London, England: Penguin Books. P179

<sup>363</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) *An inaudible dialogue, Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P1

<sup>364</sup> Žižek, Slavoj (2014) *Event*. London: Penguin Books. P179

<sup>365</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) “Time-Wars”. In: D. Ambrose, ed., *k-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P519

<sup>366</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) “Militant Tendencies Feed Music”. In: D. Ambrose, ed., *k-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P383

the position of the Monarchy in British society - suddenly became possible. This led to the tabloid press accusing the band of treason and calling for their public hanging.<sup>367</sup> However, this public outcry only managed to feed the controversy the Sex Pistols had set out to create. Importantly, once they had pushed the boundaries of what was considered conceivable, it became easier for others to push further at the accepted structure of reality without receiving the same level of scrutiny or consequences for their actions.

## 6.1 Language and Word Play

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Joy Kmt states that words exist to define our experience and describe common definitions of reality. In this sense, words are “containers of reality.”<sup>368</sup> When words have agreed upon definitions, they act like facts which have fixed meanings, cutting off the possibility of other unknown realities being formed.<sup>369</sup> In contrast, words with ambiguous or uncertain definitions can create liminal space for the unknown to develop. Language can be used performatively, especially within the context of art, as art does not need to honour reality.<sup>370</sup> The boundaries of meaning and interpretation can be pushed, creating new definitions through word play. This was the intention behind using terms like *active citizenship* and *post-work society* in my research, as a means to create new containers of reality. In his book, *How To Do Things With Words*, J.L. Austin, describes the creative potential of *constative* words, which can be perceived as true or false at the same time, leading to confusion and mistakes. Austin states that:

many traditional philosophical perplexities have arisen through a mistake - the mistake of taking as straightforward statements of fact, utterances which are *either* (in interesting non-grammatical ways) nonsensical *or else* intended as something quite different.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> History.com (2010) *The BBC bans the Sex Pistols’ “God Save the Queen”*. [online] Available at: <https://www.history.com>this-day-in-history/the-bbc-bans-the-sex-pistols-god-save-the-queen> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2021]

<sup>368</sup> Kmt, J. (2015) Creating Worlds. In: R. Phillips, ed., *Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice Volume One*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Middletown, DE: Afropfuturist Affair. P49

<sup>369</sup> Kmt, J. (2015) Creating Worlds. In: R. Phillips, ed., *Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice Volume One*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Middletown, DE: Afropfuturist Affair. P50

<sup>370</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards a Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P24

<sup>371</sup> Austin, J.L. (1975) *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. P3

My intention of using the phrase *post-work society* was to create a similar effect for readers of the thesis and participants of my projects, by making them question what they have read and requiring them to think deeper on the subject. The term may seem nonsensical or weird but meaning and reasoning can still be inferred relatively easily. Fisher describes the notion of the weird, as creating a “sense of wrongness” which highlights that we have been presented with something new.<sup>372</sup> In this sense, *post-work society* acts as a new container of reality, pointing to the unknown and signals that “the concepts and frameworks which we have previously employed are now obsolete.”<sup>373</sup> In doing this I intended to harness the potential of utopian reasoning as a site for speculative thinking and creation of, what Ernst Bloch describes as the “Not-Yet-Become” and “Not-Yet-Conscious” that “taps a reservoir of social and political desire” orientated towards the future, which is the opposite to Freud’s unconscious which looks to the past and is filled with the “forgotten and repressed.”<sup>374</sup> By using the term *Luxury Communism*, Fisher and Thorn aimed to access this “social and political desire” through word play, which is what I believe Thomas More intended when he created the original term *Utopia*, “...which could sound like *outopos* or *eutopos*, meaning either no place or good place...”.<sup>375</sup>

By creating a new word, with an inconclusive meaning, More generated a similar affect to Austin’s description of a *constative* word, an utterance which has given rise to many philosophical perplexities. By pointing to no place and a good place, the term *Utopia* has the potential to do what Graham Harman describes as, “the production or destruction of *gaps* in the cosmos.”<sup>376</sup> These gaps, between no place and a good place, are spaces for our imagination to fill with new desires and ideas that can be alternatives to the status quo. This is what Weeks describes as the “distinctive coupling of negation and affirmation that characterises the form” of utopian thinking and which makes it so appealing to me. Utopianism, like art, can be performative and have a “critical distance from reality” enabling

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<sup>372</sup> Fisher, Mark (2016) *The Weird and Eerie*. London: Repeater Books. P15

<sup>373</sup> Fisher, Mark (2017) *This Does Not Belong*. Time's Flow Stemmed. [online] Available at: <https://timesflowstemmed.com/2017/01/22/this-does-not-belong/> [Accessed 18 Jan 2020]

<sup>374</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P190

<sup>375</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P250

<sup>376</sup> Harman, Graham (2012) *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*. London: Zero Books. P2

it to ask: “why can’t it be like *this* instead?”<sup>377</sup>, without needing to describe how this would be achieved. This means that the imagination does not become inhibited and can expand beyond what is perceived as realistic or pragmatic and unlike political discourse that needs to be grounded in reality. As Weeks describes:

In contrast to the more familiar modes of political theory that present explicit evaluations of specific institutions or social regimes, which the reader is then expected to accept or reject, utopian forms tend to invite the reader to engage in the practice of comparative analysis and participate in the process of critical reflection. ... The performative quality of the provocation function is both more pronounced than it is in other genres, and is also more important to recognise in that it allows us to see the Utopia in a new light, “to grasp it”.<sup>378</sup>

The projects I developed during the research were intended to perform a similar function, by creating a platform for participants to engage with issues of *active citizenship*, re-evaluate relationships to *work* and generate understandings of a *post-work society*, without needing to form definitive conclusions. Using participatory art practice meant that participants could use this “experimental activity” to engage with difficult subject matter that pushed them outside of their comfort zones without the consequences of experiencing these situations in real life.<sup>379</sup> The intention of the projects was to provide space for critical conjecture that would have a similar effect to utopian thinking that Weeks describes as “source of provocation as well as estrangement.”<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Watson, Mike (2015) *Towards a Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P5

<sup>378</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P206

<sup>379</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London: Verso. P284

<sup>380</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P206

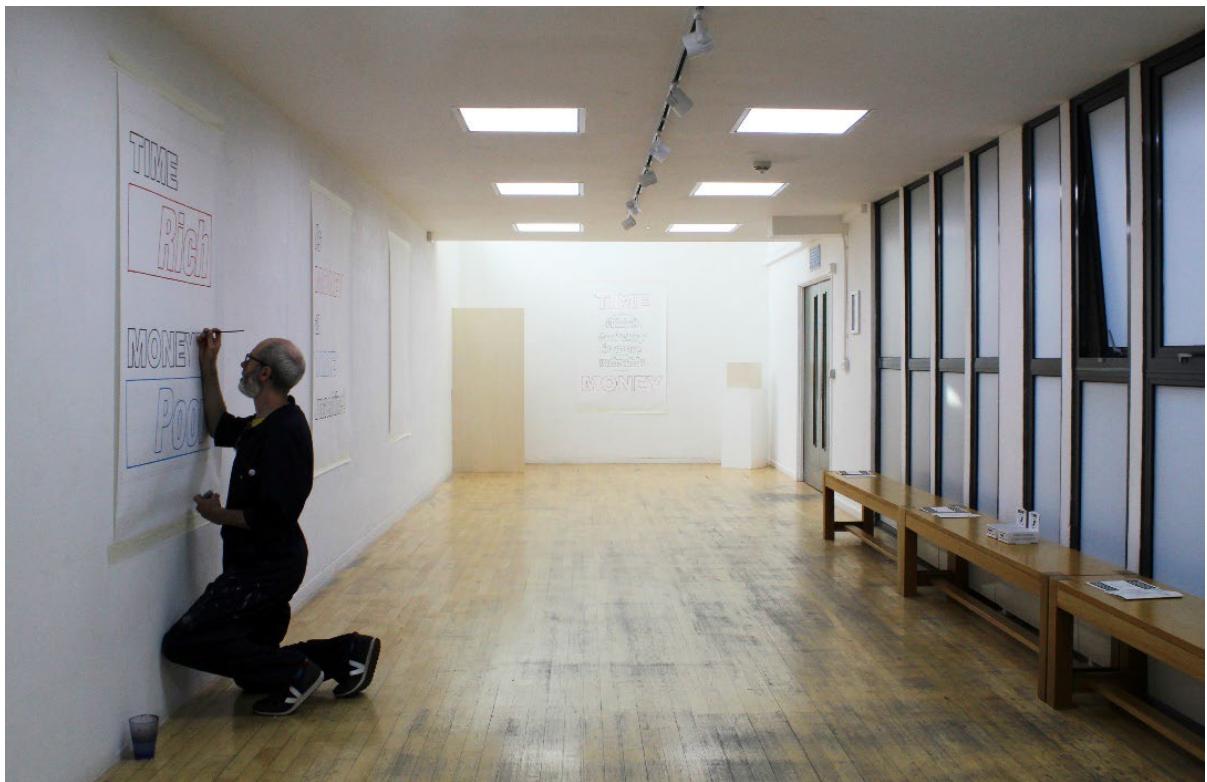


Figure 6.1: *Paint by Numbers* (2019) Installation photograph

Language and word play were a key factor in the artworks that I made during the PhD research. All the projects used a combination of text and images to create frameworks and situations that could prompt conversation. This was primarily done by posing questions that invite participation and the opportunity to think about subjects from a different perspective. In a similar way to Bill Drummond's work discussed in chapter 2, I saw conversation as the creative part of the practice and believe that an important aspect of the work took place in the thoughts of participants, and the conversations they had between themselves and others. My role as an artist, was to create the situations (*space and time, and context*) that allowed these conversations to take place. *Being present* in the exhibition space meant that I could contribute to and facilitate these conversations where necessary. However, I was careful not to present myself as an expert in the topics that were discussed, as I wanted to learn as much from the participants as possible by listening to their point of view and opinion. If I had a role, other than artist and researcher, it was as a custodian who took responsibility of taking care of those who participated in the projects.

In this chapter I will focus on my project *Paint by Numbers* (2019) but will make comparisons with my other projects and the work of other artists, to highlight how my methods were

adapted and honed over the course of the research. *Paint by Numbers* was presented in a variety of settings (see project portfolio 9.8), but for most of this discussion I will examine the context in which it was first shown; the Long Gallery, in the Fine Art Department at Newcastle University (figure 6.1 and 6.2). The exhibition space was effectively a wide corridor that connects the two buildings that form the Fine Art department. The project was shown alongside the Master of Fine Art (MFA) degree show, which meant it had a specific or “exclusive audience” (those coming to see the MFA students’ work), but due to the location in the building there was high footfall, meaning that the project was able to engage a “non-exclusive public, ...the opposite of a pre-determined, selected, and initiated public.”<sup>381</sup> This included university staff (academics, technicians, cleaners, porters) and others from outside the institution, such as delivery drivers, sub-contracted electricians, and other trades people, who might not normally engage in art projects. Through the discussion of *Paint by Numbers*, I will demonstrate how elements of the project were structured, use of language and adapting to space and context, to create alternative spaces for reflection and interrogate agreed upon social norms. Certain aspects of the project are described at length, to emphasize and convey the experiences the project was intended to create for participants who engaged with it.



Figure 6.2: *Paint by Numbers* (2019) Voting booth and Poster. Photograph by Katy Bentham

<sup>381</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2010) *Spectrum of Evaluation*. [online] Thomashirschhorn.com. Available at: <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/spectrum-of-evaluation/> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2021]

## 6.2 Paint by Numbers

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*Paint by Numbers* was designed to intervene in everyday life by causing interruptions in public space that caused a jolt or rupture in the daily routine, making passers-by stop and think. These interruptions were intended to make subjects that affect our lives but normally remain invisible and go unnoticed, suddenly become visible. This was done by posing *open questions* that tested the boundaries of language, specifically questioning the definitions of words and what they represent. For example, “Which currency is more valuable: Time or Money?” By referring to both *Time* and *Money* as a currency, the aim was to create uncertainty around two terms that appear to have fixed meanings. This created a gap in their common-sense interpretations, in a similar way that Harman describes Plato was able to achieve with the *Allegory of the cave* where he “created a gap between the intelligible forms of the perfect world and the confusing shadows of opinion.”<sup>382</sup> The confusion this causes is a form of friction which forces us to challenge our opinions and re-evaluate them. In *Paint by Numbers* the question was presented as a polling card (figure 6.4) with a binary choice format. This presented a fork in the road, that forced participants to stop and consider their response. Many told me that they felt that this was an impossible choice to make, which was the response I wanted the question to produce. This moment of not having an answer could be described as being left speechless, which is the condition that Donna Haraway believes good and critical thinking can take place.<sup>383</sup> When we do not have an immediate answer to the question, we are forced to contemplate why this is the case. The polemic nature of the question, and the emotional response it intended to produce, worked in contrast to surveys which use the *Likert scale* that gives the reader a spectrum of options from: “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”.<sup>384</sup> By offering a spectrum of choices, the Likert scale aims to gather more reasoned and less emotionally charged responses, but this can have had a neutralising effect that produces ambivalence, leading to “neither agree nor disagree” responses to all the questions. The purpose of my poll was to create friction by generating an emotional response that could lead to further discussion and deeper thinking on the subject posed by the question. Ultimately, the strength of any survey will be

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<sup>382</sup> Harman, Graham (2012) *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*. London: Zero Books. P2

<sup>383</sup> *Donna Haraway: Story Telling for Earthly Survival*. (2017). [film] Belgium: Fabrizio Terranova. (43:30)

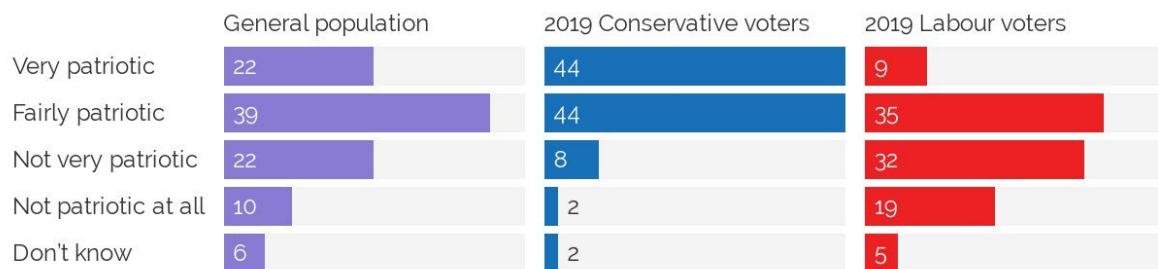
<sup>384</sup> Bernstein, Ira. H. (2005) *Likert scale*. *Science Direct*. [online] Available at:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/likert-scale> [Accessed on 16 Jan. 2021]

down to the questions that it poses. My question was not intended to offer certainty but to provide an opportunity to view the world from a different perspective.<sup>385</sup>

## Half of 2019 Labour voters describe themselves as not very patriotic, or not patriotic at all

Regarding the UK, how patriotic would you say you are? %



YouGov®

3 February 2021

Figure 6.3: YouGov Poll results

In contrast to the intention behind my question, the headline attached to this YouGov poll (figure 6.3) indicates that the results it produced could be used to draw a decisive conclusion; that Labour voters are unpatriotic.<sup>386</sup> What is missing from the poll is a definition of the word “patriotic”. Over recent years, the term patriotism has increasingly been interpreted as a form of Nationalism, and a blind belief in the UK’s superiority that can border on racism, rather than a general sense of pride in being British (or English). Also missing from the poll was the opportunity for those responding to it to express their understanding of patriotism or why they voted in the way that they did. It is important to observe that this poll was conducted during a period of fierce culture wars between those on the Left and Right of the political spectrum. Left wing activists were accused of being Anti-British and attempting to “Photoshop Britain’s cultural landscape”, because they wanted to re-examine the nation’s history and have a debate about its actions during

<sup>385</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “An Inaudible Dialogue”, *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006.P6

<sup>386</sup> YouGov (2021) *Regarding the UK, how patriotic would you say you are?* YouGov.co.uk [online] Available at: [https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/survey-results/daily/2021/02/03/ad51f/1?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=website\\_article&utm\\_campaign=DA\\_3\\_Feb\\_2021\\_1](https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/survey-results/daily/2021/02/03/ad51f/1?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=website_article&utm_campaign=DA_3_Feb_2021_1) [Accessed 13 Mar. 2021]

colonialism.<sup>387</sup> The reason I have included this YouGov poll is to highlight what my project was aiming to avoid. The results of the YouGov poll seemingly offer certainty that could be used to settle a debate, but in fact it had a polarising effect which was further inflamed by not providing a platform to resolve the friction it had caused. In contrast, my question intended to prompt participants to think philosophically about the project's themes, challenge their understandings of the meaning of the words, time and money, and the reality that they are used to describe. To push at the boundaries of words that act as "containers of reality" and open liminal space for new interpretations to emerge.<sup>388</sup>

My use of the binary question was to force the viewer to make a choice, which some found impossible to do. By including a box to explain their reasons for making this choice, I gave them the opportunity to process their decision, which I hoped would help them (and me) to better understand their response. The option to explain "why" also acted as another opportunity to challenge their decision and one that was potentially impossible to resolve - which was the point. The exhibition created space and time to explore their response further, and enable them to "see, smell, feel and hear that everything that is can also always be different."<sup>389</sup> This was why *Being Present* in the gallery was so important, so that I could talk to participants about their responses. I found that these follow up conversations were far more revealing than the initial answers to the project's questions. By talking through their thought process (or thinking out loud), participants could contemplate and examine their view in new ways.

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<sup>387</sup> Cockroft, S (2020) *Boris Johnson vows to 'resist' attempts to remove Winston Churchill statue and brands racism charges 'height of lunacy'*. [online] Evening Standard. Available at:

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/boris-johnson-winston-churchill-statue-a4468906.html> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2020]

<sup>388</sup> Kmt, J. (2015) *Creating Worlds*. In: R. Phillips, ed., *Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice Volume One*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Middletown, DE: Afropfuturist Affair. p49

<sup>389</sup> Gielen, Pascal (2015) *Performing the Common City*. In: Editors: S. Bax, P. Gielen, B. Ieven, ed., *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis. P278



Figure 6.4: Polling cards and voting box, Tate Exchange (2020)

Several participants told me that they wished the referendum on whether the UK should remain in the European Union held in 2016, had included a similar mechanism to express the reason why a vote to Leave or Remain had been made: “*We wouldn’t be in this mess if they’d put a “why” box on the ballot paper.*”<sup>390</sup> It was not my intention for the polling card and voting booth to ape the style of the 2016 referendum, but as Brexit was so present at that time (August - September 2019), comparisons were impossible to avoid. The binary choice of “Leave” or “Remain” meant that nuance was lost or could be obscured and continues to be in current debates. This highlights the importance of the questions that we ask. From years of experience in direct action movements, which made decisions through a process of consensus, the anthropologist David Graeber states that - if you get a 50/50 split in a vote with neither side willing to consent, then you’ve asked the wrong question.<sup>391</sup> The EU referendum managed to divide the UK and create new fault lines or possibly expose already existing but hidden divisions. Voters were able to project their own image of what the result would mean, and politicians capitalised on this by promising they could “take back control”, without specifying what this would actually look like. This ambiguity functioned in a similar way to the use of the term patriotic in the poll above (figure 6.3). The purpose of

<sup>390</sup> Participant of *Paint by Numbers* in Long Gallery, Newcastle University exhibition August 2019

<sup>391</sup> Graeber, David (2019) *David Graeber: Bullshit Jobs, Direct Democracy & the End of Capitalism*. [podcast] Novara Media. Available at: <https://novaramedia.com/2019/02/01/david-graeber-bullshit-jobs-direct-democracy-the-end-of-capitalism/> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2020]

my binary question was not to create division between two opposing sides, but rather to start conversations that could reflect on the similarities there were between the two choices.

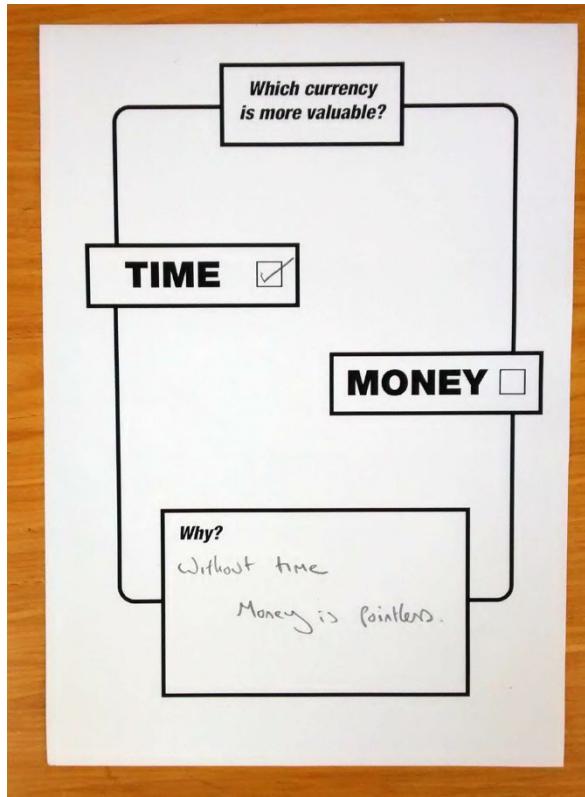


Figure 6.5

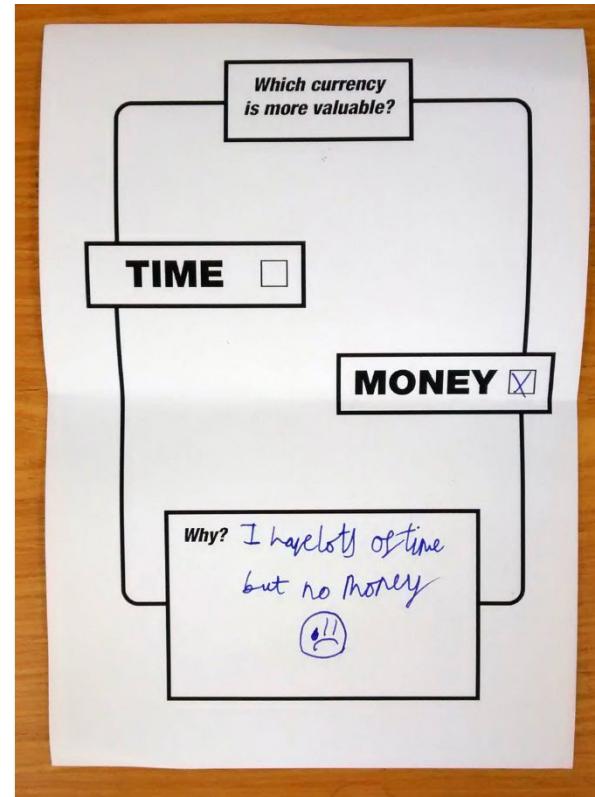


Figure 6.6

Commonalities can be seen in the responses of the two ballot papers above, that voted differently (figure 6.5 & 6.6), as the reasons for voting for time or money are affectively two sides of the same coin (excuse the pun).

Time - "Without time, money is pointless"

Money - "I have lots of time but no money"

These ballots (figure 6.5 & 6.6) reflect the recurring theme that came up in my conversations with visitors. Almost everyone I spoke to said that *Time* was the most valuable currency. This was because *Time* is finite, and so it is our most valuable resource, but without money, it is difficult to enjoy it. This reflects the results of a survey carried out in America which posed the question: "Which would lead to greater happiness — money or

time?” Of the 4,415 people they asked, 64% said money. The survey also measured the respondent’s levels of happiness and life satisfaction. It took into account respondent’s level of income, the number of hours spent at work and their access to leisure time. Those who said *time* were statistically happier and more satisfied with life than the people who chose *money*. The researchers’ conclusion was:

Unlike those who chose money, who were more likely to be fixated on not having enough, people who chose time focused more on how they would spend it, planning to “spend” on wants rather than needs.<sup>392</sup>

Being able to imagine how you want to spend your time is an important factor in being able to enjoy it. If all your time is spent focused on how to earn or save money, your ability to imagine how else you might spend your time will be restricted. Mark Fisher refers to this situation as suffering from *time poverty* which obstructs the consciousness raising activity needed to do this, “because consciousness raising requires time: a particular mode of time – the time of absorption and care...”.<sup>393</sup> Many of the people I spoke to during the exhibition who chose *Time* said that they did not need to worry about money. Since they were financially secure, they have the time for “absorption and care” which meant they could imagine what they want to do with their time or worry that their *Time* was running out.

As the responses on the polling cards above (figure 6.5 & 6.6) suggest, having lots of money does not necessarily equate to being happy. Research carried out by Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson concludes that levels of happiness are not connected to the size of your bank balance. In their book, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* (2010), Pickett and Wilkinson state that rich people tend to be healthier and happier than poorer members of their own society, but it makes no difference when comparing them with members of another country who have annual incomes twice the size their

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<sup>392</sup> Hershfield, H.E. and Mogilner Holmes, C. (2016) *What Should You Choose: Time or Money?* [online] The New York Times. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/opinion/sunday/what-should-you-choose-time-or-money.html> [Accessed 15 Nov. 2019]

<sup>393</sup> Fisher, Mark (2017) *Luxury communism: a conversation between Judy Thorne and Mark Fisher*. In: A. Hameed, H. Gunkel, S. O’Sullivan. ed., *Fictions and Futures*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Repeater. P164

own.<sup>394</sup> They state that the highest earners in a wealthy country like the UK are comparably happy and healthy to the highest earners in a much poorer country like Ethiopia. Pickett and Wilkinson put this partly down to how people see themselves in comparison to others in their society and where they come in the social pecking order. Their research shows the factors connected to happiness are scarcity and inequality. These findings were supported by the conversations I had with gallery visitors. Those who did not have much *money* were more likely to say they valued it over *time*, as having more *money* would give them more control over their lives and how they could spend their *time*. Scarcity of time (or time poverty) can impact our behaviour in a similar way to financial poverty. Scarcity mentality narrows our focus on what we immediately lack, reducing our “mental bandwidth” which causes stress and leads us to make bad decisions.<sup>395</sup> *Paint by Numbers*’ central question was designed to challenge participants’ relationship to time and money and invite them to think about these subjects differently. Through the experimental activity of participatory arts practice, it was possible to reflect on how these themes impact on their daily lives in the real world, whilst also being one step removed from it. The binary choice question opened a space for discussion by creating a gap for new interpretations to emerge. Within the space and time that the project created, issues such as active citizenship, understandings of work and a potential post-work society could be discussed with a critical distance from reality, meaning that concrete conclusions did not need to be drawn so that alternative fictions could be explored.

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<sup>394</sup> Pickett, Kate and Wilkinson, Richard (2010) *The Spirit Level: why equality is better for everyone*. New York: Bloomsbury Press. P13

<sup>395</sup> Bregman, Rutger (2016) *Why do the poor make such poor decisions?* The Correspondent. [online] Available at: <https://thecorrespondent.com/4664/why-do-the-poor-make-such-poor-decisions/179307480-39a74caf> [Accessed 16 Nov. 2019]

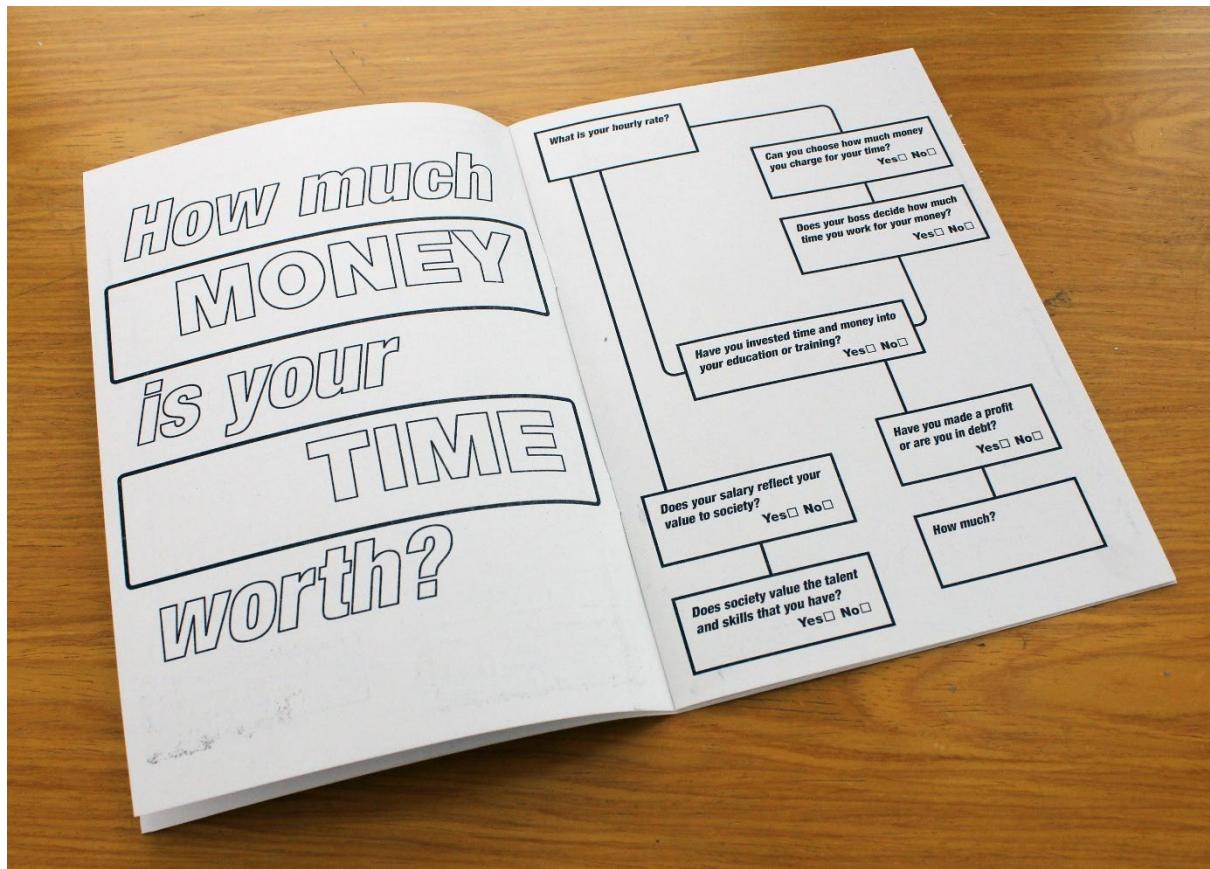


Figure 6.7: *Paint by Numbers* Zine (2019)

### 6.3 Becoming Participants Rather Than Spectators

Developing the approach taken in the polling cards, the zine sought to encourage further interaction and reflection by presenting participants with a series of interactive questions in the form of flowchart diagrams, that acted as a framework for discussion beyond the initial question posed by the project. The zine's method of questioning aimed to reveal the inherent or hidden complications in our behaviour and decision-making processes by throwing doubt on aspects of the participant's life that might appear to be simple and rational at first glance but become more complex when interrogated. This was achieved through subverting the normal function of flowchart diagrams.

The zine format enabled me to provide context to the questions that the posters in the exhibition posed by placing them next to the flowchart diagrams as double page spreads (figure 6.7). Printed materials from previous project's aimed to function in the same way. For example, the *Between Eating and Sleeping* poster had the project's questions on the front, along with a short text on the reverse. The poster was printed on heavy stock, A3

paper and was designed to function as an artwork which people would put up on their wall (see project portfolio 9.3). However, due to the poster's large size, I found that few participants took the posters away with them. This was a further reason for making the *Paint by Numbers* printed material smaller in size (A5) and in a zine format, as it was more manageable for participants to take away with them. (A PDF of the zine can be downloaded from the project website. See project portfolio 9.8).

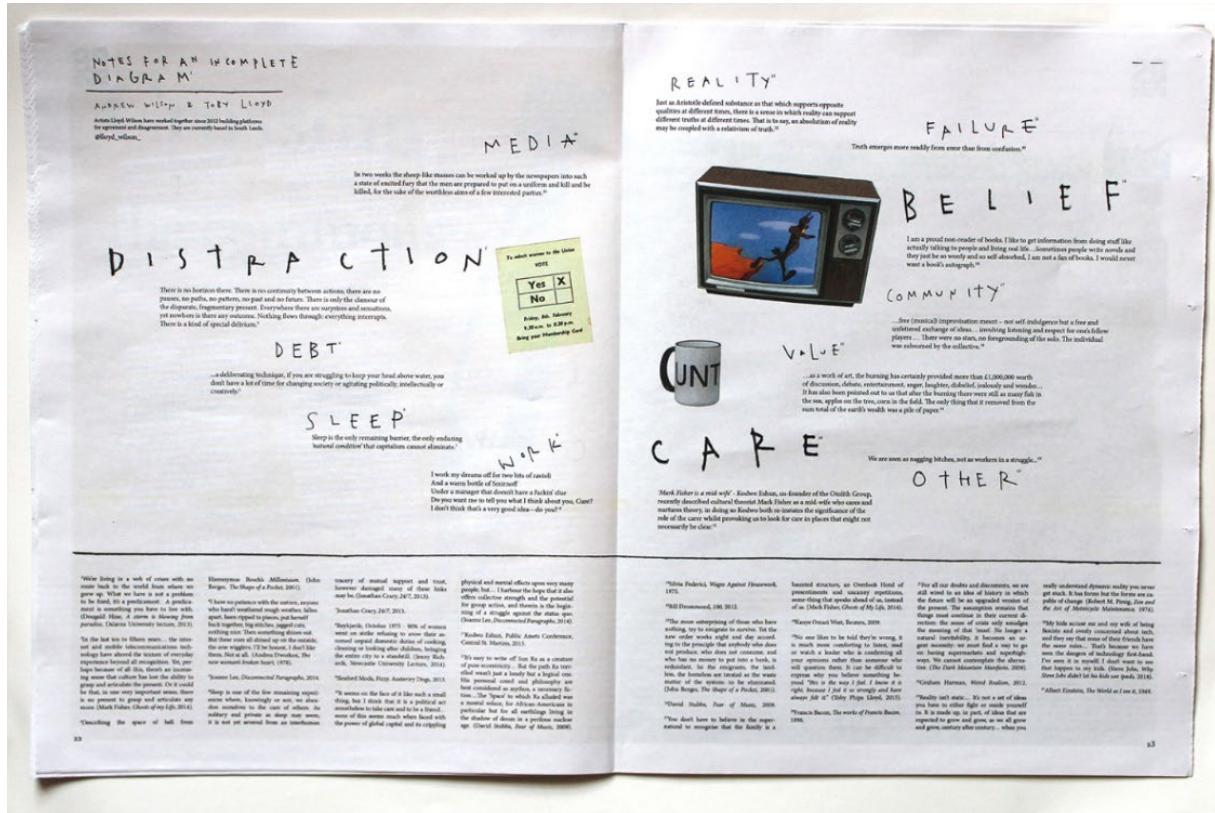


Figure 6.8: Lloyd & Wilson - *Notes on an incomplete diagram* (2015) <sup>396</sup>

The format of the zine was rooted in methods developed as part of Lloyd & Wilson's practice. In 2015 Andrew and I created a series of works under the collective title of *Incomplete Diagrams* (figure 6.8). We referred to these diagrams as *incomplete* because we did not want them to be read as a finished texts or pieces of writing which presented a fixed position or conclusion. Instead, we saw these diagrams as a method to start a conversation, not a means to end one. We wanted the reader to become an active participant in the text, rather than a spectator and were aware that the reader would bring their own interpretation and responses to the work that we could not predict. By labelling the

<sup>396</sup> A high-resolution PDF of this work is available at: [http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/incomplete\\_diagram.html](http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/incomplete_diagram.html)

diagrams as “incomplete” our aim was to encourage the reader to engage in a process of adding new layers to the work. This was achieved through performative word play that could push the boundaries of agreed upon definitions of words so that they could be challenged, and new interpretations or containers of reality could emerge.<sup>397</sup>



Figure 6.9: Lloyd & Wilson - Detail of Notes on an incomplete diagram (2015)

The objective of the *incomplete diagrams* was similar to Raymond Williams' book *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society* (1988), in which he attempted to analyse how language was used to describe common experiences and values, to better understand the impact it had on shaping our shared reality. Williams acknowledged that creating a list of words with conclusive meanings would be impossible, as words, their use and interpretations are

<sup>397</sup> Kmt, J. (2015) *Creating Worlds*. In: R. Phillips, ed., *Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice Volume One*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Middletown, DE: Afrofuturist Affair, P49

shaped and reshaped through their use. He stated that dictionary definitions can be useful for clarification of meaning but they are also limiting, “especially for those which involve ideas and values.”<sup>398</sup> Williams’ book was intended to act as a platform to start conversations about the words we used to describe our common values and test their functionality. To achieve this, it required contributions from other people.

Since the book is only completed when it is read... I am conscious more work and thinking needs to be done. Much of it can only be done through discussion... Which the book is specifically intended [to generate].<sup>399</sup>

Likewise, Lloyd & Wilson’s *incomplete diagrams* and the *Paint by Numbers* zine were not complete until they had been read and interpreted by the reader. In this sense, the audience completed the work by deciphering and interpreting it.<sup>400</sup> Lloyd & Wilson’s *Incomplete Diagrams* presented a series of words and images with quotes placed next to them or connected via footnotes. The quotes in the *Incomplete Diagrams* did not act as definitions, but the starting point for a process that could push at the boundaries of words definitions and interpretations by causing friction. *Notes for an incomplete diagram* (2015) (figure 6.8 & 6.9) did this by presenting 11 words, each with two quotes attached to them. The first quote was placed next to the word, and a second quote presented as a footnote. This meant that juxtapositions could be created by presenting contradictory or conflicting interpretations of the words, which would lead the reader to make new connections and comparisons themselves.<sup>401</sup> This was encouraged by presenting the words and quotes as a constellation, so the text had no obvious start or end point, meaning that the reader had to decide what order to read the text. Similarly, the footnotes were another way of separating out information, and making the reader move back and forth to navigate the text. In this sense, we were manipulating the reader by putting up obstacles for them to navigate and move around in order to read the text. Our aim was to create a similar experience to visiting

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<sup>398</sup> Williams, Raymond (1988) *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Fontana Press.  
P17

<sup>399</sup> Williams, Raymond (1988) *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Fontana Press.  
P25

<sup>400</sup> Duchamp, Marcel (1957) *The Creative Act*. [online] Ubu.com. Available at:  
[https://www.ubu.com/papers/duchamp\\_creative.html](https://www.ubu.com/papers/duchamp_creative.html) [Accessed 10 Aug. 2020]

<sup>401</sup> Williams, Raymond (1988) *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Fontana Press.  
P25

a gallery, where the visitor must negotiate the physical space to view an installation artwork where some elements were only visible from certain viewpoints, and which moving around the installation reveal other hidden elements that give the work more context.

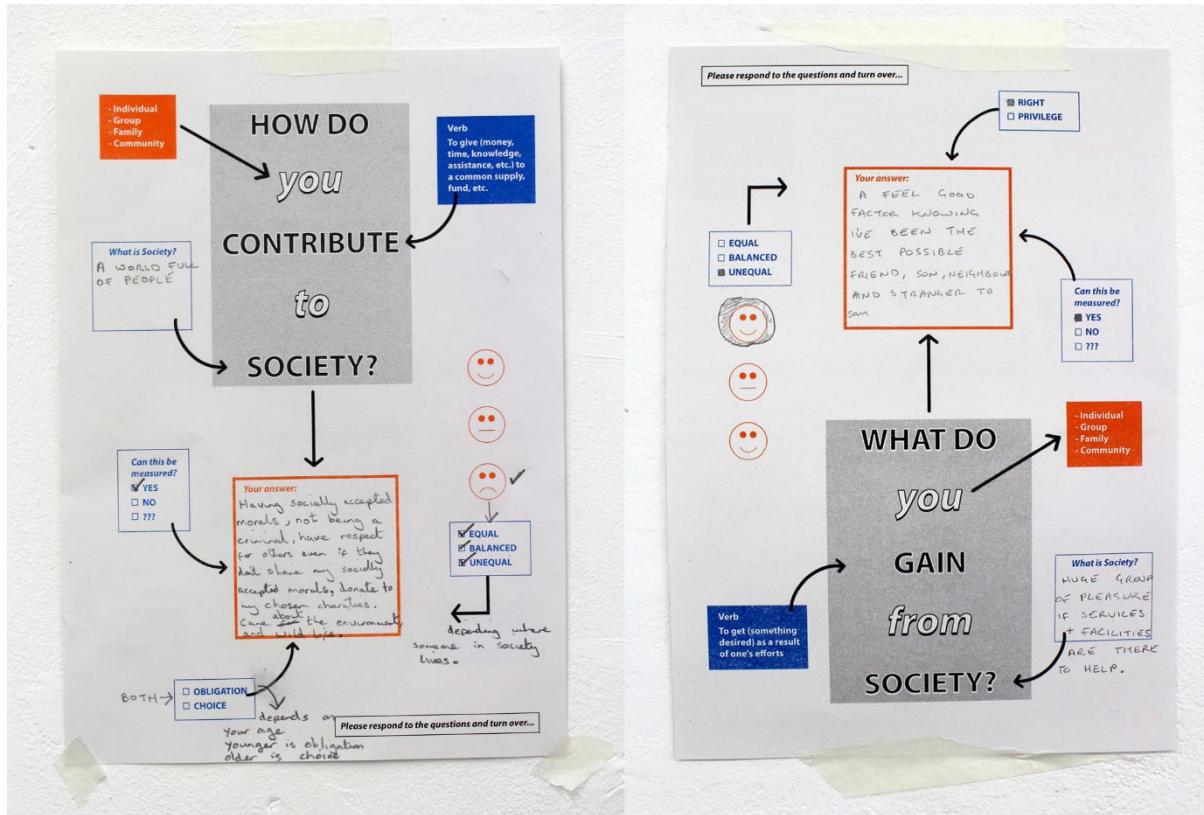


Figure 6.10: *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones?* (2018) Posters with participant responses

A similar method of questioning the interpretation and definition of words was used in the posters from my project *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones?* (2018) which was made the year before *Paint by Numbers* (2019). The posters incorporated an interactive element by including boxes that participants could fill in to respond to several questions including: "How do you contribute to society?" and "What do you gain from society?" The poster included short dictionary definitions of the words "contribute" and "gain", but the definition of "society" was left open for the participant to define (figure 6.10). One participant told me that they initially found the questions patronising, because the answers were so inherently obvious to them. However, when they attempted to quantify their response, they struggled to put their answer into words, which made them reflect on their initial assumptions. This reaction was what the questions were designed to cultivate, creating a sensation or experience of speechlessness that would lead to the

deeper thinking and critical reflection that Haraway describes.<sup>402</sup> The project was designed to explore aspects of participant's lives which normally go unchallenged and to create the space and time to explore the systems and rules which govern them (See project portfolio 9.6). One problem the project faced was that some participants found these questions too difficult to respond to, which inhibited them from engaging with the project and its subject matter further. The *Paint by Numbers* zine attempted to overcome this problem by providing a wider range of questions for participants to respond to and interpret. If one question became a stumbling block, the participant could move on to a different set of questions and start a new train of thought or conversation.



Figure 6.11: *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones?* (2018) Installation photograph

When designing the *Paint by Numbers* project, I attempted to address the elements of *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones?* that could inhibit participation. In the latter, participants were asked to fill in the posters and pin them up on the walls (figure 6.11). This meant that the exhibition developed over the two-week period as more people contributed responses. Participants were able to read the responses of others and reflect on how these contrasted with their own. Some participants told me that they felt uncomfortable doing this, partly because they struggled to respond to the questions (as discussed above) or were uncomfortable about sharing their responses publicly with other

<sup>402</sup> Donna Haraway: *Story Telling for Earthly Survival*. (2017). [film] Belgium: Fabrizio Terranova. (43:30)

exhibition visitors and participants, even though their contributions *could* be anonymous. The inclusion of the voting booth in *Paint by Numbers* exhibition (figure 6.2) enabled participants to respond to the project without having to share their response publicly. The project's central question ("Which currency is more valuable: Time or Money?") was designed to produce an emotional response and prompt a sensation of potential speechlessness, but because it was less direct than "How do you contribute to society?" and could be interpreted in multiple ways, which made it easier for participants to engage with the project. The polling card provided a simple and quick way to respond to the project, while the zine provided a platform for those who wanted to explore the project's themes in a deeper and more comprehensive manner. By presenting the questions in a visual format, the zine invited the reader to move through the text in order to create their own interpretations. This was achieved by adopting a flowchart system in which questions were connected to one another. However, unlike the flowchart, "Lamp doesn't work" (figure 6.12), which was specifically designed to help the reader solve a problem or decision-making process by coming to a clear conclusion, the zine diagrams subverted the assumed logic and clarity associated with flowcharts to reveal the complex nature behind our decision-making processes and beliefs. Instead of providing certainty or conclusions, the diagrams in the zine were intended to leave the participants asking more questions.

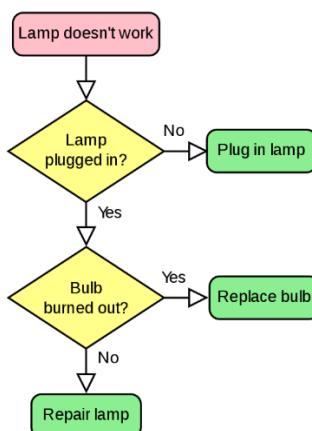


Figure 6.12<sup>403</sup>

<sup>403</sup> A simple flowchart representing a process for dealing with a non-functioning lamp.  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flowchart>

## 6.4 Subverting the Logic of Flowcharts

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This flowchart (figure 6.11) is made up of specific shapes which were designed to make it clear to the reader what the purpose of each section of the chart represents in the step-by-step process, for example, whether it is asking the reader a question (“lamp plugged in?”) or giving them an instruction (“plug in lamp”). The boxes with rounded edges are called “terminals”, they depict the start or end/conclusion of a phase in the process. The diamond shaped boxes show a “decision” point, where the direction of the flow can change, in this case whether the answer is yes or no. I deliberately did not follow a system like this or create my own a series of categorisations. This was to make the zine diagrams ambiguous so participants could interpret them as openly as possible and engage with the content without any prior understandings of flow chart systems. I did not want to create any barriers to how the diagrams would be understood or interacted with. Some participants told me that they were confused when the zine diagrams did not follow the logic that they expected. For example, responding to a question by ticking “Yes”, did not necessarily lead them in a different direction than if they responded by ticking “No”. These participants also said that the confusion they experienced did not inhibit them from answering the questions and working their way through the publication. By breaking the conventional logic of flow charts and including some non-sensical elements into the design of the diagrams, my intention was to introduce a level of uncertainty which could help open new lines of thought and inquiry. If the participant experienced any confusion when reading the zine, I hoped this could lead to new philosophical perplexities emerging.<sup>404</sup> Similar to Lloyd & Wilson’s *Incomplete Diagrams*, the zine diagrams were not intended to present a conclusive opinion or point of view, but to create friction that would make the participant challenge and re-evaluate their opinions.

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<sup>404</sup> Austin, J.L. (1975) *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. P3

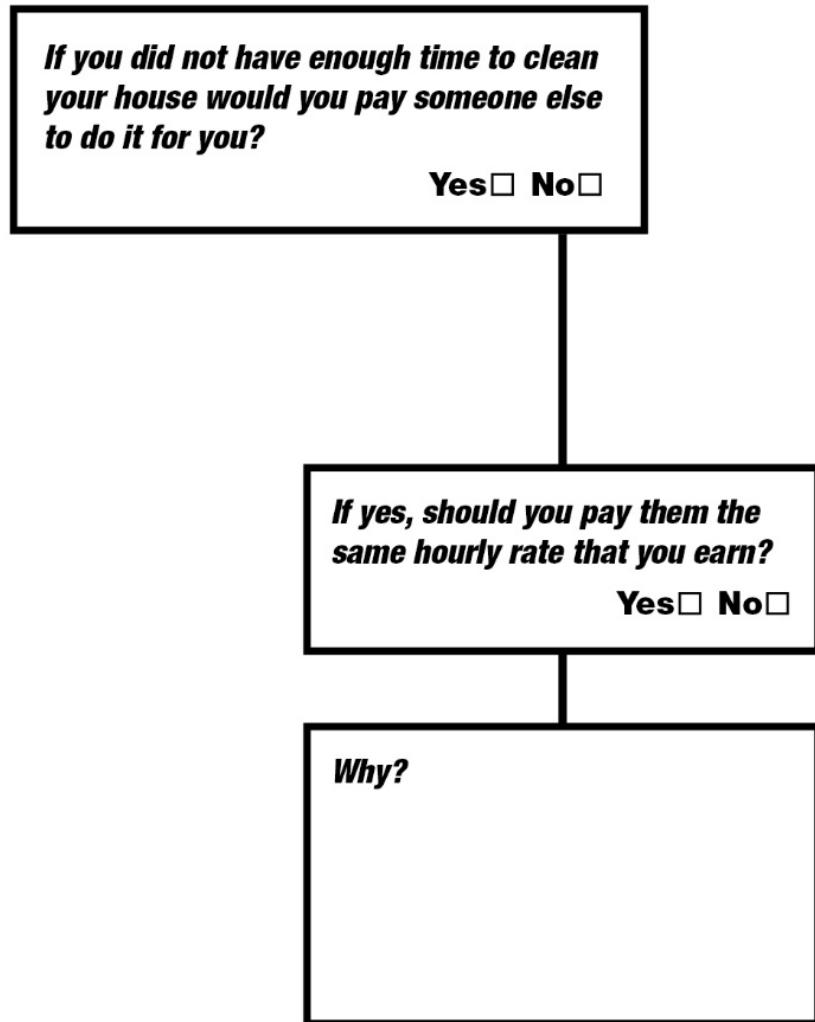


Figure 6.13: Isolated section of zine diagram from page 7 of *Paint by Numbers* zine

Figure 6.13 shows an isolated section of the zine diagram on page 7 of the publication. The first question appears to be straight forward. Responding “yes” would not be viewed as controversial by many, as one in three UK households currently employ a cleaner.<sup>405</sup> The second question adds a moral dimension to the conversation which can problematise the participant’s response to the first. For many people paying a cleaner the same hourly rate that they earn would not make any financial sense, as this would effectively cancel out any gains that outsourcing this labour would provide. This conclusion may seem rational, but the philosopher Arianne Shahvisi, argues that “...if somebody saves you time by doing your cleaning, and you don’t pay that person what *your* time is worth, it must be concluded that

<sup>405</sup> Shahvisi, Arianne (2018) *Pay your cleaner what you earn, or clean up yourself!* Media Diversity UK. [online] Available at: <https://mediadiversified.org/2018/09/07/pay-your-cleaner-what-you-earn-or-clean-up-yourself/> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2020]

you value your time above theirs.”<sup>406</sup> Framing cleaning as low skilled work is a means to justify paying the people who perform this labour minimum wage. This is especially the case for workers in higher paying jobs that work long hours and experience time scarcity, who use their income to outsource tasks like cleaning, to buy more time for themselves. However, many people who engage in this kind of compensatory consumption will find the argument that *their* time is more valuable than the time of the *person* who perform this labour for them, harder to justify. The zine diagrams attempted to create friction and the conditions for arguments like this to be made, by using word play and, seemingly non sensical questions to create gaps in the current logic of society that could enable a shift in the participant’s perspective. It is important to stress that the zine diagrams do not make moral judgements for the participant or tell them what point of view is “correct”. This is left up to the participant to decide. Just as the correspondence between specific boxes in the zine encourages reflection, so does the broader context in which the questions appear. For example, the questions shown in figure 6.13 sit alongside those in figure 6.14 which encourages interpretations of wealth and value to be interrogated from a number of different perspectives. The methodology of the zine diagrams has a performative quality of provocation, similar to utopian thought described by Kathi Weeks, which can enable participants to engage in comparative analysis and critical reflection outside of the dominant logic of society.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Shahvisi, Arianne (2018) *Pay your cleaner what you earn, or clean up yourself!* Media Diversity UK. [online] Available at: <https://mediadiversified.org/2018/09/07/pay-your-cleaner-what-you-earn-or-clean-up-yourself/> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2020]

<sup>407</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2015) *The Problem with Work*. Durham: Duke University Press. P206

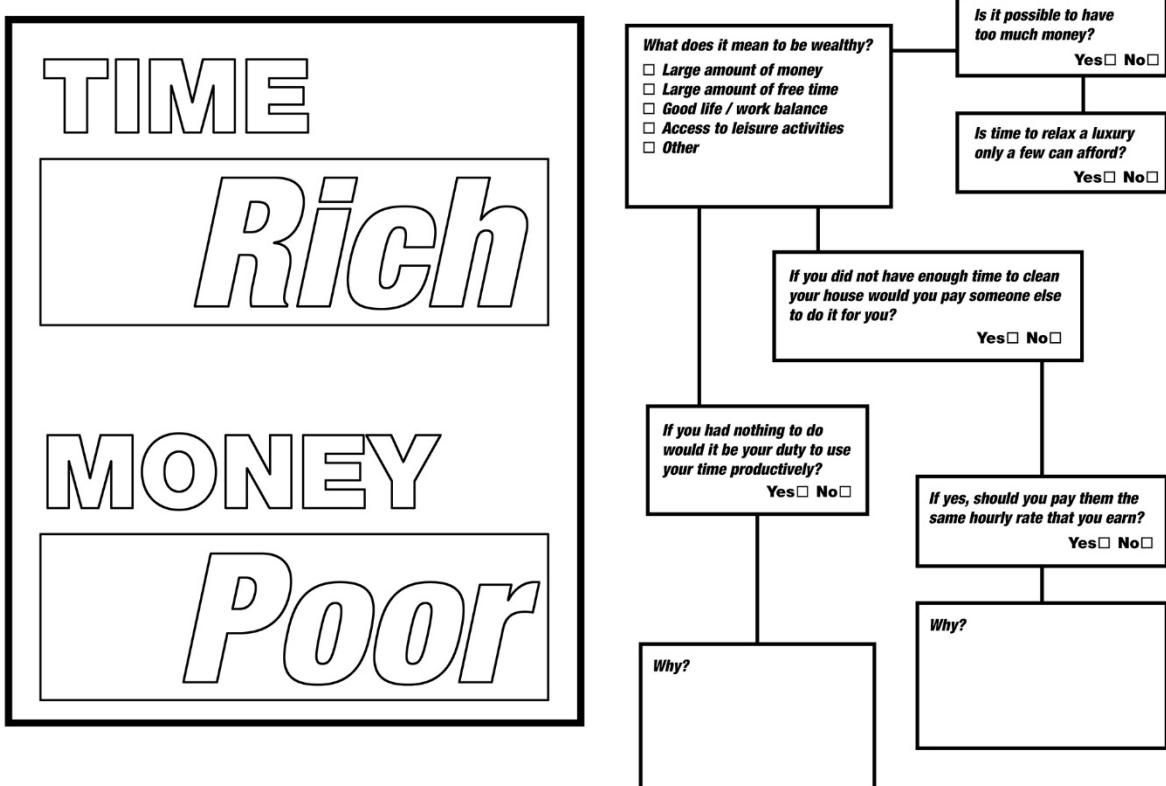


Figure 6.14: Page 6 & 7 of *Paint by Numbers* Zine (2019)

## 6.5 Questioning Decision-Making Processes

A common technique that runs through the questions within the project was non sequiturs and lines of questioning that may seem nonsensical. The purpose of this was to create a sense of unease for participants when reading the questions, to make them question what they had read and think more philosophically about their responses. To give an example of how this manifested in the flowchart diagrams I will look at a series of questions in isolation from the context that they appear in the zine (figure 6.15). The first question is phrased in a way to make the participant reconsider how they value *time* and *money*, and how these two subjects influence their decision-making processes. When giving advice on how to manage weekly schedules and maximise efficiency, the Harvard Business school professor, Robert Steven Kaplan, recommends substituting the word “money” for “time” when planning activities. Kaplan explains that “[w]ith money... you’d be more careful and judicious about it.

If someone asked you for some, you'd be more likely to say no.<sup>408</sup> As Kaplan observes, exchanging the word “time” for “money” in a sentence, changes the way that we think about an activity or subject being discussed. This also effects the value that is placed on the activity or subject. Asking the participant if they spend their “pounds and pence” differently to their “minutes and seconds”, follows Kaplan’s logic and pushes it further by replacing terms “time” and “money” with their units of measurement. By doing this, the question attempts to introduce a sense of wrongness that Fisher describes as *weird*, making the participant think differently about the logic of prioritising money over time, and highlighting the absurdity of breaking all our activities down into financial measurements.

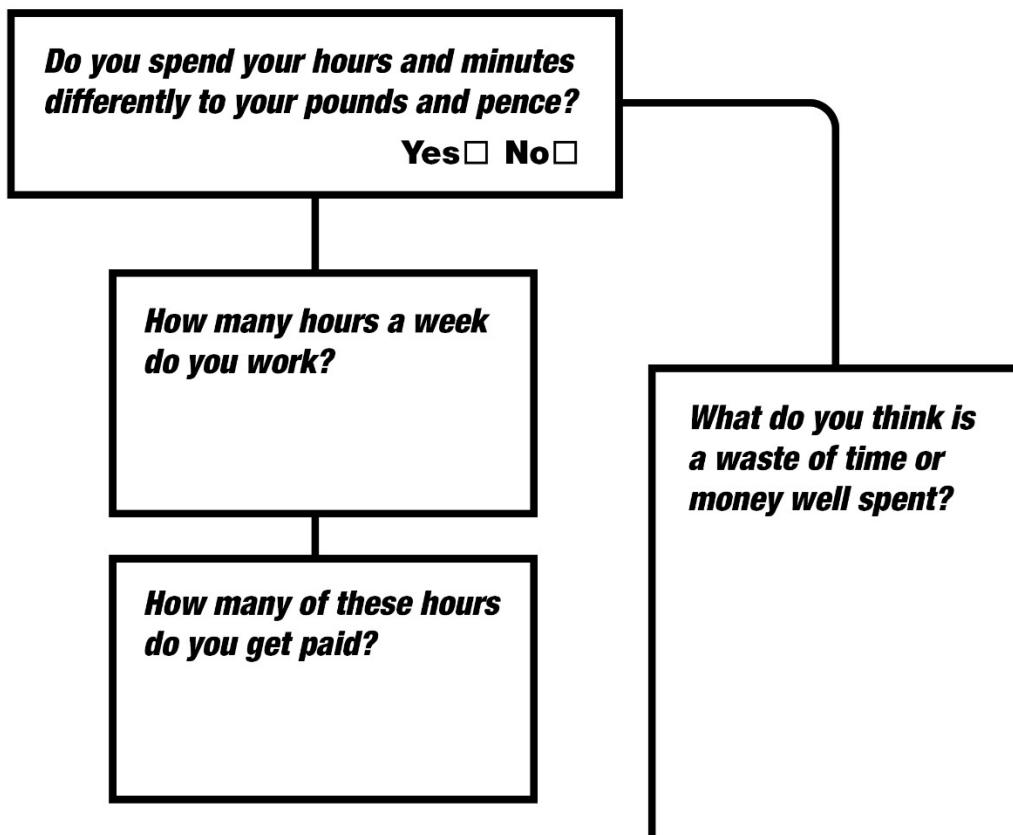


Figure 6.15: *Paint by Numbers* (2019) page 3 (detail)

Both questions that follow on directly underneath the first question (figure 6.15), could yield pragmatic responses, but they were designed to lead the participant into a deeper line of inquiry and challenge what activity they understand as “work”. For example, should the

<sup>408</sup> Silverman, Rachel Emma (2012) *Where's the Boss? Trapped in a Meeting*. [online] The Wall Street Journal. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204642604577215013504567548> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2019]

answer just include waged labour, or should it also include other kinds of unpaid activities which are performed in the home like cooking and cleaning? Should activity that is not included in your job description, but is required to do your job, like commuting, networking and responding to emails, count as “work” and therefore be added to the total figure? These follow-on questions may be easier to respond to pragmatically for those with salaried jobs with a fixed number of hours a week, but the answers will be more difficult for those who are self-employed, working in the gig economy or on zero-hour contracts and who have fluctuating patterns of work. These follow-on questions were designed to help those in the former employment category to imagine what life is like for those in the latter. The purpose of the first non sequitur question was to open space and create the conditions for this line of thinking and critical reflection.

The question on the second branch of the diagram (figure 6.15), “What do you think is a waste of time or money well spent?”, aims to widen out this space further. Again, the phrasing of the question is important as it hopes the participant will perform the reversal or substitution that Kaplan advocates, so that the question can also be read as, “what do you think is a waste of *money or time* well spent?” The purpose was to further problematise the way the participant assigns value to both time and money, by introducing a moral dimension to the conversation in a similar way that valuing *your* time above the time of a cleaner was discussed above. The logic of Neoliberal Capitalism teaches us to view our time and money in a transactional way. This logic states that both resources should be used efficiently and productively. However, this is not how many of us view all our relationships. Dougald Hine points out that if we managed our friendships under a logic of efficiency, we would probably run out of friends very quickly.<sup>409</sup> Hine believes that the things that really matter to us and add value to our lives are the relationships and activities which cannot be purchased. Hine’s sentiment was reflected in the advertising campaign for MasterCard which used the slogan: “There are some things that money can’t buy. For everything else there’s MasterCard.” The creators of the campaign started with the premise that for us to experience “priceless” moments, we have a “grocery list” of purchases that are necessary to

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<sup>409</sup> Hine, Dougald (2013) *Commoning the City: Friendship is a Commons*. Commoning The City. [video] Available at: <https://vimeo.com/68806701> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2019]

create these experiences.<sup>410</sup> For example, a plane ticket to visit your family for Christmas (figure 6.16). The advert uses an emotive message to make a strong point about how we value relationships, but it also frames these personal relationships in a financial manner by offering credit to enable people to afford to see their family and friends. In this sense, MasterCard acts as a form of compensatory consumption by providing us with the means to buy more time for ourselves in the present, but which we will have to pay back in the future.



Figure 6.16: Stills from MasterCard 'Priceless' Advert<sup>411</sup>

The questions in figure 6.15 sit within the wider context of *Paint by Numbers* central question: "Which currency is more valuable: Time or Money?" (figure 6.17). Again, by referring to *time* as a currency which can be exchanged for goods and services, the project aimed to problematise the logic we use to make decisions and assign value. In a work centred society, we are expected to prioritise work commitments over our other relationships, so it is easy to see how Kaplan's advice on managing weekly schedules can easily bleed into other aspects of our lives. Hine states that applying the logic of resource management to our friendships, fundamentally undermines what makes them valuable to us.<sup>412</sup> However, Hine also says that friendship should not be seen as an abundant resource that we can take from endlessly. He states that friendship is something that needs to be worked at and nurtured for it to bloom and survive. The point where friends start to count or measure what they contribute to or gain from a friendship is the first sign that the

<sup>410</sup> MasterCard, McCann-Erickson and a Campaign That Never Got Old? *Priceless*. (2017) Aaaa.org. [online] Available at: <https://www.aaa.org/timeline-event/mastercard-mccann-erickson-campaign-never-got-old-priceless/> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2019]

<sup>411</sup> Mastercard Advert (2006) YouTube.com. [video] Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laJOINuOV2Y> [Accessed: 22 Nov. 2017]

<sup>412</sup> Hine, Dougal (2013) *Commoning the City: Friendship is a Commons*. Commoning The City. [video] Available at: <https://vimeo.com/68806701> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2019]

relationship is damaged or on the verge of collapse.<sup>413</sup> Here I would like to refer back to the *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones? (2018)* posters (figure 6.10) which posed the questions: “How do you contribute to society?” and “What do you gain from society?” (see project portfolio 9.6). The purpose of this line of questioning was not to measure the ways participants contribute and gain from society or by how much, but to question whether these things should be measured at all.

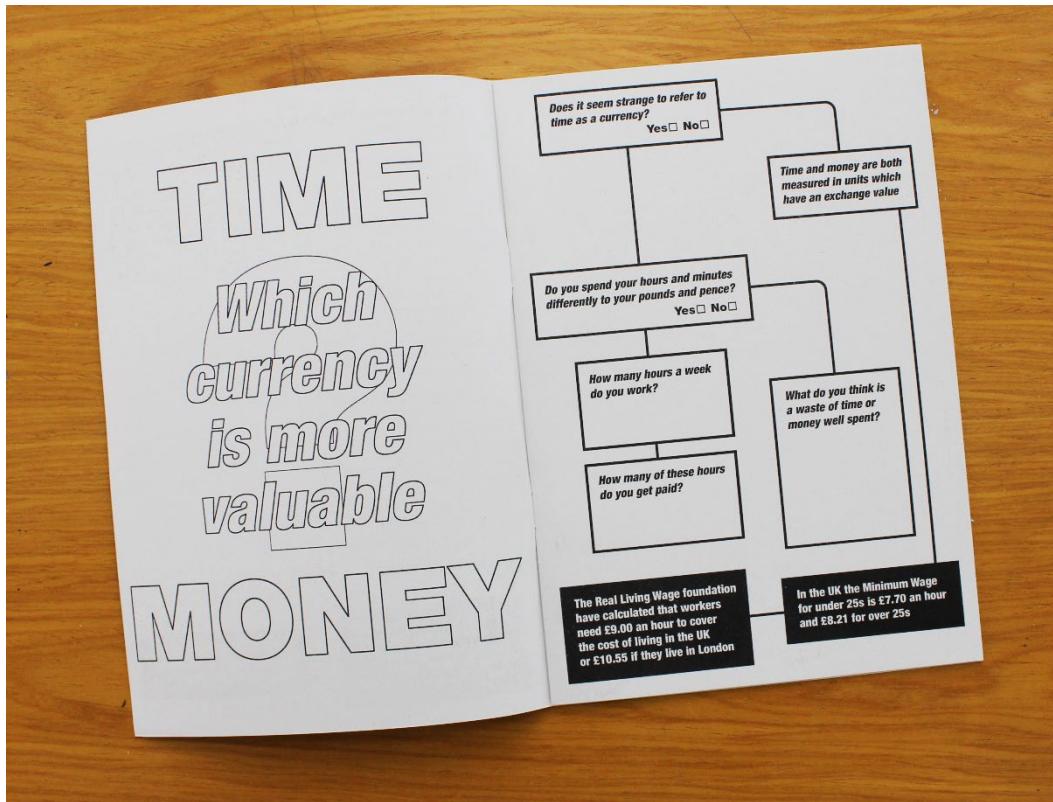


Figure 6.17: *Paint by Numbers* Zine (2019) Page 2 & 3

The Zine diagrams also presented questions in the format of a loop to reveal the invisible contexts that surround and affect our decision-making processes. Figure 6.18 has greyed out elements of the diagram from page 5 of the zine to highlight the loop it contains. The purpose of framing these questions in a circular format was to demonstrate the knock-on effect decisions have on further actions and decisions further down the line. For example, would the participant’s initial response to the first question in the loop have changed, or be viewed differently, once they have gone through the series of questions within the loop? This was designed to test the participant’s rationale behind the initial decisions and to

<sup>413</sup> Hine, Dougald (2013) *Commoning the City: Friendship is a Commons*. [video] Available at: <https://vimeo.com/68806701> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2019]

question whether their responses would be harder to justify once the loop had been completed. The loops could be read in both clockwise and anti-clockwise directions. Although different conclusions could be made depending on the direction the participant took.

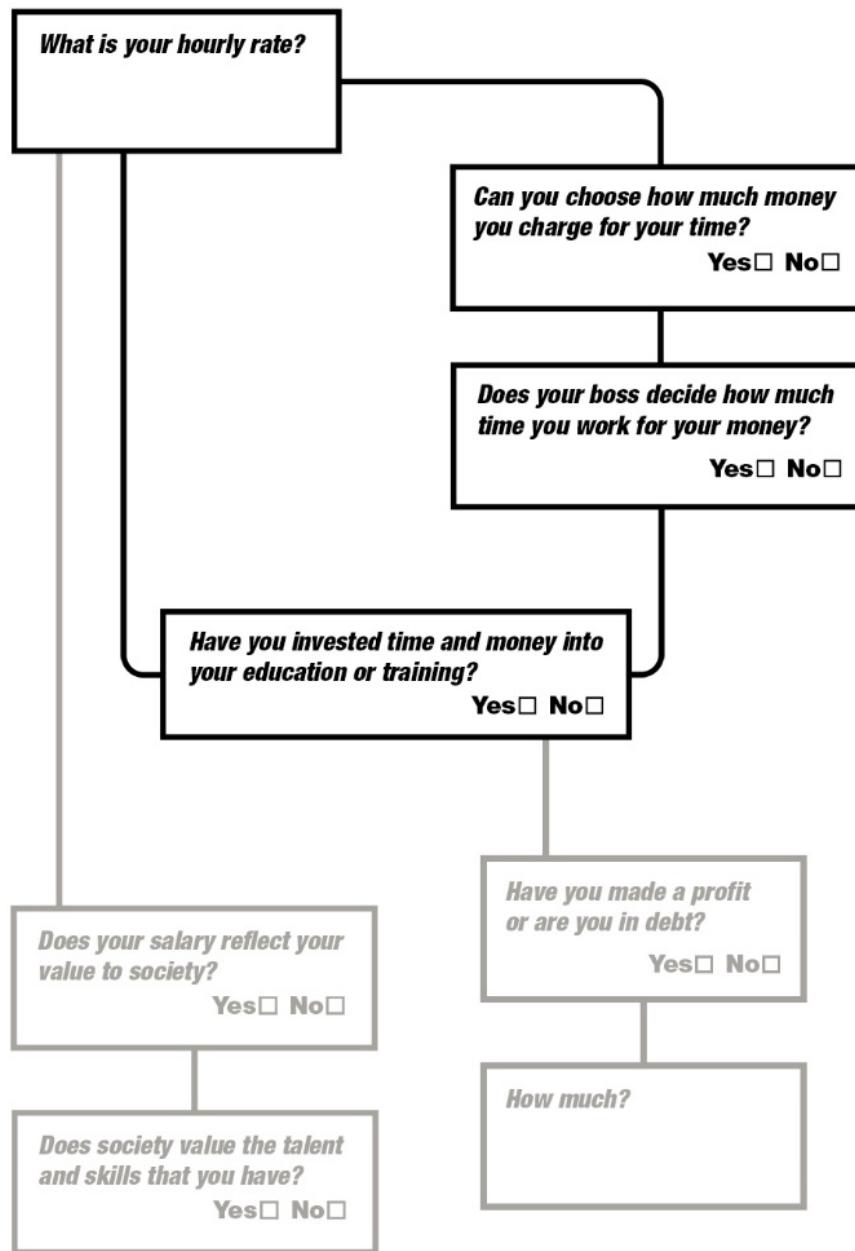


Figure 6.18: Page 5 of zine (Sections have been greyed out to highlight the structure of the loop in the diagram)

The questions in the loop build on moral dimension of how time is valued, as discussed above. This line of questioning was repeated throughout the zine to make the participant

question their decision-making processes and to challenge the justifications they make for actions which, in their normal daily routines, are likely to go unchallenged or taken for granted. The loop of questions on page 5 of the zine (figure 6.18) is part of the diagram that adds context to the question on the verso page: "How much money is your time worth?" The series of questions in the loop ask the participant to reflect on how much control they have in determining the value of their time. For example, if they invested time and money into education or training which would enable them to demand more money for an hour's work? Similarly, to the examples discussed above, the participant is presented with the option of "yes" or "no" answers to the questions, but the same circular route is provided for both responses, leaving it up to the participant to decide what the logic of the line of questioning represents.

The two branches of follow-on questions provoked participants to think about the subject matter from different perspectives and to create a sense of estrangement that challenges the common-sense justifications for attributing more financial value to different people's time. For example, asking them if their education or training had put them in debt or created a profit. Again, the purpose of these questions was not to ask the participant if these things can be measured, but to challenge the parameters by which they are measured and to question whether they should be measured at all. Framing education solely as a means to be able to demand a higher hourly rate of pay negates the value of the knowledge and experiences gained from undertaking this education which benefits not only the individual, but also the people around them. A Doctor may receive a high salary for their work, but other members of society will also benefit from the Doctor's training. These points are implicit in the line of questioning and my aim was that they would emerge when participants read through the zine. Being present in the exhibition space provided the opportunity for these conversations to develop further and allowed me to make these themes more explicit - adding other aspects of my research to the conversation. *Being Present* also provided the opportunity for me to listen to participants point of view and gather data for my research, which could be fed back into future projects.

The methodologies I have described above, and how they manifested in my projects, were all designed to act as a catalyst for conversation. These methods also created space and

time for these conversations to take place and the conditions to engage issues of active citizenship, relationships to work and inform understandings of a post-work society. Having good opening questions were extremely important tools for engaging potential participants. For example, “what did you want to be when you were growing up?” or “what gets you out of bed in the morning?” These questions were designed to be playful and open to interpretation. Importantly, they were universally understood, which meant that everyone could form a response, whether it was a genuine, silly, pragmatic or philosophical answer. These answers could then lead to further conversation and deeper lines of questioning.

The questions above are taken from *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2017-18) (see project portfolio 9.3). Although they were very successful at starting conversations and inviting participation, they also had limitations. I found that the participant’s explanations for their responses were far more revealing than the initial answers to the questions. This was why it was so important that I was present in the space to talk to participants. Even though I was present in the space, not everyone spoke to me about their answers which meant that I could only imagine what the stories behind many of the responses left on post it notes were. I identified this as one of the limitations of the *Between Eating and Sleeping* project, and which I tried to counteract with the methodologies used in subsequent projects, as described above. With *Paint by Numbers*, I tackled this issue by having more specific questions and providing several methods for visitors to respond and leave detailed explanations for their answers without needing to talk to me directly.

## 6.6 Being Present

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Both *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2017-18) and *Paint by Numbers* (2019) used the same method of *Being Present*, in which I painted the questions posed by the project onto the walls of the exhibition space. In *Between Eating and Sleeping*, I painted directly onto the walls, whereas for *Paint by Numbers*, I painted onto posters which could be rolled up and displayed in other environments and contexts. In both projects, I recorded the number of hours and minutes I “worked” on the paintings so that I could calculate the value of the paintings and my labour used to create them. In the *Paint by Numbers* exhibition, I used the

UK national living wage<sup>414</sup> (which is the minimum wage for over 25s, which was £8.21 per hour) and the Real Living Wage<sup>415</sup> (£9.00 per hour) to make two calculations and displayed these on a white board in the exhibition space (figure 6.19). This acted as another prompt for conversation with participants and way to question the value of what I was doing in relation to the project's central question: "Which currency is more valuable: Time or Money?" Having two financial measurements to calculate the value of my labour drew attention to the moral dimension discussed earlier and helped to pose the question of why some people's time was more valuable than others. At the time of the *Paint by Numbers* (2019) exhibition in Newcastle University Fine Art Department (figure 6.1), the University had just committed to becoming an accredited Real Living Wage employer.<sup>416</sup> The calculations displayed on the white board prompted a conversation with one cleaner in the department who told me that this meant a 69p an hour uplift for him which made him feel more valued by the University.

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<sup>414</sup> UK Government National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>

<sup>415</sup> Real Living Wage Foundation. *What is the real Living Wage?* <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>

<sup>416</sup> Newcastle University (2019) *Living wage accreditation announced at Newcastle University*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/press/articles/latest/2019/11/livingwageaccreditation/> [Accessed 20 Jan. 2020]

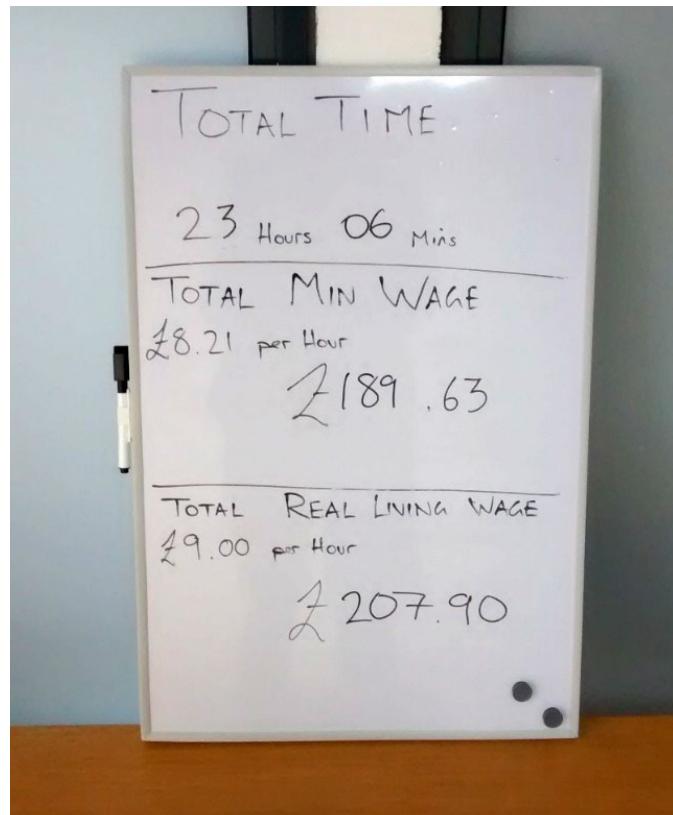


Figure 6.19: Paint by Numbers value calculations (30<sup>th</sup> August 2019)

*Being present* was similar to Thomas Hirschhorn's idea of "Presence and Production,"<sup>417</sup> discussed in chapter 5. By being present, I committed time and energy to the work which I hoped the audience would recognise and reciprocate in a mutual exchange, by taking the time to engage with the projects and talk to me about their responses to the questions that they posed. By doing this, participants validated the work; as Drummond states: the "real artwork exists ... in the conversations we have between each other."<sup>418</sup> As described above, the projects I created were ultimately a means to start conversations with people that could lead to conjecture and critical reflection. I was aware that just because an invitation to participate was made, this would not mean everyone who walked through the exhibition space would engage with it. As Hirschhorn states that participation should not be the aim of a project, it can only be a lucky outcome.<sup>419</sup> However, being present increased the chances of participation as I could respond to questions or observations passers-by and potential participants would have. Presenting the work in public spaces, which had a large natural

<sup>417</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2014) *Presence and Production*. Thomashirschhorn.com. [online] Available at: <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/guideline-presence-and-production/> [Accessed 18 Nov 2018]

<sup>418</sup> Drummond, Bill (2012) *100*. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P107

<sup>419</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2014) *Presence and Production*. Thomashirschhorn.com. [online] Available at: <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/guideline-presence-and-production/> [Accessed 18 Nov 2018]

footfall, meant that I was able to reach a much more diverse and “non-exclusive” audience than if the work was displayed in an art gallery. In the case of *Paint by Numbers*, members of staff and others who walked through the exhibition space regularly, spoke to me multiple times about the project, compared with the exclusive audience who specifically came to see the MFA degree show, and only engaged with the project once, if at all.

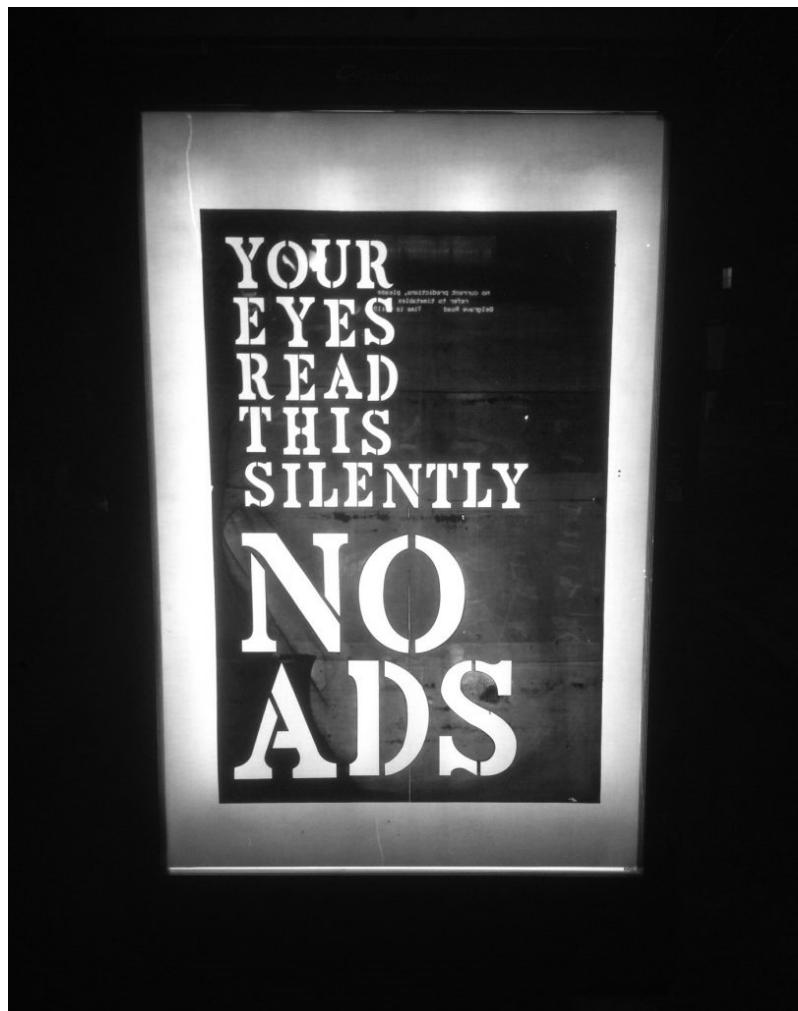


Figure 6.20: Poster by John Fekner, installed in a Bus stop advertising space as part of a Brandalism campaign in 2014.

Conversations that I had with participants, and others, who had seen either the *Between Eating and Sleeping* and *Paint by Numbers* exhibitions from a distance, made me aware that just because someone did not physically or verbally engage with the project, did not mean that they ignored the work completely. The questions that the projects posed worked subliminally in a similar way to adverts, leading those who read them to think about the questions and the themes they touched on. The effectiveness that adverts have on our unconscious minds is pointed to by a Subvertising poster that states, “Your Eyes Read This

“Silently” (figure 6.20) and has led others to describe adverts as *semiotic pollution*.<sup>420</sup> Those who walked past the exhibition space could see the work develop over the course of the project’s duration and many participants told me that their interest grew each time they walked past and observed its progression. Being present meant that those who passed by more than once did not have to engage the first time they saw the work. My hope was that after reading the questions they would think about them further and return to talk to me once they had had more time to develop a response and were ready to participate in the project. The more time I was present in the exhibition space increased the opportunities for the people to do this.

I did not want my presence to be a barrier to participation. By wearing paint splattered overalls and *working* on the paintings, my aim was to be more approachable than if I had been behind a desk or holding a clipboard, watching people walk by. On several days over the course of the MFA exhibition, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) had a member of staff stationed outside the Hatton Gallery (which is next to the Long Gallery) asking visitors to complete a survey. From my position in the Long Gallery, I could see members of the public actively avoiding eye contact with her in the hope that she would not attempt to engage them in conversation. Being seated outside the gallery’s entrance, wearing a TWAM jacket, holding an iPad and watching those who approached, made her conspicuous to visitors and her presence became a barrier that needed to be overcome before entering the gallery. I wanted my presence to create the opposite of this potentially confrontational experience. Wearing overalls made it clear that I was not another participant, but an artist at work. This meant that me and members of the public could be in the space together without having to engage with one another. Since both parties had a role - me, working on the exhibition and the audience, looking at the exhibition - we were able to occupy the same space without feeling awkward, meaning that we could ignore each other if needed, which increased the lucky outcome of participation.

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<sup>420</sup> Thackara, John (2005) *Semiotic pollution*. Thackara.com. [online] Available at: <http://thackara.com/perception/semiotic-pollution/> [Accessed 15 May 2019] + Fisher, Mark (2018) “We Have to Invent the Future”: An Unseen Interview with Mark Fisher. In: Ambrose, D (ed.) *K-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P678



Figure 6.21: *Paint by Numbers* (2019). Long Gallery, Newcastle University.

Painting the questions also gave me something to do while being present in the space (figure 6.21). In the case of the *Paint by Numbers* posters, instead of making the artworks in a private studio, I did this in a public space. This allowed me to discuss the value of my labour, as an artist, and my time in general, with members of the public. A similar method has been utilised by Drummond in his project *Man Makes Bed* (2014). This project involved him building a wooden bed frame in a public space and selling raffle tickets for the finished bed once it has been completed (figure 6.22 & 6.23). As Drummond chiselled out the mortise joints, some people would stop to talk to him, while others were happy to watch him from a safe distance.<sup>421</sup> Drummond referred to *Man Makes Bed* as a sculpture that formed part of his wider participatory art practice, acting as an event that can prompt conversation and sign post the public to a larger project that he was working on.<sup>422</sup> For example, during *The 25 Paintings* (2014) exhibition at Eastside Projects in Birmingham,

<sup>421</sup> Bill Drummond (2014) *Man Making Bed*. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P16

<sup>422</sup> Drummond, Bill (2014) *The 25 Paintings*. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P95

Drummond made a bed in four different locations around the city.<sup>423</sup> Drummond also wrote an article about his activity in the local newspaper, drawing more attention to it, acting as a way to validate his artwork in the public's imagination and catalyst for further conversation.<sup>424</sup>



Figure 6.22: Bill Drummond - *Poster 514* (2013) Figure 6.23: Bill Drummond constructs a bed in Coventry Road, Small Heath

My main reason for working on the *Paint by Numbers* posters was that it gave a justification to be in the exhibition space which created the opportunity to have conversations with potential participants, in a similar way that Drummond chose to make his beds in public spaces, rather than in a workshop. Wearing overalls and using a stopwatch to time myself was a way to draw attention to the labour I was performing. Unlike Drummond, I did not work and talk at the same time. I would actively stop working so I could focus my attention on the person or people I was talking to. To draw a clear line between the act of working on the paintings and talking to participants, I would take the stopwatch out of my pocket and pause the timer and point to the white board with the value calculations. Along

<sup>423</sup> Drummond, Bill (2014) *Bill Drummond in Birmingham: Making beds and making friends*. Business Live. [online] Available at: <https://www.business-live.co.uk/retail-consumer/bill-drummond-birmingham-making-beds-6939673> [Accessed 19 Nov. 2020]

<sup>424</sup> Drummond, Bill (2012) *100*. Self-published: Penkil Burn. P107

with the methods described previously (polling cards, voting booth, exhibition posters and the zine), the overalls, paint brush, stopwatch and white board all acted as visual prompts to start conversations around the value of time and what kinds of labour count as work. These theatrical tools enabled me to introduce potentially difficult subjects into conversations with participants in a way that could be playful, rather than confrontational.

## 6.7 Space and Time

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The aim of the project was to create *space and time* that enabled participants to engage in conjecture and reflection, while keeping a critical distance from reality. I hoped that this would lead participants to have transformative, consciousness raising experiences or events in which a shift in perception could take place. To do this I needed to form a *magic circle* so that participants could engage with ideas and thought experiments that may not be possible in other everyday situations. Foucault describes spaces like this as *Heterotopias* and states that they have a “system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable.”<sup>425</sup> It was my role as the artist/researcher to create the Heterotopia, and to let participants in and out of this space safely. By this I mean that I needed to nurture the space to allow participants to feel comfortable enough to enter it and then to engage in discussion with others and myself once they were inside. To do this effectively I needed to listen to their responses, value their contributions and take care of them. I saw this as a form of care work. If this sounds like an aggrandisement of my role, then I would argue that this highlights how care work is currently overlooked and undervalued by society. As an example of how care work is largely invisible but can be powerfully revealed, David Graeber pointed to workers in the London Underground Tube stations. When their jobs were under threat of being automated, they were able to successfully display the value of their work by agreeing that many of the tasks they performed were menial, like collecting and issuing tickets, which meant they could be done by machines. However, they asked their bosses to imagine what a Tube station with no workers would look like and questioned who would help travellers find their lost children or stop that drunk guy from following them?<sup>426</sup> In a similar sense, by

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<sup>425</sup> Foucault, Michael (1967) *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*. MIT [online] Available at: <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf> P7 [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020]

<sup>426</sup> Graeber, David (2018) *A Lot of People Don't Want to Win | James Butler Meets David Graeber*. [video] Novara Media. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7s-dn9P33k> [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020]

being present I was performing care work by creating and nurturing the heterotopia or magic circle within the exhibition space, opening and closing it for participants. This involved giving participants the opportunity to participant in the projects beyond the act of spectatorship and help to manage the amount of friction they would experience. It was important that I was not overeager and did not force anyone to become a participant if they did not want to. Those who did were also free to disengage or leave when they chose to do so. Giving myself the job of painting the posters enabled me to be present and be available, at the same time as keeping my distance.

One afternoon during the *Paint by Numbers* exhibition when I returned from a refreshment break, a visitor told me that she observed other visitors looking for pens or paints to work on the posters themselves while I was not there. This highlighted the dangers of inviting participation from the public. If I had returned and found them doing this I would have been horrified, as this form of participation would have fallen outside of the framework that I had designed for the project. This highlighted, what Liesbeth Huybrechts refers to as, the risky trade-offs of inviting participation and the uncertainty of this exchange.<sup>427</sup> This experience made me re-evaluate the intentions behind the projects and their methodologies. I wanted to break the “normal” rules of gallery experience, where visitors are expected to remain spectators. I also wanted the work to invite participation from a “non-exclusive audience”, that Hirschhorn states is, “hostile to me, the person who frightens me, the uninvited, the person who appears unexpectedly, who happens to pass by, the unanticipated.”<sup>428</sup> The projects were designed to provoke discussion so I had prepared for negative or hostile reactions to the topics the project attempted to engage with, but I had not considered other forms that participation could manifest as. This experience was an important lesson for me. It also revealed another reason why being present was valuable, as this enabled me to embrace unexpected situations and interactions with members of the public, allowing me to perform the role of a custodian, in which I could engage with these situations in a meaningful and care filled way.

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<sup>427</sup> Huybrechts, Liesbeth (2014) *Participation is Risky: Approaches to Joint Creative Processes*. Amsterdam: Valiz. P3

<sup>428</sup> Hirschhorn, Thomas (2010) Spectrum of Evaluation. [online] Available at: <http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/spectrum-of-evaluation/> [Accessed 10 Jun. 2019]

## 6.8 Context

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The *context* that the projects were placed in and experienced had a big impact on how participants engaged with and interpreted them. I was able to prepare for this to a point, but ultimately participants would bring their own contexts to the work which meant that I had little control over their response to the work. As O’Riley describes, the “work’s meaning will be revealed through the conjunction of viewer, work and world, in a process which is ultimately fluid, dynamic and mobile.”<sup>429</sup> This is why context was represented at the centre of my methodologies Venn diagram (figure 5.3), at the same time as surrounding the other methods.

I was aware that every environment has its own set of cultural norms and contexts. The projects were therefore designed to test the boundaries of these contexts. Over the course of the research, I experimented with presenting the projects in spaces where they would be unexpected in order to create friction and push the boundaries of what was considered normal, public spaces rather than art galleries, for example (see project portfolio 9.3, 9.4, 9.8 and 9.11). The aim of this was to create the conditions that would enable participants to step outside of the normal rules of everyday life and into a different space, described as a magic circle and Heterotopia above. In his description of Heterotopias, Foucault states that time plays an important role in these spaces and that their full potential is experienced through an “absolute break” from traditional time.<sup>430</sup> This break can be felt in both an eternal and temporal sense. Foucault points to museums and libraries as heterotopias which organise and accumulate time so that it remains frozen, meaning that any point in history can be accessed in the present moment. In contrast, the mode of time during a festival is flowing and temporal, meaning it can be experienced in a precarious and transitory manner.<sup>431</sup> The heterotopias I created would fit into the second categorisation, as they embraced uncertainty and the feeling of precariousness, so that participants could think and behave differently. I am not claiming that my art projects had the same euphoric potential

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<sup>429</sup> O’Riley, Tim (2006) “*An Inaudible Dialogue*”, *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P2

<sup>430</sup> Foucault, Michael (1967) *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*. MIT [online] Available at: <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf> P6 [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020]

<sup>431</sup> Foucault, Michael (1967) *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*. MIT [online] Available at: <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf> P7 [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020]

as taking part of a carnival or festival, but they did have a similar intention, to create a context that was separate from everyday reality, *space and time* where the social norms of everyday life could be suspended.<sup>432</sup> In this sense the projects attempted to affect participants experience of time using a similar method deployed with the binary choice question. By reducing choice down to two options, the binary question attempted to reveal a more expansive understanding of the topic, so it could be explored in more depth. The projects, and the physical contexts that they were presented in, created a similar compression and expansion of time. This was done by posing *open questions* in specific contexts that could cause a temporary jolt in participant's daily routine, which could create an opening to a liminal space where time could be experienced at a slower pace. This break from traditional time helped to produce the conditions necessary for consciousness raising to take place, which requires a mode of time that allows for absorption and care, that Mark Fisher states is difficult for us to engage within our fast-paced daily routines.<sup>433</sup> Therefore, my projects attempted to create the conditions for utopian thought that could provoke and estrange. Importantly, my projects posed questions within the context of art. This meant that participant's answers did not need to honour reality and would not have to lead to concrete consequences.<sup>434</sup> This allowed participants to push the boundaries of their imaginations beyond what is currently considered realistic or possible and for new ideas to emerge.

By comparing two different environments *Between Eating and Sleeping* was presented in, it is possible to examine the importance of context and demonstrate how these contexts impacted the way that audiences participated with the project. To do this I will discuss the exhibition that took place at *The NewBridge Project* on Gateshead Highstreet which lasted for two weeks in March 2018, which I will contrast with a one-day event at Durham Indoor Market in June 2018, as part of *Durham City Arts Festival*.

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<sup>432</sup> Segal, Lynne (2017) *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy*, Verso: London. P67

<sup>433</sup> Mark Fisher (2017) *Luxury Communism. A conversation between Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne*. In: H. Gunkel, A. Hameed, S. O'Sullivan. ed., *Futures & Fictions*, 1st ed. London: Repeater Books. p164

<sup>434</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards a conceptual militancy*. London: Zero Books. p24



Figure 6.24: Potential participants outside exhibition.



Figure 6.25: Exterior of The NewBridge Project, Gateshead

The NewBridge project exhibition was successful on many levels, but the majority of people who participated in the project would be described as an “exclusive audience”; those who already used the building or were comfortable entering the context of a contemporary art space. However, my aim was to engage with a non-exclusive audience. The exhibition space had large windows facing out on to a busy high street (figure 6.24 & 6.25). At the time of the exhibition, the NewBridge Project had only occupied the building for a few months. Many of the people I spoke to did not recognise the building as an art gallery and artist studios. The uncertainty around the identity of the exhibition space effected the context in how the work was understood by the public. Some people did not want to enter because they were unsure of what it was. One passer-by told me that they thought that it was going to be a shop that I was refurbishing and asked me what it was going to sell. This was a barrier to some as they thought that the space was not open to the public. However, the confusion around the identity of the building and the perceived temporary nature of what I was doing, was also beneficial on some level. For instance, Drummond states that it is important that his work appears in places and ways that “those stumbling across it may not have any idea... that it is a branch of contemporary art.”<sup>435</sup> He acknowledges that art can appear elitist to some and become a barrier to them engaging with it. By placing art projects outside of the context that they are normally expected to be, Drummond hoped that more people from a non-exclusive audience will engage with the work. This was my intention behind showing *Between Eating and Sleeping* at the NewBridge Project. As the space appeared to be an

<sup>435</sup> Drummond, Bill (2012) 100. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P57

empty shop, instead of an art gallery, I hoped more people would engage with it. Even if someone only stopped for a moment to read the questions through the window and then thought about them as they went about their day, the project achieved what it set out to do to a degree. However, I wanted to see whether presenting the work in other contexts would increase participation.



Figure 6.26: *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2018) Market Stall exhibition. Photo: Alix Collingwood-Swinburn

A clear difference between the two contexts was that participants did not need to cross a physical threshold to engage with the project presented in Durham Indoor Market (figure 6.26). Whereas needing to enter the building had been the main barrier to participating in the context of The NewBridge Project. This barrier had been removed in the context of the Indoor Market, as participants had already crossed the threshold when entering the market, which increased the number of conversations had with a non-exclusive audience. Some were happy to shout out a response and move on quickly, while others sat down and talked to me for up to 45 minutes. Here it is important to observe the established social norms and accepted patterns of behaviour that take place within contexts like an indoor market. Window shopping in environments like an indoor market is different from engaging in the

same activity on a high street. Interaction with stall holders is more likely to happen, primarily because the barrier presented by the window has been removed. Also, entering a market to browse with no intention of making a purchase is acceptable behaviour. Another key factor in the context of the market and its effect on behaviour is *time*. Some will enter with no predetermined length of time for their visit. A short walk around the shops could easily turn into a longer stay that includes a cup of coffee and a piece of cake. The possibility of this is increased because the stalls and cafes are all under the same roof and the thresholds between these spaces are more porous. This means that there is the potential time for absorption that Fisher described as necessary for consciousness raising to happen. In the context of the Indoor Market, I was able to have conversations with participants that were more explorative and expansive, compared to the discussions I had on the high street.



Figure 6.27: Interior of Durham Indoor Market

Comparing the contexts that *Between Eating and Sleeping* was presented in helped me to develop *Paint by Numbers*. When the project was presented in the Long Gallery (Figure 6.1), I was able to remove a physical threshold that would present a barrier to participation. However, time, or lack of it, still acted as another barrier to participation for most members of the non-exclusive audience. This was not a problem for members of the exclusive audience, those who came specifically to see the MFA exhibition and were happy to spend the time necessary for absorption and consciousness raising. An unexpected outcome of the context of the Long Gallery was that members of staff who walked through the space every

day as part of their daily work pattern, were exposed to the project multiple times over the course of the exhibition's duration. This meant that even if they only had short interactions with me, these built up over time and they formed a different, and potentially deeper relationship with the work than if they had visited the exhibition once. The durational context of the project was highlighted by the way that the questions and statements developed over the two-week period as I spent more time working on them. The context of time, and its value, was also indicated by the whiteboard displaying the number of hours and minutes I had spent working and the corresponding monetary calculations. This information added another context to the exhibition space that provided an opening for discussion and critical reflection.



Figure 6.28: *Reclaiming the Future* - Roundtable Discussion



Figure 6.29: performance by Yol / Lloyd / Posset

## 6.9 Events

The context of Durham Indoor Market created a temporary heterotopia in which time could be experienced in a precarious and transitory manner.<sup>436</sup> I was able to create similar temporary heterotopias within the context of the NewBridge Project by programming a series of events in the exhibition space. These included a film screening, round table discussion (figure 6.28) and performance (figure 6.29). Each drew its own exclusive audience; many of whom would not have visited the building to see the exhibition or participate in the project. However, once they were in the exhibition space, most participated in the project by leaving responses and talking to me about their answers. The events animated the space in a different way to the exhibition context, enabling larger group discussions to take place around specific topics that the project explored, Basic

<sup>436</sup> Foucault, Michael (1967) *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*. MIT [online] Available at: <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf> P7 [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020]

Income for example, compared to the open-ended conversations I had with individuals and small groups who visited the exhibition. Time was also experienced differently in the context of the events. Audiences who came to watch a film or take part in a round table discussion had prepared to spend more time in the space (one to two hours) than those who just came to see the exhibition.



Figure 6.30: *Between Eating and Sleeping* banners at gig in FUSE Art Space, Bradford (2019) Photo: Lucy Barker

Events also acted as a way for me to take the projects to other contexts outside of the gallery space and engage with different audiences. For example, as part of the *Between Eating and Sleeping* exhibition at Bradford University (2018), I programmed a gig at FUSE Art Space, a venue in the city centre. *Yol / Lloyd / Posset* performed along with other musicians, *Bradford Scratch Orchestra* and *Andy Abbott*, who I had invited to respond to the project (as discussed in Chapter 5.4). I put banners with the project's three questions up on the walls of the venue and invited audience members to respond to them (figure 6.30 & 6.31). This changed the dynamic of the space and created a platform for discussion on topics which may not normally take place in this context. Again, this meant that many people in the audience became participants rather than spectators, and I was able to collect responses from people who would not normally engage in participatory arts projects. Several of whom talked to me about their responses over the course of the event. During these conversations

I was able to introduce subjects including active citizenship, Basic Income and a post-work society into the discussion. I received a wide range of responses from apathy to excitement, but it was acknowledged that these topics that would not naturally arise in the context of a gig. By using participatory arts practice, I was able to create the conditions for the audience to engage with these issues in a playful manner and critically reflect on them without the need to draw decisive conclusions.



Figure 6.31: Audience responses at gig in FUSE Art Space, Bradford (2018) Photo: Lucy Barker

In contrast to the context of the gig, I was able to use participatory arts practice to subvert the protocols of an academic conference that specifically explored the themes of work and the post-work society.<sup>437</sup> Rather than giving a presentation in a lecture theatre, I put the *Paint by Numbers* posters up in the foyer area where conference attendees would congregate for breaks in the programme and gave my presentation in this space after lunch (figure 6.32). Instead of discussing how participatory arts practice could be used to engage

<sup>437</sup> *Challenging the work society: an interdisciplinary summit*. Birkbeck University, London. 27 - 28<sup>th</sup> September 2019. <https://autonomy.work/portfolio/conference2019/>

with issues of work and forming understandings of a post-work society, I was able to demonstrate my methodologies to the audience directly, posing the project's *open questions* and asking them to fill in the polling cards; meaning that they became participants, rather than spectators. By breaking the "normal" protocol of an academic conference, I was able to give the audience a similar jolt that passers-by might experience when viewing the posters in the exhibition formats described above and create space and time for conjecture and critical reflection. Another important factor was that by placing the posters and zines in the public space of the university, meant that the project could engage an exclusive audience (conference attendees) and non-exclusive audience (members of university staff and the public who entered the building). I acknowledged that any participation from either audience in this context would be a lucky outcome. However, this methodology demonstrates how participatory arts practice can be used to engage with issues of work and post-work society from a different perspective within an academic context that has been designed to engage with these themes and engage the audience in a way that can resonate beyond strictly theoretical forums.



Figure 6.32: Presentation at *Challenging the work society* conference at Birkbeck University. Photo: Amelia Horgan

Much of the discussion above has focused on how the methodologies of my projects were able to engage with issues around understandings of work. The topics of active citizenship and a post-work society were addressed, but not as frequently and often emerged from

conversations about attitudes to work. I have argued that a barrier to participation in political processes and active citizenship is waged labour. I will now build on this argument and my belief that a Universal Basic Income (UBI) would provide financial security and the time needed to become active citizens. To do this I will use examples from my own experience during the *Artist House 45* residency (AH45) and the PhD, which I will argue were similar to pilot studies of Basic Income that enabled me to engage in consciousness raising experiences and become an active citizen.

## 6.10 Comparing Artist House 45 and PhD Stipend to Basic Income Experiments

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The AH45 residency was created by *East Street Arts* (ESA) as the antithesis to the established artist residency format.<sup>438</sup> Instead of parachuting artists into a location for few weeks or a month to deliver a project with a local community and then leave, never to return, ESA wanted to see what would happen if an artist or artists were embedded in the community. If they became residents rather than temporary guests. So, instead of working in an arts organisation building or community space in the area, the residency was based in a domestic house in South Leeds where Andrew and I lived and worked for its duration. The ethos of the AH45 was similar to the *Artist Placement Group* (APG) which created residencies for artists to work within private corporations and public bodies during the 1960s to 1980s. Claire Bishop states that John Latham and Barbara Steveni, who were the driving forces behind APG, believed that “art has a useful contribution to make to the world, and that artists can serve society - not by making works of art, but through their verbal interactions in the context of institutions and organisations.”<sup>439</sup> Like the artists working with APG, we were given an *open brief* so did not need to define our activity before the residency started, which gave us the freedom to respond to the situations and contexts as they arose in the way we felt was most appropriate at the time. There was an expectation we would engage with people around us, but we had no specific targets or goals to achieve. The only obligation was that we would live in the house full time and make art while we were there. The intention behind both APG and AH45 was similar, to see what effect artists would have

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<sup>438</sup> Walton, Madeleine (2015) *Artist House 45*. The State of the Arts. [online] Available at: <https://www.thestateofhearts.co.uk/features/artist-house-45/> [Accessed 2 Jun. 2021]

<sup>439</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012), *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London: Verso. P164.

when they were embedded within a specific context. For APG this was with a businesses or public institution. The objective of AH45 was to explore what contribution Andrew and I could make through our presence, interactions with other residents and the artworks we would produce, in the context of the community and the institutions within it. AH45 questioned how we, as artists, and our art, could *serve society*. The project's open brief made this possible and it was achievable because Andrew and I were given the resources we needed to make our work and cover our basic needs, which was housing and a secure income. Another important factor was that they trusted us to use these resources wisely. Although ESA kept in regular contact with us and provided support when needed, they did not place any restrictions or conditions on our activities. This was an incredibly liberating experience, both personally and artistically. The security of having a house and a regular income meant that we did not have to look for paid work to sustain ourselves and fund our arts practice (although there were no restrictions on us finding other sources of income during the residency). The most valuable thing about it was that it gave us time. Time to make art, but also time to invest in ourselves and the area we lived in. As a way to get to know people in the area, we did a lot of voluntary work, attended community events and council planning meetings; activities we had not had time to do in our daily lives before the residency. After six months I knew more people on my street in Leeds than I had after five years of living at my previous address in Newcastle. Through this we met the active citizens in the area and got to know our local councillors by name. We discovered who were proactive politicians and which ones would only make an appearance when an election was on the horizon. This gave us a much better understanding of civic structures within the council and processes that were followed when making decisions that affected the area.

During the residency we were able to use the key skills we had as artists, which Ellie Harrison identifies are needed for becoming active citizens: *critical thinking, practical skills, confidence and self-motivation*.<sup>440</sup> There were two clear parallels between AH45 and Harrison's *The Glasgow Effect*. First, she used her project to investigate the civic structures of Glasgow to better understand them and discover how she could use her skills as an artist to contribute to society within them. Harrison described her attendance of the public

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<sup>440</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P187

meetings for Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, where she was the only member of the public, as being an undercover artist in residence.<sup>441</sup> Second, the funding she received to undertake the yearlong project (£15,000) acted like a Basic Income, providing her with the financial security and resources to engage in this activity. Where the projects differ was in their public profiles. When Harrison launched the Glasgow Effect on social media the project attracted a lot of public discussion and fierce debate over her motivations, the value of art and the use of public money to fund it. One post on Facebook described the project as a “free meal ticket to an idealistic bone idle, self-aggrandising pseudo ‘artist’.”<sup>442</sup> Another stated that: “Staying in a large city for a year is not art. It’s called life!”<sup>443</sup> Unlike the public nature of Harrison’s project, whilst living at AH45 we made a deliberate attempt not to draw attention to the fact that we were undertaking an artist residency. When meeting people we would introduce ourselves as Andrew and Toby from number 45, not artists carrying out an “extreme lifestyle experiment.”<sup>444</sup> This was because we wanted to integrate into the community and not be seen as imitators on a “poverty safari.”<sup>445</sup> Conversely, Harrison believed that the controversy caused by *The Glasgow Effect* provided a platform for people to participate in the project, which helped to instigate a public discussion on the value and purpose of art.<sup>446</sup> As there was a price tag attached to the project, this meant that its value could be measured and debated. If she had not made this public, Harrison believed that her activity would have gone unnoticed, which is how most of Lloyd & Wilson’s actions during AH45 remained. In this sense, the media narrative around Harrison’s project validated the artwork in the public’s imagination, and the real artwork unfolded in the news story and subsequent conversations.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2020) *Artist as Active Citizen*. [online] a-n The Artists Information Company. Available at: <https://static.a-n.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Ellie-Harrison-Artist-as-Active-Citizen.pdf>

<sup>442</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P162

<sup>443</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P150

<sup>444</sup> BBC News (2017) *Glasgow Effect artist 'used anger' to fuel work*. BBC. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-38530606> [Accessed 17 Apr. 2020]

<sup>445</sup> Green, Chris (2016) *Ellie Harrison: Glasgow residents accuse artist of 'poverty safari' for spending year in city on state-funded project*. The Independent. [online] Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/ellie-harrison-glasgow-residents-accuse-artist-of-poverty-safari-for-spending-year-in-city-on-state-a6797686.html> [Accessed 15 Nov. 2020]

<sup>446</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P188

<sup>447</sup> Drummond, Bill (2012) *100*. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P108

A similar concern over the use of public money to fund *The Glasgow Effect* is reflected in the public debate around UBI, which manifests as two key questions: who would end-up paying for the policy and how others would spend the money.<sup>448</sup> I will expand on these questions and how they are presented in the media in chapter 7. The sum of money Harrison received to undertake her project is a similar amount to the yearly stipend I received over the course of my PhD. Even though this figure may sound extravagant to some,<sup>449</sup> the Joseph Roundtree Foundation have calculated that an individual needs to earn £18,400 a year to reach minimum standard of living.<sup>450</sup> The most important aspect of the PhD stipend for me was that it provided financial and mental security which enabled me to focus on my research without worrying about money, but also allowed me to engage in several forms of active citizenship. This included working on the Tyne & Wear Citizens' *Real Living Wage* campaign<sup>451</sup> and volunteering at Meadow Well Connected once a week, helping people to develop their IT skills.

It is important to stress that these were not completely selfless acts, as I enjoyed helping others and learned a lot from the people I met, many of whom had different life experiences to my own. Indeed, this was a consciousness raising experience, which helped me to develop solidarity and empathy. The artist Cassie Thornton says that nothing makes her feel more alive than helping others solve their problems, as she can apply her skills while connecting with others and building empathy with them.<sup>452</sup> At Meadow Well Connected I often helped visitors to the centre apply for jobs and navigate other aspects of their Universal Credit claims. This meant that I was able to see first-hand the situations this process put people in, rather than just reading about these experiences in newspaper articles and research documents. Importantly, I do not want to portray myself as a middle-

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<sup>448</sup> Painter, A., Singleton, A. and Grimond, W. (2020) *A Popular Basic Income: Understanding Public Attitudes towards UBI*. RSA. [online] Available at: <https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/foundation/new-site-blocks-and-images/reports/2020/10/the-rsa-a-popular-basic-income.pdf> P2 [Accessed 29 Mar. 2021]

<sup>449</sup> Harrison, Ellie (2019) *The Glasgow Effect*. Edinburgh: Luath Press. P188

<sup>450</sup> Davis, A., Hirsch, D., Padley, M. and Shepherd, C. (2018) *A Minimum Income Standard for the UK 2008-2018: Continuity and change*. [online] Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available at:

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-uk-2018> [Accessed 7 Apr. 2021]

<sup>451</sup> Newcastle University (2019) *Living wage accreditation announced at Newcastle University*. Ncl.ac.uk. [online] Available at: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/press/articles/latest/2019/11/livingwageaccreditation/> [Accessed 7 Apr. 2021]

<sup>452</sup> Thornton, Cassie (2020) *The Hologram: Feminist, Peer-to-Peer Health for a Post-Pandemic Future*. London: Pluto Press. P21

class hero, as I acknowledge that I occupied a privileged position in that the stipend gave me the freedom to pursue activities that had no financial reward and was able to use my skills to help others, which is something that UBI would enable more people to do. Interestingly, after I had volunteered at the centre for over a year, one member of staff told me that when I first arrived several regular users of thought that I was a spy from the Department of Work and Pensions. Although this was not the case, I can understand why some thought this as the government have an increasingly authoritarian approach to unemployment, utilised forms of surveillance which some view as the criminalisation of poverty.<sup>453</sup> In contrast, advocates for UBI believe that it would remove the stigma currently felt from being unemployed and alleviate the desperation people experience when they have no income and validate many forms of unpaid work, at the same time as giving people more autonomy.<sup>454</sup>

Undertaking the PhD also validated my activity, giving me a level of status and purpose. My work as an artist was elevated to “research”, instead of an expensive hobby or pastime. By awarding the stipend and granting access to the institution’s resources and equipment, the University invested in me as a person. Doing this also meant that they trusted me, as I was given full autonomy to carry out my research during the PhD and I was free to collaborate with other people within the institution<sup>455</sup> and outside it.<sup>456</sup> This may sound trivial but having control over your own time is extremely valuable and is something that many people do not have.<sup>457</sup> Therefore, providing everyone with a Universal Basic Income would be a way for the state to invest in society, by giving people control over their time and showing that the government trusted them to use it wisely. Currently the opposite is true, as noted above, Universal Credit claimants must endlessly prove they need support and are subjected

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<sup>453</sup> Fletcher, D.R. and Wright, S. (2018) *A hand up or a slap down? Criminalising benefit claimants in Britain via strategies of surveillance, sanctions and deterrence*. Sage Journals. [online] Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0261018317726622> [Accessed 9 Apr. 2021]

<sup>454</sup> Smith, Matthew (2021) *Universal basic income could improve the nation’s mental health*. [online] The Conversation. Available at: [https://theconversation.com/universal-basic-income-could-improve-the-nations-mental-health-123816?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Twitter#Echobox=1617302359](https://theconversation.com/universal-basic-income-could-improve-the-nations-mental-health-123816?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1617302359) [Accessed 13 Apr. 2021]

<sup>455</sup> Cultures of Memory (2019) *Broadcast Bartender Podcasts*. [online] Newcastle University. Available at: <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/culturesofmemory/broadcast-bartender/> [Accessed 7 Apr. 2021]

<sup>456</sup> Yol / Lloyd / Posset (2020) *Live At The Horse Improvised Music Club*. [Cassette] Sound Holes Live Editions

<sup>457</sup> New Economics Foundation (2020) *Should we work less after the pandemic?* [podcast] Weekly Economics Podcast. Available at: <https://neweconomics.org/2020/11/weekly-economics-podcast-should-we-work-less-after-the-pandemic> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2020]

to increasingly invasive measures to be eligible for benefits. This apparent lack of trust has led to negative impacts on the mental and physical health of claimants<sup>458</sup> and which many find hard to justify as more than half of people denied help have their cases overturned on appeal.<sup>459</sup> This is the conclusion of creating a system that is built on competition and consumption, where success is measured in financial terms and on an individual scale. Getting ahead is understood as leaving others behind, and poverty is seen as a personal, rather than a systemic failure.<sup>460</sup> It has been argued that the consequences of this have been the deepening of social inequalities,<sup>461</sup> and a growing feeling of negative solidarity.<sup>462</sup> Supporters of Neoliberalism believe that greed and inequality are necessary to drive innovation and economic growth.<sup>463</sup> However, Mark Fisher felt that the opposite was true, stating that by gradually reducing our security, Neoliberalism had diminished our capacity to create new things and imagine what the future will be like in the immediate and far future. This has created a situation of unpredictability without surprise. Neoliberalism promised innovation and novelty, but instead we are given an endless repetition of the same.<sup>464</sup> For example, how different was the iPhone 10 from iPhone 9? In order to break free from this cycle of repetition, which Franco Berardi refers to as the *slow cancellation of the future*,<sup>465</sup> Fisher believed that we should give people “the resources to pursue their own experimental trajectories” and to leave them to it.<sup>466</sup> Some will fail, but many more will succeed than is

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<sup>458</sup> Cheetham, M., Moffatt, S. and Addison, M. (2018) “It’s hitting people that can least afford it the hardest” *The impact of the roll out of Universal Credit in two North East England localities: a qualitative study*. Gateshead Council. [online] Available at: [https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/media/10665/The-impact-of-the-roll-out-of-Universal-Credit-in-two-North-East-England-localities-a-qualitative-study-November-2018/pdf/Universal\\_Credit\\_Report\\_2018pdf.pdf?m=636778831081630000](https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/media/10665/The-impact-of-the-roll-out-of-Universal-Credit-in-two-North-East-England-localities-a-qualitative-study-November-2018/pdf/Universal_Credit_Report_2018pdf.pdf?m=636778831081630000) P24 [Accessed 17 Jan. 2021]

<sup>459</sup> Bulman, May (2018) *Universal credit: More than half of people denied benefit have cases overturned on appeal, figures show*. [online] The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/universal-credit-appeal-overturn-wrong-refused-benefit-poverty-dwp-a8649221.html> [Accessed 17 Jan. 2021]

<sup>460</sup> Ryan, Frances (2014) *Poverty has been rebranded as personal failure*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/apr/22/disability-poverty-crisis-government-policies> [Accessed 9 Apr. 2021]

<sup>461</sup> Kallis, G., Paulson, S., D'Alisa, G. and Demaria F. (2020) *The Case of Degrowth*. Cambridge: Polity Press. P16

<sup>462</sup> Idle, N., Milburn, K. and Gilbert, J. (2021) #ACFM Trip 14: *Desire*. [podcast] Novara Media. Available at: <https://novaramedia.com/2021/02/14/acfm-trip-14-desire/> [Accessed 25 Feb. 2021]

<sup>463</sup> Watt, Nicholas (2013) *Boris Johnson invokes Thatcher spirit with greed is good speech*. [online] The Guardian Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/nov/27/boris-johnson-thatcher-greed-good> [Accessed 8 Apr. 2021]

<sup>464</sup> Fisher, Mark (2016) *Designer Communism*. Digital Bauhaus Summit [video] Available at: <https://vimeo.com/171577013> [Accessed 19 Feb. 2020]

<sup>465</sup> Fisher, Mark (2014) *Ghosts of my Life: Writings on depression, hauntology and lost futures*. London: Zero. P6

<sup>466</sup> Fisher, Mark (2016) *Designer Communism*. Digital Bauhaus Summit [video] Available at: <https://vimeo.com/171577013> [Accessed 19 Feb. 2020]

possible under the current conditions, as they would be able to take risks without the fear of destitution if they fail and could pursue projects that do not need to be financially rewarding.

## Conclusion

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Allowing people to pursue their own experimental trajectories is essentially what advocates argue giving everyone in society a Basic Income would do. However, Fisher states that this would be the last thing to happen under Capitalism. The proposals for a post-work society, that I discussed in Chapter 4.2, present an alternative to Neoliberal Capitalism and an opportunity to create a society built on collaboration and trust, where people could work together and share ideas for the collective good. The Degrowth movement, for example, believes we should adopt simpler lifestyles which would rely less on economic growth and consumer consumption, which would enable us to invest more time and energy into meaningful but unpaid activities.<sup>467</sup> UBI could help to achieve this by decoupling income from employment and providing everyone a basic level of security and the resources they need to thrive. For many the idea of not having a job is seen as an existential crisis, not one of emancipation, as our lives and the status in society are so strongly connected to our employment. This fear is understandable as the narrative of the work centred society tells us that without our jobs, we would experience a sense of corrosive aimlessness and a loss of dignity.<sup>468</sup> As I have demonstrated above, participatory arts practice can help us to challenge messages like this by creating the conditions to re-evaluate our relationship to work and employment. Indeed, a study by Cambridge University found that reducing the number of hours we work would not be detrimental to our health and the benefits of employment can be achieved by working as little as eight hours a week.<sup>469</sup> George Monbiot believes that the same social benefits of employment - identity, meaning, purpose, a sense

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<sup>467</sup> Love, Shayla (2019) *The Radical Plan to Save the Planet by Working Less*. [online] Vice Magazine. Available at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bj9yjq/the-radical-plan-to-save-the-planet-by-working-less> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2021]

<sup>468</sup> Dunlop, Tim (2016) *Why the future is workless*. Sydney: NewSouth. P21

<sup>469</sup> Davis, Nicola. (2019) *Just one day of work a week improves mental health, study suggests*. [online] The Guardian Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/jun/19/working-one-day-week-improves-mental-health-study-suggests> [Accessed 12 Nov. 2019]

of autonomy - can be found through volunteering.<sup>470</sup> In fact, studies have found that volunteers are more motivated than employees because they are engaged in activities they believe in, rather than exchanging their labour for money.<sup>471</sup> A Universal Basic Income would enable more people to engage in forms of work that they are passionate about, and more time could be invested in collective goals that benefit wider society, rather than generating profit for individuals. Those who are sceptical of UBI believe that it would be too expensive to implement and that the cost would outweigh the benefit,<sup>472</sup> and I will expand on these arguments further in the next chapter.

Similar resistance is exhibited to proposals for a post-work society, disregarding them as utopian and impossible to achieve. These arguments reduce discussions of the future into a rigid framework that clings on to how society currently operates, even when the belief in endless economic growth on a planet of finite resources has been shown to be unsustainable.<sup>473</sup> Rather than accepting Neoliberal message that there is no alternative, utopian thought recognises that the future is radically open.<sup>474</sup> In their book, *Inventing the Future*, Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams state that, at their best:

utopias include tensions and dynamism within themselves, rather than presenting a static image of a perfected society. While irreducible to instrumental concerns, utopias also foster the imagination of ideas that might be implemented when conditions change.<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Monbiot, George. (2018) *As robots take our jobs, we need something else. I know what that is.* The Guardian. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/07/robots-jobs-salaried-work-society-unpaid-george-monbiot> [Accessed 12 Nov. 2019]

<sup>471</sup> Pearce, J. (1983) *Job Attitude and Motivation Differences Between Volunteers and Employees from Comparable Organizations.* Journal of Applied Psychology. [online] Available at: [https://escholarship.org/content/qt3kp8859s/qt3kp8859s\\_noSplash\\_e62b8e886516cc20651bb39cf8f7fce.pdf](https://escholarship.org/content/qt3kp8859s/qt3kp8859s_noSplash_e62b8e886516cc20651bb39cf8f7fce.pdf) [Accessed: 28 Mar. 2021]

<sup>472</sup> Loft, P., Kennedy, S., Mackley, A. and Hobson, F. (2020) *The introduction of a universal basic income.* House of Commons Library. [online] Available at: [https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2020-0096.pdf](https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2020-0096/CDP-2020-0096.pdf) P8 [Accessed: 28 Mar. 2021]

<sup>473</sup> Smith, Warwick (2014) *Do we dare to question economic growth?* The Guardian. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/13/do-we-dare-to-question-economic-growth> [Accessed 9 Apr. 2021]

<sup>474</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work: feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries.* Durham: Duke University Press. P196

<sup>475</sup> Srnicek, N. and Williams, A. (2015) *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work.* London: Verso. P139

Likewise, proposals for a post-work society do not present a static image of a perfected society, but images of one that could be radically different from the world we inhabit today. Participatory arts practice can play a similar role by fostering the imagination in a way that alters our connection to the present, while shifting our relationship to the future.<sup>476</sup> This is achieved by intervening in everyday life and rupturing of the accepted structure of reality,<sup>477</sup> asking: “if it’s like *this*, why can’t it be like *this* instead?”<sup>478</sup> This is incredibly important when faced with growing inequality and the threat of climate change.<sup>479</sup> Monbiot believes these questions are currently beyond the scope of politics, as those in public life are too blinkered or too frightened to answer them, out of fear that the conclusions will make them unpopular with the electorate.<sup>480</sup>

Participatory arts practice has the capacity to help us address these problems and shift social norms by communicating “the paradoxes that are repressed in everyday discourse,” by creating experiences that can equally be disturbing and pleasurable, enlarging our capacity to imagine the world differently and how we behave within it.<sup>481</sup> It is art’s capacity for illusion that makes it possible to imagine alternative worlds in which real life scenarios can be played out without concrete consequences.<sup>482</sup> Since art admits its deception from the outset, it does not need to honour reality so that impossible and contradictory ideas can be held and explored.<sup>483</sup> Bishop warns that art alone cannot be the solution to political problems as it is as “uncertain and precarious as democracy itself”, but art can create the conditions for discussion that would not be possible in everyday situations and create spaces for consciousness raising to take place.<sup>484</sup> However, like democracy, the spaces that

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<sup>476</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem with Work: feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press. P204

<sup>477</sup> Fisher, Mark (2018) “Militant Tendencies Feed Music”. In: D. Ambrose, ed., *k-punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher*. London: Repeater Books. P383

<sup>478</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards a Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P5

<sup>479</sup> UN News (2020) *Rising inequality affecting more than two-thirds of the globe, but it’s not inevitable: new UN report*. [online] Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/01/1055681> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2021]

<sup>480</sup> Monbiot, George (2017) *Public luxury for all or private luxury for some: this is the choice we face*. The Guardian. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/31/private-wealth-labour-common-space> [Accessed 8 Apr. 2021]

<sup>481</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London: Verso. P284

<sup>482</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards a Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P3

<sup>483</sup> Watson, Mike (2016) *Towards a Conceptual Militancy*. London: Zero Books. P24

<sup>484</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London: Verso. P284

art can create need to be tested and performed in the specific contexts that they take place in for them to be effective. As participatory art involves people as a medium, those who participate have a dual role as participant and spectator, meaning that they can stand outside and within the work simultaneously. This means that participants can oscillate between these two positions (in a similar way that I have done during the PhD as an artist and researcher), creating friction and dialogue, meaning that they have the opportunity to not merely 'think' their way through problems, but rather 'practice' them to a resolution.<sup>485</sup> However, it is important to state that any resolution should not be prescribed or handed down to participants. As I have demonstrated with my projects above, participants will draw their own conclusions from the experiences they have with the work and that meaning will be revealed through the interaction of the participant, the work and the world.<sup>486</sup> It is this process that enables participatory arts practice to engage in issue of active citizenship, our current relationships to work, to inform understandings of a post-work society.

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<sup>485</sup> Hope, Sophie (2015) *Bursting paradigms: a colour wheel of practice- research* p84

<sup>486</sup> O'Riley, Tim (2006) "An Inaudible Dialogue", *Research Into Practice*. University of Hertfordshire, July 2006; published in *Working Papers in Art & Design*, Volume 4, 2006. P2

## CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH QUESTION 2 - PARTICIPATORY ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

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*How can participatory arts projects be used as an alternative method for communicating ideas like Universal Basic Income?*

The public perception of Universal Basic Income (UBI) has shifted over the course of my research, moving from a fringe idea into the mainstream. Polling commissioned by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) in 2020 found that almost one in three people would be in favour of a local trial of UBI, and that support was spread across all age groups and political affiliations. However, concerns about how the policy would be funded and how others would spend the money was consistent across all groups, even amongst strong supporters.<sup>487</sup> The RSA polling also found that public attitudes were informed and influenced largely by the mainstream media, which I will argue, has predominately presented UBI in a negative way, often using arguments that are based on opinion, rather than evidence, to discredit the policy. In this chapter I will describe how emotive narratives can be more effective than empirical evidence when discussing a subject and how participatory arts practice can be used to communicate ideas like UBI in a way that can circumnavigate ideological barriers and confirmation bias by presenting them in a context that participants can connect to their own lived experience.

### 7.1 Limits of Debate

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From my experience, talking to people about Basic Income for the first time can be difficult, especially if they have been approached unsolicited. Describing what it is, who would receive it and how it would be funded, can sound bureaucratic and become over complicated, especially as there is no definitive version of the policy. If an ideological objection is raised, like '*why should we give free money to people who don't deserve it?*' or '*It would make everyone lazy!*' It can be difficult to move past this point, as any explanation to these arguments can lead to further objection or questions that move the conversation

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<sup>487</sup> Painter, A., Singleton, A. and Grimond, W. (2020) *A Popular Basic Income: Understanding Public Attitudes towards UBI*. RSA. [online] Available at: [https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/\\_foundation/new-site-blocks-and-images/reports/2020/10/the-rsa-a-popular-basic-income.pdf](https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/_foundation/new-site-blocks-and-images/reports/2020/10/the-rsa-a-popular-basic-income.pdf) P4 [Accessed: 29 Mar. 2021]

away from the original topic of discussion. Even if the person I am talking to supports the idea in principle, many will disregard the policy as utopian, and therefore impossible to achieve. In these cases, the conversation can quickly develop into a binary win or lose debate, in which nuance is lost.

Sceptics of Basic Income like to claim that there is no evidence to support the positive effects that advocates claim it would have. Even though this statement is false,<sup>488</sup> it is rarely challenged when presented in the mainstream media. Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic political and public support for pilot studies grew dramatically. In 2020 over 500 MPs, peers and councillors across the United Kingdom signed a letter to the chancellor calling for trials to be conducted in the UK.<sup>489</sup> By 2021, 32 local councils had passed motions for trials to be conducted in their localities,<sup>490</sup> and a survey found that 69% of people in Wales would support Welsh Government piloting a Basic Income scheme.<sup>491</sup> In spite of this, there was still strong resistance from the Conservative government, which campaigners believe was based on ideology rather than evidence.<sup>492</sup> This can be seen in arguments presented by the Conservative member of the London Assembly, Shaun Bailey, during a debate on the policy in which he stated that Basic Income would reduce the incentive to work, and that people would just use the money to buy lots of drugs.<sup>493</sup> Bailey substantiated his claim by stating that those arguing for Basic Income had not taken the human condition into account. This displays a simple lack of trust of giving money to people, especially the

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<sup>488</sup> Stanford Basic Income Lab (2020). *Global Map of Basic Income Experiments*. [online] Available at: <https://basicincome.stanford.edu/experiments-map/> [Accessed: 29 Mar. 2021]

<sup>489</sup> Partington, Richard (2020) *Covid job losses lead MPs to call for trials of universal basic income*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/oct/31/covid-job-losses-lead-mps-to-call-for-trials-of-universal-basic-income> + UBI Lab Network (2020) *Signatories on our letter for Rishi Sunak calling on him to back Basic Income trials*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/letter-to-rishi-signatories> [Accessed: 29 Mar. 2021]

<sup>490</sup> UBI Lab Network. (2021) *Council Motions*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/council-motions> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2021]

<sup>491</sup> Howe, Sophie (2021) *Majority in Wales support a basic income trial – new findings by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales*. Future Generations Wales. [online] Available at: <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/news/majority-in-wales-support-a-basic-income-trial-new-findings-by-the-future-generations-commissioner-for-wales/> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2021]

<sup>492</sup> Geraghty, Liam (2021) *Ministers ‘cobbled together articles’ for universal basic income research*. The Big Issue. [online] Available at: <https://www.bigissue.com/latest/ministers-cobbled-together-articles-for-universal-basic-income-research/> [Accessed 27 Aug. 2021]

<sup>493</sup> Bloom, Dan (2021) *People would blow Universal Basic Income on ‘lots of drugs’, top Tory claims*. The Mirror. [online] Available at: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/people-would-blow-universal-basic-23593556> [Accessed 22 Mar. 2021]

poor, which is built on opinion rather than fact. Similar claims to Bailey's are frequently raised and are accepted as legitimate arguments against implementing Basic Income, even though trials have found the opposite to be true, as consistent evidence has found increased engagement in the labour market,<sup>494</sup> along with reductions in the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.<sup>495</sup>

Before the pandemic, public understanding of Basic Income in the UK had largely been informed by the trial conducted in Finland between January 2017 and December 2018. Media coverage had mainly been negative, branding the experiment a failure because there had only been a 1% increase of employment for those participating in the trial compared to the control group. Headlines like *Finland's free money experiment fails to boost employment*,<sup>496</sup> created a negative account of the trial that focused on one aspect of its findings. This obscured all the positive outcomes for participants in the trial that included reductions in stress and anxiety, along with an increase of trust in politicians and community.<sup>497</sup> As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, the use of language is extremely important in conveying information and how it is interpreted. The oversimplification of the policy as "free money" has fed into the narrative that Basic Income is a money for nothing which would promote idleness. Countering this narrative of the policy is difficult as short emotive headlines are much more effective in building the perception of a subject than statistics and empirical data. An example of this can be seen in the contrasting coverage of the Labour Party's decision to support running pilot studies in the UK in 2019.

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<sup>494</sup> Standing, Guy (2017) *Basic Income: And How We Can Make It Happen*. Pelican Books. P236

<sup>495</sup> Standing, Guy (2017) *Basic Income: And How We Can Make It Happen*. Pelican Books. P226 + Ferdosi, M., McDowell, T., Lewchuk, W. and Ross, S. (2020) *Southern Ontario's Basic Income Experience*. McMaster University, Canada. [online] Available at: <https://labourstudies.mcmaster.ca/documents/southern-ontarios-basic-income-experience.pdf> P41 [Accessed 10 Oct. 2020]

<sup>496</sup> Henley, Jon (2019) *Finland's 'free cash' experiment fails to boost employment*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/08/finland-free-cash-experiment-fails-to-boost-employment> [Accessed 10 Oct. 2020]

<sup>497</sup> Kela (2020) *Results of Finland's basic income experiment: small employment effects, better perceived economic security and mental wellbeing*. Kela.fi. [online] Available at: [Results of Finland's basic income experiment: small employment effects, better perceived economic security and mental wellbeing - News archive for customers - kela.fi](https://www.kela.fi/en/news/2020/02/03/results-of-finlands-basic-income-experiment-small-employment-effects-better-perceived-economic-security-and-mental-wellbeing) [Accessed 10 Oct. 2020]



Figure 7.1: The Independent, Tuesday 07 May 2019



Figure 7.2: The Express, Tuesday 14 May 2019

It is clear to see from the headlines, what message each of the papers attempted to portray. The Independent (figure 7.1) declared, in a seemingly neutral way, that Basic Income would mean that all citizens would receive money,<sup>498</sup> while the Express (figure 7.2), who appear to have a less favourable view of the policy (and the Labour Party), focused on how Basic Income would benefit three specific groups of people: *murderers, rapists and paedophiles*.<sup>499</sup> The Independent presented Basic Income as a policy which would promote fairness, empathising its aspect of universality which would mean every person, lawfully resident in the UK, would receive it without conditions or means testing. The article states that advocates believe Basic Income could “dramatically reduce poverty, insecurity and the use of food banks while saving on the bureaucracy of current social welfare administration.” The article also reported findings of a poll conducted by the *Institute for Policy Research* at the University of Bath in 2017, which found that 49 per cent of all Britons would support the

<sup>498</sup> Rahim, Zamira (2019) *Universal basic income: Plan to give all citizens money should be piloted in UK, report says*. The Independent. [online] Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-party-basic-income-report-pilot-scheme-a8901956.html> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2019]

<sup>499</sup> Lister, Sam (2019) *Murderers, rapists and paedophiles 'to be given £70 a week' under new Labour plan*. The Express. [online] Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1126957/Murderers-rapists-paedophiles-Labour-plan-public-money> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2019]

introduction of a universal basic income scheme.<sup>500</sup> In contrast to this coverage, The Express used extremely emotive language to attempt to frame the policy as ridiculous and unfair by stating:

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has said the [Labour] party will trial paying a universal basic income – but it would mean criminals walk out of jail with thousands of pounds in their pocket. ... as well as covering criminals, taxpayers will also be forced to shell out for Britain's top earners, including bankers and Premiership footballers.<sup>501</sup>

Framing Basic Income as a policy that would force the public to “shell out” for those who do not deserve support was an attempt to delegitimise the policy and its advocates. By asking why the public should support a policy that would favour murderers at the expense of hard-working taxpayers, the paper presented the idea as a moral question, with a clear “yes” or “no” answer. In her article *Debate is Stupid*,<sup>502</sup> Aisling McCrea describes her concern that discussions on complicated and controversial topics that do not have simple answers, are increasingly being framed in the media and political forums in this style of debate. She states that: “An audience is more easily won over with a one-liner that inspires applause or laughter than a five-minute explanation of a complicated phenomenon.” McCrea believes that this approach stifles our political and social discourse, as it does not provide the public with a detailed, coherent, well-sourced answer to the question being discussed. As an example of the effectiveness of an emotive argument over an evidence based one, she draws on her experience of taking part in a high school debating competition, in which she argued against the death penalty. In her statement she listed evidence that had been gathered throughout the years on why corporal punishment was a bad policy, including the high rate of false convictions, targeting of non-white defendants, the cost, cruelty, and the

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<sup>500</sup> University of Bath. (2017) *Half of us would support universal basic income but support drops if benefits are cut or taxes rise*. University of Bath. [online] Available at: <https://www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/half-of-us-would-support-universal-basic-income-but-support-drops-if-benefits-are-cut-or-taxes-rise/> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2021]

<sup>501</sup> Lister, Sam (2019) *Murderers, rapists and paedophiles 'to be given £70 a week' under new Labour plan*. The Express. [online] Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1126957/Murderers-rapists-paedophiles-Labour-plan-public-money> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2019]

<sup>502</sup> McCrea, Aisling (2018) *Resolved: Debate is Stupid*. [online] The Outline. Available at: <https://theoutline.com/post/6709/debate-is-stupid> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019]

lack of data proving its effectiveness as a deterrent. Her opponent's speech was much shorter, simply naming three famous child killers, then asking the audience, "do you think these people deserve to live?" Even though their presentation did not include any evidence at all, the audience found the argument more compelling, and her opponent won the debate. As we can see, The Express used the same emotive narrative as McCrea's opponent by connecting Basic Income to the famous child murderer, Ian Huntley, stating he would receive a handout of £84,000 if the policy was implemented.<sup>503</sup> By focusing the story on individuals like Huntley, The Express has attempted to distract the reader from the benefits UBI would have for the wider population. It is clear why opponents of Basic Income use this form of messaging, as it creates a clear emotive story that the reader can connect with.

Narratives help to form our beliefs which we will then pass on to others when discussing the subject. George Monbiot cites George Marshall to highlight the power of narrative: "People may hold information in the form of data and figures, but their beliefs about it are held entirely in the form of stories."<sup>504</sup> Monbiot goes on to say that stories, even if they are partly or completely fictitious, can also strengthen confirmation bias as they resonate so powerfully with our beliefs so as to attempt to disprove them, "tend only to reinforce them."<sup>505</sup> This can even be said of those who support Basic Income. When the head of *Basic Income Network in India*, Sarath Davala, was asked what results from a trial could convince him that Basic Income was a bad idea, he replied: "Nothing, and I don't want to think about it."<sup>506</sup> When I interviewed Davala, I asked him to expand on his answer. He explained that his belief in Basic Income was forged by being a researcher on the trials in India, living with participants for over a year and witnessing the positive impacts the cash transfers had on their lives.<sup>507</sup> Davala said that this first-hand experience was much more powerful than any single piece of research or evidence that could counter what he had seen with his own eyes.

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<sup>503</sup> Lister, Sam (2019) *Murderers, rapists and paedophiles 'to be given £70 a week' under new Labour plan*. The Express [online] Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1126957/Murderers-rapists-paedophiles-Labour-plan-public-money> [Accessed 17 May. 2019]

<sup>504</sup> Monbiot, George (2017) *Out of the Wreckage: A new politics for an age of crisis*. London: Verso. P2

<sup>505</sup> Monbiot, George (2017) *Out of the Wreckage: A new politics for an age of crisis*. London: Verso. P2

<sup>506</sup> Kangas, O., Forget, E., Groot, L., Davala, S., Cooke, J. and Van Parijs, P (2018) Roundtable on basic income experiments. In: *Basic Income Earth Network Congress 2018*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LF7LHv4A8ks> (42.00)

<sup>507</sup> Lloyd, T. and Davala, S. (2020). *Interview in Hyderabad, March 2020*.

His experience formed has an integral part of the narrative that he tells others when advocating for Basic Income.

## 7.2 Using Participatory Arts Practice to Communicate UBI

Instead of trying to convince someone that Basic Income is a good idea, I believe that it is better to let them make their own decision. To do this the information needs to be relayed in a way that is not dogmatic and is easy to interpret. As I have shown above, emotive narratives can be more effective than evidence-based arguments. Also, having a large amount of evidence that supports an argument does not necessarily mean that the public will believe it. Research has found that if a statement is repeated regularly, the perception of its truthfulness will increase in the mind of the public, even when the statement is known to be false.<sup>508</sup> I will now discuss how participatory arts practice can be used to communicate ideas like Basic Income, in a way that allows participants to make independent decisions and avoid confirmation bias.

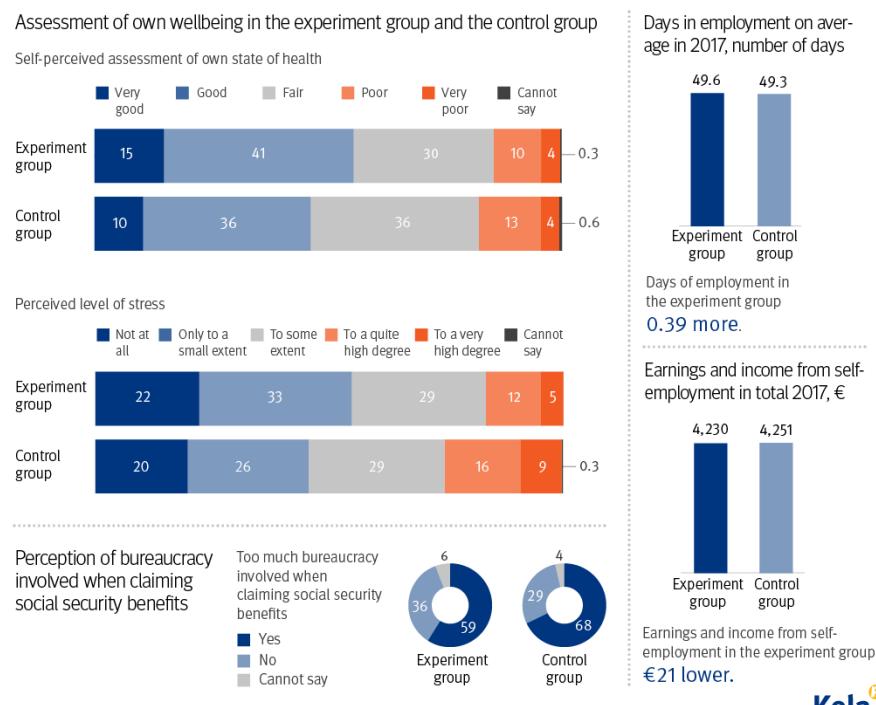


Figure 7.3

<sup>508</sup> Hambrick, David Z. and Marquardt, Madeline. (2018) *Cognitive Ability and Vulnerability to Fake News*. [online] Scientific America. Available at: <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/cognitive-ability-and-vulnerability-to-fake-news> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2021]

Figure 7.3 is a visual representation of the preliminary findings from the first year of the Basic Income experiment in Finland, discussed above. Even though they show positive results, the information is difficult to read and process which can make them unconvincing. Statistics like this can seem abstract when compared to stories and anecdotes which can be related to our own life experiences. The photographer Jessie Golem created *Humans for Basic income* (2018) as an alternative method of presenting the experiences of participants from a Basic Income trial in Ontario, Canada.<sup>509</sup> The trial was scheduled to run for three years, but a change in government led to the trial ending prematurely, and payments stopped after 17 months. The new administration claimed that the trial was too expensive and failed to help people become "independent contributors to the economy".<sup>510</sup> Golem, who was a participant in the trial, used the photographs of participants to present a counter narrative to the government. The portraits show the participants holding up cards with hand-written stories on them, which describe the positive impact Basic Income has had on their lives and the negative effects they faced when the trial was cancelled early. In the portrait below (figure 7.4), David describes how Basic Income alleviated stress which enabled him to be a better husband and father. This meant that he was also able to do a better job as a counsellor, improving lives of others in his community. *Humans of Basic Income* created a narrative around the trial, which is not visible in graphs, by connecting human faces to testimonies that put participant actions into context and humanised how they spent their Basic Income money. This meant that participants stopped being statistics and became people with life stories that others could empathise with. This helped to dispel the "common sense" argument put forward by the likes of Bailey, who believe the human condition would lead to the money being used irresponsibly. Contrasting Golem's project with the graphs from the Finnish trial (figure 7.3) demonstrates how the two methods reveal different kinds of information. One is not necessarily better than the other, as both are necessary to gain a full picture, but the narratives that are connected to them is

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<sup>509</sup> Golem, Jessie. *Humans of Basic Income* <https://www.jessiegolem.com/humans-of-basic-income/>

<sup>510</sup> Loriggio, Paola. (2018) *Ontario Tories announce changes to welfare programs, plan to scrap basic income pilot*. The Canadian Press. [online] Available at: <https://www.cp24.com/news/ontario-tories-announce-changes-to-welfare-programs-plan-to-scrap-basic-income-pilot-1.4035306> [Accessed 20 Jun. 2019]

extremely important, as Marshall states above, statistics are how we will hold information, but our beliefs are formed and shared through stories.<sup>511</sup>

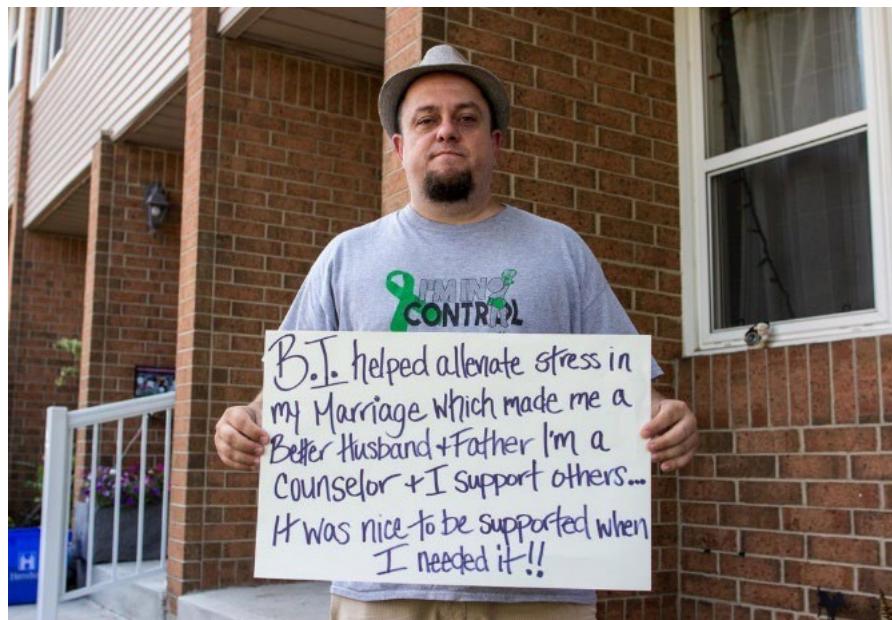


Figure 7.4: Jessie Golem, *Humans of Basic Income* (2018)

The projects I created over the course of my research used participatory methods to communicate the idea of Basic Income by presenting the policy in a way that would enable people to make connections to their own lived experiences. It is important to state that the projects were not intended to act as propaganda for the policy. The first project I created, *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2017), allowed me to gauge public understanding and levels of support for Basic Income by starting conversations. This was achieved by posing *open questions* and creating *space and time* for discussion, as described in Chapter 5 & 6. The project deliberately did not use the words Basic Income in any of its questions or text. This was to avoid the problems outlined at the start of this chapter. The three questions posed by *Between Eating and Sleeping* were designed to place the reader in the past, the present and speculative future.<sup>512</sup> This performed a similar function to the *initial interrogative statements* utilised by Stephen Willats in his participatory art projects that questioned participants' life experiences and created the space to situate these experiences "within a

<sup>511</sup> Monbiot, George (2017) *Out of the Wreckage: A new politics for an age of crisis*. London: Verso. P2

<sup>512</sup> "What did you want to be when you were growing up?", "What gets you out of bed in the morning?" and, "What would you do if you had a year off?"

parallel world in which reflexive examination is more easily facilitated.”<sup>513</sup> Like Willats *initial interrogative statements*, the questions posed by *Between Eating and Sleeping* created a framework for participants to critically reflect on their life experiences and interrogate the narratives they used to describe them. Most participants had immediate and intuitive responses to the first two questions. The majority of responses to, “What did you want to be when you were growing up?” were what I would have expected: “Dinosaurs or Space,” for example. But some gave more emotive answers like, “Mentally stronger”, “Not Fat” or “Someone else.” Answers to the second question, “What gets you out of bed in the morning?”, were largely pragmatic, like needing the toilet or something to eat. Surprisingly, few people mentioned work as a motivation to get out of bed. Many stated that other obligations, like caring for children or feeding pets, were bigger priorities for them. The most interesting responses were for the last question, “What would you do if you had a year off?” This is because the question required the participants to use their imagination. For some the easiness of the first two questions disarmed them, so that the third acted like a non sequitur, creating a moment of speechlessness that caused them to pause and think deeper about what motivated them and gave their life meaning.

Many asked what I meant by “a year off?” Would it be paid or unpaid? I knew that any clarification would lead to more questions, so I invited participants to define the meaning of the question and set the terms for their response for themselves. This led to many interesting discussions that included personal life stories and other anecdotes that were used to explain answers and the values that underpinned them. Once I had talked to the participants for a short time, I was able to introduce the idea of Basic Income in a way that was relevant to our conversation and resonated with their life experiences. This allowed us to talk about the policy without having to come to any clear-cut conclusions, either for or against. Asking participants to imagine how they would spend the money, rather than how they thought others would spend it, helped to counter the “common sense” arguments and narratives used to discredit the policy in the media. The project’s aim was not to convert participants into supporters of Basic Income, but to convey information about the policy to them and encourage deeper debate that avoided knee jerk reactions or ideological

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<sup>513</sup> Kester, Grant H. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press. P94

objections. It was also an opportunity for me, as a researcher and advocate, to learn about their views on the policy and wider beliefs. By using participatory arts practice, I was able to present the policy to participants in a context where they were able to imagine the effects it would have outside the pragmatic confines of their daily routine and logic of Capitalist Realism.

In comparison to the intentionally open questions of *Between Eating and Sleeping*, other projects I developed posed more specific questions which were designed to explicitly lead the conversation to Basic Income. The final page of the *Paint by Numbers* zine contains the question: “If the government paid you £1000 a month unconditionally, just for being a member of society, would you quit your job?” The question deliberately did not contain the term Basic Income. Again, this was to avoid the situations described at the start of the chapter, in which framing the question around a political issue would determine the direction of the conversation. Furthermore, by not including the term participants could respond to the question without any prior knowledge of Basic Income and allowed them to draw their own interpretations and make connections with wider themes that the project touched on. The majority of people I spoke to said they would not stop working if they received the payment. Those who said that they would quit their job, stated that doing so would allow them to retrain or look for more meaningful employment. These responses corresponded with the findings of Basic Income trials<sup>514</sup> and went against the “common sense” narrative that the media often present.<sup>515</sup>

Discussions with participants who engaged in my projects, lasted anywhere between 30 seconds to over an hour. Many of these conversations did not touch on Basic Income, but during the ones that did, I was able to refer to evidence from trials that I had researched and my own experience of AH45 and the PhD stipend. Some participants remained unconvinced by what I had to say but said that the conversation had helped to make them think about the policy from a different perspective to the narrative conveyed in the media. Whether they were for or against the policy in principle, most of the people I spoke to

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<sup>514</sup> Standing, Guy (2017) *Basic Income: And How We Can Make It Happen*. London: Pelican Books. P228

<sup>515</sup> Foges, Claire (2020) *Money for nothing will not buy us happiness*. The Times. [online] Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/money-for-nothing-will-not-buy-us-happiness-prlk6v8n8> [Accessed 17 Apr. 2020]

agreed that trials should be conducted in the UK to test the effects of the policy and gather convincing evidence that would be needed to make the political case for it to be implemented.

### 7.3 Basic Income Top Trumps

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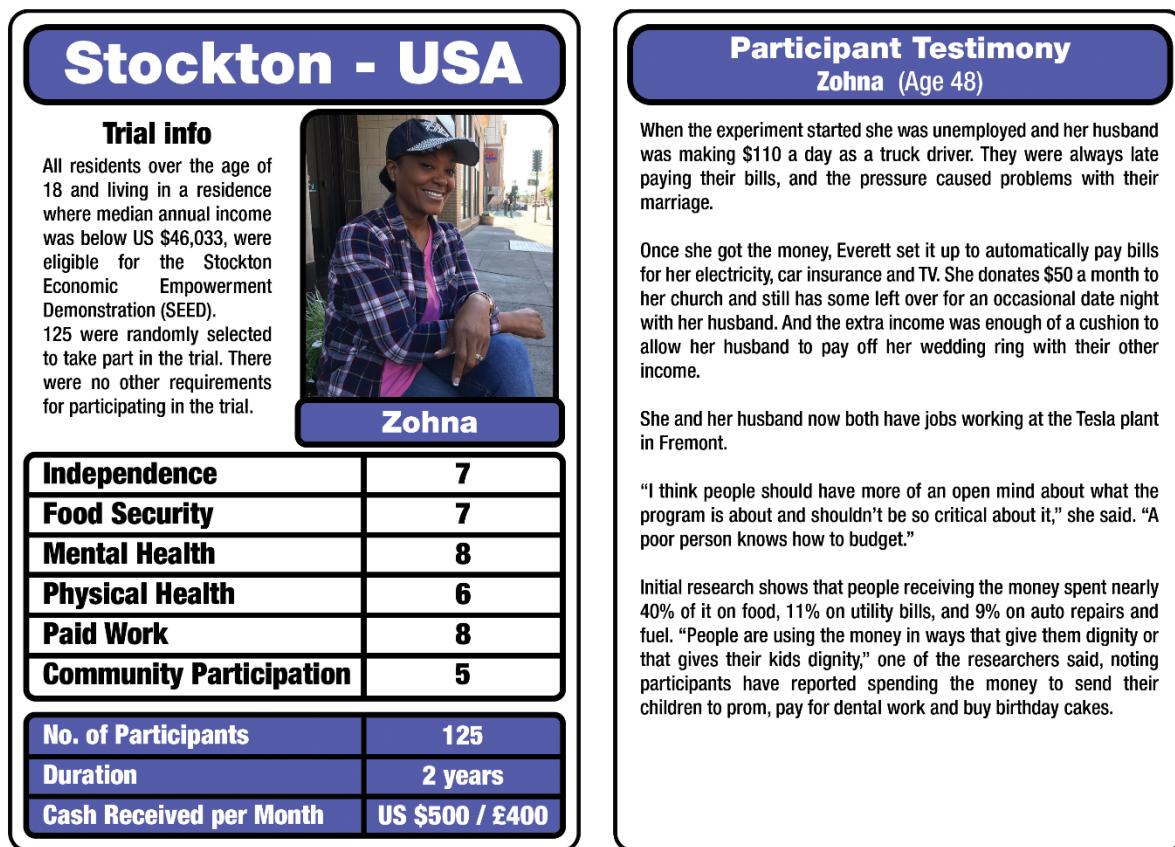
The methods used in *Between Eating and Sleeping* were exploratory in nature and embraced unpredictable outcomes. The project was presented in public spaces, so the majority of participants were from a non-exclusive audience and most conversations were on a one-to-one basis. Following on from this, I experimented with different methods of engaging the public which lead to the creation of a *Basic Income Top Trumps* card game (2020). This project was used to facilitate more focused group discussions with an exclusive audience on the subject of Basic Income and to present evidence from trials in a clear and digestible format. The card game was created in collaboration with Perry Walker from *Talk Shop*, who produce materials to help facilitate discussions and debate.<sup>516</sup> The game used the format of the well-known Top Trumps game so that the cards could be understood easily and played without any explanation or instructions.<sup>517</sup> Participants from Basic Income trials from around the world were used to create profiles for the cards. Each card had a short description of the trial, a testimony from the participant and six categories with scores out of 10 (figure 7.5). The categories include *independence, food security, mental health, physical health, paid work and community participation*. The category titles were adapted from those used to measure the findings from the trial in Ontario, Canada (2017).<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> Talk Shop. (date unknown) *Our Purpose*. [online] Available at: <http://www.talkshopuk.org/our-purpose/> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2021]

<sup>517</sup> Top Trumps. (date unknown) *About*. [online] Available at: <https://toptrumps.com/about/> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2021]

<sup>518</sup> Government of Ontario (2017) *Ontario Basic Income Pilot*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-basic-income-pilot> [Accessed: 15 Jan. 2020]



government who were not in favour of the policy.<sup>521</sup> The Conservative administration stated that they favoured their means tested benefit, Universal Credit, and that their rejection of Universal Basic Income was based on principle.<sup>522</sup> Advocates for Basic Income found the government's position extremely frustrating, as the trials proposed by the feasibility study would be the most comprehensive studies of Basic Income globally to date and could be able to provide a definitive response to concerns raised by sceptics of Basic Income.

Those who have been campaigning for Basic Income for years have expressed concern that no amount of evidence can convince those who are ideologically opposed to giving people money universally and without any conditionality. Sarath Davala believes that those who are against the policy will even create reasons not to accept evidence from pilot studies, pointing to examples where politicians have attempted to discredit evidence from a trial by saying that not enough people were involved, or that the duration was not long enough to determine long-term effects in behaviour.<sup>523</sup> Another common critique is that the results of a trial from India or Africa would not translate to a North American or European context. This second argument has become harder to substantiate now that recent trials in America and Canada have drawn similar positive conclusions to those conducted in the Global South,<sup>524</sup> but as discussed above, opposition to Basic Income is often formed on an ideological basis rather than evidence. Therefore, the objective of the Top Trumps card game was to use participatory arts practice to present evidence from trials that could move past ideological barriers, and to make comparisons between trials easier to do by highlighting the commonalities between participants experiences across different economic, geographical, and cultural contexts.

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<sup>521</sup> BBC News (2020) *Citizen's basic income: Pilot scheme 'challenging but desirable'*. [online] BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-52997031> [Accessed 13 June 2020]

<sup>522</sup> Loft, P., Kennedy, S., Mackley, A. and Hobson, F. (2020) *The introduction of a universal basic income*. [online] House of Commons Library. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2020-0096/CDP-2020-0096.pdf> P8 [Accessed: 28 Mar. 2021]

<sup>523</sup> Kangas, O., Forget, E., Groot, L., Davala, S., Cooke, J. and Van Parijs, P (2018) Roundtable on basic income experiments. In: *Basic Income Earth Network Congress, Finland 2018*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LF7LHv4A8ks>

<sup>524</sup> Lowery, Annie (2021) *Stockton's Basic-Income Experiment Pays Off*. The Atlantic. [online] Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/03/stocktons-basic-income-experiment-pays-off/618174/> [Accessed: 14 Mar. 2021]

My intention was to create a physical deck of cards which could be engaged with by exclusive and non-exclusive audiences. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown restrictions, all the games had to be conducted online with exclusive audiences. An advantage of this was that players could take part from a wide range of locations. Perry and I ran several games, each lasting between 90 minutes and two hours, with a mix of people, some involved in Basic Income advocacy, and others with little knowledge of the policy. The games were comprised of two rounds. In the first, players were dealt several cards each, then asked to select one card. Players took it in turn to describe the participant the card represented and what impact the trial had on this person to the other players. Players were asked to list the participants scores, giving a short interpretation of each, stating if they agreed with them or not. This was followed by a discussion where players reflected on the experiences of the participants and differences between the trials. Players were then asked to express what struck them the most about the cards and the participant experiences.

Scotland		Participant Testimony
<b>Trial Info</b> Everyone in the community will receive the same amount of money which is based on Scotland's minimum income standard. There are no requirements to work and you will not lose any of your Basic Income if you find additional paid work. During the trial you will not be able to claim Job Seekers Allowance, Universal Credit, Tax Credits or State Pension, but you are still entitled to disability, housing, childcare and caring benefits, if you are eligible.		
<b>Independence</b> <b>Food Security</b> <b>Mental Health</b> <b>Physical Health</b> <b>Paid Work</b> <b>Community Participation</b>		
<b>No. of Participants</b> 2,500 <b>Duration</b> 3 years <b>Cash Received per Month</b> £925.55		

Figure 7.6

The second round of the game used one of the proposed plans for a trial put forward by the Scottish Feasibility study and asked players to imagine that they are taking part in the trial (figure 7.6).<sup>525</sup> Players filled in the card, giving themselves scores out of 10 for each category, and wrote a short testimony about how their life would be affected by taking part in the trial. Once the players had done this, they were asked to feed this back to the other players. This formed the basis for a discussion between the players.

The first round was important as it gave the players a chance to get to know one another and build a level of trust. This also gave them a deeper understanding of Basic Income and the various schemes that have been trialled around the world. One player, who was a member of a Basic Income organisation, believed that the cards were an effective way to show the diversity of personal experiences of the participants from the different trials, and presented other information from the trials in a clear and digestible way. Another player, who previously had little knowledge of Basic Income, said that after playing the game they felt confident enough to talk to friends and family about it and even advocate for the policy to be implemented. This feedback was extremely encouraging, but the real success of the game emerged during the second round where players imagined what it would be like to take part in the trial proposed by the Scottish government. Several of the players said that they felt very emotional hearing each other's stories. I was surprised at how much personal information the players shared about their current situations and the impact taking part in the trial would have on them and their families.

The context and format of the game helped to create a magic circle that made players feel comfortable enough to share personal experiences and anecdotes which they would not discuss in other situations.<sup>526</sup> These included stories involving money and debt, some of which were painful and created feelings of shame. In this sense, the Top Trumps game provided a similar framework to Willats' *initial interrogative statements*, by establishing a distance from their life experiences, allowing the players to reflect and discuss them with

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<sup>525</sup> Citizens' Basic Income Feasibility Study Steering Group (2020) *Assessing the Feasibility of Citizens' Basic Income Pilots in Scotland: Executive Summary*. [online] Available at: [https://fife-web.squiz.cloud/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0025/175372/Draft-Final-CBI-Feasibility\\_Exec-Summary-June-2020.pdf](https://fife-web.squiz.cloud/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/175372/Draft-Final-CBI-Feasibility_Exec-Summary-June-2020.pdf) P7 [Accessed 30 Jun. 2020]

<sup>526</sup> Benedetto, Ida (2017) *The Magic Circle*. Patterns of Transformation: Designing Sex, Death, and Survival in the 21st Century. [online] Available at: <https://patternsoftransformation.com/vocabulary/mc-overview.html>

one another more easily.<sup>527</sup> By using dialogical methods, similar to those described by Grant Kester in his book *Conversation Pieces*, the game was able to create a cumulative process of exchange and dialogue that helped participants to question their behaviour and imagine beyond the limits of their own fixed identities and stereotypical images of others.<sup>528</sup> This process unfolded over the course of the game as players shared experiences and made comparisons with one another's lives. This was achieved by creating, what Claire Bishop refers to as, a fusion of reality with calculated artifice, in which real-life scenarios could interact with fictional ones, by testing participants social boundaries without incapacitating restrictions of guilt.<sup>529</sup> The game was not a means to an end in itself but served as a method to explore and disentangle a more complex knot of social concerns and behavioural protocols.<sup>530</sup> One player commented that the game was a "really good tool for making people think about what impact money has on their lives."<sup>531</sup> She felt that players were able to move beyond the social taboo of talking about money and start to think about money in a more rational way, which is difficult to do in everyday scenarios. Moreover, she said that the game effectively translated what Basic Income would be like in reality and that this was convincing because the game used evidence and testimonies from real pilot studies. Other players stated that the game highlighted many ways that life can be dysfunctional and how Basic Income could benefit people in unexpected ways. The game used participatory arts practice to facilitate conversations like these and present evidence from trials in a form that let participants decide the validity of the policy for themselves.

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<sup>527</sup> Kester, Grant H. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press. P94

<sup>528</sup> Kester, Grant H. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press. P8 + 12

<sup>529</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London: Verso. P39

<sup>530</sup> Bishop, Claire (2012) *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*. London: Verso. P39

<sup>531</sup> Lloyd, T. and Walker, P. (2021) *Helping Citizens to Imagine the Effect of a Basic Income*. [video] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2pff0Q1AbU&t=> [Accessed 5 Aug. 2021]

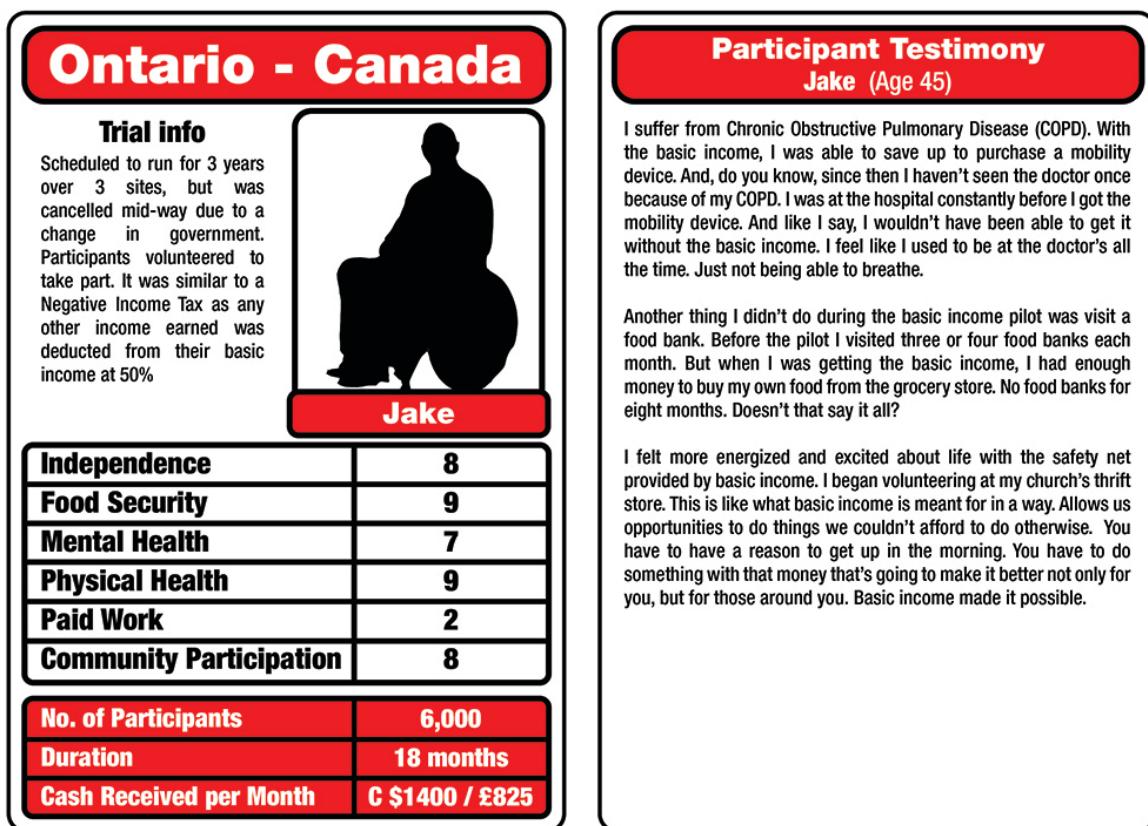


Figure 7.7

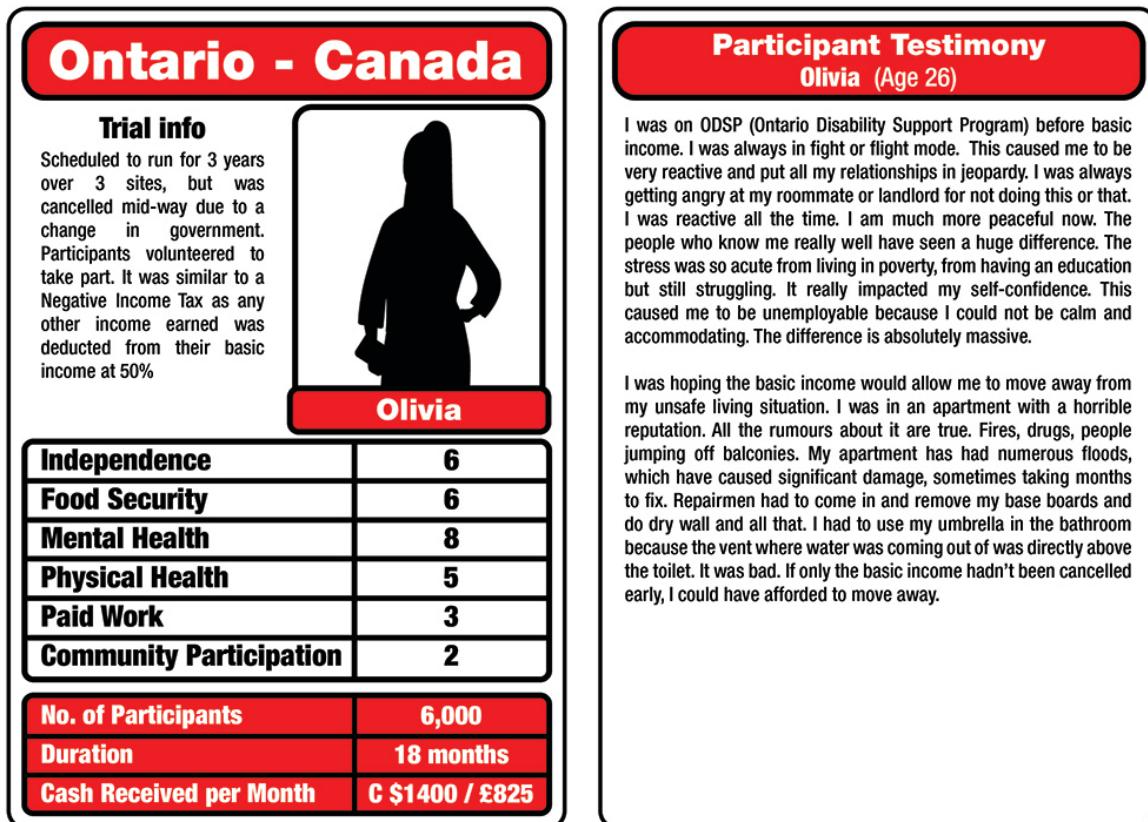


Figure 7.8

Within the context of the game, players felt comfortable to challenge aspects of the evidence presented and questioned the definitions of the scoring categories. For example, a discussion developed between two players (*Player One* and *Player Two*) around the definition of *community participation*, and what kinds of activity this should include. *Player One* felt that high scores were linked to specific activities mentioned in testimonies and missed other, less explicit, contributions to the community. For example, Jake (figure 7.7) scored highly because he had the time to start volunteering in his church thrift store. *Player One* stated that although this was a valid form of community participation, the scoring systems seemed to overlook the other, less explicit, ways that trial participants contributed and participated in their communities. He pointed to Olivia (figure 7.8) as an example, whose mental health improved during the trial meaning that she was no longer constantly in “fight or flight mode”, which meant that she was able to reduce her anti-social behaviour and be a better neighbour. *Player One* observed how much our behaviour impacts the people around us (family, housemates, neighbours, and the wider population) and felt that this should also be considered in the scores. He shared an example from his own life to build on his point. When the game was conducted, *Player One* had been furloughed from his job, which meant he could be at home when his children returned from school each day, allowing him to help them with their homework and prepare their meals earlier in the evening, both of which would not be possible during his normal work schedule. This may not sound like community participation, but he felt that being able to perform these activities had a positive impact on him and his family which meant that they were better people to be around, and therefore should be seen as a positive contribution to the community, and an example of *Scenius*.<sup>532</sup> This view is shared by the Director of Health at the *Health Foundation*, Jo Bibby, who states that the environment we live in affects our physical and mental health. This includes the people within our environment. If they are happy and healthy, this will also have a positive effect on us.<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> “...scenius is the intelligence of a whole... operation or group of people... in which people share their talents and contribute to each other’s success.” Gentry, Alex (2017) *What Is The “Scenius”?* Medium.com. [online] Available at: <https://medium.com/salvo-faraday/what-is-the-scenius-15409eb6ac72> Accessed: 15 Feb. 2020]

<sup>533</sup> Bibby, Jo (2018) *How do our family, friends and community influence our health?* The Health Foundation. [online] Available at: <https://www.health.org.uk/infographic/how-do-our-family-friends-and-community-influence-our-health> [Accessed 7 Oct. 2021]

There is a strong correlation between *Player One*'s observations and the narratives that emerged from Golem's *Humans of Basic Income* portrait above (figure 7.4). Golem's project captured forms of community participation which would not appear in statistics or graphs and presents them in a concise and convincing manner. *Player Two* pointed out that these forms of community participation and their impact are much easier to see and measure when the trials are conducted in saturation sites, where everyone in the local area receives the Basic Income, which is what the Scottish Feasibility study has proposed. *Player Two* observed that in most trials, Finland for example, participants were spread over a large geographic area which made it much harder to see how the Basic Income benefitted other people around the individuals who received it.

Rather than presenting definitive data, the game's scoring categories were designed to add an aspect of play to the cards which could enable a process of exchange and dialogue to draw out the gaps in the evidence. This helped the players to reflect on their own experiences and share them with the other players, adding layers of nuance and creating narratives which would not have emerged if they had read an article or report about the trials. An example of where this occurred was in the second round of the game, when a similar discussion over the definition of *community participation* took place around the category of *paid work*. When scoring themselves, several players said that they would reduce their hours of employment in order to do more meaningful but unpaid work, like volunteering, caring for family members and creative projects. Others said that they would have more choice over what kinds of work they did and could say no to work that they did not enjoy or found exploitative. The players observed that the Basic Income would improve their well-being as individuals, giving them more time and energy to do other kinds of work and become active citizens, but the benefit of this would not necessarily be captured in the categorisation system of the cards which focused on paid work. This highlighted the fact that reports on Basic Income trials have prioritised the impact on employment over other forms of participation, and focused on the behaviour of individuals, rather than the effect it would have on the wider community. Although evidence from trials show huge benefits to mental and physical health, these effects are often ignored or downplayed in the media, and the impact on employment is used to measure the success of a trial. This means that the benefit that Basic Income would have on the arts and other forms of social and cultural

participation have been missing from the discourse beyond the acknowledgement that more people would be able to become artists. This is often viewed as a trivial by-product of the policy rather than a positive outcome or specific goal. Also, for every person who celebrates this potential outcome, another will use it to denigrate the policy, stating that Basic Income would produce lots of bad poetry.<sup>534</sup> The argument put forward here is that poetry, and similar creative activities, are non-productive in the market and therefore have no value. Proponents of this argument believe “struggling artists” are struggling for a reason, which is that they do not provide goods and services of sufficient value.<sup>535</sup>

The argument that creative activities are non-productive is another example of how the business ontology of Capitalist Realism is applied to all aspects of our lives, which means that the evidence from trials has been presented in a way that aims to satisfy this agenda, rather than challenge it. This limits the scope of the policy and the wider benefits it could have for society if it were implemented. Indeed, when analysing the evidence from trials, advocates will justify decreases in employment during trials by demonstrating that many of those who leave the labour market do so to retrain or enter education in order to find better paid work in the future. Other forms of “non-productive” activity are also framed in how they impact the economy, rather than having any intrinsic value themselves. When creative activities have been reported in the studies, they are viewed through the lens of entrepreneurship and self-employment. For example, the McMaster University report of the Ontario trial refers to a young man suffering from mental health issues who was receiving state benefits and working several part-time jobs before the trial started.<sup>536</sup> He was a gifted musician and the Basic Income helped him to manage his condition and meant he could work on recording an album, which was something that he loved to do. He did not expect to be a rock star or make a million dollars, but he hoped that Basic Income would give him the financial freedom to use his talent to earn a living. Although the benefit that working on a creative project had on his mental health was acknowledged, this was presented as a side

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<sup>534</sup> Battersea Arts Centre (2020) *Universal Basic Income debate*. [online] (26:30) Available at: <https://www.nataliebennett.org/latest/battersea-arts-centre-universal-basic-income-debate> [Accessed on 12 Dec. 2020]

<sup>535</sup> Keeble, Nathan (2017) *The Dangers of a "Universal Basic Income"*. [online] Mises Institute. Available at: <https://mises.org/wire/dangers-universal-basic-income> [Accessed on 25 Mar. 2021]

<sup>536</sup> Ferdosi, M., McDowell, T., Lewchuk, W. and Ross, S. (2020) *Southern Ontario's Basic Income Experience*. McMaster University, Canada. [online] Available at: <https://labourstudies.mcmaster.ca/documents/southern-ontarios-basic-income-experience.pdf> P13 [Accessed 10 Oct. 2020]

effect rather than an important outcome, with the emphasis being placed on the opportunity to use his skill to find alternative employment.

## 7.4 Basic Income and Creativity

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My research has identified the need for more attention to be given to the impact Basic Income would have on cultural production and participation along with the benefits this could have on many aspects of our lives. David Graeber felt that people are naturally creative, industrious and empathetic, and by detaching livelihood from work, Basic Income would enable us to contribute to society in different ways.<sup>537</sup> Working on self-initiated creative projects can be a source of great satisfaction and an opportunity to escape the labels that define us in the realm of employment. For example, Angela the *politician*, can become Angela the *sculptor*. Paul the *teacher*, can become Paul the *singer*. Many of us will invest more time and effort into these projects than we would be willing or able to put into our day jobs, precisely because they are motivated by love, rather than money. Working collectively on self-organised projects can build a sense of community and solidarity which can create moments of collective joy. Comparisons can be drawn between creative projects and protest movements as both can gather people together in search of a common cause. Although creative projects may not be politically motivated, the political can emerge from them by providing new ways of seeing the world, creating non-economic forms of value, and offering alternative ways to contribute to society. Furthermore, self-organised and creative activity can create a more organic understanding and attachment to politics that can open a range of critical and political perspectives that challenge the logic of Capitalism and state orthodoxy.<sup>538</sup> This was the experience of artist and musician, Andy Abbott, when organising DIY art and music events with his friends and other people. He states that these events were educational experiences for those involved as they learned a lot more from doing things themselves and working together as group of amateurs, rather than relying on professionals to provide services for them. They were able to overcome problems creatively by sharing skills and developing new ones together, which gave them a sense of

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<sup>537</sup> Mermelstein, Daniel (2019) *David Graeber, Bullshit Jobs*. [online] Citizen's Income Trust. Available at: <http://citizensincome.org/book-reviews/david-graeber-bullshit-jobs/> [Access on 11 May 2021]

<sup>538</sup> Abbott, Andy (2012) *The Radical Ethics of DIY in Self-organised Art and Cultural Activity*. [online] Available at: <http://www.yvonnecarmichael.com/andyabbott.co.uk/index.php/about/writing/> [Accessed 12 May 2021]

empowerment from their achievements. Most importantly, they realised first-hand that there was an alternative to the “alienating, repetitive, separated, specialised and divided life under capitalism.”<sup>539</sup> Abbott believes that creative DIY culture offers multiple case studies for what people will do with more free time, “as well as entertain themselves and each other, people choose to build networks of solidarity, care and mutual aid.”<sup>540</sup> For me, Abbott’s experience is a strong description of the consciousness raising potential of participatory arts practice. Giving more people access to making art and other creative outlets, could foster a wider appreciation of the benefits of art and what it can be beyond traditional definitions like painting and sculpture. This would also help to challenge what is understood as *culture* and flatten the hierarchies of high and low culture. Watching a football match and having a drink in the pub is culture and should be viewed as equally valuable as a trip to an art gallery or museum. All these activities gather people together and create space for dialogue and conjecture. Enabling more people to make art could also help to democratise the artworld which is currently extremely unequal and relies on vast amounts of volunteer work for it to function.<sup>541</sup> Consequently, people from working-class and ethnic minority backgrounds are underrepresented. Authors of the *Panic!* report, that explored social class and inequalities in the creative industries, concluded that contributing factors were that these groups were unable to take on unpaid work, and had a lack of personal networks or insider knowledge which people from more privileged backgrounds can access.<sup>542</sup> Universal Basic Income would not solve these problems, but it could enable more people from different backgrounds to become artists and give them the resources to create new art worlds that represent them, instead of trying to enter one built on hierarchy and privilege. Counter to the popular myth that UBI would disincentivise work and make everyone lazy, it could allow more people to follow creative trajectories and provide,

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<sup>539</sup> Abbott, Andy (2012) *The Radical Ethics of DIY in Self-organised Art and Cultural Activity*. [online] Available at: <http://www.yvonnearmichael.com/andyabbott.co.uk/index.php/about/writing/> [Accessed 12 May 2021]

<sup>540</sup> Abbott, Andy (2021) *From DIY to UBI: The Political Horizons of a Gig Guide Pamphlet: 1999 to 2017 and beyond*. In: J. Tormey, G. Whiteley. ed., Art, Politics and the Pamphleteer, 1st ed. London: Bloomsbury. P242

<sup>541</sup> Nicoll, Janie and Rutherford, Ailie (2018) *In kind*. [online] Available at: <https://inkindproject.info/about/> [Accessed 29 Mar. 2021]

<sup>542</sup> Brook, O., O’Brien, D., and Taylor, M. (2018) *Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries*. The University of Edinburgh. [online] Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333508087\\_Panic\\_Social\\_Class\\_Taste\\_and\\_Inequalities\\_in\\_the\\_Creative\\_Industries](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333508087_Panic_Social_Class_Taste_and_Inequalities_in_the_Creative_Industries) [Accessed 2 Nov. 2020].

“opportunities to participate in experimentation, theorization, imagination” that is needed for us to move beyond the confines of Capitalist Realism and realise new ways of being.<sup>543</sup>

## Conclusion

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In this chapter I have demonstrated how participatory arts practice can be used to communicate ideas like Basic Income in a way that enables participants to move beyond confirmation bias and view information from different perspectives. I have shown how emotive narratives can be more effective than empirical evidence when conveying a message. This is because we are limited to interpreting information from our own viewpoint, meaning that we will question information that contradicts what we instinctively feel to be true.<sup>544</sup> The methods used in my projects were able to counteract this by enabling participants to critically reflect on their life experiences through a process of dialogue and exchange, allowing them to challenge the narratives they use to understand their identity and place in the world. The projects discussed above created spaces and situations that engaged members of the public outside of the political arena to start conversations about Basic Income without the need to ‘win’ a debate. This is significant as the majority of the public’s attitudes are informed by the mainstream media which often uses emotional narratives to discredit UBI with arguments that are based on ideology rather than fact. Engaging with participants through these projects also helped me, as an advocate for Universal Basic Income, to gain a better understanding of their views and concerns about the policy at the same time as challenging my own beliefs and confirmation bias. These projects were not intended to function as propaganda but could act as tools to counter the dominant narratives in the media and allow participants to come to their own conclusions. Using participatory arts practice to facilitate discussion allowed for lines of enquiry and critiques to emerge which are rarely explored when Basic Income is discussed in the media and political forums, which tend to focus on employment and the benefit to the economy.

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<sup>543</sup> Gilman-Opalsky (2020) *The Communism of Love: An inquiry into the poverty of exchange value*. Chico, CA: AK Press. P318

<sup>544</sup> Casad, Bettina J. (date unknown). *Confirmation bias*. [online] Britannica.com. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/science/confirmation-bias> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2019]

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

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This research has made two key contributions to the field of participatory arts and, more broadly, approaches to public debate and policy-making. It has:

- Demonstrated the value of participatory arts practice in public debate around complex issues, such as UBI
- Made a contribution to the field of participatory, practice-based research by developing iterative, heterotopian methodologies

My research has shown that participatory arts practices can be an effective method for critically reflecting on issues of active citizenship, re-evaluating our current relationships to work, and informing understandings of a post-work society. The term participatory arts practice is in itself significant as it recognises the importance of the context in which the practice sits and to which it contributes, and it must be recognised that much of this can be invisible, undetectable or unrecognised. Participatory arts practice can create friction and tensions within the routines of our daily lives by asking questions that can help to shift our understanding, without providing concrete solutions or claiming to empower.<sup>545</sup> This can create space for conjecture that allows participants to challenge the narratives they use to understand their identity and place in the world, which can also act as an entry point to wider political discussions and civic participation. The participatory nature of this practice means that it can create heterotopias<sup>546</sup> where the normal rules of everyday life can be suspended so that people can experience pleasurable and uncomfortable encounters, with a critical distance from reality, by engaging in actions and discussions which would not be possible in other everyday scenarios.

By using participatory arts practice as its principal approach, and adopting UBI as its central focus, this research has demonstrated how participatory arts practice can generate debate

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<sup>545</sup> B+B (2007) *Taking Play Seriously*. In: J. Billing, M. Lind, L. Nilsson. ed., *Taking Matters Into Common Hands*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Black Dog. P114

<sup>546</sup> Foucault, Michael (1967) *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*. MIT [online] Available at: <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf> [Accessed 8 Aug. 2020]

around complex societal issues. Under the logic of Neoliberalism citizens are viewed as consumers, who must be self-reliant and see themselves in competition with one another. Active citizenship recognises the value of activities that fall outside of Capitalist exchange relations but contribute to the below the waterline economies that sustain our social, material and environmental well-being.<sup>547</sup> Engaging in forms of active citizenship has the potential to build bonds of belonging and friendship that go beyond traditional understandings of citizenship and identity. I have argued that work and time poverty are the main barriers for people to engage in activities beyond their own individual concern, and that Universal Basic Income (UBI) could provide the necessary time and energy for more people to become active citizens. For an increasing number of people employment no longer covers the cost of living and a scarcity of time means that they need to engage in more forms of compensatory consumption. This situation can be good for Capitalism, by creating new markets and increasing profits, but it has negative effects for the planet and its people. Since the financial crash of 2008, the contradictions of Capitalist Realism have become harder to ignore and the growing existential threat of climate change mean that we need to re-evaluate our attitudes to work and consider alternatives to Capitalism.

By creating spaces and processes that encouraged alternative thinking, this research demonstrated how the concept of a post-work society can act as a form of utopian thought which, like art, can create the conditions for the imagination to expand and consciousness to be raised. My practice-based approach used interventions in public space that could cause joyful disruptions in participants everyday lives, which meant that I was able to engage people who would not normally take part in participatory art or research projects. Language and word play were a key factor in these projects which posed questions that invited conversation and placed participants at the centre of the discussion, providing them with the opportunity to contemplate my research themes from their own lived experience. The interactions with participants were then folded back into the research and led to the creation of further artworks that generated a synergy between the approach and purpose of my research. Responding to participants' engagements and adapting the project methodologies as the research developed allowed me to embrace the unexpected, unanticipated, and unlegislated outcomes of my practice-based research and to follow these unexpected lines of enquiry as they emerged. This iterative and explorative approach

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<sup>547</sup> Gibson-Graham, J. K, Cameron, Jenny & Healy, Stephen (2013) *Take back the economy: an ethical guide for transforming our communities*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. P11

to practice-based research is valuable for researchers working in creative practice and other academic fields. The four elements (space and time, open questions, being present and context) set out in my Methodologies Venn diagram (figure: 5.3) provide a template that can be used or adapted to conduct research and share findings with academic and non-academic audiences.

My research has demonstrated how participatory arts practice can engage members of the public to start conversations about these seemingly utopian ideas whilst keeping a critical distance from reality, meaning that seemingly impossible or contradictory ideas can be held and explored without having to come to clear conclusions and avoid the need to win a debate. It is important to recognise the limitations of this approach. One is that the contexts in which my practice took place will necessarily have influenced the lenses through which the work was read or approached by an audience, and the audience that engaged with the work. Nevertheless, through existing in gallery, public and online spaces, different audiences (exclusive and non-exclusive) were able to interact with the projects. Future work will seek to expand and diversify the audiences this kind of work can engage.

Another limitation of participatory arts practice as an approach was that much of it will remain invisible to myself, the researcher, and for secondary audiences, as the real work was found in the private thoughts or conversations between participants.<sup>548</sup> This is the nature of participatory art practice as it values the invisible processes and interactions between people over visible or finished products. My projects did provide several frameworks for participants to respond to the questions that the research posed, but I did not attempt to formally capture or document these discussions in full as this could have created a barrier to participation which may have stopped them from unfolding at all. Similarly, this thesis and the art projects I created are just the tangible outcome of my research. Most of the research will remain invisible to the outside viewer as I am the real product of the PhD.

The PhD itself acted as an experiment into what the potential of something like UBI might be in enabling active citizenship. The stipend functioned like a Basic Income which provided

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<sup>548</sup> Drummond, Bill (2012) *100*. Self-published: Penkiln Burn. P110

me with the financial security and resources to engage in forms of active citizenship and consciousness raising experiences. Many of these fell outside the remit of the thesis, but they were inseparable from the research process and formed a valuable contribution to the final outcomes. The PhD, like the Artist House 45 residency, was an emancipatory and consciousness raising experience. The stipend provided the financial security and time to push my own boundaries and take risks, while also engaging in forms of volunteering that helped me to challenge my own personal beliefs by seeing the world through the eyes of other people. Alongside this, the support from the university and its staff validated the work I was doing, which provided me with a level of status and sense of purpose. This was especially significant as being dyslexic, I have struggled academically all through my life, being in the bottom sets throughout education and often told that I was stupid. I never thought I would be able to study at Postgraduate level or be capable of completing a thesis like this one. The practice-based nature of the research valued my creative skills and enabled me to develop them further into the research methodologies I used over the course of the PhD. Therefore, I am living proof that there are considerable intangible benefits that can emerge from UBI. Seeing the PhD stipend as a form of UBI, however, also highlights the limitations around something like UBI as a policy that might be short-lived or a trial that ends. Now that I have finished the PhD and will not have access to the university's resources, or the Basic Income the PhD provided, my ability to be an active citizen and advocate for UBI will be more difficult as I will need to look for work and earn a living. The experience of undertaking the PhD has cemented my belief that a UBI would benefit society by enabling more people to realise their creative potential and become active citizens.

As noted, during the course of my research, the social and political landscape changed significantly and the discourse around UBI shifted due to the onset of the Covid19 pandemic. My research has highlighted how the discourse around UBI has focused on impacts to labour market and health, largely ignoring the effect it could have on cultural participation and production, along with the positive effects an increase in these activities could have for society at large. However, there are signs that this attitude has started to change. In October 2020, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales launched a manifesto calling for a trial of Basic Income, a shorter working week and the introduction of a *Creative Participation Income*. They argue that the latter could create "opportunities for public services to work closer with creatives beyond COVID-19 to address a range of societal

issues including town and city centre regeneration.”<sup>549</sup> They acknowledge that creative thinking will be needed to tackle the predicaments that society faces, and that a form of Basic Income could enable more people to become active citizens by unlocking their creative skills and imaginative potential, which they may not have been privileged enough to develop previously. This is a positive step, but there is still a long way to go in terms of widening the debate around the arguments for and against UBI and similar policies like Universal Basic Services and a Four-day Week. My projects and research methodologies are uniquely situated to help in this process as they could be used by practice-based researchers or activists to engage the public, particularly non-exclusive audiences, in meaningful dialogue and exchange that broadens the discussion of how to tackle the problems we collectively face and involve them in creating alternative visions of the future.

Since completing the final draft of the thesis, I have approached Future Generations Commissioner of Wales, and other organisations advocating for UBI, to see if they would be interested in using my projects as part of their campaigns or collaborating to develop new projects using my methodologies. This is significant as the Welsh government announced in May 2021 their intention to run a trial of Basic Income for care leavers, and in October 2021, Ireland committed to running a three-year trial for artists and arts workers starting in early 2022.<sup>550</sup> Campaigns instigated by advocacy groups like *UBI Lab Network*, which I was actively involved in, have made significant steps in generating political support for UBI and moving the idea from fringes into the mainstream discussion. However, there is still a lot of misinformation about UBI and the evidence from trials is often framed in academic terms that can be opaque. Moreover, polling on UBI has found that, even amongst its strongest supporters, there are concerns about how other people would spend the money.<sup>551</sup> My projects and methodologies could be used to create a platform for debate and awareness raising by communicating UBI, and similar policies, to the public in a way that enables them

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<sup>549</sup> Howe, Sophie (2020) *Manifesto for the Future*. Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. [online] Available at: <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Manifesto-for-the-Future-FGCW1.pdf> P21 [Accessed 12 Jul. 2021]

<sup>550</sup> Journal of Music (2021) *Basic Income Pilot for 2,000 Artists and Arts Workers to Begin in Spring 2022*. journalofmusic.com. [online] Available at: <https://journalofmusic.com/news/basic-income-pilot-2000-artists-and-arts-workers-begin-spring-2022> [Accessed 17 Nov. 2021]

<sup>551</sup> Painter, A., Singleton, A. and Grimon, W. (2020) A Popular Basic Income: Understanding Public Attitudes Towards UBI. RSA. [online] Available at: [https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/\\_foundation/new-site-blocks-and-images/reports/2020/10/the-rsa-a-popular-basic-income.pdf](https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/_foundation/new-site-blocks-and-images/reports/2020/10/the-rsa-a-popular-basic-income.pdf) P2 [Accessed 15 Dec. 2020]

to make connections with their daily lives and to reflect on how it would affect their own behaviour.

My research has identified future lines of enquiry, which include using my projects to conduct further research into UBI, and similar policy proposals. My research methodologies could be adopted as a means to encourage public debate and engagement on these subjects and present policies in a way that opens them out to conversation, avoids binary and simplistic reductions, and allows space for reflection and deliberation. I will continue to campaign for UBI as part of UBI Lab Network, specifically through UBI Lab Arts which I co-founded with Andy Abbott in 2020, and which can be seen partly as an outcome and impact of this research. UBI Lab Arts is group for artists and artworkers who are interested in using creative methods to deepen and broaden the conversation about Universal Basic Income. This is done through sharing, testing and applying creative and artistic methods to compliment the wider work done by UBI Lab Network in campaigning for pilot schemes across the UK. UBI Lab Arts does not advocate for a Basic Income for artists only and recognises that the security provided by Basic Income is key to unlocking creativity for artists and wider society. For the next steps of my own artistic practice, I plan to develop my project *Unfinished Manifesto 1.0 - Demand Universal Luxury* (2020) (see 9.12 in project portfolio). This will involve running workshops, with exclusive and non-exclusive audiences, where I will present my research on post-work imaginaries and work with participants to co-write a manifesto or list of demands for utopian visions for the future that the groups would want to inhabit. I acknowledge that an important part of this project will be engaging with people might not agree with my world views and provide a space for them to challenge my ideas of what a “better future” might look like.

Therefore, as this research has demonstrated, participatory arts practice has proven to be a valuable vehicle through which complex, divisive political issues can be introduced and debated with exclusive and non-exclusive audiences. My findings show that through its capacity for mimesis and role-play, participatory arts practice can counteract Capitalist Realism by creating a sense of defamiliarization and estrangement that enables a shift in perspective, allowing alternative visions of the future and new political imaginaries to emerge. My research demonstrated that participatory arts practice can create platforms for

participants to interact with others in a process of dialogue and exchange that enables them to challenge personally held narratives and beliefs and to disentangle complex social and behavioural protocols. It is not the responsibility of art to implement social change, but art can achieve things that politicians are unable to do, precisely because it is not measured by the same parameters. The imaginative power of art can start the process or conversation that leads to change in the real world by inspiring new forms of self-organising and active citizenship.<sup>552</sup> Like protest movements, participatory arts practice can bring people together in search for a common cause and provide important aspects of social life which may not be available in other routines of daily life. This can help to counteract feelings of alienation, leading to a sense of empowerment and gives them a glimpse of what a different world might look like, one beyond the exchange relations of Capitalism that recognises that we are all interdependent on each other, and that we are all able to make valuable contributions to society at every stage of our lives.

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<sup>552</sup> Diaz, Lara Garcia & Gielen, Pascal (2018) *Precariat - A Revolutionary Class*. In: Editors: N. Dockx & P. Gielen, ed., *Commonism: A New Aesthetics of the Real*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Amsterdam: Valis P176

## PROJECT PORTFOLIO

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This is a list of the project I created during my PhD research, including collaborative projects by Lloyd & Wilson. The projects have been listed in chronological order. Whereas the critical commentary focuses on key projects within the thesis, this portfolio includes all of the projects that comprise the PhD. As is the iterative and overlapping nature of practice-led research, several of these projects informed my methodologies and key works discussed in the critical commentary

### **List of projects**

- 9.1: *Darkness Still* (2017)
- 9.2: Lloyd & Wilson - *Snap, Broadcast Bartender* (2017)
- 9.3: *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2017-8)
- 9.4: Lloyd & Wilson - *The Last Hour!* (2017)
- 9.5: *Where were you the night that they died?* (2017)
- 9.6: *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones?* (2018)
- 9.7: *Six Honest Servants* (2018)
- 9.8: *Paint by Numbers* (2019)
- 9.9: Lloyd & Wilson - *Why is memory important? Broadcast Bartender* (2019)
- 9.10: *Basic Income Top Trumps Card Game* (2020)
- 9.11: *What would you do differently if you had a Basic Income every month?* (2020)
- 9.12: *Unfinished Manifesto 1.0 - Demand Universal Luxury* (2020)

## 9.1 Darkness Still (2017)

- Single channel video (16 minutes, looped)
- Computer, desk, chair and headphones

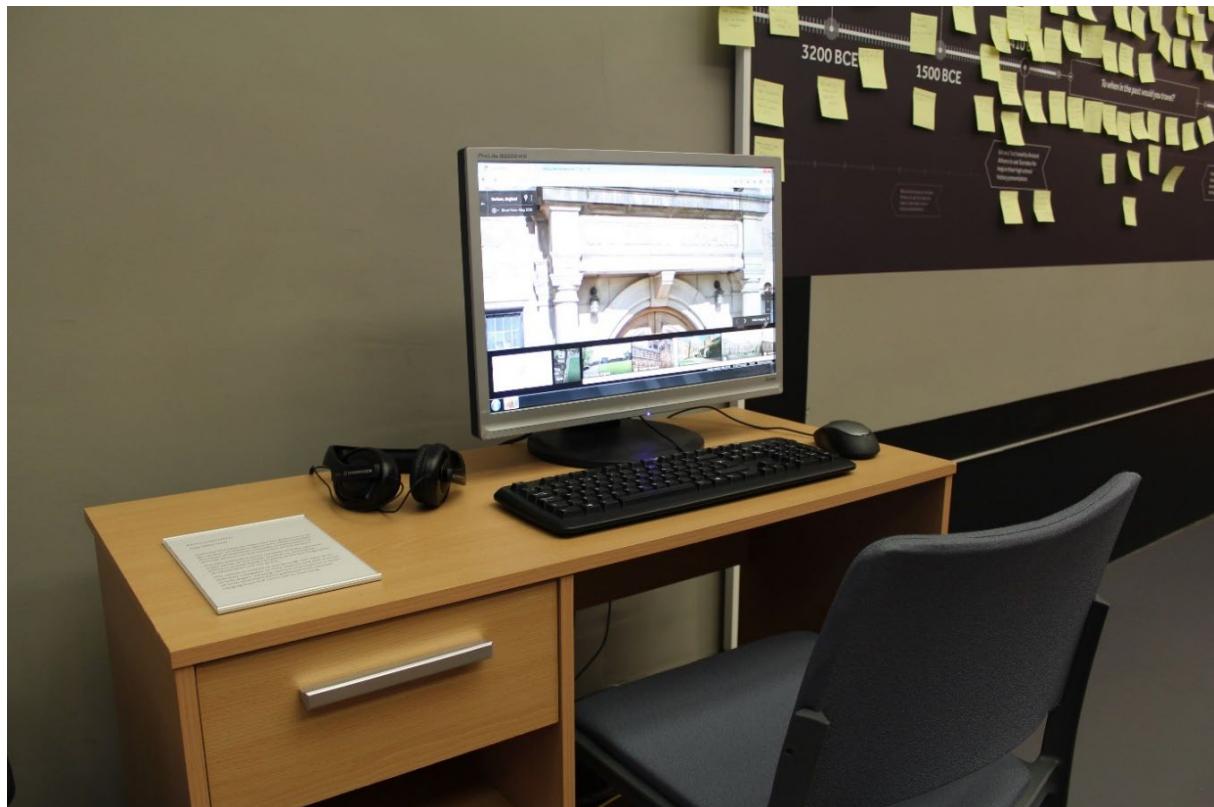


Figure 9.1: *Darkness Still*. Installation photo. Palace Green, Durham University (2017)

This film was commissioned by Durham University for the exhibition, *Time Machines: the past, the future, and how stories take us there* (2017).<sup>553</sup> *Darkness Still* takes its title from essay *The Rediscovery of the Unique* in which H.G. Wells describes the limits of mankind's scientific achievements to answering the questions of the cosmos. The film explores human curiosity and the desire to make sense of the chaos around us by looking for patterns and forming narratives from the fragments of information we can grasp. The viewer is invited to see through the eyes of an unknown navigator as they explore the internet and edit a series of wiki pages, viewing content and listening to a series of texts that have been gathered from a wide range of sources from H.P Lovecraft to Carl Jung.

<sup>553</sup> Palace Green Library (2017) *Time Machines: the past, the future, and how stories take us there*. Durham University. [online] Available at: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/palace.green/whatson/details/?id=34147> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

Viewers were invited to sit down at a desktop computer in order to watch the film (figure 9.1). This created an immersive experience. One visitor told me they felt like they were surfing the internet but that their actions were being controlled by another invisible user, who was trying to manipulate their thoughts. This made me realise the potential of placing the viewer and the centre of the work and how narratives could be used to cause shifts in perspective, which is what I attempted to do with subsequent projects, although through more participatory methods.

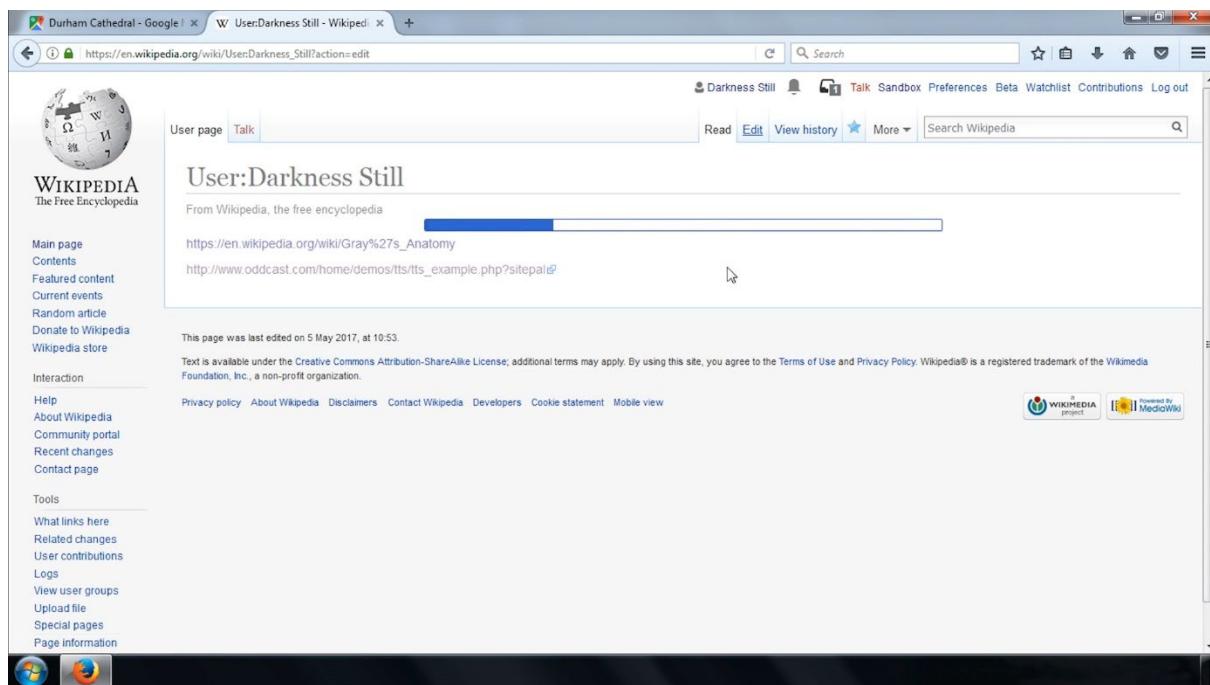


Figure 9.2: *Darkness Still* (2017) Video still.

You can watch the video on the project website:

<http://tobyphippslloyd.co.uk/project/darkness-still/>

## 9.2 Lloyd & Wilson - Snap, Broadcast Bartender (2017)

- Public House Installation
- Two live events
- Two 60-minute podcasts
- Beermats



Figures 9.3: *Snap, Broadcast Bartender*. Beermat Front and Back (2017)

This project consisted of two live events with public audiences. The first took place in Leeds before the snap general election in 2017 (figure 9.4). The second happened in Newcastle after the election (figure 9.5). The format of the events involved five drinkers and guest bartender discussing the election from a fabricated Public House environment. These conversations were recorded and edited down to one-hour podcasts that were broadcast on Resonance FM. The aim of the project was to provide an antidote to the Question Time style panel show with well-rehearsed sound bites and speeches that often alienate the listener and stunt the discussion. Alternatively, this conversation was intentionally improvised meaning it could veer off at any time into surprising or unsuspected areas. Once the conversation had finished, instead of a public Q&A session, the audience were invited to join the drinkers at the bar and converse with them directly. Lloyd & Wilson felt that Broadcast Bartender format worked because, "it encourages frivolousness as much as weightiness ... thus upholding the golden rule of the Public House; 'thou shall not take

oneself too seriously'."<sup>554</sup> Our intention was to create a platform for voices and opinions that was missing from the media landscape and narrative around the election.



Figure 9.4: *Snap, Broadcast Bartender*. East St. Arts, Leeds (2017)

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<sup>554</sup> Lloyd & Wilson (2016) *EU Broadcast Bartender*. [online] Available at: [http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/eu\\_broadcast\\_bartender.html](http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/eu_broadcast_bartender.html) [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]



Figure 9.5: *Snap, Broadcast Bartender*. The NewBridge Project, Newcastle upon Tyne (2017)

For more information about the project and recordings of the discussions can be found on the project website: [http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/snap\\_broadcast\\_bartender.html](http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/html/snap_broadcast_bartender.html)

### 9.3 Between Eating and Sleeping (2017)

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- A3 Risograph poster (edition of 200)
- Hand painted wall text
- Single channel video (8 mins)
- Programme of events
- Workshops

*Between Eating and Sleeping* (2017-18), manifested as several forms including: a poster, video, interactive exhibition, workshops, events and collaborative performances. Central to the project were the three questions that it posed:

- *What did you want to be when you were growing up?*
- *What gets you out of bed in the morning?*
- *What would you do if you had a year off?*

These questions were designed to place the reader in the past, present and speculative future, in order to open up a discussion around their attitudes to work (paid & unpaid) and how they value free time. The questions were presented as an A3 poster with a short essay on the reverse that added more context. A PDF of the poster can be downloaded from the project website: <http://tobyphippslloyd.co.uk/project/between-eating-and-sleeping/>



Figure 9.6: *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2018) NewBridge Project, Gateshead.

In the exhibition format of the project, I was present in the space, painting the questions on to the walls. This meant that I could be present to talk to people when they entered the space and would be more approachable than if I were sat in the room with a clip board and questionnaire. Visitors were invited to write their responses to the questions on post it notes and stick them on the wall next to the corresponding question. I found that the explanations were far more revealing than the initial answers, which was why it was so important that I was present in the space during the exhibition. After participants had discussed their responses with me, I was able to introduce themes of my research to them in ways that connect to their life experiences, including Basic Income. This approach also allowed me to listen to the views of participants and gave me a better understanding of what underpinned their beliefs.

After exhibiting the project at Newcastle University, Bradford University and the NewBridge Project, I made banners of the project's three questions so they could be shown as shorter pop-up exhibitions and interventions in other locations like conferences and gigs (figure 9.7 & 9.10).

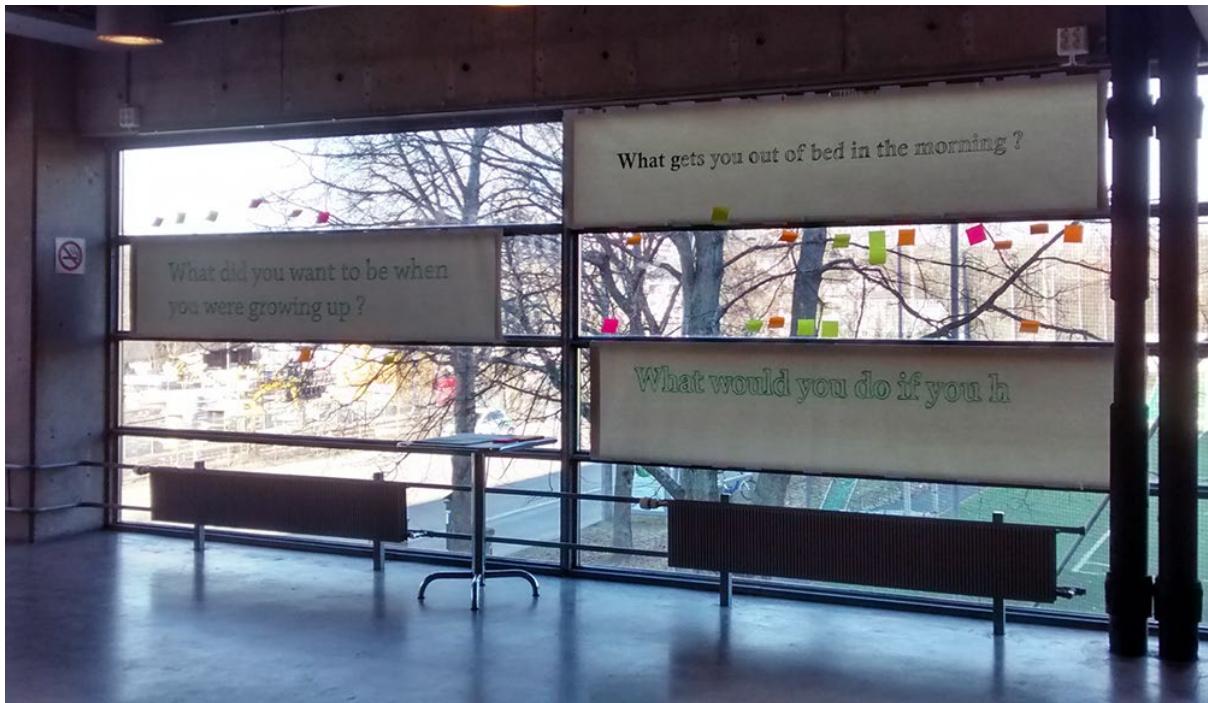


Figure 9.7: *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2019) Pop-up exhibition at BIEN Norge Congress, Oslo

The responses that I collected from these exhibitions and interventions were fed back into the research process and used to create a film that was shown at exhibitions and online (figure 9.8). The film can be viewed on the project website:

<http://tobyphipslloyd.co.uk/project/between-eating-and-sleeping/>

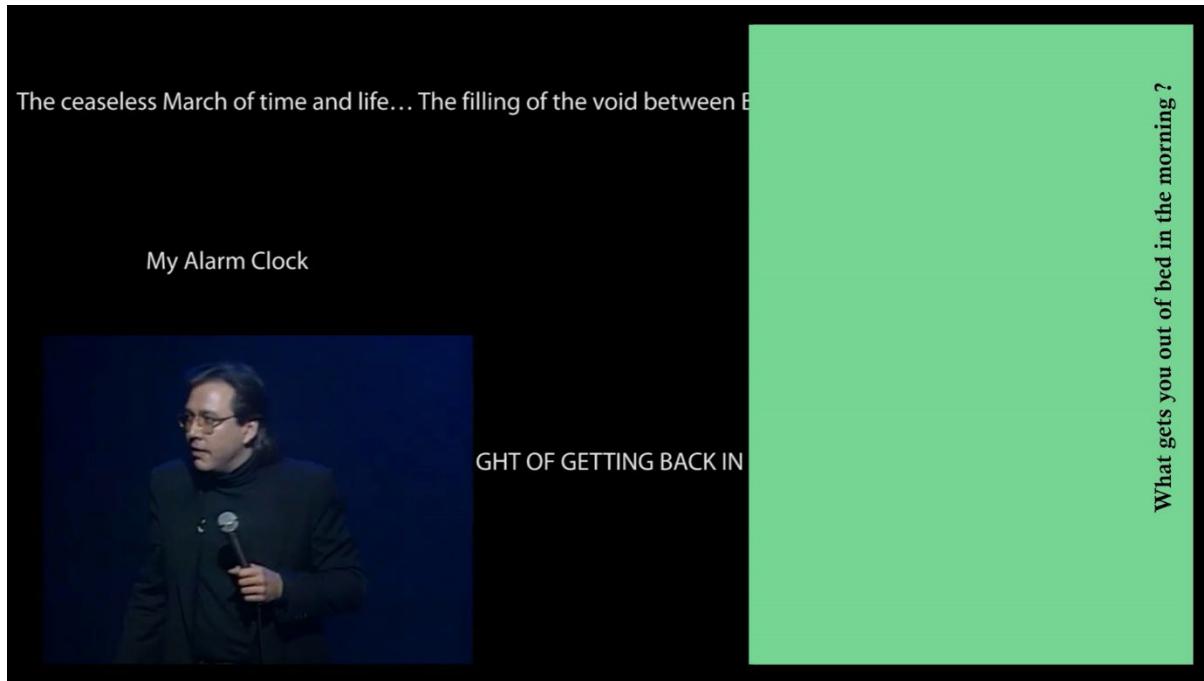


Figure 9.8: *Between Eating and Sleeping* (2019) film still

Materials gathered from the exhibitions were also used to create visual scores (figure 9.9) for improvised performances by musicians who I invited to collaborate with me (figure 9.10). To listen to recordings of the performances with visual scores, see the following links:

- *Yol / Lloyd / Posset* at The Old Police House, Gateshead (24<sup>th</sup> March 2018):  
[https://youtu.be/2uPKy1\\_RSw4](https://youtu.be/2uPKy1_RSw4)
- *Bradford Scratch Orchestra* at FUSE Art Space, Bradford (28<sup>th</sup> June 2018):  
<https://youtu.be/B0IEumVOjls>



Figure 9.9: Still from visual score for *Yol/Lloyd/Posset* (2018) The Old Police House, Gateshead.



Figure 9.10: *Bradford Scratch Orchestra* respond to visual score (2018) FUSE art space, Bradford.

The collaborative work with Yol and Posset developed into a series of projects including an exhibition at BasementArtsProject in Leeds titled, *Between Gas Canisters and Personal Identity Lanyards* (2019) (figure 9.11 & 9.13). The exhibition included papercut artworks by Yol made in response to the themes explored in *Between Eating and Sleeping*, which were presented as large-scale posters and smaller works displayed in identity card lanyards.

Posset and I also made works that were presented in lanyards. My works included participant responses to the project's three questions from previous exhibitions.

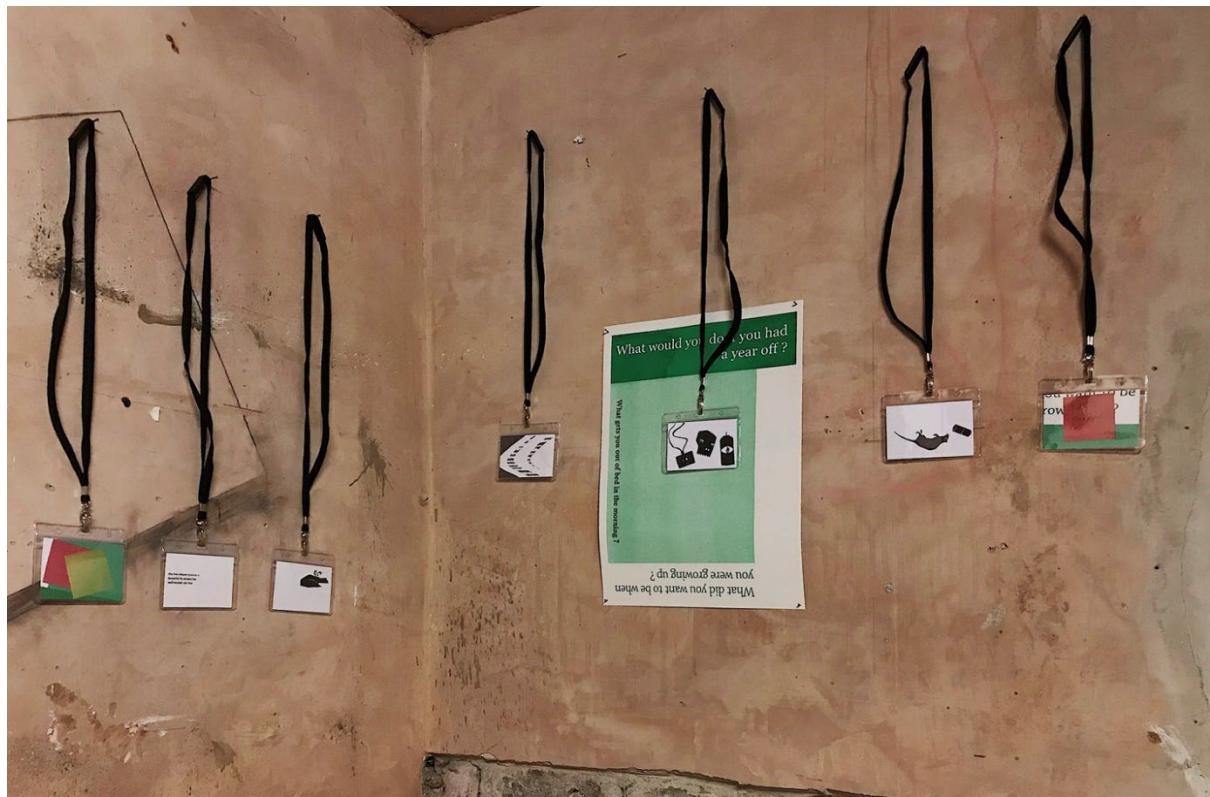


Figure 9.11: *Between Gas Canisters and Personal Identity Lanyards* (2019) BasementArtProject, Leeds. Photo: Bruce Davies

Over the course of the project, I ran several workshops which provided a space for group discussion which allowed for a wider range of themes to be explored. Most of these took place in gallery spaces and involved exclusive audiences who had signed up to take part in the workshop. This was in contrast to non-exclusive audiences who engaged with the project in public spaces, usually for short periods of time. Conversely, the workshops allowed for more in depth and explorative discussions. The project's three questions were used to structure the conversations. Asking participants what they wanted to be when they were growing up acted as a good icebreaker and an informal way for participants to introduce themselves to one another. I allowed the participants to lead the direction of the discussion as they responded to the questions and reflected on how their answers compared with other members of the group, seeing what differences and commonalities emerged. When needed, I shared examples of responses that other groups and participants

had given to the questions, to help guide the conversations back to the themes that the project and workshop aimed to explore.



Figure 9.12: Workshop discussion (2019) BasementArtsProject, Leeds. Photo: Bruce Davies



Figure 9.13: Post-workshop discussion and gallery tour (2019) BasementArtsProject, Leeds. Photo: Bruce Davies

Project website: <http://tobyphipslloyd.co.uk/project/between-eating-and-sleeping/>

## 9.4 Lloyd & Wilson - *The Last Hour!* (2017)

- Newspaper publication
- Window installation
- Series of events
- Beermats



Figure 9.14: *The Last Hour!* Newspaper publication (2017)

*The Last Hour!* was an exhibition, series of events and newspaper publication, made with curator, Timothea Armour, for Collective Gallery in Edinburgh. The project considered the contemporary state, and potential future, of the public house.<sup>555</sup> Its title was taken from a chapter of the Mass Observation study, *The Pub and the People* (1938), and adopted similar anthropological research techniques to explore the public houses near the gallery in Edinburgh, and the behaviour of people frequenting them. The newspaper was then distributed to these pubs. Lloyd & Wilson also created an expanded mind map in the gallery's windows (figure 9.15) using pages of the newspaper along with other research materials we had collected in the build up to the exhibition. The project's event programme

<sup>555</sup> Collective Gallery (2017) *The Last Hour!* [online] Available at: <https://www.collective-edinburgh.art/programme/2017-the-last-hour> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

included a guided Mass Observation study of local pubs and workshop (figure 9.17 & 9.18) performance by improvised musicians, Usurper (figure 9.19), and a screening of *Public House* (2016) by Sarah Turner, a cinematic portrait of the London pub The Ivy House.

The project was a continuation of many of the methods utilised by Lloyd & Wilson in the past but working with Armour helped to develop these methods and gain a useful perspective from an outsider. This helped to expand my thinking around how to involve participants and potential collaborators into my later projects.



Figure 9.15: *The Last Hour!* Mind-map window installation (2017) Collective Gallery, Edinburgh.

The newspaper publication included an article I wrote, *Are Landlords Artists?* (figure 9.16), that questions whether running a pub can be viewed as a creative act. This was inspired by my research into UBI and public perceptions of the value of work and play. A PDF of the newspaper can be downloaded here:

[http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/PDF/the\\_last\\_hour\\_newspaper.pdf](http://lloyd-wilson.co.uk/PDF/the_last_hour_newspaper.pdf)



Figure 9.16: *The Last Hour!* Newspaper (2017)



Figure 9.17: *The Last Hour!* Mass Observation Field Study event (2017) Collective Gallery, Edinburgh.



Figure 9.18: *The Last Hour! When Is A Pub Not A Pub?* Workshop (2017) Collective Gallery, Edinburgh.



Figure 9.19: *Usurper* performance at the Waverley Bar, Edinburgh

More information about the project can be found on Collective Gallery's website:

<https://www.collective-edinburgh.art/programme/2017-the-last-hour>

## 9.5 Where were you the night that they died? (2017)

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- Billboard with hand painted text



Figure 9.20: *Where were you the night that they died?* (2017) Gymnasium gallery, Berwick-upon-Tweed.

This work was made for an exhibition at the Gymnasium gallery in Berwick-upon-Tweed, titled: *First Bowie Now This*.<sup>556</sup> The show explored the impact of what was considered at the time to be the exceptionally traumatic year of 2016, which began with the death of David Bowie and ended with the election of Donald Trump. The exhibition's interpretive text included the question: "Did public grief over a string of celebrity deaths in fact expose a

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<sup>556</sup> *First Bowie, Now This* (2017) Gymnasium Gallery, Berwick-upon-Tweed. [online] Available at: <https://cargocollective.com/JonCornbill/First-Bowie-Now-This> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

latent realisation that global capitalism had reached an intractable point in its evolution?"<sup>557</sup> The assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King were moments in history that acted as registers of time and functioned as yardsticks with which cultural shifts and movements could be measured. The exhibition's interpretive text referred to Bowie as a watershed-figure who could represent how we will remember 2016, and potentially bring us together around a shared sense of tragedy.<sup>558</sup> This was significant as opportunities for experiencing collective cultural moments has dissipated over the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. For example, we are no longer collectively watch the announcement of this week's number one single on *Top of the Pops*. These events, whether it is hearing a favourite song for the first time or learning of the loss of a loved one, can represent important turning points in our lives. These moments can be paradigm shifts which change the way we view the world forever. Sometimes these events will feel universal, where others will be much more personal, but no less significant.

The work I made took the form of a small billboard which asked the question: "Where were you the night that they died?" The intention behind the work was to acknowledge the connections and interdependencies we share with other people in society and recognise the invisible impacts they have on our lives. Slavoj Žižek states that the true nature of events like this, and other turning points in our lives, are invisible.<sup>559</sup> This is especially the case for personal moments which are not experienced by other people which can mean that they may feel unrecognised and therefore undervalued. The question my billboard posed was intended to uncover and remind the reader of these invisible events and to recognise the lasting effects they can have on us. It also attempted to acknowledge the value of these experiences and provide the opportunity to share them with others.

Through making this work, I realised the power of language, as the question I posed could be read as an invitation to share a personal memory about someone who had died. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as an accusation. If the question was spoken, the

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<sup>557</sup> *First Bowie, Now This* (2017) Gymnasium Gallery, Berwick-upon-Tweed. [online] Available at: <https://cargocollective.com/JonCornbill/First-Bowie-Now-This> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

<sup>558</sup> *First Bowie, Now This* (2017) Gymnasium Gallery, Berwick-upon-Tweed. [online] Available at: <https://cargocollective.com/JonCornbill/First-Bowie-Now-This> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

<sup>559</sup> Žižek, Slavoj (2014) *Event*. London: Penguin Books. P179

tone of voice and position of the person asking the question, a policeman for example, will define how it would be interpreted. When the question is presented as text, these intonations will be determined by the person who reads them. The format used to present the question also had an influence on the way that it was interpreted. By presenting the question on a billboard, I placed the questioner in position of authority, looking down at the observer who reads it. As billboards are found in public space, they can be seen by anyone who walks by. Many will ignore the words and images that they display, but for those who read them, it has the potential to cause an unpleasant jolt or joyful disruption in their lives. This project helped to highlight the power and potential of posing open questions in my work and was the reason that this became a method I adopted throughout the rest of my research projects.

Project website: <http://tobyphipslloyd.co.uk/project/where-were-you-the-night-that-they-died/>

## 9.6 Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones? Part One (2018)

- Single channel video (5 minutes, looped)
- 2 posters (841 x 1189mm)
- A4 Risograph print (edition of 200)



Figure 9.21: *Everyday Political* (2018) CGP Gallery, London. Photograph by Damien Griffith

This project started as a video created for *Everyday Political*, an exhibition at CGP Gallery in London (figure 9.21), which was curated by George Vasey featuring artists from the North East of England.<sup>560</sup> The video begins by posing the question '*How do you contribute to society?*' It then unpicks this statement by challenging what we mean when we say "society" and what is understood as a "contribution" to it. A chorus of voices ask a series of questions as images and video clips float in and out of view. The questions may seem simple, but our answers will not be. The purpose of the video is to start a conversation that can explore and challenge the complicated aspects of everyday life.

<sup>560</sup> Southwark Park Galleries (2018) *Everyday Political*. [online] Available at: <https://southwarkparkgalleries.org/the-everyday-political/> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

The project was then developed for exhibition at Newcastle University (figure 9.22) which included doubled sided posters that posed questions from the video which participants could respond to by fill in and sticking them up on the wall. This made the work more interactive, but due to travelling to give presentations at two conferences, I was unable to be present in the gallery and engage participants personally. This meant that I could only guess what the rationale behind the participants responses to the questions were, which helped to highlight the importance of being present with the work.



Figure 9.22: *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones?* (2018) Newcastle University.

I wrote a 3000-word essay that responds to the question posed in the title of this project and gives more context to the themes that it aims to explore, but this was not used during the PhD. In the future I plan to develop this project further by producing a newspaper publication which will house this essay, along with several other short texts I wrote over the course of the research which were not used in the thesis. Alongside this, I plan to create two more films (Part two and Part Three) that will complement the project's existing film (figure 9.23). Part Two will explore the dichotomy between work and play, while the Part Three will examine our relationship to public and private space.



Figure 9.23: *Are Washing Machines More Important Than Smart Phones? Part One* (2018) Video still.

The film, Part One, can be viewed on the project website:

<http://tobyhipslloyd.co.uk/project/are-washing-machines-more-important-than-smart-phones/>

## 9.7 Six Honest Servants (2018)

- Series of workshops
- Six A1 posters
- Publication

*Six Honest Servants* questioned what is understood as 'Public Services' and what we expect from them. Why do we need public services? When do we use them? Who makes decisions about them? The work was part of a larger project, *Those Northern Lights, So Pretty*,<sup>561</sup> which took place during the Great Exhibition of the North.



Figure 9.24 & 9.25: *Six Honest Servants* workshop with Gateshead Youth Assembly.

I collaborated on the project with *Dingy Butterflies* to run workshops with groups of Gateshead residents including, *Friends of Saltwell Park*, *Gateshead Clubhouse*, *The Comfrey Project* and *Gateshead Youth Assembly* as well as members of the public. Using mapping exercises and group discussion participants explored their experiences of Gateshead and what factors influence how they interact with public and private spaces and services. These activities lead to discussions around what role businesses and local government play in the way Gateshead functions and the effects these have on their lives. Recurring themes that emerged during the workshops were the city's heritage and how it should be protected for future generations, the importance of public transport and meeting spaces, and the growing role volunteers have in maintaining valued resources. These conversations fed into six posters that I created which were based on the Ishihara colour vision test cards. The work takes its title from Rudyard Kipling's 1902 poem, *I Keep Six Honest Serving-Men*, in which he

<sup>561</sup> Dingy Butterflies (2018) *Those Northern Lights, So Pretty*. [online] Available at: <https://www.dingybutterflies.org/those-northern-lights-so-pretty-2/> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

identifies the six enquiry words: What, Why, When, How, Where and Who. These words became starting points for people to question and consider the role of public and private services. These conversations were developed into a series of six posters which displayed participants responses to the project's questions:

- What are Public Services?
- Why do we need Public Services?
- When do you use them?
- How much do Public Services cost?
- Where are decisions made about Public Services?
- Who controls them?

The project concluded with an exhibition at the Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead (figure 9.26) and a public talk.



Figure 9.26: Six Honest Servants (2018) Shipley Gallery, Gateshead.

High resolution versions of the posters and a PDF of the publication can be found on the project website: <http://tobyphippslloyd.co.uk/project/six-honest-servants/>

## 9.8 Paint by Numbers (2019)

- 5 hand painted posters (150cm x 100cm)
- A5 zine publication
- Voting boot
- Polling cards
- Badges

The central question posed by the project was: “*Which currency is more valuable - Time or Money?*” From there it posed a series of provocations that covered connecting themes, including understandings of wealth, labour, basic income and if free time should be a human right. The exhibition included five posters with hand painted questions or statements, and a zine<sup>562</sup> which contained smaller versions of the posters and further prompts and statements. There was a voting booth and polling cards which invited visitors to vote on which currency is more valuable and state why they made their choice. Visitors could also express their choice by taking away and wearing a *Time* or *Money* badge (figure 9.27).



Figure 9.27: Time and Money badges in Long Gallery exhibition.

<sup>562</sup> Zine (pronounced zeen) is an independently or self-published booklet, often created by physically cutting and gluing text and images together onto a master flat for photocopying, but it is also common to produce the master by typing and formatting pages. Flipsnack Blog (2018) *What is a zine?* [online] Available at: <https://blog.flipsnack.com/what-is-a-zine/> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

Like the *Between Eating and Sleeping* banners, this project's posters were designed so that they could be exhibited in other contexts and used as prompts for discussion during presentations (figures 9.28, 9.29 & 9.30).

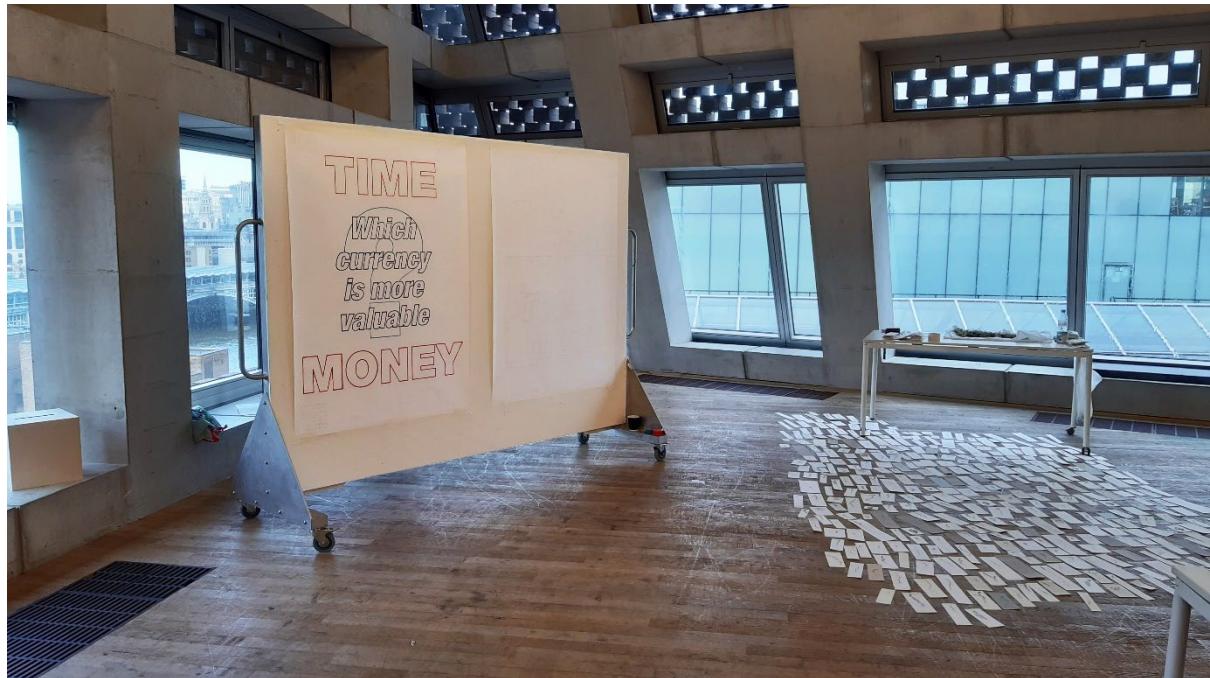


Figure 9.28: *Sale* (2020) Tate Exchange, London. Beginning of the event.

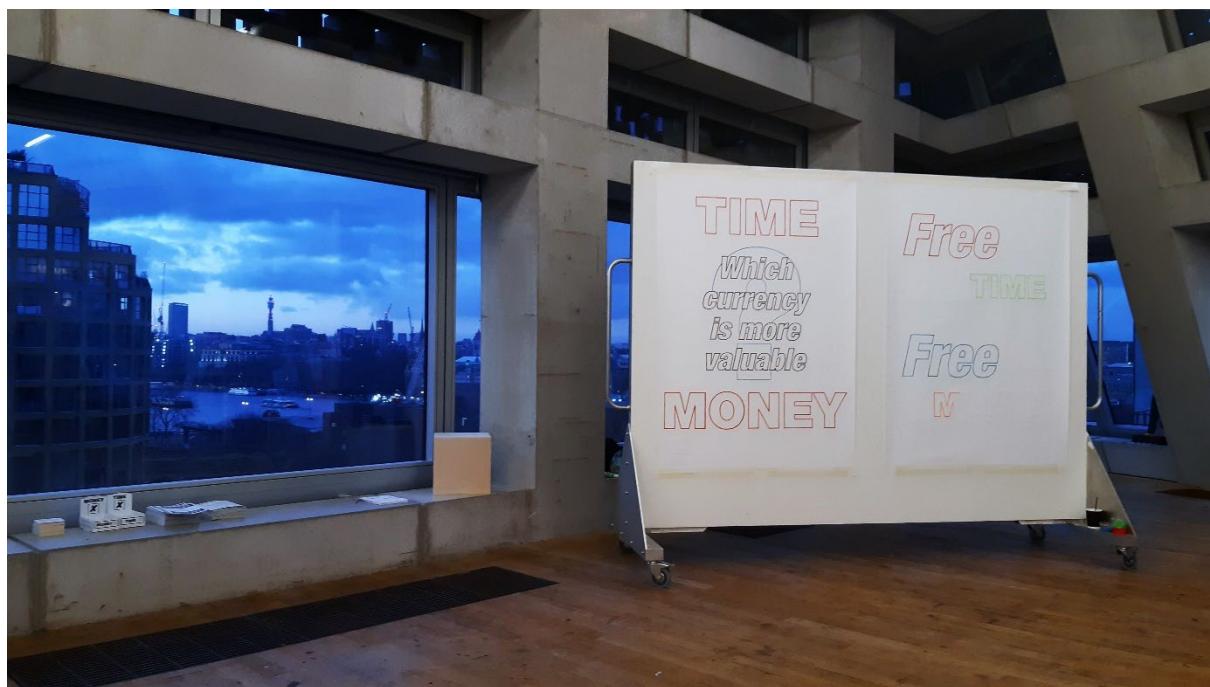


Figure 9.29: *Sale* (2020) Tate Exchange, London. End of the event.



Figure 9.30: Presentation for *Citizens Basic Income Network Scotland* (2019) Woodland Creatures, Edinburgh.

More information about the project and a PDF of the publication can be found on the project website: <http://tobylloyd.co.uk/project/paint-by-numbers/>

## 9.9 Lloyd & Wilson - *Why is memory important?* Broadcast Bartender (2019)

- Public House Installation
- Three live events
- Three 60-minute podcasts
- Beermats

Lloyd & Wilson worked with the Cultures of Memory research group from Newcastle University to run three Broadcast Bartender sessions over the course of one day. Each session invited drinkers and guest bartenders from different cultural institutions to discuss the question, “why is memory important?” The sessions were framed around the themes of *Memory Work*, *The Art and Science of Memory*, and *Decolonising Memory*. The intention of the event was to create an atmosphere that stood apart from the usual seminar or panel format that take place within the university setting. All three sessions were recorded and made available to listen to on the Cultures of Memory website.<sup>563</sup>



Figure 9.31: *Decolonising Memory*, Broadcast Bartender (2019) Ex-libris Gallery, Newcastle University.

<sup>563</sup> Cultures of Memory research group (2019) *Broadcast Bartender - Why is Memory Important?* [online] Newcastle University. Available at: <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/culturesofmemory/broadcastbartender-reportandrecordings.html> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

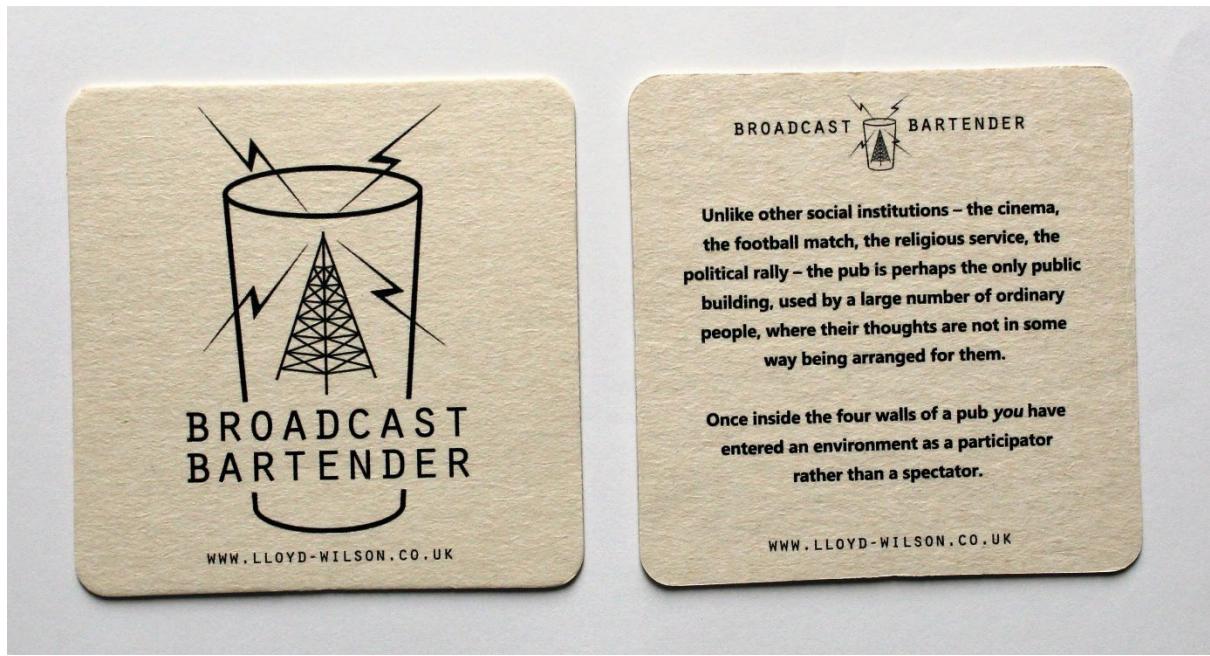


Figure 9.32: *Broadcast Bartender* Beer mats (2019)

For more information about the project and to listen to the recordings of the discussions, go to: <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/culturesofmemory/broadcastbartender-reportandrecordings.html>

## 9.10 Basic Income Top Trumps Card Game (2020)

- Playing cards
- Online game (duration and number of players varies)

This project was developed in collaboration with Perry Walker of *Talk Shop* to be a facilitate tool for discussions around Basic Income. The intention was to enable those playing the game to imagine how receiving a Basic Income would affect their lives if the policy was implemented. The cards were designed using the well-known Top Trump card game format so that the cards can be played without any explanation or instructions.<sup>564</sup> Participants from Basic Income trials from around the world were used to create profiles for the cards, which included scores out of 10 in six categories: independence, food security, mental health, physical health, paid work and community participation. This helped to illustrate to the players the differences between the trials that have taken place and the impact that receiving a Basic Income had had on the participants.

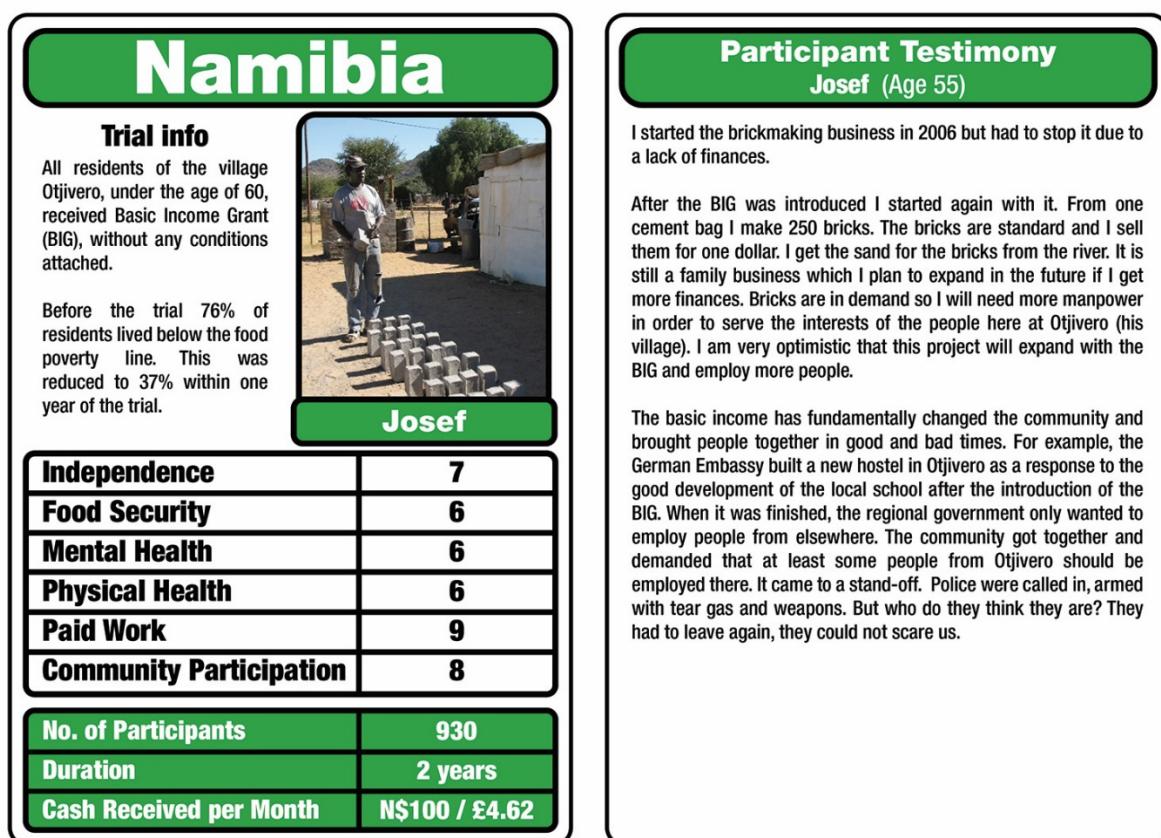


Figure 9.33: Josef, Namibia. Top Trump Card (2020)

<sup>564</sup> Top Trumps (date unknown) *About*. [online] Toptrumps.com. Available at: <https://toptrumps.com/about/> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

The game comprises of two rounds. In the first players are asked to select one card and describe the participant it represents to the other players and what impact the trial had on this person. This then forms the basis for a discussion between the players about the differences between the trials and to imagine what impact Basic Income would have on people in the UK. The second round of the game uses one of the proposed plans for a trial put forward by the Scottish Feasibility study and asks the players to imagine that they are taking part in the trial. Players are asked to fill in the card, giving themselves scores out of 10 for each category, and write a short testimony about how their life would be affected by taking part in the trial. Once the players have done this, they are asked to feed this back to the other players. This forms the basis for a discussion between the players.

The games were conducted over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic while the UK was in lockdown. This meant that they had to be played online using Zoom and Google Slides (figure 9.24). However, the upside was that players from all over the UK could play with each other.



Figure 9.34: Participants playing online game of *Basic Income Top Trumps* (2020)

A short video explaining how the game works with testimony from participants can be viewed on the project website: <http://tobypipslloyd.co.uk/project/basic-income-top-trumps/>

## 9.11 What would you do differently if you had a Basic Income every month? (2020)

- Series of cartoon illustrations
- Newspaper article



Figure 9.35: *What would you do differently if you had a Basic Income every month? #6 (2020)*

This project grew out of my advocacy work with *UBI Lab Network*. It was initially intended to illustrate responses from surveys conducted by *The Basic Income Conversation*<sup>565</sup> and *Organise*<sup>566</sup> which were submitted as evidence to an inquiry by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on *preparations for changes in the world of work*.<sup>567</sup> The DWP's inquiry asked three questions that referred to UBI:

<sup>565</sup> Basic Income Conversation (2020) *Help us build the case for UBI - complete the survey*. Actionnetwork.org. [online] Available at [https://actionnetwork.org/forms/dwp-select-committee-submission?link\\_id=1&can\\_id=ed26e5ed2a1670f99fdcce2d7109fc7a&source=email-help-us-build-the-case-for-basic-income&email\\_referrer=email\\_829295&email\\_subject=help-us-build-the-case-for-basic-income](https://actionnetwork.org/forms/dwp-select-committee-submission?link_id=1&can_id=ed26e5ed2a1670f99fdcce2d7109fc7a&source=email-help-us-build-the-case-for-basic-income&email_referrer=email_829295&email_subject=help-us-build-the-case-for-basic-income) [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

<sup>566</sup> Organise (2020) *Future of Work Consultation*. Organise.network. [online] Available at: [https://the.organise.network/surveys/ubi---ubi-consultation-survey?utm\\_campaign=generic&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=member&fbclid=IwAR0N9RN0hx9Lqidf9gfYw3RsoJgKA71VifQgo1kNQffl9mVCnyMFB54YtLw](https://the.organise.network/surveys/ubi---ubi-consultation-survey?utm_campaign=generic&utm_medium=email&utm_source=member&fbclid=IwAR0N9RN0hx9Lqidf9gfYw3RsoJgKA71VifQgo1kNQffl9mVCnyMFB54YtLw) [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

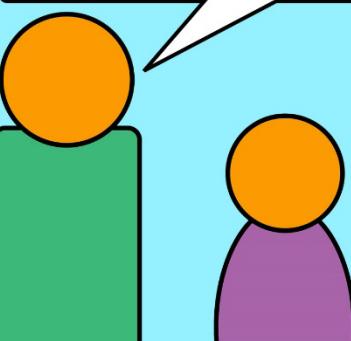
<sup>567</sup> Department of Work and Pensions (2020) *DWP's preparations for changes in the world of work*. Parliament.uk. [online] Available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/302/dwps-preparations-for-changes-in-the-world-of-work/> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

- Is there a need to consider new, long-term approaches to addressing change in the labour market: for example, introducing a Universal Basic Income (UBI)?
- Is UBI an appropriate short-term response to shocks in the labour market?
- What can the Government learn from the international evidence on UBI?

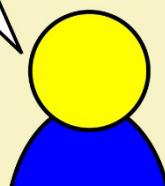
The intention was that my illustration would humanise the testimonies from the two surveys and help those conducting the DWP's inquiry to make a connection between them and their own lived experiences. I used a comic stripe format for my illustrations, as it was an accessible and well-known format which also enabled me to include several characters in one image (figure 9.36). I decided to emphasize the cartoon style by not to giving the characters facial features. This was done to leave more room for interpretation, allowing the viewer to project themselves and their own situation into the images.

# What would you do differently if you had Basic Income every month?

Before the virus, I was close to burnout. I couldn't afford to take a break, and this almost destroyed my health. I could relax and do better work. I would want to work in a sector that supported sustainable futures.



I would be able to do simple things like attend night school and go to the gym with my friends



My wife and I would be able to dedicate more time to supporting the charities we donate our time and money too. If we didn't need to work as often for the financial return the time could be better spent in areas where they're not able to reimburse you for your time

Figure 9.36: *What would you do differently if you had a Basic Income every month?* (2020) DWP inquiry submission.

Once the evidence had been submitted, *UBI Lab Network* asked me to continue to make cartoons which they could share on their social media platforms (figure 9.37 & 9.38). They felt that the cartoons were extremely effective at expressing the potential benefits of Basic Income and have received the highest number of interactions on *UBI Lab Network*'s Twitter account.



Figure 9.37 & 9.38: Cartoons on UBI Lab Network Twitter page (2020)

Following the popularity of the cartoons, I wanted to expand the project to engage local audiences in the North East. To do this I wrote an article which was published in the second issue of the *Lockdown Gazette*,<sup>568</sup> a printed newspaper publication which was distributed to communities who might not have access to the internet during isolation. The *Lockdown Gazette* was initiated by *The NewBridge Project* during lockdown in collaboration with several voluntary organisations. My article (figure 9.39) attempted to frame the idea of Basic Income in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, how it had shifted people's perspectives by asking them if they would live differently if they had a Basic Income. For example, would a Basic Income help them to continue caring for family members or volunteering for a mutual aid group, which they might have started to do during lockdown, and may want to

<sup>568</sup> The NewBridge Project (2020) *The Lockdown Gazette – Issue 2*. thenewbridgeproject.com. [online] Available at: <https://thenewbridgeproject.com/product/the-lockdown-gazette-issue-2/> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

continue to do instead of returning to full-time work? The article included a cartoon with a blank speech bubble, inviting the reader to reflect on the question and fill it in themselves. In 2021 I adapted the article for a non-specific geographical audience which was posted on the UBI Lab Network's blog.<sup>569</sup>

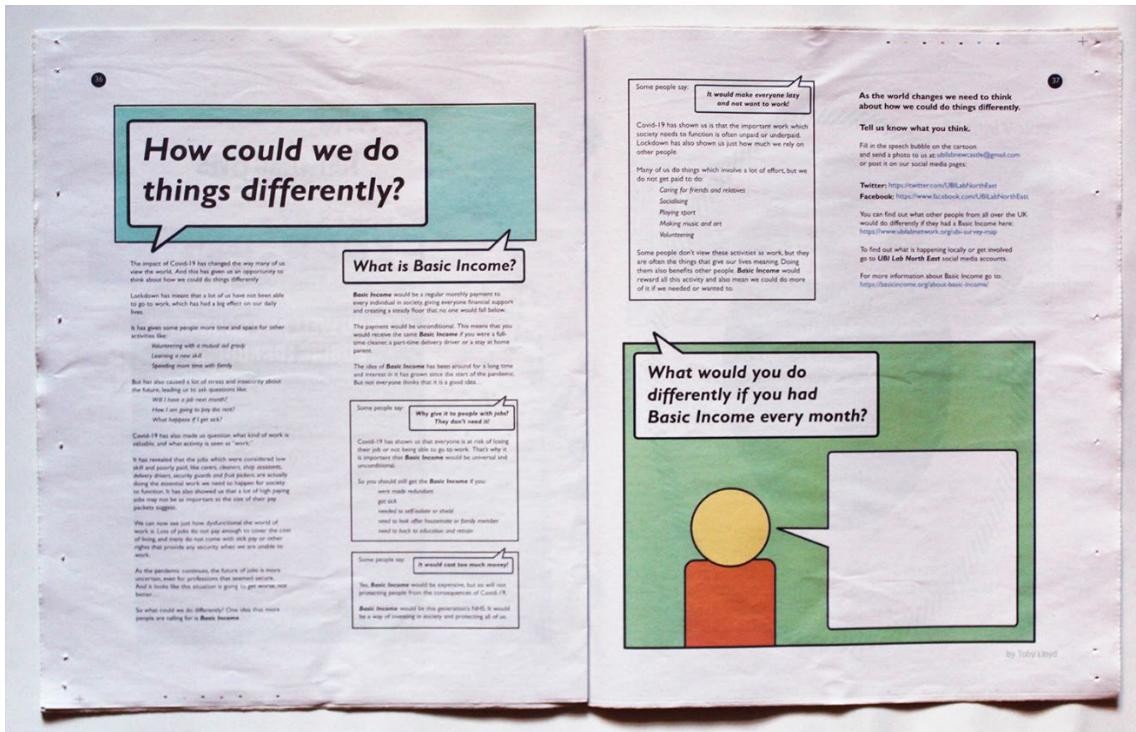


Figure 9.39: Lockdown Gazette newspaper article (2020)

More information about the Lockdown Gazette and a digital copy of the newspaper can be found here: <https://thenewbridgeproject.com/news/the-lockdown-gazette-issue-2/>

My article can be read on the UBI Lab Network blog here:

<https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/blog/how-could-we-do-things-differently>

<sup>569</sup> Lloyd, Toby (2021) *How could we do things differently?* UBI Lab Network. [online] Available at <https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/blog/how-could-we-do-things-differently> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2020]

## 9.12 Unfinished Manifesto 1.0 - Demand Universal Luxury (2020)

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- Hand painted text on paper (56cm x 100cm)



Figure 9.40: *Unfinished Manifesto 1.0* (2021)

This work emerged from the thinking process I was engaged in while writing the thesis during lockdown. The painting was exhibited at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (Figure 9.41) as part of *Baltic Open Submission* from 19<sup>th</sup> May to 5<sup>th</sup> September 2021.<sup>570</sup>

I chose the three words that are contained in the manifesto carefully. I hoped that by placing them together, I would inspire the reader to push at the boundaries of the words' meanings and help them to imagine a positive vision of the future. I was inspired by Kathi

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<sup>570</sup> Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (2021) *Baltic Open Submission*. [online] Baltic.art. Available at: <https://baltic.art/baltic-open-submission> [Accessed 8 Sep. 2021]

Weeks description of utopian manifestos and demands which are designed to act as provocation, without fully prescribing what action should be taken. The incomplete nature of the utopian demand challenges the reader to imagine an alternative future with the purpose of attempting to bring it into being. Weeks states that the format of the manifesto does this by deliberately “setting itself against the conventions of appropriate discussion and reasonable demands on which the reproduction of the status quo depends.”<sup>571</sup> Another key influence for this work was Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne’s conversation about the term *Luxury Communism*. They state that luxury is usually associated with Capitalist notions of excess; commodities which only a few people can afford. In contrast, Fisher and Thorne propose that luxury should be understood as the pleasure of luxuriating; “the sensual joy of having to do less work, time to be unproductive, and the possibilities for more intense sociality, eroticism and adventure this opens up.”<sup>572</sup> By demanding universal luxury, my hope was that readers would question the common interpretation of private luxury and imagine a form of public luxury which everyone could enjoy and share together. By making a demand for something that is currently seen as impossible, this manifesto requires that we rethink what is possible. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that it is possible to do things differently, but for positive and lasting change to happen, we need to demand it. This manifesto aimed to inspire collective action by creating a desire for an alternative world to the “business as usual” model we had before the crisis.

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<sup>571</sup> Weeks, Kathi (2011) *The Problem With Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press. P215

<sup>572</sup> Thorne, Judy (2017) *Luxury Communism. A conversation between Mark Fisher and Judy Thorne*. In: H. Gunkel, A. Hameed, S. O’Sullivan. ed., *Futures & Fictions*, 1st ed. London: Repeater Books. P146



Figure 9.41: *Baltic Open Submission* (2021) Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead

In the future I plan to run a series of workshops that will be used to generate content for a zine publication, which the participants will be collective authors of. The workshop will use *Unfinished Manifesto 1.0* as starting point for a discussion about how we can collectively create positive visions of the future that enable us to imagine what surviving and experimenting in times of uncertainty could and should look like. The workshop will involve a short introduction on my research into post-work and post-growth imaginaries. This will be followed by a series of individual and group exercises that will be used to create a list of further demands that can be added to the manifesto. This list will then be written up and turned into a zine publication to be used in further workshops.

Project website: <http://tobypipsllloyd.co.uk/project/demand-universal-luxury/>

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