

PRAXIS

[A text to be kept open alongside *Lexis*, and read at any break after *Part 1* and before the *Ana-conclusion*]

Adam Walker

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LIST OF ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

Walker, Adam, *6 Weeks in Kyiv* (2018), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/6weeksinkyiv.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021]

— *The Return Beyond Which There Is No Point* (2017-18), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/thereturn.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021]

— *Sequestered* (2018), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/sequestered.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021]

Walker, Adam and Emma McGarry, *Special Rights* (2018), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/specialrights.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021]

Walker, Adam and Vicki Thornton, *STATESCAPE[∞]* (2020), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/statescape.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021]

— *TOMBOLA!* (2017-18), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/tombola.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021]

— *undertitled* (2019), composite video available at <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/undertitled.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021]

Walker, Adam with others, *Our Skins are Porous Too* (2019) <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/ourskins.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021]

These eight artistic interventions form part of this PhD research project. There are no accompanying objects or files: each artistic intervention is either extensively documented, or in some cases exists, online. Links are given above, and can also be found in the *Artistic interventions* section at the end of *Praxis*, alongside details, documentation and consideration of each work.

Site of artistic practice

Text is affective.

This research project pivots upon an overlaying of the poststructuralist linguistic turn with ('new') materialism in its macro-political sense.¹ In many ways, it is possible to think of the inter-textual, fluid constructions of meaning by which poststructural theorists navigated the conceptual realm as having now been materialised within a broader reality. Text, especially in its sub-form of (computer) code, has gained its own agency. It has moved through a descriptive and articulatory form, and beyond a generative one, to now hold increasing independent affect of its own, constructing our world around us with rapidly diminishing human authorial oversight.

... Or at least this is the alluring image of an ephemeral, post-somatic future that some Silicon Valley ideologies celebrate. To return to the materialist side of my pivot though, I foreground the need to engage in the social, economic and historical material conditions, as well as within discursive and conceptual realms. Our materialised reality may be a product of chance, but it is nevertheless the one within which we exist. The material events and encounters which have led up to this present moment (including, in recent years, the unmediated direct effects of text) structure and determine our human experience of that reality.

¹ I use the term 'materialism' in an inclusive rather than reductive sense, as set out by Coole and Frost.

Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1-43.

Like the technosphere, much of my artistic practice is itself rooted in text, seeking the potential to subvert from within that operating in and around the same medium might enable.² As the technosphere projects towards totality, working textually (amidst its codes and logics) is the most effective, if not only, means of resistance.³

The corollary of text becoming increasingly affective is that our material reality is itself becoming a textual one. Sites, networks and events of material power, subjectification and inequality are increasingly emitted and materialised in a textual form, through networked communications and media, and data, code and algorithm. It is not solely that text has direct affect upon reality, but furthermore, that the increasingly dominant underlying architecture of our reality *is* textual.

This emergent textuality is informed by, though not the same as, the language of idea or discourse; while direct affect upon the human, for the most part, operates through further translation into material encounter. However, slippage across the diminishing boundary into lived material reality is occurring in an ever more seamless, automatic way. An accelerating, iterative feedback loop is being formed whereby hypothetical materialities circulate instantaneously in textual form, and only need be actually materialised at precise moments of action upon specified bodies. Data can travel instantaneously where in previous epochs physical armed force would have needed to be deployed. And the other side of this loop likewise closes in, with the conditions of

² Text is meant in a broad range of understandings, as will be explored in the discussion which follows, and as is exemplified in *Artistic interventions*. Whether or not a formal text as commonly understood, 'text' suggests a fluid encoding or grammar of variable interpretability and inter- and intra-linkage.

³ Working with text also reflects an art-historical argument: that the textual (including its inter-, counter-, sub- and other variants) might enable an escape from the limitations of image and representation.

the informing discourses being upheld and reproduced. The emergent textuality offers no escape from the contingencies of history: it perpetuates an encoded acceleration of the inequalities established within the world, with dominant ideologies and established powers reproduced in place.

Where advantage can be found, some of the sites we think of as being at the forefront of textualisation will ruthlessly (and furtively) resort to extremely physical materiality. For example, algorithmic high frequency trading centres now seek to gain a strategic advantage by being fractionally physically closer to the market's server than competitors, thus beating them to the best price.⁴ Or more corporeally immediate: 'security' forces around the world (whether civil or military, state or private) will without hesitation shift from cutting-edge data surveillance to brutal human-body-on-human-body degradation and torture.⁵ The technospheric structure operates in this constant interplay and flow between the material and multi-textual: this is the context in which my artistic practice sits.

⁴ Alberto Toscano, 'Gaming the Plumbing: High-Frequency Trading and the Spaces of Capital', *Mute*, 3:4 (2013) <<https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/gaming-plumbing-high-frequency-trading-and-spaces-capital>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Forms of speculation, such as high frequency trading, are technologies by which capital can assert and maintain dominance over labour, as emphatically set out by Piketty.

Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

⁵ The two articles below, for example, indicate the CIA's simultaneous complicity in both vast data harvesting and analysis, and brutal direct bodily torture.

Glenn Greenwald and others, 'Microsoft handed the NSA access to encrypted messages', *Guardian*, 12 July 2013 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/11/microsoft-nsa-collaboration-user-data>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Oliver Laughland, 'How the CIA tortured its detainees', *Guardian*, 20 May 2015 <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/dec/09/cia-torture-methods-waterboarding-sleep-deprivation>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Bodily labour also matters.

Our own and others' bodies, their physical labour, and the violence enacted upon them in extracting this. In recent years, the utopian imaginaries of the beginnings of the digital age have become increasingly tempered by recognition of the bodily human labour underpinning it: in factories producing components, in mines extracting rare earths, or in the off-shored recycling of the quickly discarded objects of ever-faster new technology development cycles. This devalorised fringe of labour further extends to include outsourced call centre and tech support work (still for the most part requiring the relationality of an en fleshed human voice) and the Uber drivers and Deliveroo riders of the 'proximate periphery'.⁶ Broadening further, it encompasses all the undervalued and underappreciated physical labour which upholds a small elite's ability to imagine everyone is occupying their self-same position of 'post-somatic immateriality' (or perhaps an ability not to care that this is not the case). And outside of the remunerated workplace, the immeasurable reproductive, affective and domestic labour underpinning life is arguably an even more vital foundation. All of this work is undertaken disproportionately by those subject to compounded historical inequalities.

Text, site, bodies and labour are key to both the technosphere and the methodology of 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' set out below.

⁶ I develop a concept of the 'proximate periphery' in the *Dark kitchens and desert cities* section in *Part 2 of Lexis*.

Methodology of artistic practice

In order to avoid confusion, it needs stating that there are two aspects to artistic practice methodology within this project. What are principally set out here are the initial 'worked-with' methodologies: the processes and means of artistic research whereby those eventual strategies, positions and meta-methodologies which the project ultimately proposes, and the structural planes within which they need to operate, are developed and figured out. The methodologies described and contextualised here are the procedural approach by which the practice-research itself is undertaken. This iteratively feeds back and forth with written theorising in co-establishing a new contribution to knowledge.⁷

Owing to the productivist premise, whereby I seek frameworks for pro-egalitarian affect within the social, political and cultural arenas, methodological approaches are also developed as outcomes of the project as a whole. These sought-after approaches, including means of generating mutually caring encounters of affect and agency alongside structural disruption and subversion, are partly developed through practice employing worked-with methodologies. This takes place in continuous reflection and

⁷ Terms such as 'practice', 'writing' and 'theorising' can create a sense of distinction and discreteness between the artistic interventions and other written components of this project which is not helpful. The 'writing' is itself a practice, much of the 'practice' includes forms of writing, and both contribute to theorising (while also having other functions).

Having said this though, as here, it is still sometimes practically necessary to indicate either those parts of the project developed as artistic interventions, or those sections of writing not designated as arttexts (such as this one).

While acknowledging the imprecision and potential slippage into oversimplification of using these terms, I offer this footnote in place of remaking this point at each instance.

evaluation, through and alongside the entwined research strands of theorising and 'being'.⁸

Having just made a distinction between these two aspects of practice methodology, I now immediately want to blur it. Gradually, the two come together into one, as findings made through the research process lead the worked-with methodologies to progressively start to align with the sought-after. This occurs through the methodological original contributions ('embodied flattened allegorical montage' and 'iterative refracted practice, theorising and being') being themselves iteratively refined through the process of developing a concept of radical care. In increasingly becoming a practice of that which they seek, they are both the means by which radical care is developed, and also contributions in and of themselves (which are, in turn, continuously reflected upon through the ongoing practising of a concept of radical care, as it itself remains fluid).

Basis of approach

The artistic interventions within this project function as research in a way which can be introduced through an earlier work of mine, *Negatory Manifesto*.⁹ This continuously

⁸ This interrelationship between artistic practice, theorising and being was discussed in the *Introduction*.

⁹ Adam Walker, *Negatory Manifesto* (2016) <<http://www.adamjwalk.co.uk/negatorymanifesto.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

While evoking Rainer's *No Manifesto* (and on one level operating in a similar way), *Negatory Manifesto* attempts to articulate a further degree of self-reflexivity and connected-ness to the (unseen) human through its continuous re-writing, errors, corrections and pauses.

Yvonne Rainer, *No Manifesto* (1965), text available at <https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/yvonne-rainer-trio-a-1978/> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

looping moving-image work shows a set of negative statements being endlessly typed and deleted again and again. The statements range from accurate claims or acknowledgements to desired positions, and from pressing critiques to utopian dreams. Glimpses of fallibility, perhaps human-ness, creep in in moments of error, hesitation and correction.

Negatory Manifesto

No pre-ordained outcomes
No resolved positions
No illustration
No privileging of the singular authorial voice
No metaphor for metaphor's sake
No presumption of a shared position based on an uncritical notion of 'us'
No claiming to speak for 'them'
No work for work's sake
No aestheticising of the political into something neutered
No claiming ignorance of context
No uncontested acceptance of an art historical teleology
No kitsch of the grand march
No unchallenged binary positions, flipped or otherwise
No romanticising of the self

No end point as principle focus
No documentation when the process of documenting undermines
No segmenting into life and art, work and play
No privileging of ethics over aesthetics, or vice versa
No uncritical commodification
No complete explanation
No presumption
No exploitation (or at least not on net balance, hopefully, maybe)
No complete autonomy, nor whatever its complete opposite is
No letting the thing land
No hierarchy
No forgetting your own privileges
No playfulnessless
No thinking you can ever really remove yourself
No claims of objectivity
No adherence to internalised self-fulfilling norms

Figures 1 and 2: Adam Walker, *Screenshots of Negatory Manifesto*, 2016. Showing almost the entire text, these screenshots, including a few errors, are taken prior to the cursor returning to the start to correct, and then delete, what is has written (before beginning again). (Should the text in these images prove too small to read, the work can be viewed at www.adamjwalker.co.uk/negatorymanifesto.htm)

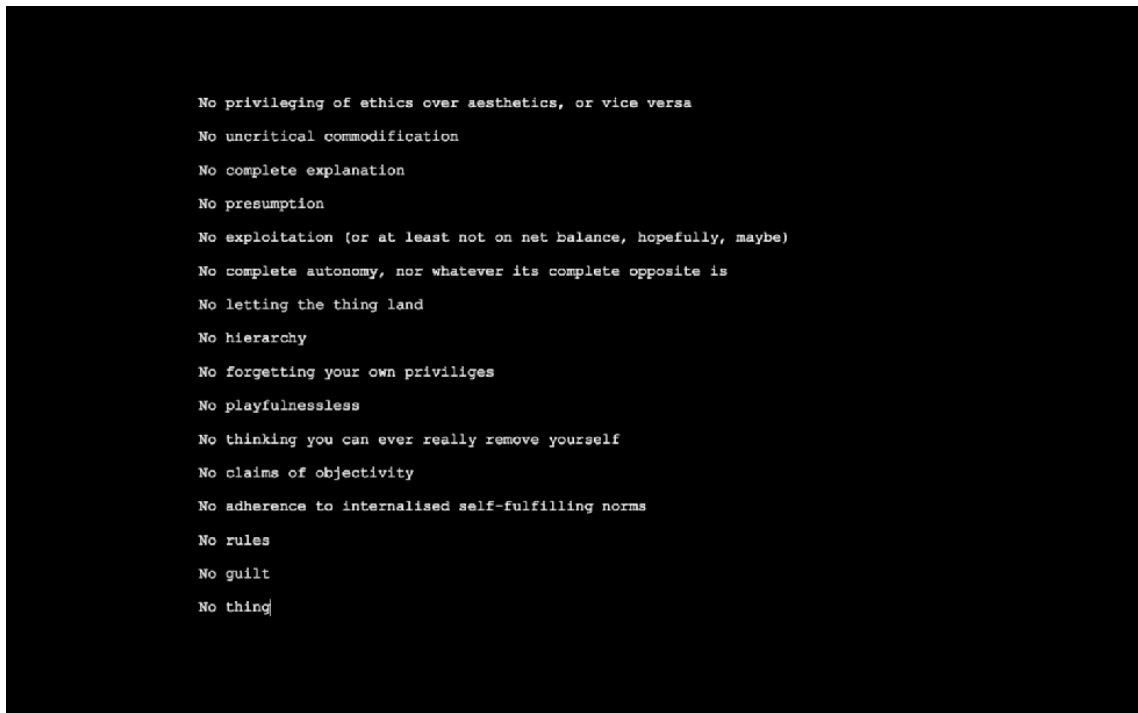


Figure 3: Adam Walker, *Screenshot of Negatory Manifesto*, 2016. Here, the final three lines are shown

My practice-research operates through seeking to create work which, while not necessarily fitting completely within the strictures of *Negatory Manifesto* (an impossible aim), acknowledges the problematics (either manifested or potential) pointed towards, and grapples and engages with the unavoidable complicities. The research is to make work 'through', rather than 'beyond', *Negatory Manifesto*: to acknowledge complexity, complicity, entanglement and positionality, and to work actively with these, in recognition of the presently observed political imperative to seek to enable counter-ways of being.

Though *Negatory Manifesto* is on one level a formal, literal text, the research-practice now rooted in it and grappling through it comprises texts in the broader sense outlined by Roland Barthes: situated, contingent, emplaced and contextually entangled; coming

into pluralities of meaning in encounter with site and audience.¹⁰ As fluid constellations of fragments coming together and shifting apart, and reiterating themselves in open future variations, the artworks produced embody Barthes' observation that considering art as 'text' rather than 'work' 'decants the work [...] from its consumption and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice.'¹¹ This positioning opens up a continuously reflexive process of radically caring text, theorising, practice and being, in acknowledgement of our existence within a world of abstracted textual affect upon unequally positioned bodies.

Allegory

I employ forms of montage and allegory to attempt to productively affect the material, while acknowledging its increasing textuality. As Benjamin Buchloh writes, allegory is premised on a shift away from perceptual immediacy to a reading and reforming of 'meaning' in the mind of the viewer; the present experiential encounter is broadened out through association, contextualisation, history, viewpoint and so forth.¹² Allegory, as Buchloh discusses it, is presented as theorised by Walter Benjamin (and is proximate to Barthes' text, though for clarity's sake, owing to the increasingly textual construction of the technosphere and my ensuing use of text as a strategic form, I will lean towards speaking of allegory when discussing conceptual mechanics within my practice).

Benjamin observed communication such as language or text, or possibly an artwork, as

¹⁰ Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' [1971], in *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), pp. 155-164.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹² Benjamin Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art', *Artforum*, 21:1 (1982), 43-56.

operating simultaneously in the two registers of that which is communicated and that which is expressed.¹³ The slippage and mistranslation between what is expressed and what is communicated opens up the space where allegory can operate. Allegorical 'meanings' reside as a continually fluxing meta-text in relation to, but not determined by, the direct expression of communication.¹⁴ 'Meaning' is also inflected through countless interconnections of broader cultural context, a 'limitation' which offers playful possibilities.

Benjamin considers there to always be a disparity between that which is communicated and 'reality', because while it can to some extent reflect and transmit a reality, the would-be communicative act does not become reality: to do so would be self-annihilating. Also importantly however, because of this partial untethering the communicative act can point to something beyond the present reality, or obscured within it, and can thus act as a site of rupture or speculative potential transformation.¹⁵ Whether intentional speech or the more primordial, somatic 'cry that escapes signification', the expressive act proceeds away from the uttering body.¹⁶ In primary form, it remains reliant upon the proximate body; the only means of further departing from it in time or space is through textualisation and abstraction. The oral expressive act sits at an interstice of potential affect and vulnerability. Immaterial, it is at once

¹³ Howard Caygill, 'Walter Benjamin's Concept of Allegory', in *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. by Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 241-253.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

That this meta-text is acknowledged as continually fluxing (formed in encounters, events and (mis)translations) is key. It should not be confused with a transcendentalist belief in an underlying fixed 'reality' or 'truth' which might be revealed.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* [1975], trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 6.

invulnerable and fragile in its fleeting transience. While it departs the uttering body, it retains a tether (strengthened through surveillance and datafication technologies), and thus might provide a path of consequence back to the body.¹⁷ A question which follows is whether an affective counter-individualistic form of utterance might be possible: one which is (possibly surreptitiously) enabling in relation to the human-ness of its initiator(s) and interpreter(s), instead of fully collapsing into the individuated abstraction of the technospheric milieu.

As noted above though (and as developed through *Lexis*), our contemporary reality is increasingly textually constructed in ways which erase the human, proceeding in accelerating, a-critical feedback loops between the material and the conceptual. Abstracted communicative acts, erased of their connections with context and human, are thus collapsing together. This shifts the possibilities of allegorical techniques. On the one hand, the allegorical space of the unknown gap of mistranslation is shrinking rapidly, as knowledge, information and power can be increasingly instantly brought to bear, and a supposedly singular totality of meaning is more and more effectively projected throughout society. On the other though, the emergent space of almost infinite uprooted multi-textualities, if it can be envisaged, forms a context where the allegorical might operate in the fractalling fissures. Here, potential affect in the material might be propagated through (mis)translations, so long as the human can be retained amidst the abstraction. It is important to emphasise that 'the human' being invoked is not a transcendental one: not the impossibly reified claim of either 'perfect' or 'supreme' human. The human is bodily, messy, irrational, leaky and material. We are porous, relational beings.

¹⁷ Speech and language, though clearly connected to text, are not the main focus of this project. It is worth emphasising though, that in their contemporary recording and dissemination, acts of speech and codes of language are continually rendered as text in various forms.

As Timothy C. Campbell observes, from the perspective of the hegemonic structure there are both 'proper' and 'improper' texts.¹⁸ The proper text is that which can be owned, aligning with the individuated, proprietorial basis of the technosphere. The improper text, contrastingly, does not fit here: instead tethering in some way to the non-individuated, non-prorietorial human. It 'awards a power to the collective capable of persuading men and women that they more properly belong to a collective', and thus holds a disruptive potential.¹⁹ Resistant practices might operate through attempting to disrupt, disturb, critique or subvert the proper text by interruption of the improper.

Language (or text) and the material are linked in simultaneous connection and separation through the act of communication. This link needs to be recognised and maintained, else both slip into irrelevance to one another through incommunicability.²⁰ However, the imperfection of any translation is also vital as the aforementioned space of allegorical potential. The present risk is that this communication link principally becomes one between an 'upper conceptual-discursive textual realm' and a 'lower info-data-algorithmic textual realm', which has become 'reality'. And indeed, increasingly

¹⁸ Timothy C. Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 5-6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Campbell reflects extensively upon Heidegger. It is noteworthy that where Heidegger saw technologies as forming an occlusion of the relationship between writing and writer (through bypassing handwriting), contemporary technospheric technologies can contrastingly be seen to be inescapably archiving recorded data onto the individuated subject (as was discussed in detail in *Part 1 of Lexis*).

Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides* [1982], trans. by André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1992).

²⁰ Caygill, p. 244.

for many of us, it does take over much of our lived reality. These 'upper' and 'lower' textual realms operate in ever more perfect instantaneous mapping of one another, reflecting the increasingly totalising hegemony. It is vital that any allegorical potential in the diminishing space between these two realms is made use of while still possible. Just as important though (if not perhaps more so), is the fissure of allegorical potential in the separating off of that material, 'other' a-textual reality which, though increasingly overlooked, continues to persist. The devalorised, bodily, organic, messy, irrational, mortal reality that does not render cleanly into the info-data-algorithmic textual realm. It is subsumed and exploited by this realm as much as is possible, but there is always something that remains beyond: a type of often ignored 'lumpen-reality'.²¹ Immersion in this reality is deeply unequal, with those unwillingly held within it, in the perpetual 'beneath', being the exploited, the othered and the attacked.²² Allegory needs to be brought to bear on the attempted erasure of recognition of this reality, to make the ethical abhorrence of its exploitation meta-textually (and politically) apparent.

²¹ In the process of writing, this term has shifted between 'lumpen-materiality' and 'lumpen-reality'. I have settled on the latter in order to emphasise that while there are prominent material aspects to the realm, it is not this materiality itself that principally produces the conditions of being within it. Rather the 'reality' is (re)produced through the unequal relating of this realm to the two textual ones above it.

While it is a devalorised site, there is potential for disruptive transgression in and from this 'space beneath'. For such moves to be affective of dominant structures though, it is necessary to translate affect back into the textual. This is not an equally accessible option for all.

²² As discussed in *Part 2 of Lexis*, agency to move in and out of this realm is not equally distributed. While some may choose to shift into it at times, others are denied the option of exiting.

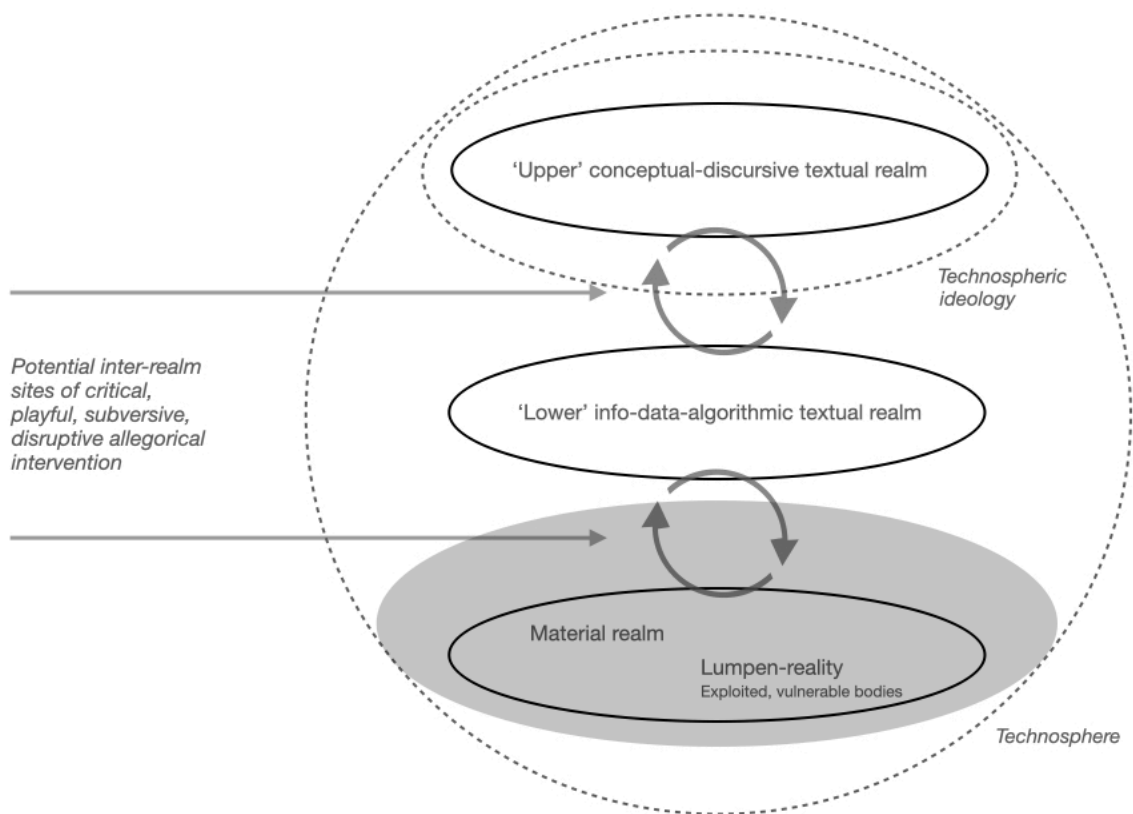


Figure 4: Adam Walker, *Diagram of realms within the technosphere*, 2020. The three realms, and sites of potential allegorical intervention between them

Benjamin writes of the 'world of things' becoming ruined and devalued through its allegorisation, before, in a second stage, the allegory itself then becomes allegorised which brings meaning back around to the world of things.²³ For example, in an art historical context, the significance of the unique or rare art object is 'ruined' through its mass reproducibility (which ruptures its prior allegorical functioning). The Duchampian readymade then connects a new significance back to the object. However this new tether is, importantly, with a world of things irreversibly shifted from its pre-

²³ Ibid., p. 248.

readymade state. Within the technosphere, the material and bodily is 'ruined' through subsumption into an increasingly textually dominated structure, rendering the lumpen-reality without value (according to the dominant logic).²⁴ Just as the readymade was not a reactive return to a past 'handmadeness', any means of engaging with (and possibly affecting) our contemporary context is not to be found in returning to a nostalgic materiality, but in fostering a pro-human-ness *beyond* our present textual abstraction. The 'improper text' which proffers a speculative, forward looking connection to a human-ness (even while its attempted erasure continues in the present) might act to disturb the closed loop of the two textual realms.²⁵

It is important to restate and emphasise some of the key elements of Benjamin's conception of allegory, which still stand. Firstly, it is very different to the symbol. Whereas the allegorical holds open the space of the unknown, the symbolic closes down into a singular universal 'meaning'. Building from this, the allegorical is multiple: a constellation of fragments operating perpetually on the outside. And furthermore, when the individual subject does collate these fragments into a reading of meaning, this is completely contingent to the present contextual site and moment.²⁶

²⁴ Within this, bodily labour is 'ruined' through technology and automation. The hegemonic structure attempts to mute any allegorical significance in the alienated de-contextualised labour then brought back around that does not align with its own interests (as seen, for example, in attempts to control the discourse surrounding the gig economy). The 'improper text', which operates outside this control, is crucial here. (This note connects with the *Dark kitchens and desert cities* section in *Part 2 of Lexis*.)

²⁵ Campbell, p. 6.

²⁶ Caygill.

To reiterate the earlier point then, the allegorical meta-text is in continual, plural formation. It is antithetical to the revelation of a singular 'truth'.

Montage

Having outlined the functioning of early twentieth century allegorical montage by the Dadaists and Marcel Duchamp (who manifested it within the singular act of nominative appropriation), Buchloh argues that the relevant dialectical response to this was not a regressive return to the production of market-orientated commodities, but instead a turning outward to apply the techniques of allegorical montage to the socio-political realm (rather than focusing them inward on the modernist framework).²⁷ In a subsequent essay, Buchloh presents factography as manifesting this aim for a brief moment.²⁸ However, factography was premised on the idea that an underlying reality can be rendered visible without interference or mediation.²⁹

My research-practice methodology, 'embodied flattened allegorical montage', is quite different to this in two ways. Firstly, in taking an allegorical approach, I make no claim whatsoever of revealing or rendering any form of *underlying* reality, but instead seek to enable the formation of contingent meta-texts (which, in turn, relate to the fluid entwined 'realities' they sit within and co-constitute). And secondly, I reject any premise of unmediated non-interference: my artistic interventions are premised entirely upon acknowledged entanglement.

²⁷ Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures'.

²⁸ Benjamin Buchloh, 'From Faktura to Factography', *October*, 30 (1984), 82-119.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Thus, to some extent my methodology fits within the 'excessive particularising metamorphic strain' of contemporary practice which Larne Abse Gogarty speaks of.³⁰ Operating in a reflexive, meme-like way within the info-data-algorithmic realm, and exemplified by artworks such as those of Ryan Trecartin and Lizzie Fitch, Abse Gogarty frames this as contemporary montage. However, the practices presented do not go as far as I seek to in terms of holding open some form of affective (though non-didactic, non-paternalistic) relationship with the overlooked underlying material realm.³¹ Potential productivist change and transformation are present, but these occur in circulation between the two textual realms I have described. Neither do some of these practices sufficiently engage with the entangled and complicit position of the author. Abse Gogarty's 'excessive particularising metamorphic strain' fully addresses the fragmentation of the authorial subject within the technosphere, but under-acknowledges the manner in which the authorial position nevertheless continues to hold a shifting relevance, and still needs addressing. While we might rarely know who started the meme, 'the death of the author' does not entail their complete annihilation, but rather the superseding of their hegemony by a contingent, plural construction of meaning encompassing text, site, encounter, viewer and context *in addition* to author.³²

³⁰ Larne Abse Gogarty, 'Coherence and Complicity: On the Wholeness of Post-Internet Aesthetics', presentation at *Propositions #4: Unpacking Aesthetics and the Far Right* conference, BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, 17 March 2018 <<https://vimeo.com/266048660>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

³¹ Abse Gogarty emphasises the need to hold onto the transgressive, playful site of memes and their surrounding cultural spaces for progressive politics (rather than cede these to the far-right). In emphasising a method of disordered 'irrational piling up of images [and] weird associations', some of the associations or connections affixed upon and relating to the particular positionality of the author (or others whom the work might specifically address) are not sufficiently acknowledged or considered. If present, they can become lost within the morass of open signifiers and other elements. (This is not a general critique. Rather, it is specifically in relation to the research-positioning of practice as 'embodied flattened allegorical montage'.)

Ibid.

³² Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' [1968], in *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977), pp. 142-148.

Buchloh devotes a significant part of his essay to a description and positive assessment of Michael Asher's contribution to the 1981 exhibition *The Museum as Site* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, arguing that the work (which consisted of a poster at the museum entrance, the conceptual appropriation of a painting already in the collection, and a painstakingly remade sign in the adjacent park) makes effective use of montage between its elements to construct an allegorical text in the mind of the viewer, making apparent a linking of hidden networks and discourses.³³ However, while not wholly unsuccessful, this work is still ultimately premised on representation: representation of networks and discourses which Asher might acknowledge complicity within, but still ultimately absents himself from into a privileged position of un-present authorship at the moment of allegorical reading.

It is in this engagement with authorship that the work doubly falls down. Firstly, in Asher's assumption that he can be subjectively absent from potential constructions of meaning, and secondly, that he can still claim a form of disembodied authorship over the 'correct' interpretation of the work. A singular linear understanding, passing between and interpreting (and conjoining) the three elements, is desired of the viewer; in contrast to the fluid meshes of multiplying potential navigations in the works Abse Gogarty discusses.³⁴ For Asher and Buchloh, authorship (and meaning) still principally

³³ Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures'.

Michael Asher, untitled artwork for *The Museum as Site*, exhibition at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1981.

³⁴ Abse Gogarty.

originate within the artwork, presented for the viewer to decode or reconstruct. An allegorical, textual encounter is produced, but it is a closed, unequal one.³⁵

*Embodied flattened allegorical montage*³⁶

My practice-research methodology departs from Buchloh's formulation of allegorical montage and turns back towards Barthes in seeking to produce contingent, non-linear

³⁵ Buchloh's essay does not assert a 'definition' of allegorical montage, but proceeds to gradually suggest one through discussion of a number of artists, as a positive development amidst contemporaneous practices. He traces a historical lineage of dadaist and Duchampian strategies of juxtaposition and the collapsing together of signs and signifieds. Via the self-referential re-reflecting of these strategies back onto the process of producing 'the work' (by the likes of Rauschenberg), Buchloh then turns to recent practices which turn allegorical montage outward to address the social.

Of the practices he presents as operating in this way, Buchloh's discussion of Asher's work is the example which can be most clearly critiqued in its relations to authorship as related above. The essay also offers extensive discussion of a number of other practices, including those of Birnbaum and Rosler. Birnbaum's works (refracting the mechanisms of ideological dissemination through television) and Rosler's (appropriating but refusing the conventions of photography) operate in a somewhat more nuanced way. They circulate within and without the structures they contest and, in so doing, problematise authorial positionality within the work. In particular, Buchloh's discussion of the intersecting aspects in and around Rosler's work, more so than Asher's, does begin to hold a self-reflexive authorial embodiment. It also begins to sit disruptively within continual ongoing textual and material reproduction of meaning, rather than operating akin to a decodable map of interconnected points.

Buchloh, 'Allegorical Procedures'.

'Embodied flattened allegorical montage' as developed then, should not be misconstrued as a rejection of Buchloh's allegorical montage. Rather, it is a more explicit centring of critical embodied positionality and a more broadly contextually enmeshed, ongoing, collective reading and construction of any 'meaning'. Within our present context of dehumanised individuation within ever-faster exponentially multiplying interconnections, it becomes all the more vital to emphasise this.

³⁶ In her 'flat, unmediated, nihilist strain', which Abse Gogarty contrasts with the 'excessive particularising metamorphic strain', what is flattened is context, positionality and relation.

Abse Gogarty.

The flattening in 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' is very different to this. The flattening sought here is of hierarchy, particularly of privileged authorship. Relation to context and positionality is conversely emphasised and highlighted, certainly not flattened.

meaning-producing encounters that are premised on an equality and recognition of all human agents enmeshed within (and beyond) them. I look to how allegory might operate as a technique if its authorship were also to become dispersed. I seek to create a kind of chance, collaborative allegorical montage of context, process, site and encounter; creating a contingent assemblage in which the artist-author is but one (never absent or hidden) fragment. I navigate a path between Asher and Buchloh's continued privileging of authorial oversight, and the under-recognition of the author's positionality in the practices Abse Gogarty describes.

I then attempt to intersect this 'embodied flattened allegorical montage' into potential sites of allegorical affect between the upper conceptual-discursive textual realm, lower info-data-algorithmic textual realm, and residual devalorised lumpen-reality. I look, in the co-production of speculative, unknown meta-texts, to acknowledge (and hopefully affect) underlying material realities, but make no claim of rendering or representing them.

Artistic interventions

Eight arttexts, undertaken and enfolded within the research process of this project, are presented on the following pages, with the constituent elements of each first factually described.³⁷ In several cases the arttext exists online, either in entirety or as an iteratively arrived at site in the dissemination of the work, and in these cases links are given. Acknowledging that this may be a physically printed form of *this* text, documentation images are also included in all cases and links are written out rather than embedded so as to enable their subsequent looking up if desired.

In then setting out how ‘embodied flattened allegorical montage’ operates in each arttext, I offer a ‘context-event-encounter map’ for each. I present these ‘maps’ rather than a linear text in order to emphasise the flattened, non-hierarchical nature of the works, and the shifting, non-linear, porous interrelations with context which they self-reflexively sit within.

That the complex set of interrelations which the arttexts co-constitute cannot be adequately articulated as a linear text also reflects back an important point about the arttexts themselves: they become more than the sum of their (embodied, flattened, allegorically montaged) parts. In other words, the arttexts are more than these maps,

³⁷ As much as possible, I use the term ‘arttext’ in place of ‘artwork’, following Barthes’ argument discussed above.

Barthes, ‘From Work to Text’.

In seeking to do this, it has been notable how difficult it is to refer to art without terming it ‘(the) work’. For the avoidance of convoluted-ness, I have occasionally accepted doing so. For example, I have opted not to follow the practice so rigorously as to form sentences within which the word ‘text’ is functioning in multiple different senses, when using ‘work’ would greatly aid clarity. In both *Praxis* and *Lexis*, if a Barthesian textuality is not central to the point being made, ‘artwork’ is also sometimes used to aid comprehensibility.

and more than any abstracted text attempting to articulate their embodied thinking. This 'more' is where the human-ness in the arttexts sits, and is both an expression and recognition of Barthes' aforementioned shift from work to text bringing in 'play, activity, production, practice', as well as Benjamin's slipping and fluxing meta-text between communication and expression.³⁸

There are core consistencies: text, site, bodies and labour, identified above as being key, factor centrally across the arttexts (these four are very present in all of the works, irrespective of whether or not they are used as a structuring point within the context-event-encounter map). Likewise, a reflexive emphasis on positionality, central to 'embodied flattened allegorical montage', is integral to each of the arttexts.

Each of the artistic interventions which follow also has its own specificities and contingencies. While being part of this research project, they have a porous relationship with it. As arttexts within the world, they also operate in relation to other hopes, intentions, requirements, limitations and contextual interrelationships adjacent to or further beyond this project. There are various collaborative partners, *Special Rights* has a more concrete activist intent, and *Our Skins are Porous Too* is in part curatorial.

Differences of medium and form also foreground differing emphases: the montaged elements of *Sequestered*, an in some ways relatively minimalist action, are largely existent beyond the arttext itself; whereas a partially scripted event such as *TOMBOLA!* produces many more of the montaged elements within itself (though these in turn connect out allegorically to the broader social, political, cultural, technological and economic). Through these differences though, 'embodied flattened allegorical montage'

³⁸ Ibid., p. 162.

as a methodology of practice is developed, tested and questioned: not least how it can operate from, through, with and towards radical care.

Care is key to these arttexts. Each of them occurs within, or reflects upon, a site or context that is in some way 'other' to the artist(s). The arttexts seek to recognise and critically, caring-ly engage with this difference of positionality, not deny or back away from relation with it. The event-encounter of engagement has by definition already occurred when the glimmer of a possible artistic intervention emerged. The vital care (encompassing a hope of the radical) is in working through and with this, rather than denying it.

The context-event-encounter maps which accompany each of the following artistic interventions are an arbitrary, contingent snapshot of something fluid, and attempt to articulate the orientation of each arttext within a set of relations which could be infinitely expanded out. They are thus by necessity compromised. They also seek to be legible, hence the connections drawn are even more partial. If re-made, they would undoubtedly be different.³⁹

³⁹ Please note if self-printing *Praxis*: the pages showing the context-event-encounter maps are intended to be A3 size and fold out.

1. *The Return Beyond Which There is No Point* (2017-18)⁴⁰

[www.adamjwalker.co.uk/thereturn.htm]

The Return Beyond Which There is No Point is a fluid grouping of fragments including: a machine embroidered flag I designed and commissioned while in Kyiv, Ukraine in autumn 2017; documentation of the circuitous and technologically and financially compromised process of having this flag made; a performance of carrying the flag through Kyiv and the surrounding forest before raising it on the roof of the same building in which it had started; a moving-image work based on this performance; a text considering 'the return beyond which there is no point' within and beyond the immediate context; and a sound work made in collaboration with a musician-producer in response to this text.

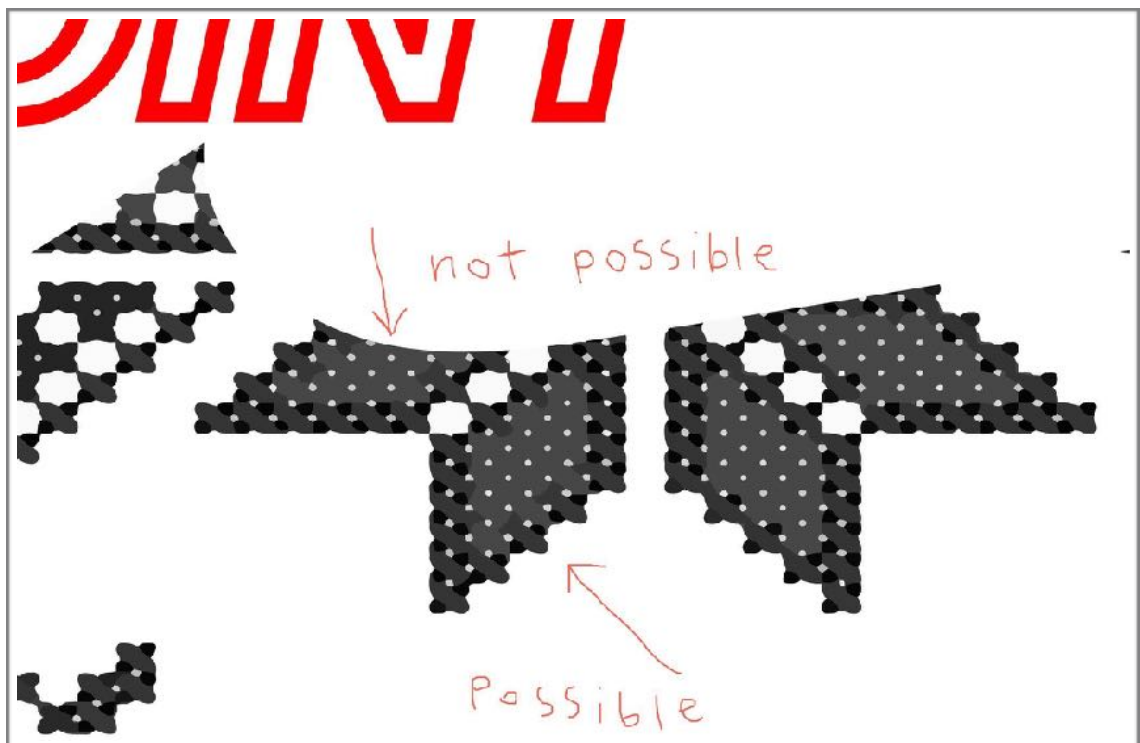
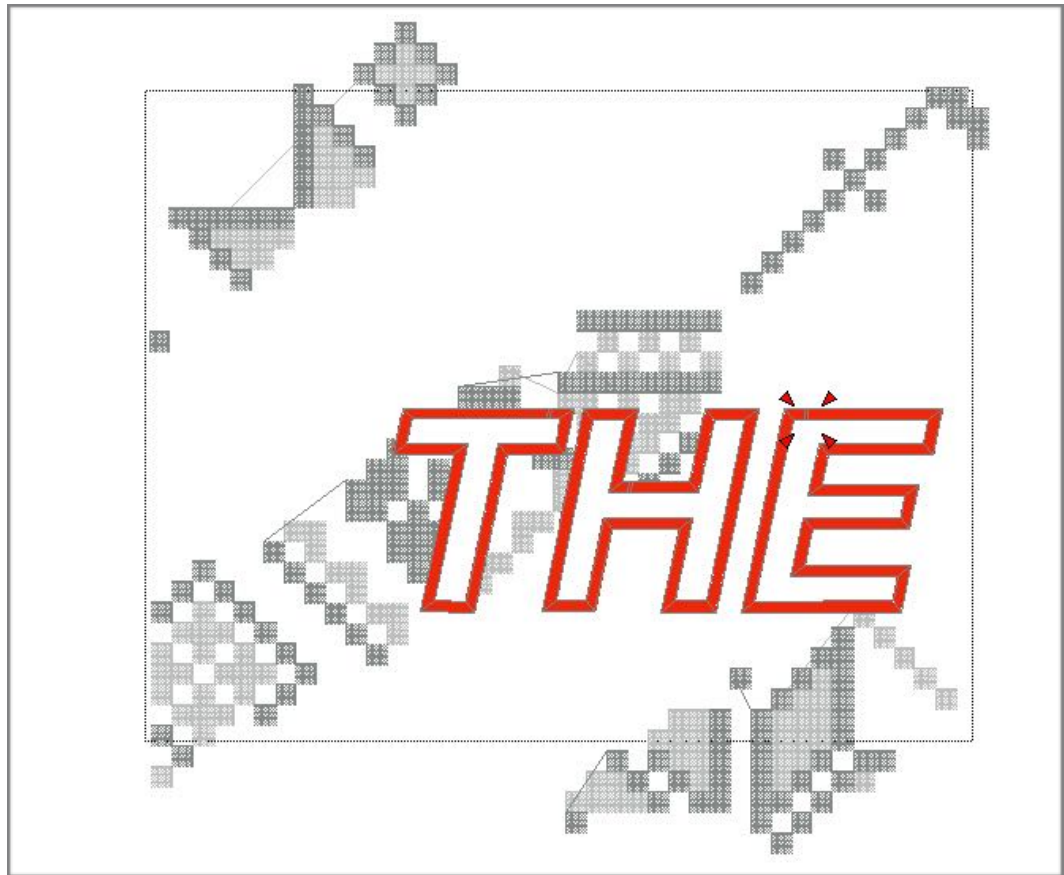
⁴⁰ Adam Walker, *The Return Beyond Which There Is No Point* (2017-18), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjwalker.co.uk/thereturn.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].



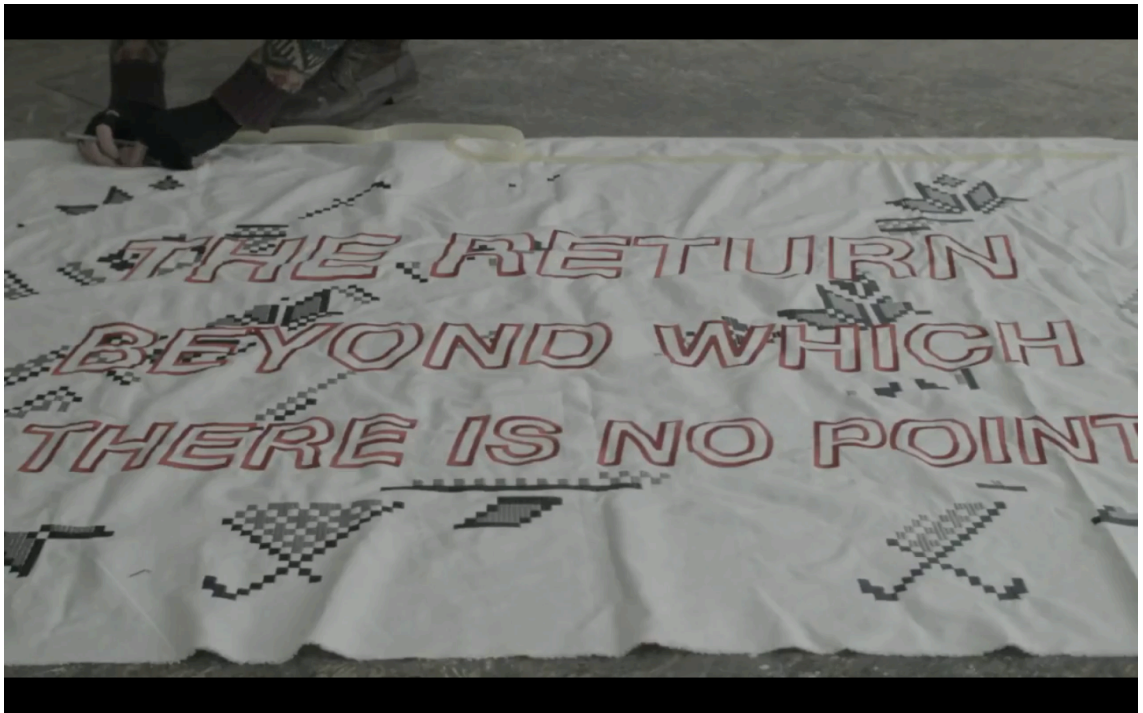
Figures 5 and 6: Anna Sorokovaya, *Documentation of the flag-carrying performance of The Return Beyond Which There is No Point*, 2017



Figure 7: Anna Sorokovaya, *Documentation of the flag-carrying performance of The Return Beyond Which There is No Point*, 2017



Figures 8 and 9: Adam Walker / flag embroiderers, *The Return Beyond Which There is No Point* flag production digital image files, 2017. These image files were exchanged with the embroiderers in establishing what was technically and financially feasible



Figures 10 and 11: Adam Walker/Vicki Thornton, *The Return Beyond Which There is No Point* moving-image stills, 2018. The moving-image work can be viewed at www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/thereturn.htm

THE RETURN BEYOND WHICH THERE IS NO POINT

The return beyond which there is no point.
Something to go back to that's nothing (or everything) once arrived at.
Nothingness. De-birth.

The point beyond which there is no return.
Going too far?
Fully committing.
No coming back.

The return.
Return to what?
Return to the past? Whose past? The future past.
Return to the moment.
Only the present.

Purity.
Origins.
The forest.
Back to something clearer (noble?). Back to something less evolved, primitive.
Return to a lost freedom.

Return as u-turn.
Return as re-turn. A series of turns.
Re-turning returns.

Beyond.
Imminent.
Last stop on the line.

Beyond the return.
The lost forever.
The pre-history. Or never-to-happen future.

The point.
Believed in.
Meaningful.
A marker (in time or place), an event.
Looked forward to.
Looked back upon.
Returned to.
Way-station. Get off, change direction.

No point.
A flat unending plane.
Mediocrity.
Semi-utopia.

Adam J B Walker
(October 2017)

Figure 12: Adam Walker, *The Return Beyond Which There is No Point text*, 2018. The soundscape made in response to this text can be heard at www.adamjwalker.co.uk/thereturn.htm

I returned to Ukraine in March 2018 to form an installation from an arrangement of some of these elements for exhibition at Yermilov Centre, Kharkiv. The installation comprised the flag; its daily delegated carrying and varying repositioning by invigilators (without instruction); the text presented on the wall at a large scale; a single image from my previous flag-carrying performance (where I am sat at a Kyiv tram-stop alongside some men who appear to have been in a fight); and the soundscape filling the otherwise largely empty space.



Figure 13: Adam Walker, *Installation view of The Return Beyond Which There is No Point at Yermilov Centre, Kharkiv, 2018*



Figures 14 and 15: Adam Walker, *Installation views of The Return Beyond Which There is No Point at Yermilov Centre, Kharkiv, 2018*



Figure 16: Adam Walker / gallery invigilator, *Still from a video by a gallery invigilator showing the flag being carried at Yermilov Centre, Kharkiv as part of The Return Beyond Which There is No Point, 2018*. Invigilators were invited to carry the flag whenever they wished, do with it as they wished, and reposition it as they liked. Some examples, recorded on mobile phones, can be viewed at www.adamjwalker.co.uk/thereturn.htm

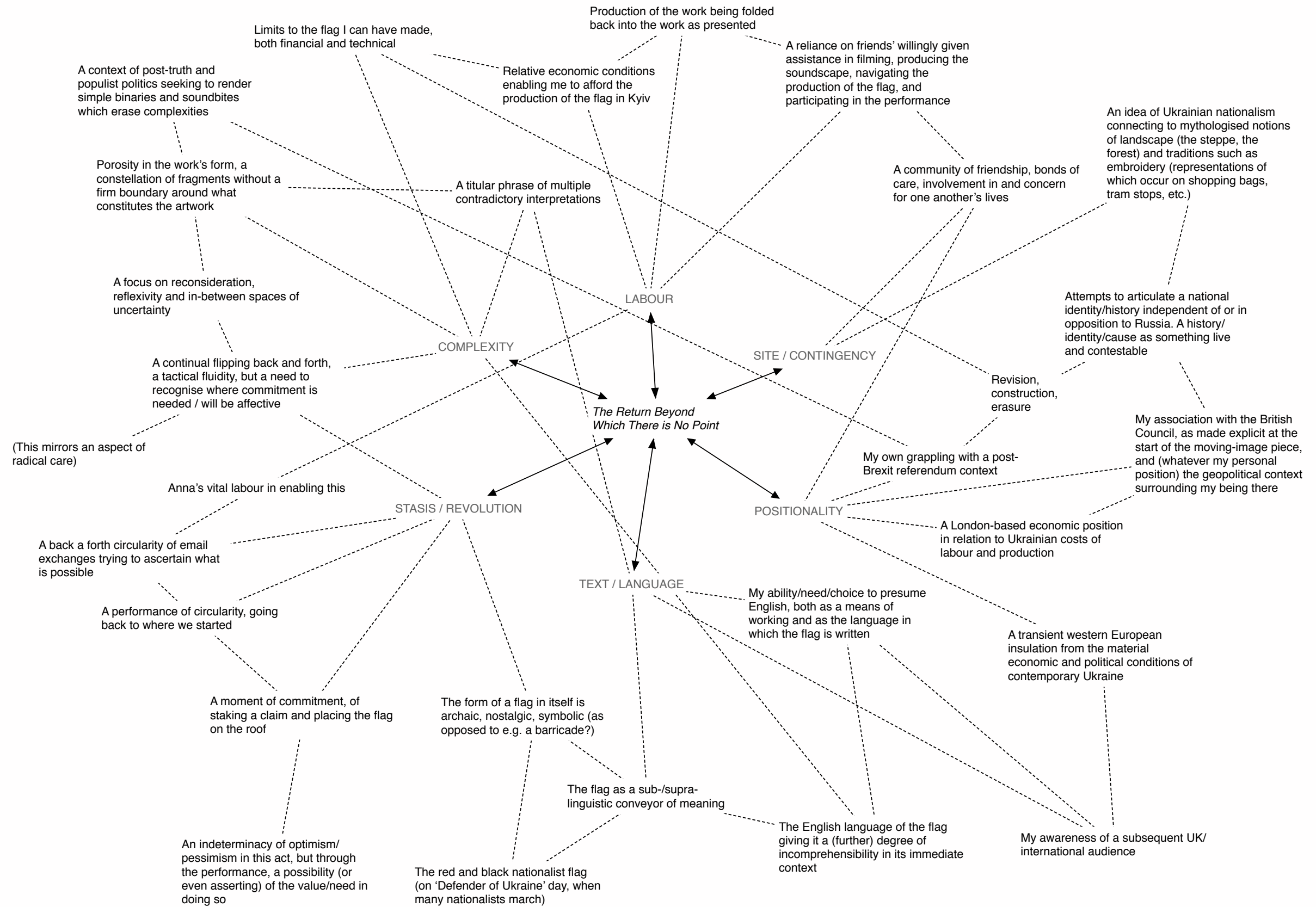


Figure 17: Adam Walker, *Context-event-encounter map for The Return Beyond Which There is No Point*, 2020

2. *TOMBOLA!* (2017-18)⁴¹

[www.adamjwalker.co.uk/tombola.htm]

TOMBOLA! is a collaboration with Vicki Thornton. Its first iteration was as a live event at Izolyatsia in Kyiv. Attendees on a bare soundstage-like set were invited by an unspeaking masked figure to read absurd scripts in their choice of Ukrainian, Russian or English. These were constructed from the fortune-cookie-like phrases printed on the back of receipts from a local supermarket chain. Some were time-stamped to be read at certain points according to a large digital clock display. The scripts employ English-language wordplay, which often becomes garbled nonsense when translated back into other languages. Meanwhile, catchphrases from nostalgic British TV gameshows play, and the masked figure leads increasingly absurd actions.

⁴¹ Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, *TOMBOLA!* (2017-18), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjwalker.co.uk/tombola.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].



Figures 18 and 19: Anna Sorokovaya, *Documentation of the live performance of TOMBOLA!* at Izolyatsia, Kyiv, 2017



Figure 20: Adam Walker, *Documentation of the live performance of TOMBOLA! at Izolyatsia, Kyiv, 2017*

SCENE 71

PART 2:

Trust your feelings.

[A romantic meeting awaits you.]

How can a meeting await me?

[Surely someone has to await meeting you?]

Surely someone has to await meeting me.

[Keep the harmony in everything.]

Keep it in the fridge.

[har - - - -]

[EXTENDED PAUSE]

mo - - - -

[ny - - - -]

no, ni - - - -

[ni?]

ous - - - -

[adjective?]

adjectival.

[You will be pleasantly surprised.]

Pleasantly or pheasantly?

[Definitely the former.]

[EXIT PURSUED BY A DIFFERENT BEAR]

Figure 21: Adam Walker, *An example of one of the scripts written for TOMBOLA!*, 2017

TOMBOLA! was re-presented as a synced two-screen moving-image installation at Yermilov Centre, Kharkiv in 2018. A composite version can be viewed at www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/tombola.htm.



Figure 22: Adam Walker, *Installation view of TOMBOLA! at Yermilov Centre, Kharkiv, 2018*. Scripts and polaroids, kept from the live event, were placed at the installation entrance



Figures 23 and 24: Adam Walker, *Installation views of TOMBOLA!* at Yermilov Centre, Kharkiv, 2018

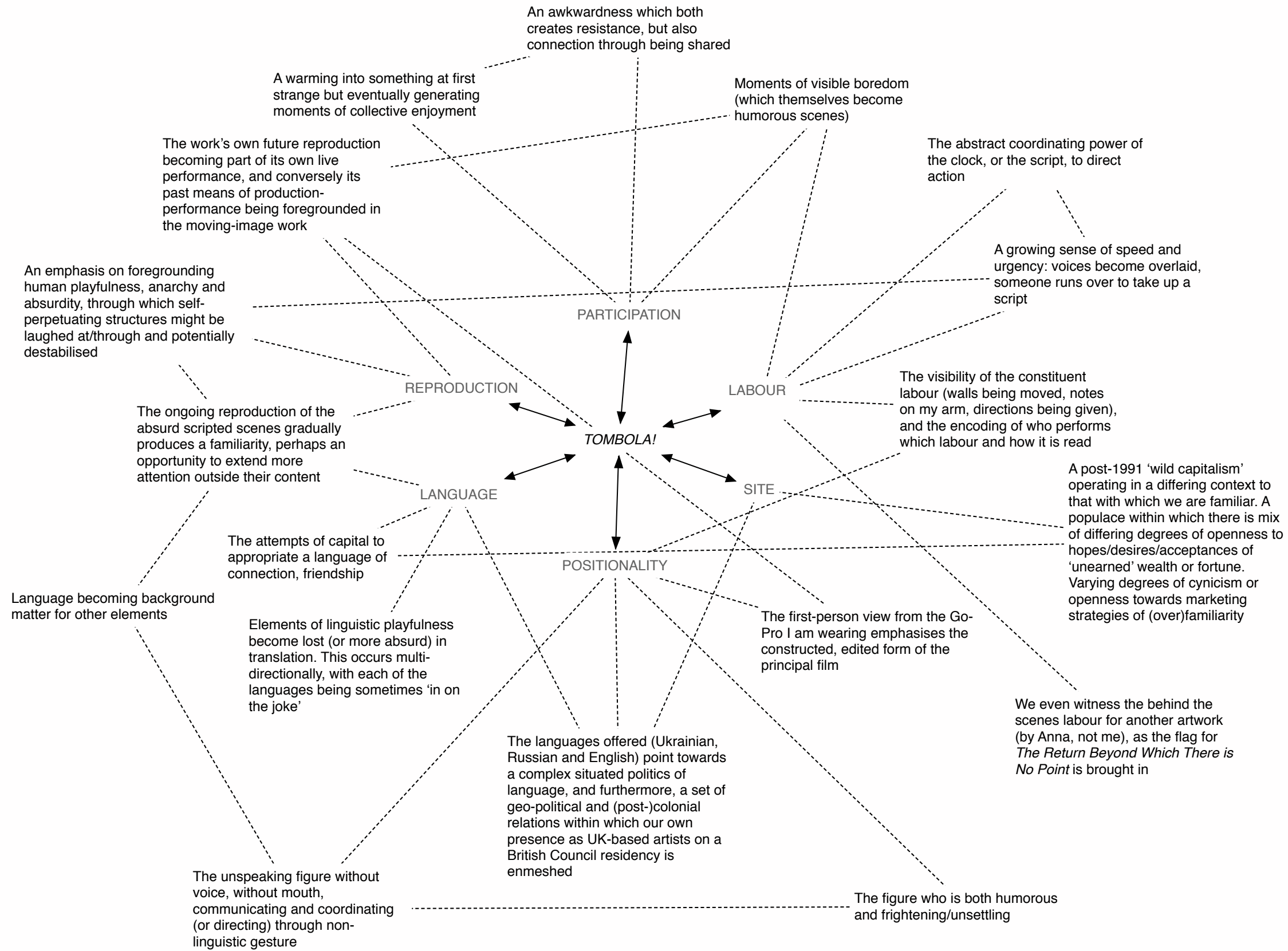


Figure 25: Adam Walker, *Context-event-encounter map for TOMBOLA!, 2020*

3. *6 Weeks in Kyiv* (2018)⁴²

[www.adamjwalker.co.uk/6weeksinkyiv.htm]

6 Weeks in Kyiv begins with a handwritten table documenting Uber journeys made during a six week period in Kyiv, Ukraine. Transcribed from the app, the table includes drivers' first names in Cyrillic script, along with their 'rating', journey details, my own fluctuating rating as a passenger, and a few additional notes.

This table is part of the arttext, both in original taped-together paper form, and also as an actual-size scanned image on a large monitor in front of me.⁴³

I read out the list of journeys and their details. The sound of my voice is then taken via microphone into a virtual vocoder built in the open source visual programming language Pure Data, which can be seen projected on and behind me. The sounds of my voice, rendered into digitised data, become the inputs to this vocoder, triggering frequencies and synthesised sounds to play, alongside a distorted, delayed echo of my voice.

⁴² Adam Walker, *6 Weeks in Kyiv* (2018), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjwalker.co.uk/6weeksinkyiv.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

The spelling of the name of the Ukrainian capital in English is a contested issue, bound up in questions of nationalism and Russian influence. Though an oversimplification, 'Kyiv' is often presented as the transliteration from Ukrainian, in contrast to the more traditional 'Kiev' from Russian. My use of 'Kyiv' follows that of friends residing in the city.

⁴³ For a subsequent performance at NEoN Digital Arts Festival, Dundee, 2019, this image of the table on-screen was re-edited to gradually appear and disappear at a tempo suggestive of human breathing.



Figure 26: Adam Walker/Sotiris Gonis, *Still from documentation of 6 Weeks in Kyiv being performed as part of Flight Mode at Asylum, London, 2018*. Moving-image documentation of this performance can be viewed at www.adamjwalker.co.uk/6weeksinkyiv.htm

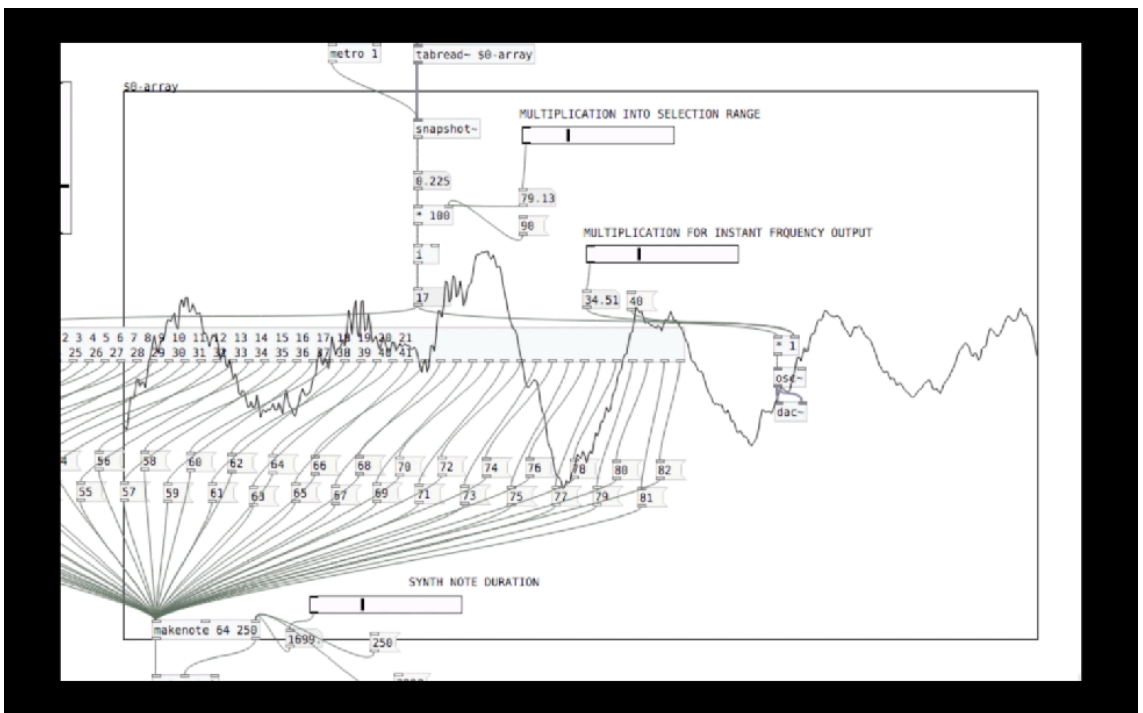


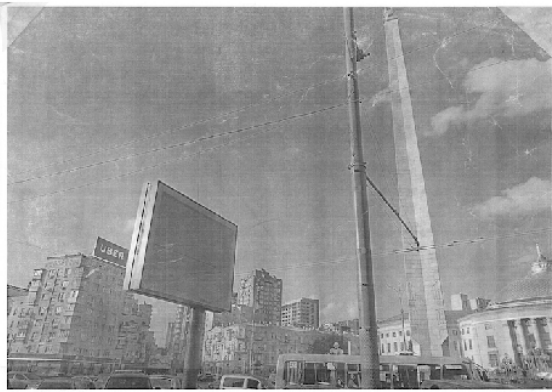
Figure 27: Adam Walker, *Still showing part of the virtual vocoder written in Pure Data for 6 Weeks in Kyiv, 2018*



Figure 28: Adam Walker/Sotiris Gonis, *Still from documentation of 6 Weeks in Kyiv* being performed as part of *Flight Mode at Asylum, London, 2018*



Figure 29: Katherine Rattary for NEoN Digital Arts Festival, *6 Weeks in Kyiv* being performed at *NEoN Digital Arts Festival, Dundee, 2019*



UBER JOURNEYS

DATE	PICK UP / TIME	DESTINATION / TIME	DRIVER	COST / FEE	RATING	REMARKS
5th Sep	5:59pm	6:15pm Ischalytsya	ИВАН	64.57 / 8.20km	4.7	5
7th Sep	1:26pm	1:49pm Sashenko	Виктор	59.12 / 8.76km	4.88	5
9th Sep	11:45am	11:59am Sashenko	ИВАН	68.66 / 8.38km	4.95	5
9th Sep	11:09am	12:16pm Ischalytsya	Александр	61.51 / 8.20km	4.83	5
11th Sep	7:02pm	7:15 1st bridge	Володимир	81.12 / 8.20km	4.86	5
13th Sep	11:16am	11:29 Sashenko	ЮРІЙ	74.72 / 8.16km	4.92	5
13th Sep	5:04pm	5:35pm Ischalytsya	Александр	64.35 / 8.20km	4.71	5
16th Sep	12:19pm	12:37pm Sashenko	Денис	72.41 / 8.16km	4.79	5
17th Sep	12:22am	12:35am Sashenko	Александр	65.85 / 10.08km	4.91	5
18th Sep	4:43am	4:51am Ischalytsya	Александр	13.87 / 7.84km	4.64	5
19th Sep	2:20pm	2:46pm Sashenko	Ярослав	16.41 / 12.31km	4.58	5
19th Sep	6:02pm	6:20 Nizhnyy slit	Ігор	81.56 / 9.20km	4.82	5
20th Sep	1:50pm	1:59pm Nishchyl	Валерій	30.82 / 1.92km	4.75	5
21st Sep	10:53am	11:49am Ischalytsya	Миколай	74.67 / 9.11km	4.86	5
23rd Sep	4:58pm	5:09pm Ischalytsya	Леофія	106.76 / 13.02km	4.75	5
23rd Sep	2:04pm	2:23pm Ischalytsya	Артур	74.97 / 9.20km	4.84	5
24th Sep	12:10pm	12:27pm Sashenko	Максим	74.73 / 8.20km	4.91	5
24th Sep	7:14pm	7:27pm Ischalytsya	Александр	91.82 / 9.20km	4.83	5
26th Sep	8:36pm	8:45pm Nishchyl	Володимир	59.77 / 8.16km	4.9	5
27th Sep	4:21pm	4:35pm Nishchyl	Сергей	50.37 / 7.16km	4.76	5
28th Sep	9:22pm	10:01pm Nishchyl	Сергей	98.37 / 8.16km	4.81	4
29th Sep	1:12pm	1:27pm Ischalytsya	Максим	39.34 / 1.92km	4.8	5
30th Oct	12:45pm	1:15pm Nishchyl	Виктор	90.48 / 9.20km		5
8th Oct	1:10pm	1:22pm Sashenko	Сергей	101.47 / 8.20km		5
9th Oct	7:30pm	7:47pm Ischalytsya	Евгений	58.87 / 8.16km		5
10th Oct	8:45am	8:58am Nishchyl	Сергей	17.04 / 1.92km		5
10th Oct	9:20pm	9:35pm Sashenko	Олег	27.59 / 3.20km		5
12th Oct	10:48pm	10:57pm Ischalytsya	Виталий	63.44 / 8.20km		5
14th Oct	8:30am	8:39am Nishchyl	Владимир	52.89 / 1.63km		5
14th Oct	2:07pm	2:27pm Sashenko	Ігор	72.57 / 8.20km		5
15th Oct	1:10am	1:27am Nishchyl	Александр	51.77 / 1.92km		5
15th Oct	6:03am	6:20am Nishchyl	Роман	34.58 / 1.35km		5

MY RATING

8th Sep 4.83

10th Sep 4.84

13th Sep 4.86

14th Sep 4.81

23rd Sep 4.81

28th Sep 4.83

29th Sep 4.84

15th Oct 4.85

some particular passengers were not rated

- driver often leaving at - 1st bridge

- had to cancel a driver as this as he didn't find me another. Also time if could bring something?

- other not to have license requirements (22nd Sep)
- parked in wrong spot (wrongly) and got stuck in traffic

- had to give this guy a lower rating as almost cancelled heading... (1 cancellation)

- getting into this guy about not being able to understand one another

Figure 30: Adam Walker, Scan of the 6 Weeks in Kyiv handwritten table, 2018. The table is written on nine taped-together A4 sheets of paper. In the photograph, a large Uber billboard can be made out atop a building in one of Kyiv's main squares

4. *Sequestered* (2018)⁴⁴

[www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/sequestered.htm]

The text on the following page both describes *Sequestered*, and is also shown as part of the work whenever it is exhibited. When physically exhibited, *Sequestered* always takes the censored form described.

⁴⁴ Adam Walker, *Sequestered* (2018), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/sequestered.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

Sequestered (2018)

Curated by MIT (the Turkish national intelligence agency)

This artwork was created while on a residency in Adana, southern Turkey.

Physically it consists of 34 A4 pages of handwritten text by me, and 24 A4 pages of typed text (copied from mine) by Yasar*, one of several typists who work on the street opposite the courthouse writing up official documents, but also acting as advisors on bureaucratic and legal processes.

These pages constitute three texts (each both handwritten and typed). They are word-for-word transcriptions (excepting occasional human error) of the three Turkish Wikipedia articles below. Typing took place following extensive conversations about the political contexts the texts point towards, including the possibility of personal risk.

Text 1: Incirlik Hava Ussu** (Incirlik Air Base)

A shared Turkish/ American military airbase 15 minutes outside Adana. The base, operational since the 1950s, was an important part of US Cold War infrastructure, and has more recently been a key node for western military intervention in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

[After going to see the base (where a proxy-American suburbia of large detached houses with SUVs in the drive can be seen through the fence) Turkish intelligence agents visited us to enquire about our activities.]

Text 2: Turkiye'de sansur** (Censorship in Turkey)

This text traces the history of censorship in Turkey from the Ottoman Period through to the present, with an emphasis on internet blocking under the current Erdogan regime.

[At the time of my being there, Wikipedia (in both English and Turkish) was inaccessible in Turkey. However, by means of inserting a '0' directly before the 'w' of wikipedia in the address bar, a mirror site ('wikizero') set up by Turkish activists could be accessed. It was from here that I transcribed the texts.]

Text 3: Suriye Ic Savasi'nda multeciler** (Refugees of the Syrian Civil War)

Turkey hosts more refugees displaced outside of Syria than any other country. Following the widely circulated horrific images of people dying in the Aegean while trying to cross to Greece, and acute 'migration crises' at subsequent borders, the EU now pays Turkey significant sums to keep refugees within its territory.

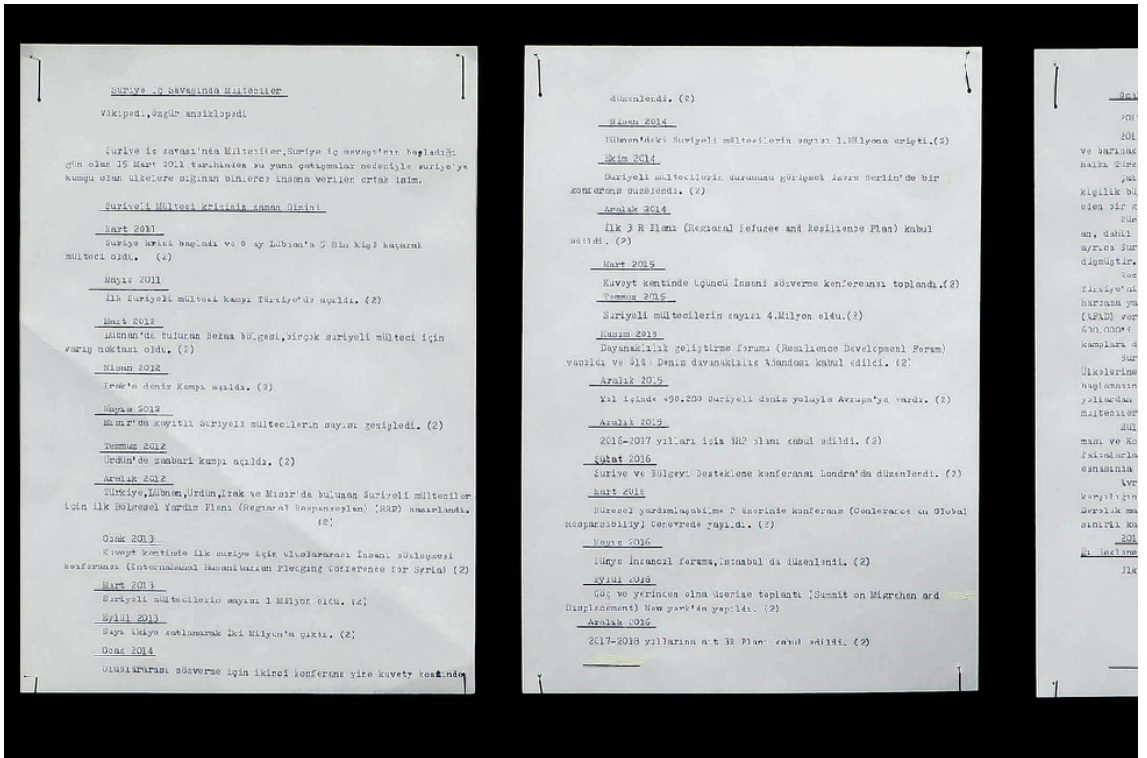
[Being close to the border, Adana has a large, visible Syrian refugee community. Often speaking another language using a different alphabet, lacking access to computers, and facing numerous bureaucratic hurdles, they are frequent visitors to typists such as Yasar.]

At the conclusion of the residency the work was exhibited in the gardens of the Archaeological Museum in Adana. Following a visit from intelligence agents during installation, it was insisted the texts on Incirlik Air Base and Censorship in Turkey could not be displayed, leaving a sole board holding the text on Refugees of the Syrian Civil War, as shown here. In subsequent exhibiting elsewhere I follow this 'curatorial' decision.

* This may or may not be his real name.

** Apologies that limitations in the fonts on my laptop mean some Turkish differences to English letter-forms are not correctly displayed.

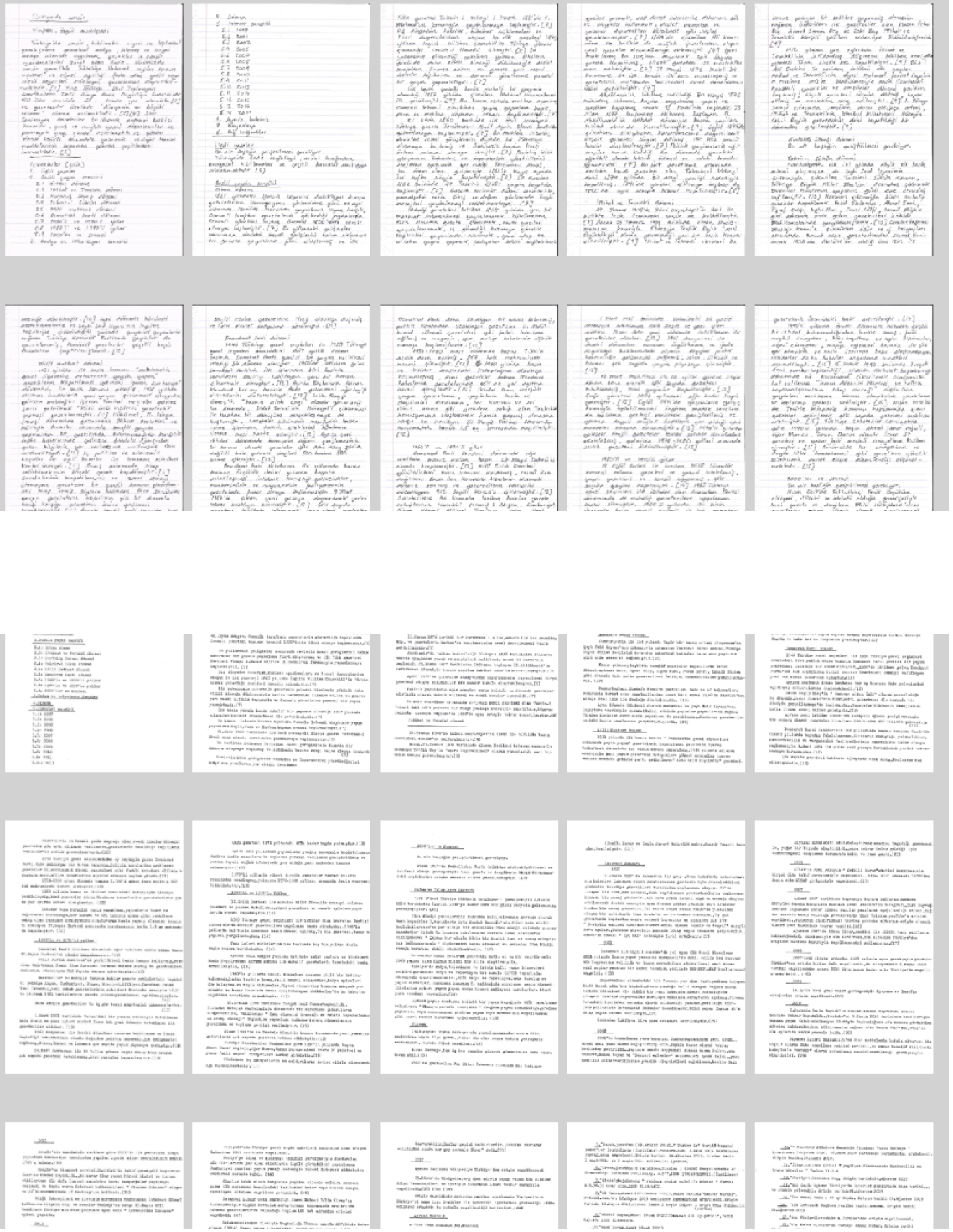
Figure 32: Adam Walker, *Sequestered explanatory text*, 2018



Figures 33 and 34: Adam Walker, *Installation views of the reduced exhibiting of Sequestered in the gardens of the Archeological Museum, Adana, 2018*

Adam J B Walker

Türkiye'de sansür (Censorship in Turkey)
(soon to be read)



Figures 35 and 36: Adam Walker, Screenshots from www.adamjwalker.co.uk/sequestered.htm showing legible high-resolution images of the texts (handwritten and typed) transcribed for Sequestered, 2018. At the time of writing this webpage continues to be accessible in Turkey

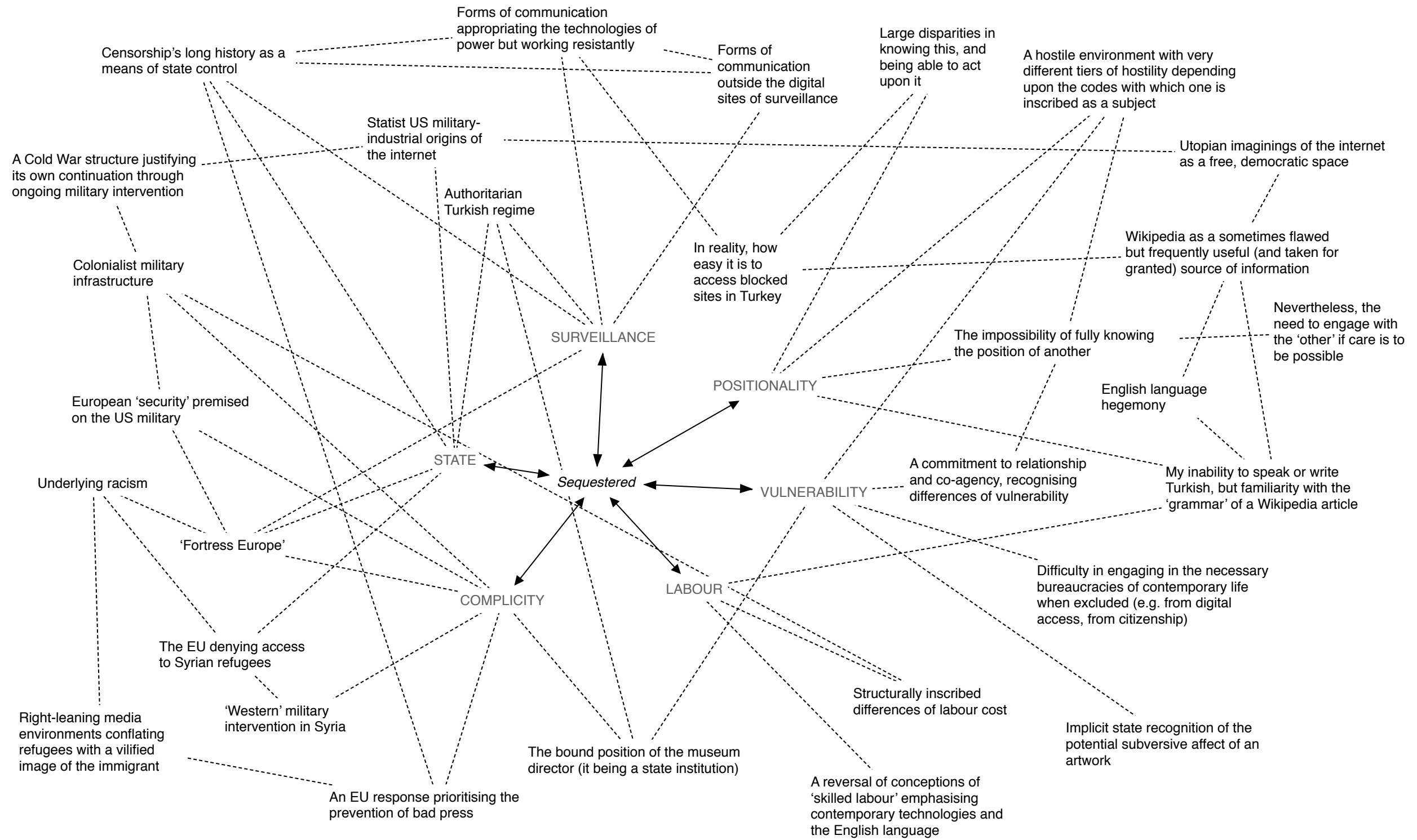


Figure 37: Adam Walker, *Context-event-encounter map for Sequestered*, 2020

5. *Special Rights* (2018)⁴⁵

[www.adamjwalker.co.uk/specialrights.htm]

Special Rights is a publication made in collaboration with Emma McGarry, which we developed through being emplaced within a nursery school via a Serpentine Gallery project. The publication is centred around the personal accounts of a group of parents of children with 'special educational needs'. These parents' and their children's encounters with systemic failings within education institutions are recounted, as well as their means of coping. We spent considerable time with the parents and got to know them well, also developing a set of collaborative manifestos together. These core elements within the publication are accompanied by texts addressing current and imminent government policy (such as funding cuts which will result in more children with 'special educational needs' being denied appropriate care and schooling), along with photographs from immersive free-play environments we constructed and explored with the children.

The publication was launched in November 2018 and has since been widely disseminated free of charge.⁴⁶ Several events bringing together parents, educators, activists, politicians and artists have also been held.

⁴⁵ Adam Walker and Emma McGarry, *Special Rights* (2018), documentation available at <<http://www.adamjwalker.co.uk/specialrights.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

⁴⁶ A pdf version of *Special Rights* can be downloaded, or hardcopy requested, at <<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/learn/changing-play/special-rights>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

It's wonderful of course, being in this parallel dimension or other planet or whatever this place is. But we always know we have to return back through the tunnels.



"When I was trying to find a nursery I applied to quite a few and I was looking for "outstanding". I ended up getting a few places around my area, so I was happy, and then I saw what it was like. When I took him they asked me, "Oh why is your son still not speaking?" When I explained he had a developmental delay, maybe autism, their response was "okay, what are you feeding him?!"

I asked them if they had any experience with children with autism or special needs? They replied, "No, not really." And I asked if they had staff who could support my son, because I thought, although he wasn't yet diagnosed, that he might have autism. The response was, "Maybe? You could apply for this...?" So that's what they said. I felt like as soon as they knew that he might have that condition they didn't want to take him.

"He can stay or he can leave, take it or leave it." It was that kind of situation. And they're "outstanding"! Ofsted really needs to revise the criteria for a nursery to achieve outstanding. Recent research shows that one in fifty-nine children is affected by autism, and if they're really not supporting those children, how on earth could they get outstanding? This really upsets me.

And it's not only one nursery, it was similar at quite a few of the nurseries I went to. I found somewhere eventually, but now I have to travel quite a distance to bring in my son every day for just two and a half hours. If they really recognised that children

**MY
CHILD
HAS
THE
RIGHT
TO**

1. GO TO NURSERY
2. GO TO SCHOOL
3. BE RESPECTED FOR, AND IN, THEIR OWN DIFFERENCES
4. BE TREATED AS AN INDIVIDUAL
5. BE WHO THEY NEED TO BE
6. BE LOVED
7. BE HAPPY
8. BE SILLY
9. BE CARED FOR
10. BE WANTED
11. BE HEARD
12. BE UNDERSTOOD
13. BE SAFE
14. FEEL SAFE
15. MAKE MISTAKES
16. SHOW EMOTION
17. HAVE AN OPINION
18. LEARN

19. LEARN IN THEIR OWN WAY AT THEIR OWN PACE
20. BE THEIR PRESENT SELF, AND BE SUPPORTED TO BECOME THEIR FUTURE SELF
21. BE SUPPORTED BY ADULTS THAT HAVE OPEN MINDS AND BIG HEARTS
22. GET THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TODAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

Figures 38, 39 and 40: Sophie Demay and Maël Fournier-Compte, *An inside spread and front and back covers (showing a collaboratively written manifesto)* from *Special Rights*, 2018



Figure 41: Sophie Demay and Maël Fournier-Comte, *An inside spread from Special Rights*, 2018

The speculative fiction narrative starting overleaf runs throughout the publication, as a series of fragments alongside the parents' recollections. It connects together and re-presents some of the collaborative thinking and care that took place within the project and, importantly, asserts a hopefulness.

KEEP ON UNPICKING

A STORY BY ADAM J B WALKER

It started with the bricks. Foundations matter, and they were our foundational matter.

Passed through the rails into the playground. Small hands receiving one by one. But they quickly built up and out and round and into something.

Utopian thought experiments built on bricks. Bricks of clay, like feet of clay, at risk of washing away. And maybe that's apt, that without due care and attention, the foundations, the very premise of what we're doing might be carried off.

At risk means in need of care. Attention. And care and attention are what are needed here. Things can't be left, presumed okay as is.

Something needs to change.
attention. Not ATTENTION.

What is a nursery after all? A place of nurturing, of tending. Just as a gardener gives each seedling the best possible conditions, the right soil type, the correct temperature and the right amount of water to flourish, so all the children, in their nursery, need the right care for them. And just as a tomato plant makes a bad daffodil, and vice versa, no two children are the same, don't require the same, and should never be judged or measured in terms of how well they are someone else.

Flourishing. Shouldn't that be a right, not a privilege?

It was later, meeting with the parents at the coffee morning, that someone said it: 'I would like to see each nursery or play centre welcoming our children with special needs in the same way that other children are welcomed'.

We hadn't heard that when we brought in the soil. We weren't plants though, and we moved and writhed through it. Imprinting into it, building brick bridges to cross. Worm-engineers.

And that's when the tunnels first started to appear. We stretched them out like quantum cosmonauts, wormholes to another galaxy, folded back in on themselves. We crawled through, following them, whomever it was who was brave enough to pass through first.

Re-emerging into the sunlight it was different. The nursery was the same, but also not the same. Something in the way people acknowledged one another, welcomed each child, took time to listen, to try to understand. It shouldn't have felt unusual.

As more of us emerged through the portal, someone dared to ask: here, in this place of possible reality, would we all be accepted, as we were in our differences and complexities? Particularly we were thinking of those with what were sometimes termed ‘special needs’ back on our side of the wormhole.

The answer came without hesitation: ‘Yes, of course. They have first priority for admission. We consider them to be children with special rights!’. And with paradoxical relief that’s when we realised we weren’t in a utopia after all. A true utopia wouldn’t require rights because equality could be universally presumed. We weren’t disappointed though: in fact the opposite.

We’d known as soon as we came through to this place we had to go back to our reality and we knew we couldn’t take real utopian equality back through with us. It was too alien to the world we knew. But rights! Rights were manageable, achievable perhaps. And could make a difference.

Eagerly we gathered them and shared them between us, as we each could carry, to return through the still-open tunnel. We sensed it might close soon, and had to get back through and in this small, eminently achievable way, make a change in our home world.

We’re back now.

But every so often we do re-enter.

We all encounter the portal differently. Maybe there’s a ritual: singing or gathering pots and pans that gives us the calmness to pass through it, or maybe we need a quiet comfortable space. Above all we need to be able to be ourselves, and loved and valued for it.

The visits there aren’t without their sadness.

It’s wonderful of course, being in this parallel dimension or other planet or whatever this place is. But we always know we have to return back through the tunnels.

Why?

Well because of reality.

And because of everyone else, who hasn’t found a way through yet.

Both lights at the end of the tunnel matter.

One of the ways things could be and the new ways we might imagine them, talk about them, attempt to bring them about. We have to hold on to that end, it’s where we can breath.

But the other too, because it’s really hard and that needs to be acknowledged. The stories we heard, from parents, recount the reality. In Westminster. In 2018.

They're real personal stories, but they're repeated again and again elsewhere. Policy needs to change, to come through the portal.

But children and their parents now, when the structures around them are failing and not recognising their special rights, need to be listened to, respected, shown care, and supported.

Those tubes were engaging. Essentially they were a coiled wire over which foil was affixed. Amidst the crawling through, throwing things down, and pulling taught, a few children enjoyed picking at an end of a tube, pulling the wire out, unravelling it.

Keep on unpicking.

Keep on unpicking.

Keep on unpicking.

And the structure between both sides of the portal might, just might, eventually dissolve, bringing together that which is with how it could be.

Figures 42, 43 and 44: Adam Walker, *Keep on Unpicking, the fragmented story running through Special Rights*, 2018

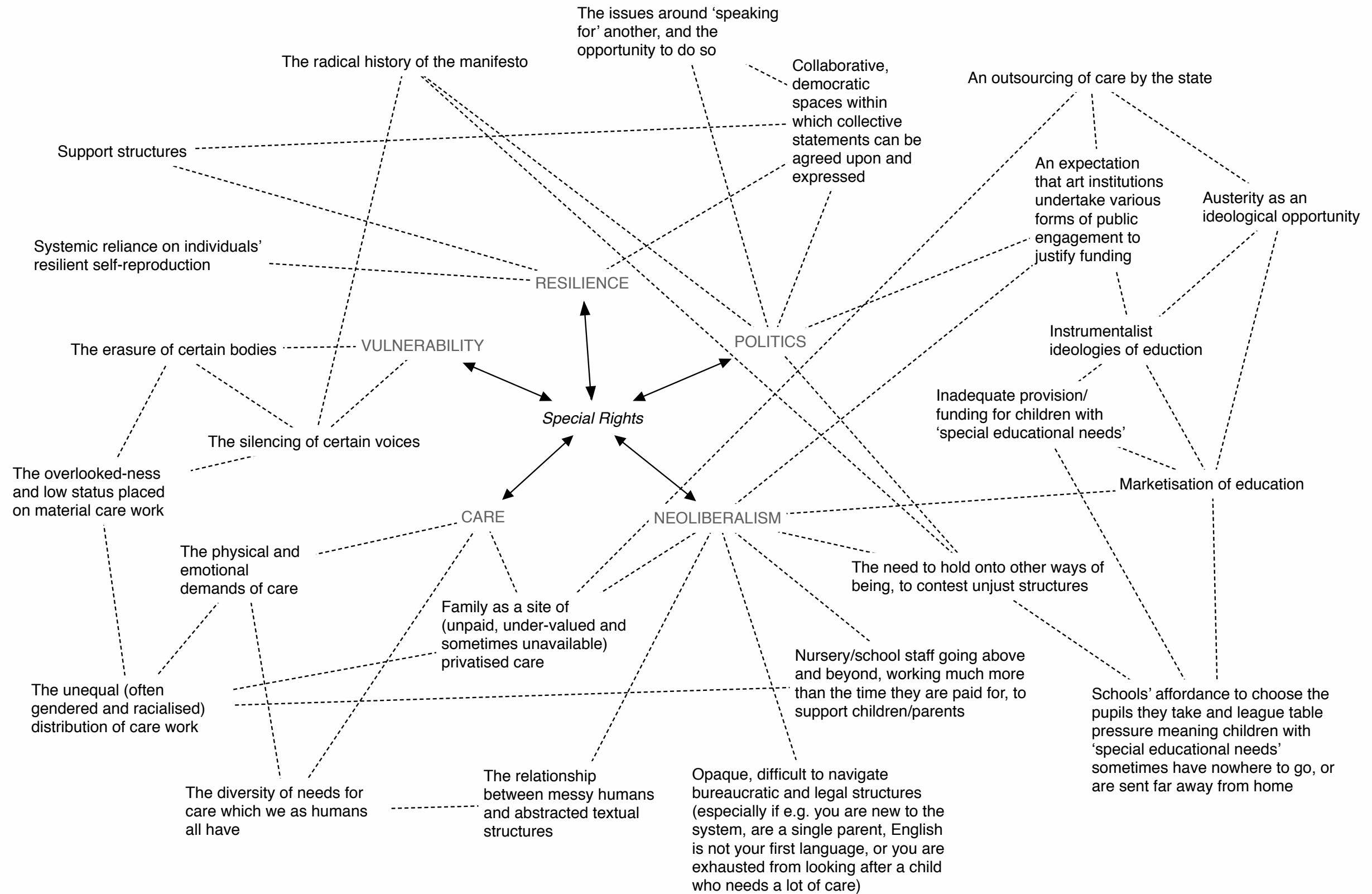


Figure 45: Adam Walker, *Context-event-encounter map for Special Rights*, 2020

6. *undertitled* (2018-19)⁴⁷

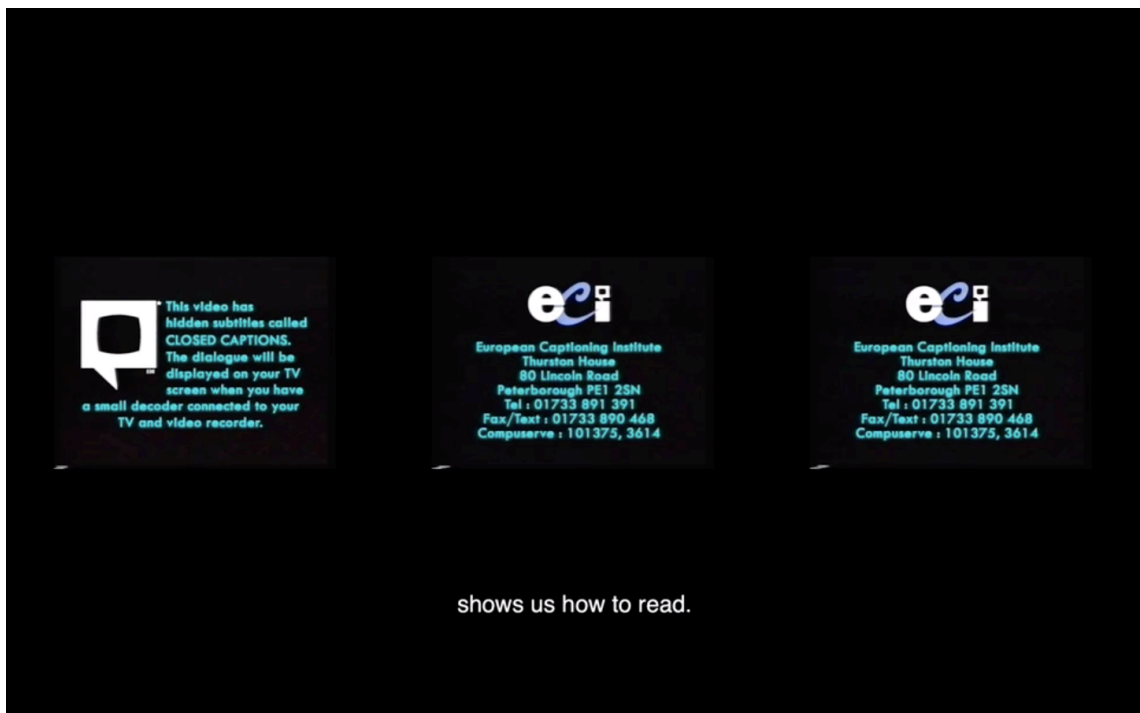
[www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/undertitled.htm]

undertitled is a collaboration with Vicki Thornton. It is a three-channel moving-image installation, comprising a diverse montage of edited found-footage cut over two human voices.⁴⁸ One of these voices expresses utopian optimism and faith in the technological future, while the other recounts their mundane, repetitive outsourced work 'teaching' algorithms, and their increasing exhaustion. Later, an artificial voice, perhaps that of the machine itself, joins. Subtitles are the only on-screen presence of the voices heard, initially accurate but becoming fragmented.

The found-footage is periodically interrupted by documentation of a previous live-performance iteration of *undertitled*, within a cinema auditorium. In this, camera-operators wear screens on their chests displaying text directly addressing the audience.

⁴⁷ Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, *undertitled* (2019), composite video available at <<http://www.adamjbwalker.co.uk/undertitled.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

⁴⁸ A full installation of *undertitled* (with the three channels projected in a 'U' shape which the viewer could step into the centre of) was planned for 2020 but postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Figures 46 and 47: Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, *Stills from the composite version of undertitled*, 2019. These stills show the subtitles starting to fragment



Figures 48 and 49: Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, *Stills from the composite version of undertitled*, 2019. The composite version of *undertitled* can be viewed at www.adamjwalker.co.uk/undertitled.htm



Figure 50: Adam Walker, *Installation view of the initial performance-screening of undertitled at Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle, 2018*. Camera-operators wore screens which at times displayed text

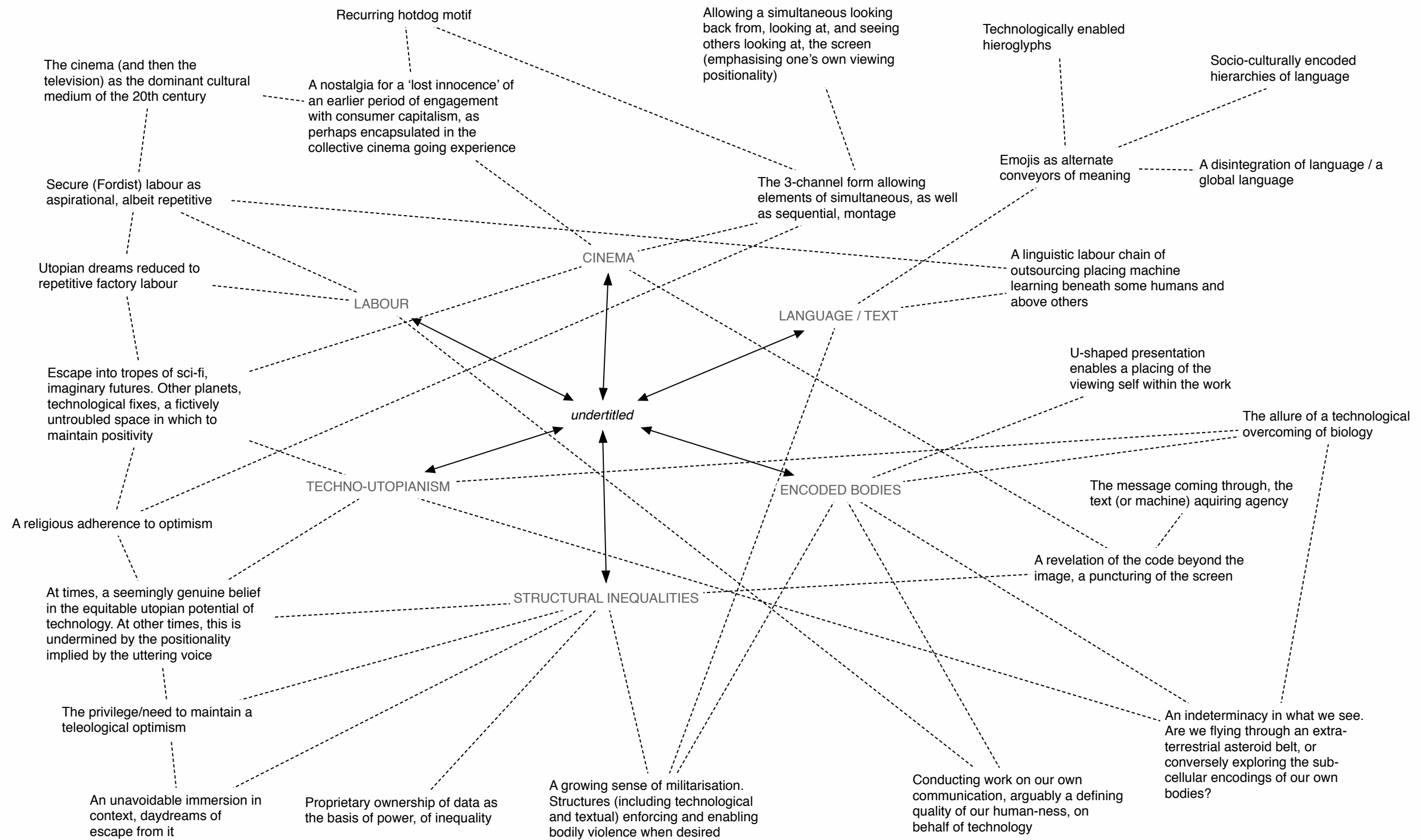


Figure 51: Adam Walker, *Context-event-encounter map for undertitled*, 2020

7. *Our Skins are Porous Too* (2019)⁴⁹

[www.adamjwalker.co.uk/ourskins.htm]

Our Skins are Porous Too is an arttext-curatorial project developed with the online project space www.skelf.org.uk. An arttext itself, taking the form of an infinitely scrolling text, it also presents works by eight other artists.

Existing online, the project can be viewed at www.adamjwalker.co.uk/ourskins.htm.

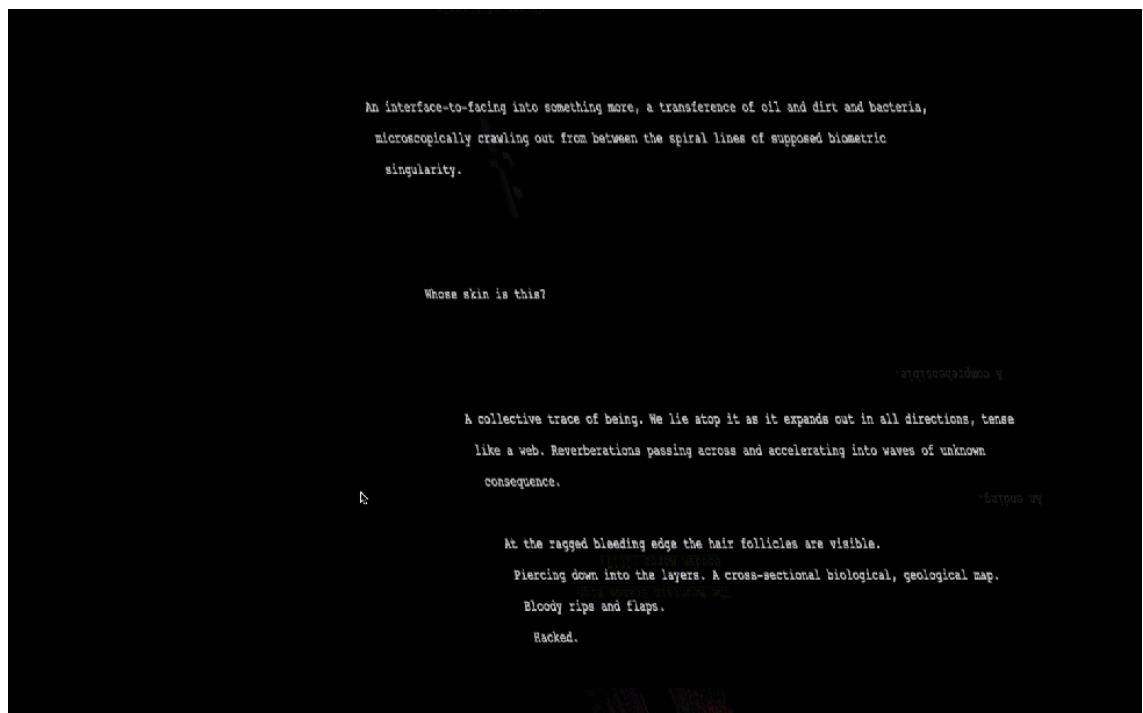
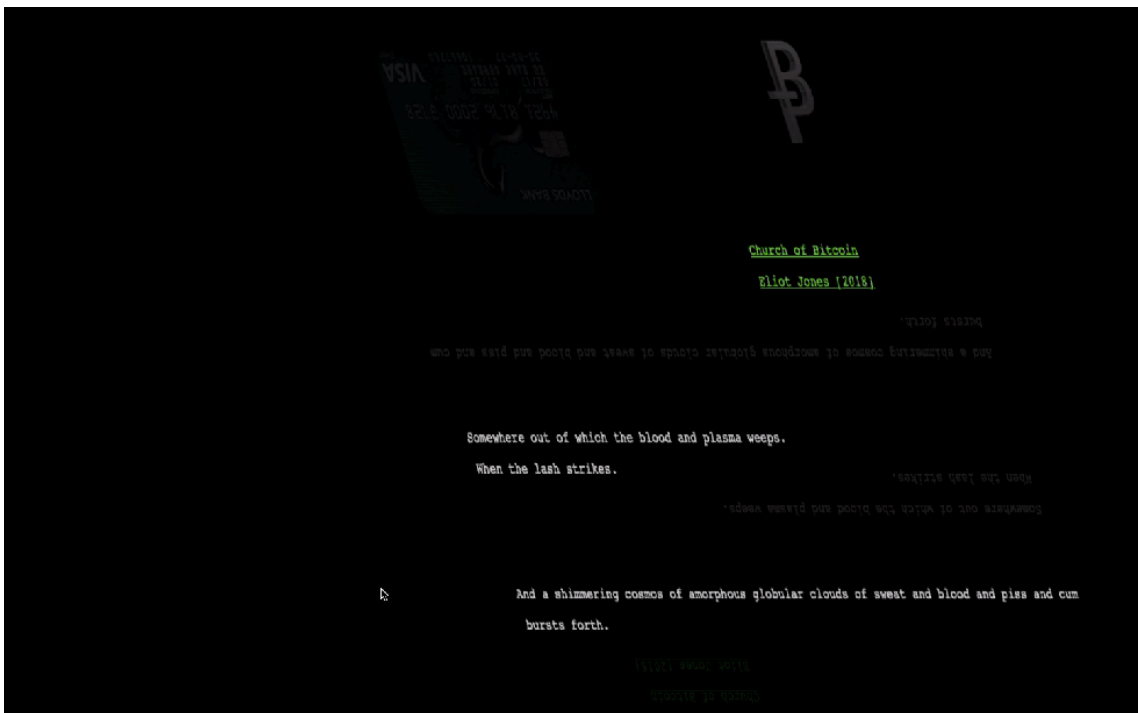
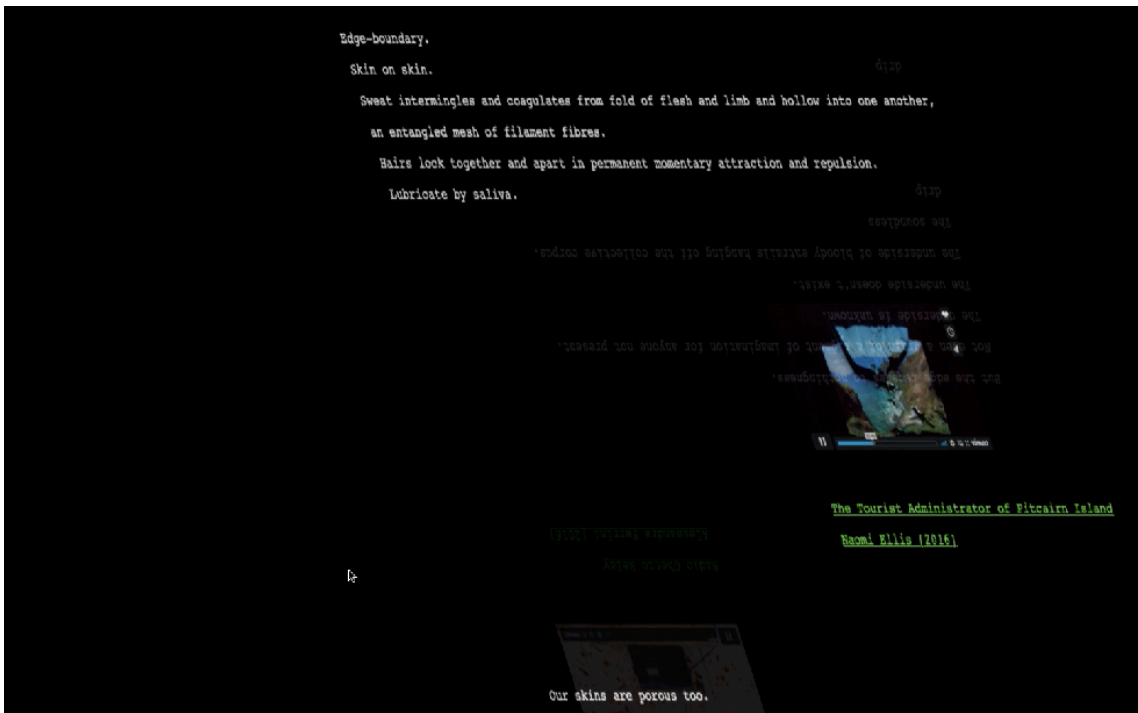


Figure 52: Adam Walker, *Screenshot of Our Skins are Porous Too*, 2019. In order to properly read/view this arttext and the artworks interspersed through it, please visit www.adamjwalker.co.uk/ourskins.htm

⁴⁹ Adam Walker with others, *Our Skins are Porous Too* (2019) <<http://www.adamjwalker.co.uk/ourskins.htm>> [Accessed 2 January 2021].



Figures 53 and 54: Adam Walker, *Screenshots of Our Skins are Porous Too*, 2019

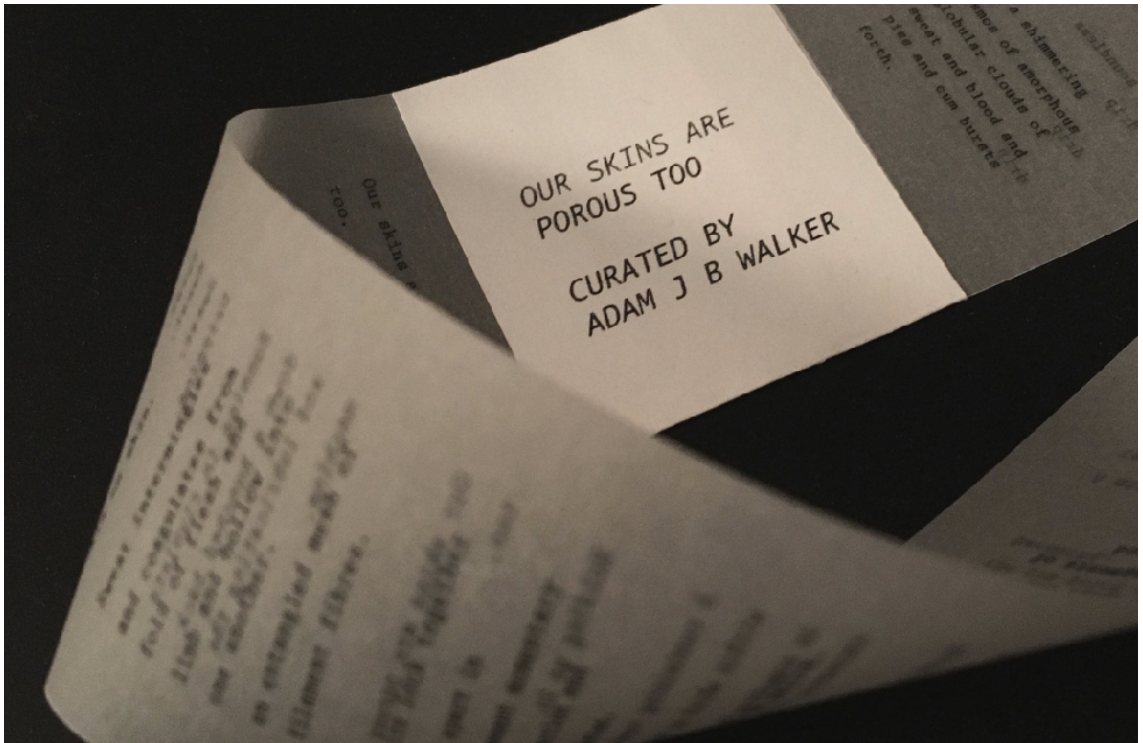


Figure 55: Adam Walker, *Documentation of the physical invitations to Our Skins are Porous Too*, 2019. Invitations in the form of a Möbius strip bearing the text in a continuous loop were posted out, inviting viewers to visit the website

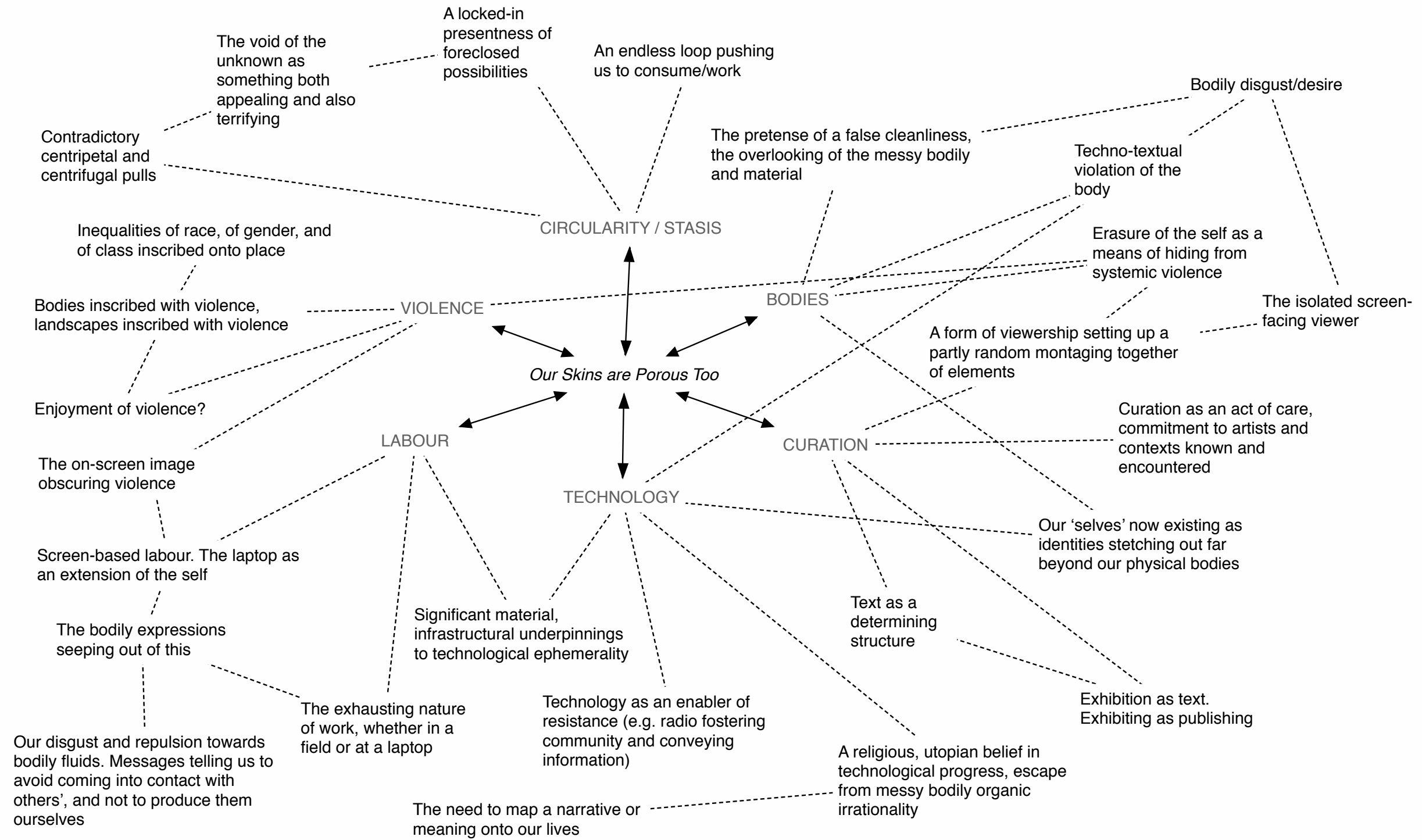


Figure 56: Adam Walker, *Context-event-encounter map for Our Skins are Porous Too*, 2020

8. *STATESCAPE*[∞] (2020)⁵⁰

[www.adamjwalker.co.uk/statescape.htm]

A third collaboration with Vicki Thornton, *STATESCAPE*[∞] is a single-channel moving-image work taking the form of a trailer for a non-existent film exploring a hypothetical computer game, along with an accompanying text. This fictive game is centred on Mezyhirhya, the corruptly acquired private estate of former Ukrainian president Victor Yanukovych, which continues to be run by its 'liberators', including right-wing nationalists.⁵¹

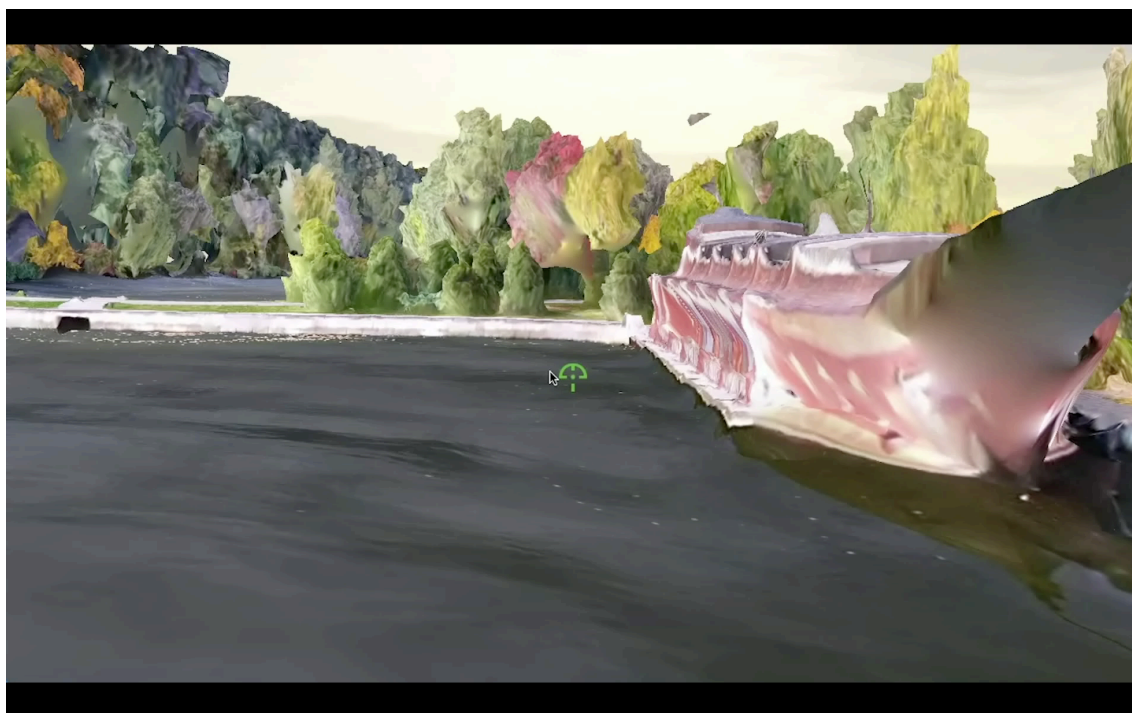


Figure 57: Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, *Still from STATESCAPE*[∞], 2020. *STATESCAPE*[∞] can be viewed at www.adamjwalker.co.uk/statescape.htm

⁵⁰ Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, *STATESCAPE*[∞] (2020), documentation available at <http://www.adamjwalker.co.uk/statescape.htm> [Accessed 2 January 2021].

⁵¹ This was certainly the case at the time of filming. However, there was speculation that in the near future management of the estate could be transferred to a company partly owned, ironically, by one of Yanukovych's former close associates.



Figures 58 and 59: Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton, *Stills from STATESCAPE[∞]*, 2020. These stills show the former presidential mansion and its sole resident/custodian (at the time of filming)

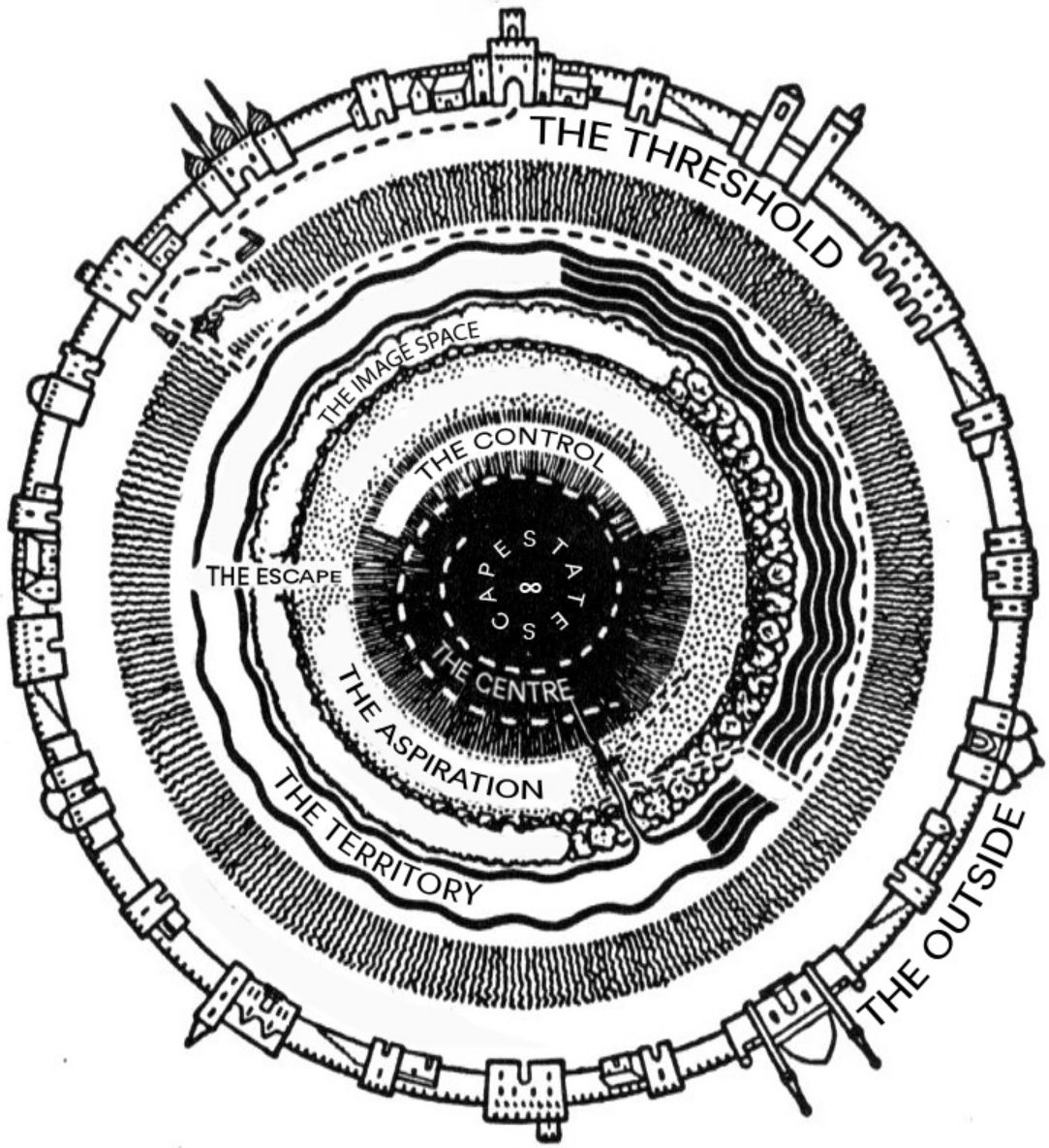


Figure 60: Adam Walker and Vicki Thornton/Marco Perera, *Conceptual map of the STATESCAPE∞ world within which the fictive game is situated*, 2019

STATESCAPE[∞] takes Mezhyhirya as its starting point.

An actual physical site, but also as a place imagined, historical, represented, political, virtual, economic and personal.

As artists, our encounter with Mezhyhirya poses broader questions of inequality, aspiration and care.

We sit inside these questions.



Grainy footage shows Yanukovich's helicopter departing from the Mezhyhirya helipad in pre-dawn darkness on February 21st 2014.

Later that day, people arriving from Maidan took control of Mezhyhirya.

Inside the estate, the new occupiers found a zoo, real-size model galleon, golf course, spa complex, huge collection of vintage cars, and more. All within a vast park surrounding a newly-built mansion.

Now a national park, the estate is popular at weekends. Visitors come to walk, relax, have wedding photos taken in front of the mansion, and see the illegally acquired wealth.

Mezhyhirya continues to be run by some of its initial 'liberators'. Their flag has flown above the mansion for the past five years.



STATESCAPE[∞] considers Mezhyhirya as part of a globally interconnected game. The rules to this game are unknown and continually changing.

The ransacking of a national economy for personal gain opens out onto new forms of power.

Our presence as British artists here in Ukraine is interconnected with its current political and economic relationships with other European countries. Institutions such as the British Council and Goethe Institute which have funded our being here are political actors. As Londoners, we also come from the same city where much wealth from Ukraine has been taken: into property or via shell companies and tax havens. Many of Yanukovich's artworks were purchased at London auction houses.

The Instagram-posing which now frequently occurs at Mezhyhirya seems at times to be a faint echo of the lifestyles of that extracted wealth.

Successfully moving up or down a level in this game all too often reveals what you have just done to in fact be going nowhere.

Figure 61: Adam Walker/Vicki Thornton, *Page 1 of the pamphlet which accompanies STATESCAPE[∞]*, 2019

STATESCAPE[∞] simultaneously presents itself as a game, and an attempt to figure out what the game is.

The viewer is led through a series of levels, linked through a reflexive dialogue between us as artists as we attempt to understand the game, and what our role is.

The game keeps changing.

It is global capitalism, but also the simulatory experience of walking through Mezhyhirya. *STATESCAPE*[∞] shifts back and forth between the material and the abstract.



There are seven levels which proceed from periphery to centre:

1. *The Outside* with its visible and invisible structures of exclusion and invitation.
2. *The Threshold* requiring acceptance of the rules of the game to cross.
3. *The Territory* attempting to gain an overview of the whole site.
4. *The Image Space* of remotely re-crossing the boundary.
5. *The Aspiration* of apparent success.
6. *The Control* through systems of surveillance and direction.
7. *The Centre* where the locus of power and wealth sits.

Finally comes a coda, *The Escape*, which poses the question of whether the game can be left, and if so, by whom?



Vicki Thornton & Adam J B Walker (2019)

Figure 62: Adam Walker/Vicki Thornton, *Page 2 of the pamphlet which accompanies STATESCAPE*[∞], 2019



Figures 63 and 64: Marco Perera, *Documentation of a preview presentation of STATESCAPE∞ at the House of Cinema, Kyiv, 2019*. This presentation event included attempts to play an undetermined game with a deck of blank cards. Pens were provided to distinguish cards, and any rules or framework had to be continuously collectively agreed (or disagreed) upon

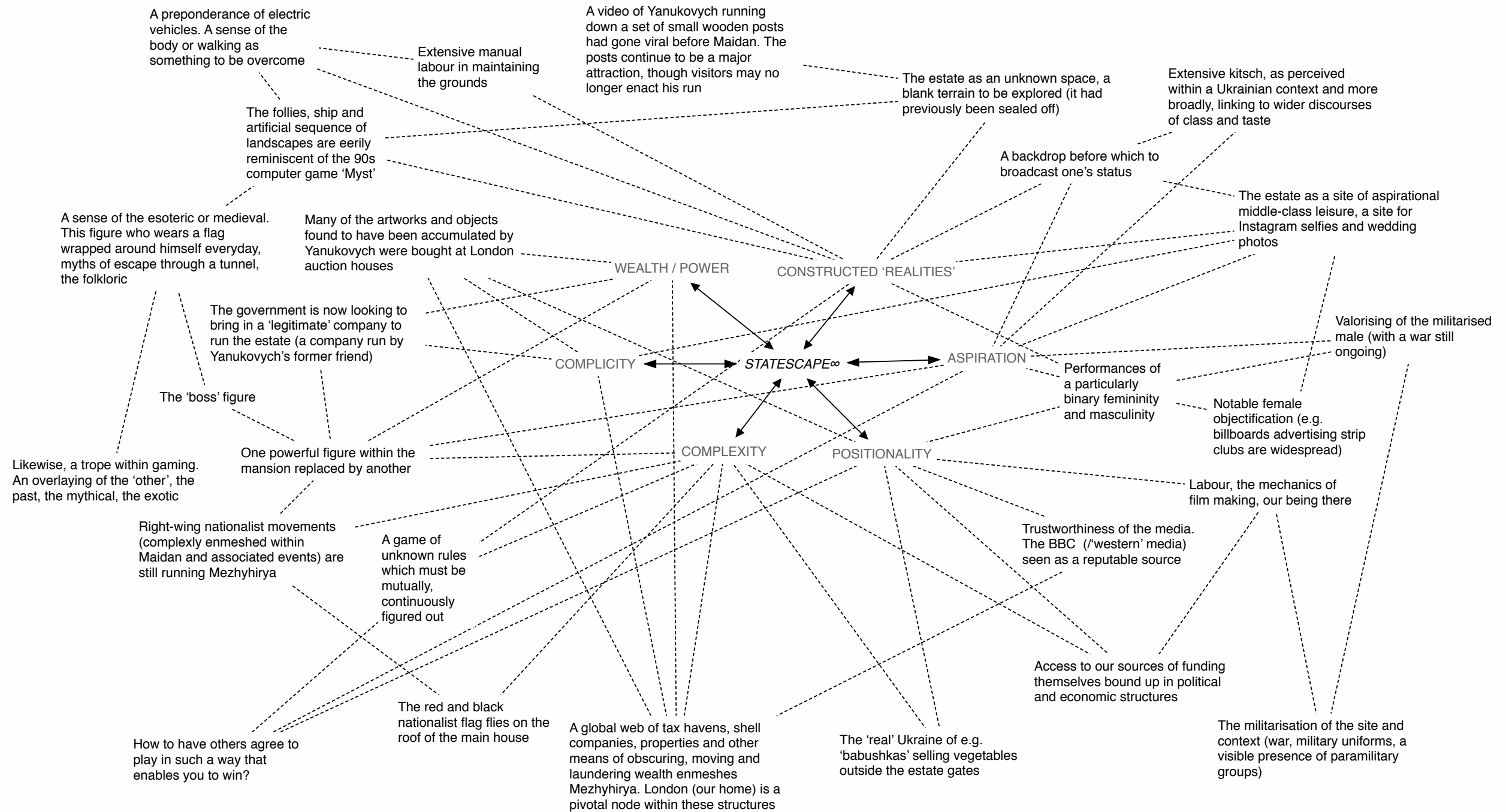


Figure 65: Adam Walker, *Context-event-encounter map for STATESCAPE∞, 2020*