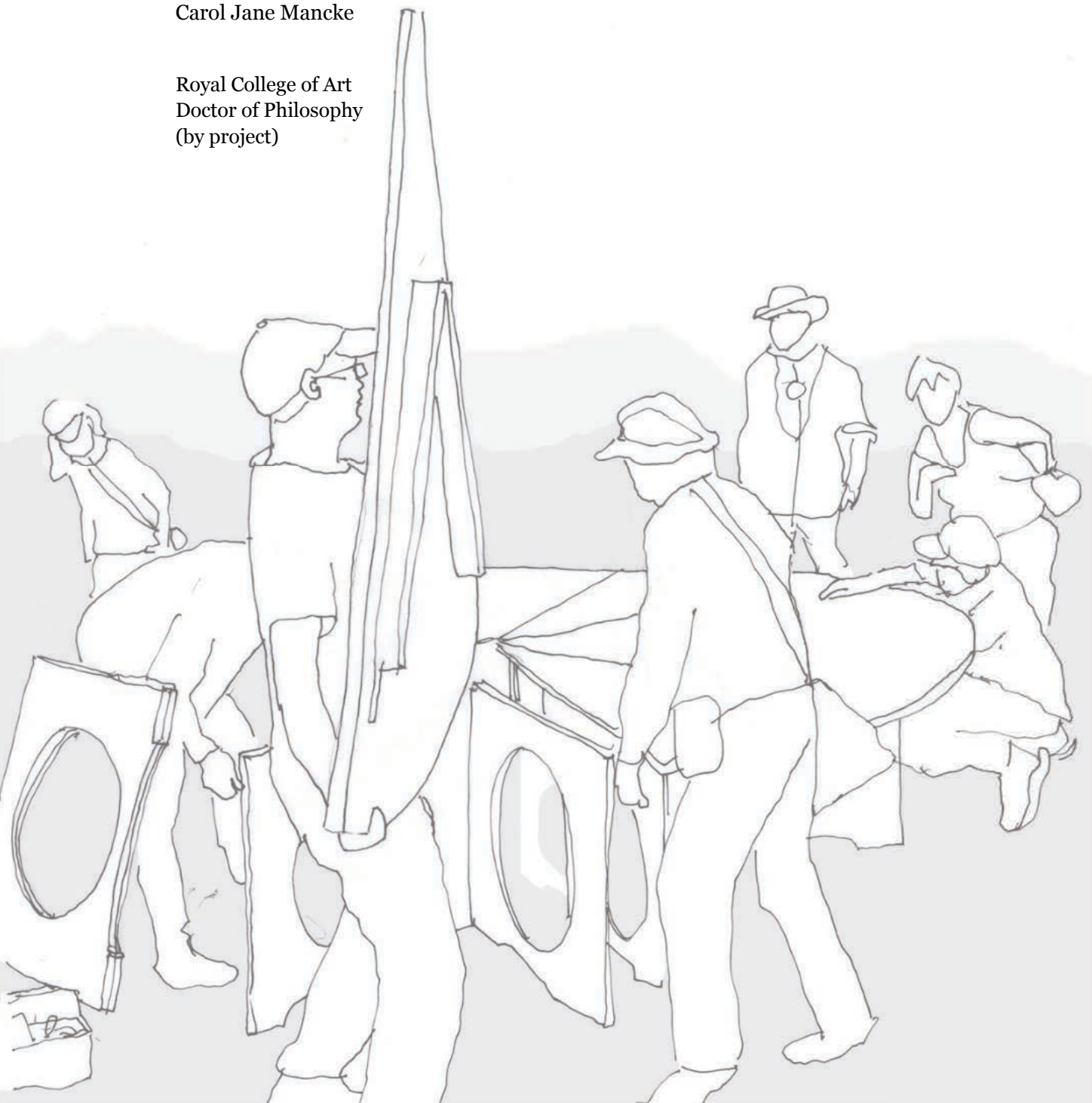


Thinking in Public: The Affordances of Hopeless Spaces
Volume 2: Projects

Carol Jane Mancke

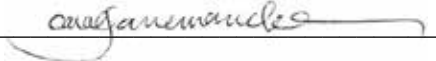
Royal College of Art
Doctor of Philosophy
(by project)



Declaration

This second volume of this thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signed:  Date: 15 April, 2021

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Note to readers

This practice-led research is presented here through three interlinked components:

Volume 1: Essays

Volume 2: Projects

I was there (film, 2021)

I invite readers to engage with the thesis in the following order:

1. Volume 1 Preface and Introduction (pages 1-20)
2. Volume 2 Portfolio, Tactics and Reflections (pages 1-67)
3. *I was there* (link in Volume 2, page 53)
4. Volume 1 Cuts 1-4 and Conclusion (pages 21-172).

Introduction to Volume 2

In the Introduction to this thesis in (Volume 1, pages 5-20), I state that my methodological approach is one of wayfaring. My inquiry followed two trails through my research landscape that at times ran alongside each other, diverged and came together. One path explored the terrain through a speculative writing process, the other through a series of public engagements.

This Volume 2: Projects, is a field guide to the public engagements path and has three parts: 1) a portfolio of project descriptions; 2) a precis of engagement tactics I employed and 3) a brief discussion of general reflections. Projects are presented chronologically, grouped under three themes: *public places*, *public actions; tables*, *collaborative thinking* and *gathering voices*. Thinking in terms of my wayfaring methodology, each project marks a place along the public engagements path. Those projects that mark nodes where the two research paths converge also become subjects for further consideration in the essays in Volume 1. These connections across the volumes are noted in the portfolio.

With the exception of the first two paper-based works and the tables, *Table 18* and *Table 15*, all projects are participatory, material and contextual. Portfolio pages for the latter projects begin with a summary page on which the work title and date, type of work, names of collaborators and curators and questions the work explores are noted in the upper left of the page. Below this is a photograph and information about the site, duration, type of participation, funding, materials and tactics.

The projects vary significantly in terms of topics, duration, numbers and types of participants, character of site engagement, quality/degree of criticality, numbers of iterations, strategies of engagement, materials and tactics etc. In order to balance detail and overview and provide a comprehensible picture of the overall practice, I have elected to give more weight to those components or factors of each project that have been especially generative for the research. This allows me to draw attention to social, cultural and ecological aspects of sites and gesture toward the sometimes-uneasy relations between these and my project participants, activities, funding, timing and agendas within the context of the practice as a whole.

General principles for participation

All the public engagements involved other people taking part as collaborators, performers, participants, spectators and/or bystanders. I distinguish four levels of participation: *unintentional observer*, for the passer-by who looks on; *snagged unintentional*, for the passer-by who joins in; *intentional*, for the participant who sets their intention to join in advance and *collaborating* for the intentional participant who becomes a collaborator. In all cases, participation was guided by four principles:

- First, participation should build through an open-ended, evolving process that neither aims toward nor settles for a solution or product.
- Second, participation should be voluntary and interactive, such that anyone who wants to participate can do so actively, in the moment, through dynamic exchange.
- Third, all aspects of the participatory process should be non-hierarchical and egalitarian such that no individual or group of individuals (including the artists/hosts) is ever seen as experts. Instead, each individual's personal knowledge and skills are equally valued as expert knowledge.
- Fourth, the participatory process should recognise and acknowledge plurality as a basic human condition, and therefore allow for all manifestations of difference.

Portfolio

Public space and politics

Drawing for the count (2015)

drawing: pencil on tracing paper, 210 x 280 mm

What if voting is a form of drawing?

Can we cultivate more meaningful forms of democratic engagement?

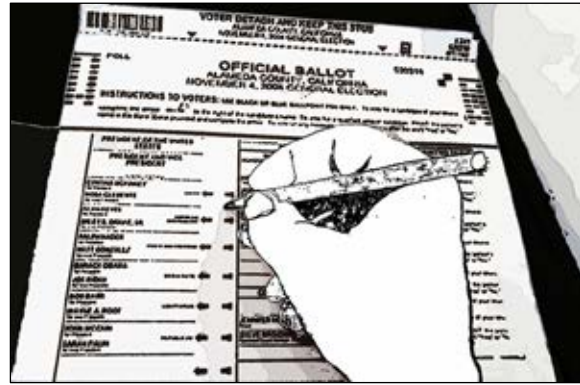


Figure 1: Alameda County California ballot in 2008.

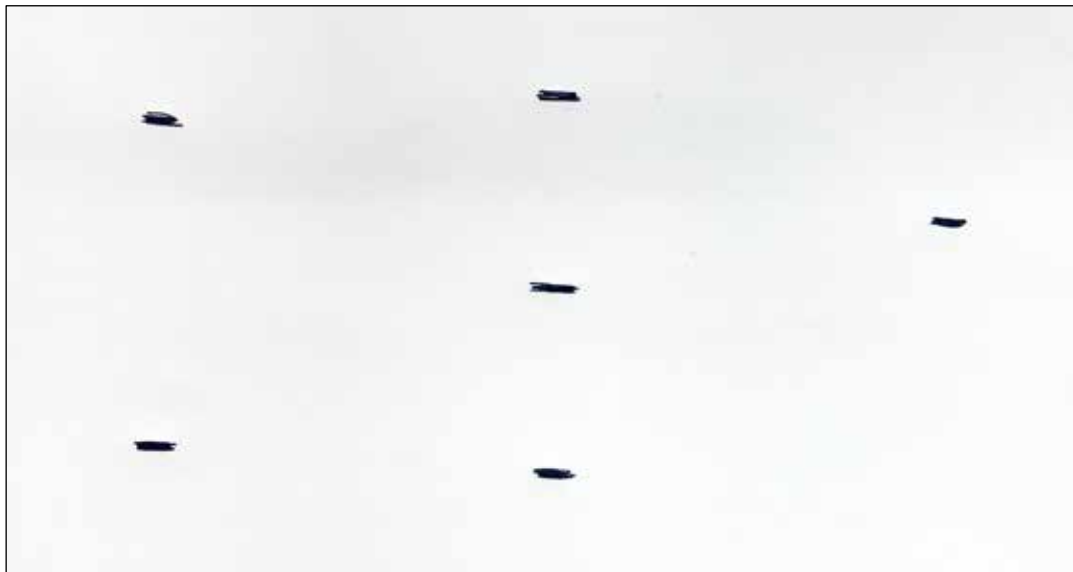


Figure 2: *Drawing for the count*, detail.

At the time I made this work, the form of ballot used in California required the voter to link a name to a role, or a proposition to a YES or a NO, by drawing a connecting mark between two pre-printed horizontal bars – one with flat verticals on each side and another with an arrow head pointing to the candidate or proposition on one side. I made *Drawing for the count* by tracing the marks I made on my election ballot that year. The connecting lines I drew reflect a way of looking at the world and record my desire that certain things happen. They combine into an expansive interconnected assemblage of marks, which are read as data for what can seem like a high stakes gamble. In tracing these lines to make this artwork, I separated them from their original purpose, but my new lines remain a purposeful reminder of the potential performativity of drawn marks. They have consequences and make things happen in the world. I discuss *Drawing for the count* in Cut 1 (Volume 1, 37-58).

After the action: who am I in this place? (2014)

series of photographs and digital collages

*What remains in a site of public protest
and reprisal after the action is over?*

Who am I to visit such a place?



Figure 3: *Beijing selfie* (2014) part of the series *Who am I in this place?*

Between 2013 and 2015, I made a series of photographs documenting public spaces in China, Japan, Malaysia, Australia and the Ukraine, looking for and attempting to capture traces of public protest and state reprisal. Instead, I encountered other tourists, which led me to make the installation, *Can I dance in Tiananmen Square?* (2014) and this series of digital collages.

Can I dance in Tiananmen Square? (2014)
in *Are You Ok?* (2014), curated by Dari Bae
installation/performance

*What remains in a site of public protest
and reprisal after the action is over?
Who am I to visit such a place?*



Figure 4: *Can I dance in Tiananmen Square?*



Figure 5: *Can I dance in Tiananmen Square?* with participant actions.

Site: Hanmi Gallery, gallery in a semi-derelict building in central London
Duration: 7 days
Participation: about 100 unintentional observers, 8 snagged participants
Funding: none
Materials: red tape, laser level, digital display, photographs on paper
Tactics: invitation, DIY performance, photography

When I visited Tiananmen Square in 2014, I took photographs from each side of the Square and then walked to the centre to photograph outward toward the cardinal directions. When I later reviewed the images, I noticed two security guards (seen in the left side of the image above) standing far apart in the first image. In each subsequent image, they appeared ever closer to each other, until coming to stand side by side very near me. Around me, thousands of tourists pointed cameras at themselves and each other. I was alone, taking pictures of the space. In the installation, I brought viewers into the photographic space by exploding the images and distributing the parts around the enclosing walls. A thin line of red tape at eye level line evoked a carefully surveyed urban space. I invited viewers to ask and enact their own version of the question – *Can I _____ in Tiananmen Square?* – and added photographs of their actions into the installation.

Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie (2014)
Ellesmere Port, Wirral, Merseyside, UK,
curated by Nayan Kulkarni

*Could a carpark be a space for thinking
together about the kind of future we
want?*



Figure 6: *Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie*, gift drawing.



Figure 7: *Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie*, Asda carpark, video still.

Site: Asda Ellesmere Supercentre carpark, Rivacre Valley Country Park carpark
Duration: 2 days
Participation: about 20 unintentional observers, 4 snagged unintentional participants
Funding: public
Materials: costume, site inscription, site markers (weather balloons), aerial videography, web page, printed cards
Tactics: place device, DIY performance, public drawing, gift

This public engagement was part of an initiative to tease out possibilities for a participatory art-based public programme proposed to the local authority by Nayan Kulkarni. I was given an open brief to develop a site-specific public engagement. During an early visit, I was struck by the town's physical similarity to American car-based communities of similar size, where the largest public spaces are carparks and roads. I saw a potential for a project to be developed with the local community around car culture that might include: pop-up drive-in film screenings; carpark conversations, music, street dance and other performance activities using cars to define venues and/or provide seating, lighting and sound (see Suzanne Lacy's *Oakland Projects* (1991-2001) discussed in Cut 4 of the Essays) or perhaps a car ballet (see Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Snowplough Ballet* (2012) (Ushida, 2019)).

Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie



Figure 8: *Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie*, gift drawing.

ELLESMERE PORT BOOGIE WOOGIE

Ellesmere Port strikes me as a 'car town'. Distances are a bit too far for walking and trains are not very convenient. Buses are not bad, but it is so much easier to drive. The verdant public realm is designed for the enjoyment of drivers – generous green verges, beautifully landscaped roundabouts, public art scaled to be appreciated by drivers and spacious car parks. And, not only do automobiles make life much easier, the car manufacturing and petrochemical industries provide a significant amount of employment for the Ellesmere Port region.

Do you think cars are ruining cities and streets? Do they contribute to the dehumanisation of work (through mass production)? Does our reliance on cars drive the squandering of global resources and the conflicts that result? Does your car give you (like mine does me) a sense of freedom, a sense that you are your own person who can go wherever you like, whenever you like?

Have cars sheltered important moments in your life? I have experienced sadness, joy, violence, epiphany, rage, pain, intimacy, fear, thrill, difficult conversations, tentative liaisons, protected togetherness, exquisite aloneness and extreme danger in my cars. Statistics says that travelling by car is among the most dangerous thing most of us do, and yet I usually feel safe in my car. How about you?

Cars are objects of desire and love and the subject of millions of conversations. Do you identify with your car? Do you give it a name? Do you think of it as a 'he' or 'she'?

Have you ever thought about how, although you need it for everyday life, most of the time your car is not in use? Instead, it rests, waiting, loved yet often 'sleeping rough' in a street or car park – taking up space. I think about how car parks take up large areas of our shared public space. And how these spaces designed for machines, constrain the ways we relate to each other, interrupt urban life, create heat islands, suppress wildlife and maybe disrupt eco systems.

I also think it is interesting that parked cars are private. The pocket of space each encloses belongs to someone, a person or family identifiable by remnants left in the car: maps, dashboard accessories, lost toys, food crumbs, fingerprints and DNA. Parked cars juxtapose the intimacy of private interior space, with the extreme publicness of the street and car park.

Cars have music systems, telephones, gps, lights, heating and cooling systems, etc. Do you ever use your car for things other than going from A to B? What would Ellesmere Port be like visually if there were no motor vehicles? Cars contribute to our visual environment in changing ways. They reflect sunlight and allow the surrounding scenery to slip over their slick surfaces as we move. Cars are colourful and they reflect us: showing the world and ourselves our innermost desires as well as our own real bodies – both distorted in their smoothly curved surfaces. What would Ellesmere Port be like without all those shiny metal shapes?

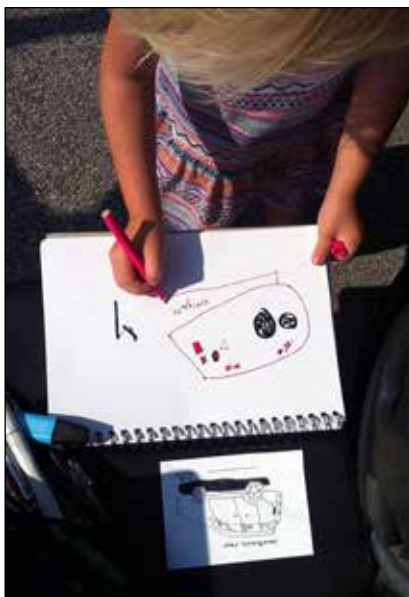


Figure 9: *EP Boogie Woogie*, drawing my drawing of Jonathan's car [left], web text prompt [right].

Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie



Figure 10: *EP Boogie Woogie*, parking mandala/site drawing, video still



Figure 11: *Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie*, photograph by N. Kulkarni.

In *Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie*, I explored affordances in two Ellesmere Port car parks for collaborative exchanges with cars, drivers and passengers. Despite advertising, soliciting and meeting potential volunteers in the weeks before the event, not one volunteer or invited participant came on the day. Actual participants were passers-by who, intrigued by my activities and costume, my foreignness and/or the drawings of their cars that I gave to them, stopped to talk with me about their personal or community's relationship to cars. In both sites, I filmed from above, suspending a camera from weather balloons. In Rivacre Park, also drew an alternative parking layout with tape, and invited parkers to occupy a circular parking 'mandala'.

Tables, collaborative thinking

Table 18 (2015), *Table 15* (2017)

modular tables: plywood, metal fasteners
Table 18: 3860 mm diameter, in 6 pieces
Table 15: 3000 mm diameter, in 10 pieces



What physical form might Hannah Arendt's metaphorical table take?

Figure 12: *Table 18*, surface inscription.



Figure 13: *Table 18* at *Theatre of Speaking and Reading*, RCA Research exhibition 2017, photograph by N. Middleton.

These tables were inspired by Hannah Arendt's idea that the common world is like a table that simultaneously relates and separates us. They allow me to explore the possibility of physically occupying her metaphor in order to practise, in an embodied way, the appearance of worldly reality, setting a stage for political life to emerge (Arendt, 1998).

Table 18 is a large round table made originally for the 2015 Royal College of Art Research Biennial – *Why Would I Lie?* –, which addressed ethics in fine art and design research. The surface is inscribed with an imaginary city plan comprising six urban spaces where prolonged protests occurred between 2011 and 2015 in the US, the UK, Spain, Turkey, the Ukraine and Egypt. In its first appearance, *Table 18* defined a discursive space within an exhibition. It established a *clearing*, where possibilities for collaborative thinking around the event theme afforded by the exhibition context, were activated through individual and collaborative *DIY action*. I discuss *Table 18* in Cut 1 (Volume 1, 37-58).

Table 18 (2015), *Table 15* (2017)



Figure 14: *Table 15* design drawing.



Figure 15: *Table 15* design drawing showing two modules.

Table 15 is slightly smaller and has no permanent inscription. It is perforated to allow objects to be passed through its surface.

From the Spring of 2015 through the end of 2020, *Table 18* and *Table 15* hosted twenty public engagements in nine locations ranging from intimate gatherings of eight to a performance event involving more than sixty people. For *Table 18* these included: *Why Would I Lie?* (London, 2015); *Six rounds of six* (London, 2015) (Volume 2, pages 15-18); a number of workshops and ESL classes held by members of Fartown Methodist Church (Huddlesfield, 2016); a public engagement hosted by Anna Kontopoulou at the Tate Modern's Tate Exchange titled *The Democratic Table* (London, 2016); and a series of performances hosted by RCA Fine Art research students titled *Theatre of Speaking and Reading*, part of the exhibition *Daybreak* (London, 2017). Many of these feature in the film *I was there* (2021) (Volume 2, 52-53).

Table 18 (2015), Table 15 (2017)



Figure 16: *Table 15* in 2020, sheltering-in-place at machinaloci space.

For *Table 15* these included: *Uncaptured Land* (Albany CA, 2017), developed and hosted by Carol Mancke and Trena Noval (Volume 2, 22-25); *Fluid Cities* (dschool at Stanford University CA, 2017), developed and hosted by Mancke and Noval (Volume 2, 28-32); *Planning in the Round* (machinaloci space, Berkeley CA, 2018), developed and hosted by James Rojas and John Kamp; *The Land and Me: landscape in the round* and *If the land could speak...?* (Santa Rosa CA, 2019), developed and hosted by Mancke and Noval (Volume 2, 33-49); *The American Front Yard* (machinaloci space, 2019) (Volume 2, 50), developed and hosted by Rojas, Kamp, Noval, Ann Wettrich and Mancke); *Journey Itself Home* (machinaloci space, 2019), developed and hosted by Sue Mark, Bruce Douglas, Hiro Abe, Natsuka Endo and Mancke; a conversation with the artist Nicole Vinokur (machinaloci space, 2019,) *The Bonzai Studio* (machinaloci space, 2020), developed and hosted by Grant Foerester, curated by Mancke; *Circling Back Collage Circle* (machinaloci space, 2020), developed and hosted by Patty Glikbarg and Kerstin Hellmann, curated by Mancke and a painting performance by Adrian Arias as part of *Life is a Treasure* (machinaloci space, 2020), curated by Mancke. A few of these feature in *I was there* (2021) (Volume 2, 52-53).

Six rounds of six (2015)

Studio RCA Vauxhall, London

series of collaborative public encounters

What happens if we gather around a large round table to experiment with ways of thinking together as a public activity?



Figure 17: *Six rounds of six: Creating commons.*

Six rounds of six

As part of her research into the affordances of hopeless spaces, Carol Mancke will mobilise *Table 18*, a work she made for the RCA Research Biennial 2015, to host and curate a series of six roundtable events including discussions, readings, workshops, games and collaborative performances. Each event will address a likely, possible, unlikely and/or impossible future for the area around Riverlight.

All events are open to the public and will take place in Studio RCA Riverlight One, Nine Elms Lane, Vauxhall, London SW8 5BP. Contact: carol.mancke@network.rca.ac.uk

1	RISK a game with Moxie Rojas and Carol Mancke	drop in any time 13-18:00 Sun 14/6
2	READING ALOUD – FIRST PERSON NORTH with Ruth MacLennan	11-11:00 Mon 15/6
3	PLURAIITY OF TRANSLATION a workshop with Amélie Mourgue d'Algue	10-11:00 Wed 17/6
4	CREATING COMMONS conversations with residents of Brompton Square (tbc)	15-18:00 Fri 18/6
5	INDUSTRIAL MEDITATION workshop with Nayan Kulkarni	11-13:00 Sat 20/6
6	RIVERLIGHT ROUND workshop with Peter Le Costeur + Carol Mancke	15-18:00 Sat 20/6
6+	6 INVERSIONS yoga workshop with Tracy Lee Strassburg	10-10-11:00 Sun 21/6
6++	RISK AGAIN! a game with Moxie Rojas and Carol Mancke	drop in any time 14-18:00 Sun 21/6

Manue Rojas artist and curator, PhD candidate in Fine Art, Royal College of Art
Ruth MacLennan artist, PhD candidate in Fine Art, Royal College of Art
Amélie Mourgue d'Algue art writer, PhD candidate in Fine Art, Royal College of Art
Nayan Kulkarni artist, PhD candidate in Fine Art, Royal College of Art
Peter Le Costeur artist, PhD candidate in Fine Art, Royal College of Art
Tracy Lee Strassburg yogi extraordinaire
Carol Mancke artist and architect, MPhil/PhD student in Fine Art, Royal College of Art

carol mancke + friends
STUDIO RCA
six rounds of six
riverlight one
nine elms lane
vauxhall
sw8 5bp
13-21 June 2015

Figure 18: *Six rounds of six*, flyer.

Site:	Studio RCA Riverlight, Nine Elms Lane, Vauxhall, London
Duration:	8 days
Participation:	open to public, about 25 participants, all collaborators or intentional participants
Funding:	none
Materials:	table, dice, sculpted heads and other game pieces, tape, markers
Tactics:	DIY performance, readings, games, interviewing, site inscription, videography, walking, music making

A series of collaborative encounters I curated and hosted around *Table 18*. Each event addressed a likely, possible, unlikely or impossible future for the neighbourhood of Nine Elms Lane in the midst of its radical transformation from a semi-derelict warehousing district into a property developer's wet dream. *Six rounds of six* features in *I was there* (2021) (Volume 2, 52-53).

Six rounds of six



Figure 19: *Six rounds of six: Industrial magic*, Battersea Power Station construction site hoarding, still, camera by P. Wareing.

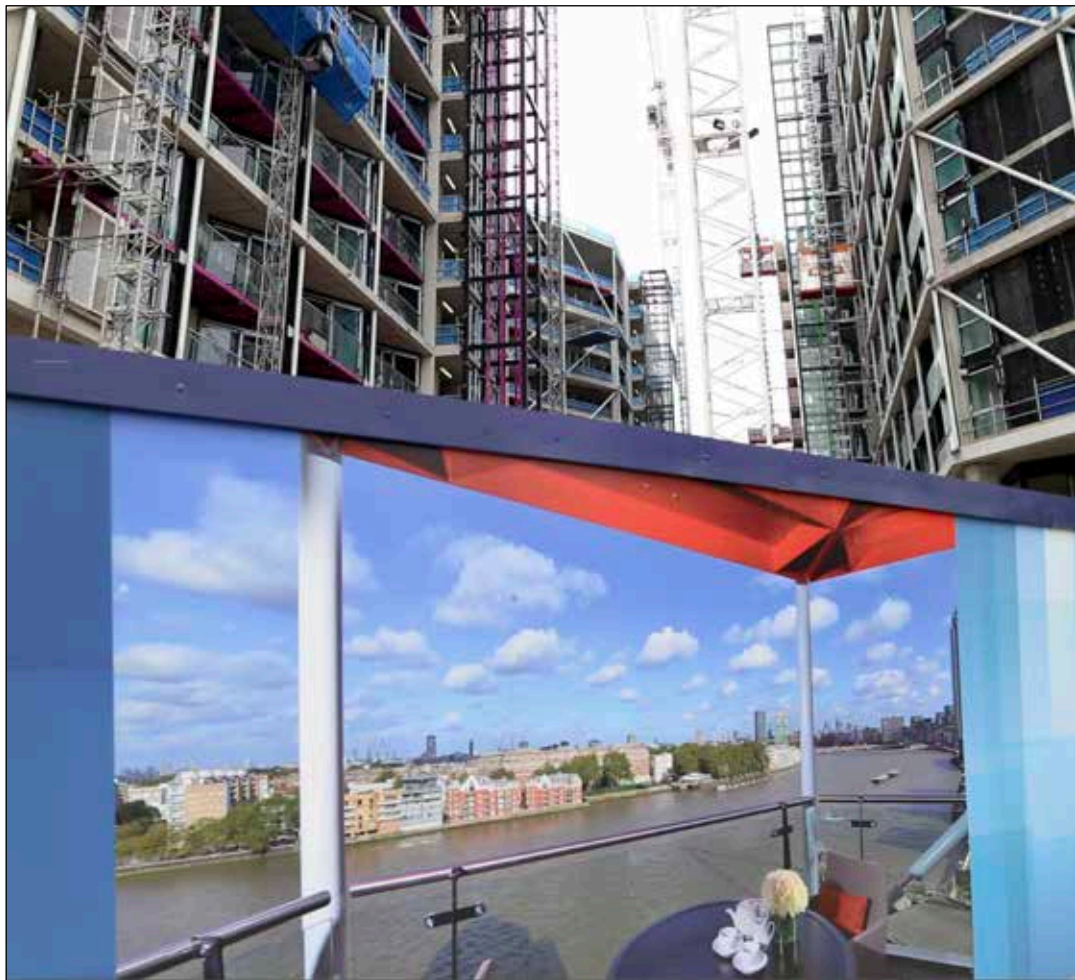


Figure 20: *Six rounds of six: Industrial magic*, your singular image vs our plural reality, Riverlight Studio RCA faces the heavily trafficked Lane, sandwiched between concierge and spa on the ground floor of Riverlight One, the first new building to open for business. Under construction to the West was Battersea Power Station's long awaited new 'exciting and innovative mixed-use neighbourhood [...where] life doesn't feel ordinary, it feels extraordinary' (Battersea Power Station, 2021); to the South, the moated and bomb-shielded American Embassy and to the East a cylindrical housing tower. In June 2015, the 'there' of this place was still to arrive.

Six rounds of six

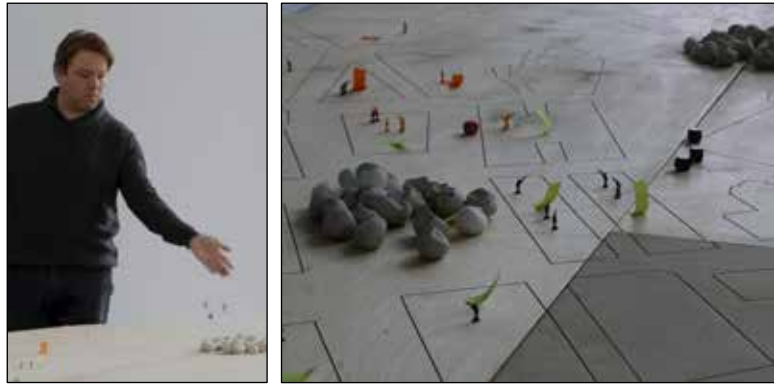


Figure 21: *Risk!*, still [left]; photograph by M. Bajec [right].



Figure 22: *Six rounds of six: 6 Inversions*

Buffeted by traffic noise and dusty winds, passers-by rarely stopped to enjoy the tasteful planting and public artwork to the side of the studio, and no one dropped in.

Each encounter in the series critically engaged with affordances in this radically transitional place. *Risk!* with Manca Bajec introduced strategies of protest and commoning into the game of capitalist military world domination. *Reading Aloud* with Ruth Macleannan proposed reading as a communal activity through which shared vocabularies might be constructed. Through *Plurality of Translation* with Amelie Mourgue d'Algue, we explored how plurality might be practiced. In *Creating Commons*, I interviewed two long-term residents of nearby Bonnington Square who had participated in transforming that place from a semi-derelict squat to a thriving mutually supportive community of homes and community run and maintained public spaces and gardens.

Six rounds of six



Figure 23: *Six rounds of six: Riverlight round*, still, camera by P. Wareing.

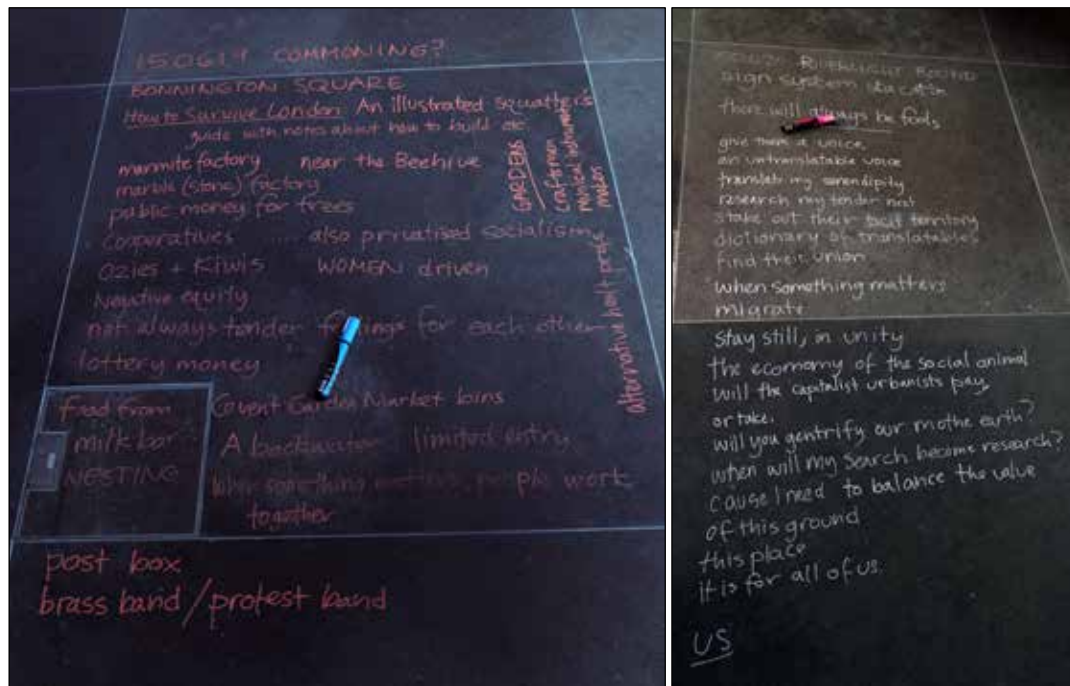


Figure 24: *Six rounds of six: Creating commons* [left]; *Riverlight round* [right].

In *Industrial magic* with Nayan Kulkarni, we walked Nine Elms Lane reading the carefully chosen words and images used by developers to construct and sell an image of the future neighbourhood. *Riverlight round* was to have been a culmination of the week's activities, where ideas explored in each session, as recorded on the floor, would be brought together and distilled into lyrics for a round to be sung.² Finally, *6 Inversions* involved first a conversation with yoga practitioner and teacher Tracy Lee Strassburg about her urban yoga practice and its relationship to place followed by my performance of 6 inversions on *Table 18's* space of resistance.

² My musical collaborator was taken ill that day.

Turning Tables



Figure 25: *Turning Tables*, collaborative mental furniture.

Site: Department of Comparative Literature, University of California, Berkeley
Duration: 1 evening
Participation: open to public, 8 intentional participants (students, academics, artists, architects and an environmental activist/lawyer)
Funding: partly funded by UC Berkeley
Materials: site inscription, chairs
Tactics: reading, *Theatre of the Oppressed* exercises, embodied image making, reflexive discussion

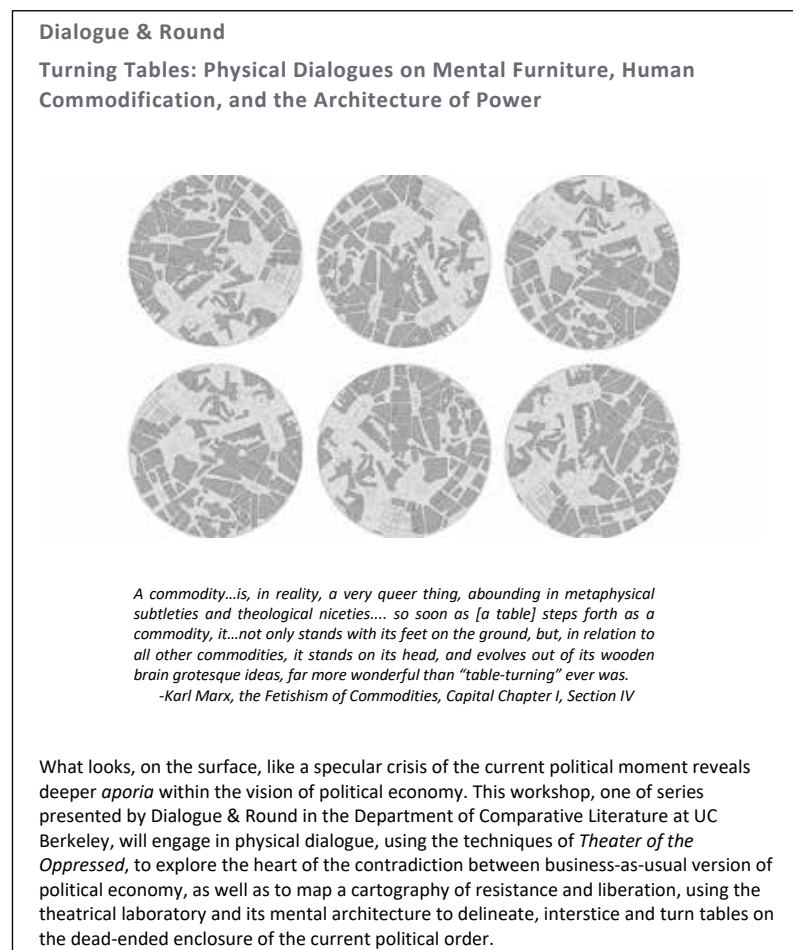


Figure 26: *Turning Tables*, flyer excerpt.

This collaboration with *Theatre of the Oppressed* scholar and practitioner Jiwon Chung was part of *Dialogue & Round: Tables not Walls* (2017), a series of collaborative engagements I hosted whilst a visiting researcher in Comparative Literature at the University of California Berkeley.³ I discuss *Turning Tables* in Cut 4 (Volume 2, 123-152) and it features in *I was there* (2021) (Volume 2, 52-53).

³ Other *Dialogue & Round* engagements were *Exquisite Corpse* and *Machina Loci: On Collaborative Creation* with Nana Ariel and *Feed the Artists* with Maggie Lawson.

Turning Tables



Figure 27: *Turning Tables*.



Figure 28: *Turning Tables*.

Exploring power relations through a series of movement exercises, we first teased out the balance of power already present in the room to reveal how architecture establishes a topography of power relations that – although invisible – affects each person differently, privileging some and holding back others. Next, we investigated the power relations expressed by different arrangements of chairs, into which we positioned our bodies to embody and communicate evolving power relations. We then probed the interplay between what specific relational stances and gestures communicate and what it feels like to occupy them. Beginning by shaking hands, partners took turns moving into new positions relative to each other. For example, I might keep my right hand in my partner's, whilst moving my body and head to lean away, and stretching my left hand even further away. Now, instead of equality and mutual respect, the viewer sees me being coerced, and I feel coerced.

We moved on to explore the affordances and inherent agency of furniture, including the mental furniture we use as scaffolding to assist memory and thinking. In the final exercise, we embodied, viewed and discussed images of personal experiences of selling things by making tableaus into which we added sound and movement.

Uncaptured Land (2017)

Albany CA

public engagement developed with Trena Noval,
curated by Susan Moffat



Figure 29: *Uncaptured Land: Cultured Rubble in situ* (2017).

Does the land have power?



Figure 30: *Uncaptured Land*, photograph by C. Benton.

Site:	Albany Bulb, Albany California
Duration:	1 afternoon
Participation:	open to public, 25 intentional participants (students, academics, artists, architects, planners, scientists, landscape architects, a translator and others)
Funding:	in-kind transport within the Bulb provided by the East Bay Parks District
Materials:	Table 15, coloured display rounds, name labels, packets containing maps, readings and coloured circles, carrier bags home-made refreshments,
Tactics:	reading, walking, clearing, DIY performance, cycles of inquiry, building and practicing a community of inquiry, gifts, reflective discussion

This public engagement was conceived for the Albany Bulb, a former construction waste landfill, which is now a semi-wild peninsula in the San Francisco Bay off the city of Albany.⁴ I discuss *Uncaptured land* in Cut 3 (Volume 1, 95-120) and it features in *I was there* (2021) (Volume 2, 52-53).

⁴ For the context and history of the Albany Bulb see Wikipedia (2021) and Nick Paulas (2019).



Figure 31: *Uncaptured Land*, photograph by T. Noval.

Uncaptured Land
Observation and Conversation



August 6, 2017

Does the land have power?

Starting from the assumption that it does ...

... could we for the next two hours this afternoon, imagine the land - this land - as the protagonist in a narrative that is not centered on us?

One scenario might be, for example, instead of good and evil, the grand story of the earth is actually a battle between sea and land? We usually see the land as a passive victim of our actions. What if we are actually simply agents of the land in its battle against the sea? Do we not extend the land and buttress its edges? Don't we extract the land's riches and poison the sea with its waste?

In this scenario, the land might be the perpetrator of crimes against the sea....

What other narratives might there be? In what stories might the bulb, this land, be the protagonist? The bulb has yet to be captured, it remains at-large, a survivor of many attempts to turn it to our will. Why? What might its side of the story be?

Carol Mancke (<http://www.machinaloci.com/>)
Trena Noval (<http://www.fieldworkscollaborative.com/>)

Figure 32: *Uncaptured Land*, prompt.

Uncaptured Land



Figure 33: *Uncaptured Land*, finding evidence, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.



Figure 34: *Uncaptured Land*, panoramic, photograph by C. Benton.

Uncaptured Land

Observation and Conversation

 August 6, 2017

How it will happen...

At the Cove
Introductions

Walk to Susan's garden

At the garden

Conversation 1:
Questions
Finding evidence
Your findings

Conversation 2:
Tea
Building the story

Conversation 3:
The collective narrative
Wrap Up - What changed?

Uncaptured Land

Observation and Conversation

 August 6, 2017

A poem to consider...

The Moment
by Margaret Atwood

The moment when, after many years
of hard work and a long voyage
you stand in the centre of your room,
house, half-acre, square mile, island, country,
knowing at last how you got there,
and say, I own this,
is the same moment when the trees unloose
their soft arms from around you,
the birds take back their language,
the cliffs fissure and collapse,
the air moves back from you like a wave
and you can't breathe.
No, they whisper. You own nothing.
You were a visitor, time after time
climbing the hill, planting the flag, proclaiming.
We never belonged to you.
You never found us.
It was always the other way round.

Figure 35: *Uncaptured Land*, running order and reading.

Together with participants, we went through a carefully developed sequence of activities, investigating a future mystery to be solved by generating *what*, *where*, *how* and *why* questions and answers, and by collecting 'evidence' at the scene. Participants presented their alternative narratives in 'show and tell' performances.

Uncaptured Land



Figure 36: *Uncaptured Land*, still, camera by S. Gouldthorpe.



Figure 37: *Cultured Rubble in situ and still life* (2017), photographic series.

The logistics of transporting and assembling *Table 15* within the difficult terrain of the Bulb was a collaborative project in and of itself.

Since the early 2000s, Susan Moffat had been working to save the Bulb as a place where people can freely make art and performance. We were among the first artists she invited to develop and present a participatory art project as part of her *Love the Bulb* initiative, which has subsequently developed *BULBFEST*, an art and dance festival (Love the Bulb, 2019).

During a conversation in 2020, Moffat spoke of how *Uncaptured Land* informed her development of the festival:

When I put together our dance festival that had 16 different performers and 16 locations, we had to split the crowd and lead them from place to place. We had to time things. It was like a physically exploded version of your table, right? ... *Uncaptured Land*, helped me think through using the entire bulb as a stage. You know that's an analogue for what happened at the table.

Moffat invited us to present a second iteration of *Uncaptured Land* which was cancelled at the last minute because of dangerous air quality caused by wildfires. I made *Cultured Rubble* (2017), a series of paired photographs of found objects for *Uncaptured Land 2*, to be gifts for participants.

Circling back – thinking through (2017)

Le Romieu, France

public engagement

How are thought, movement and place related?

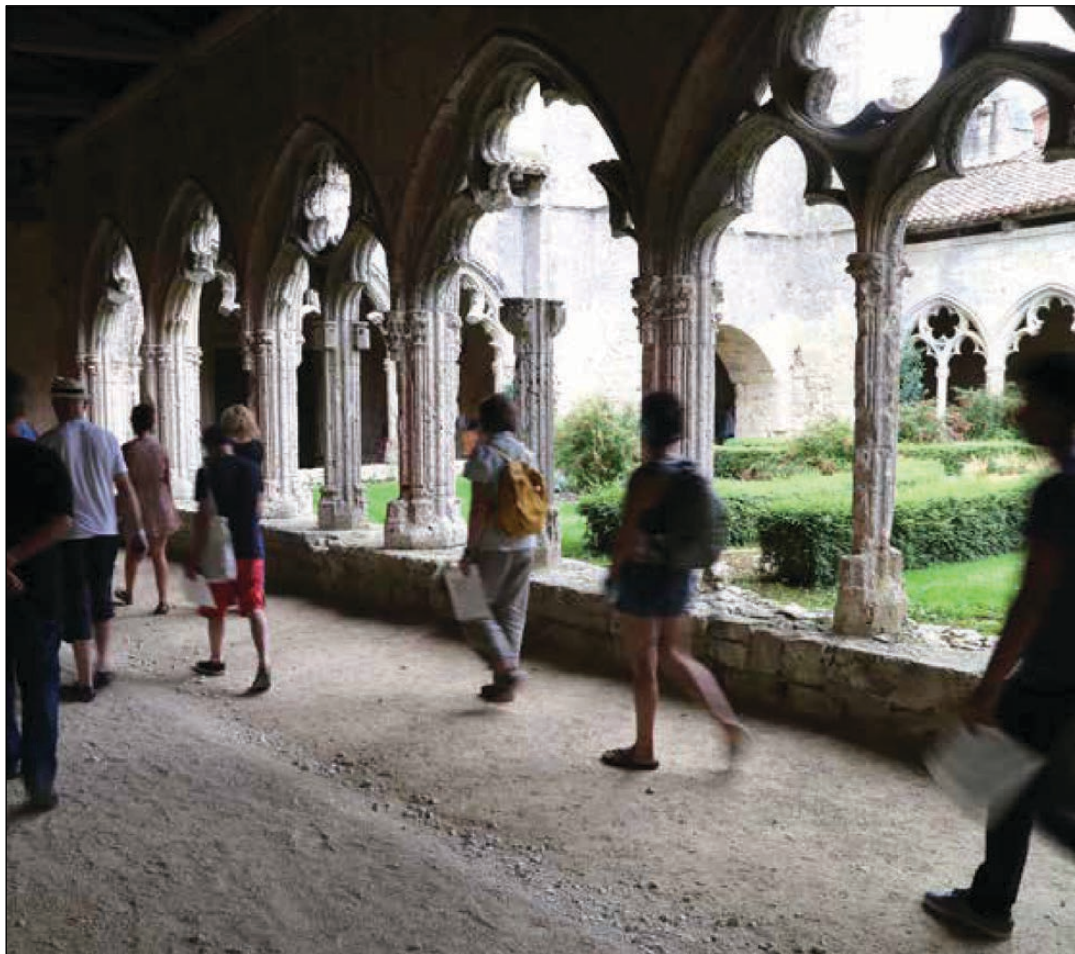


Figure 38: *Circling back - thinking through*, walking the cloister.

Site: The cloister at the Collégiale Saint-Pierre de La Romieu, Ger, France
Duration: 1 afternoon
Participation: 20 intentional participants
Funding: none
Materials: hand drawn map
Tactics: reading aloud, walking, mapping, cycle of inquiry, gifts, reflective discussion

Created for *Made of Walking* (2017), a gathering of walking artists in a village near Le Chemin de St Jacques pilgrimage route in rural France, this engagement explored relationships between place, movement and thought. I discuss *Circling back* in Cut 3 (Volume 1, 95-120), and it features in *I was there* (2021) (Volume 2, 52-53).

Circling back – thinking through



Figure 39: Sounds, Collégiale Saint-Pierre de La Romieu.

...we experience time and space in a manner that is primarily unconscious. These are not categories we could call objective, or external. Our sense of space results from our ability to move. Our sense of time, meanwhile, is due to being biological individuals undergoing distinct and changing states. Time is thus nothing other than the flow of changes.

Place as an aspect of space pauses time. It is the momentary detainment of our perception on a configuration of objects. It is, in contradistinction to time, a static notion.

Understood thus, human time is divided into stages as movement through space is broken up by place-pauses. Such pauses anchor us within the flow of time. A person who is sleeping and loses any sense of the place in which he or she currently is also loses all sense of time. The more pauses in space, and the more places we experience therefore, the more time elapses subjectively. We often refer to separate stages of time as episodes. They have no consequences, interrupting time without becoming part of it. They are self-contained occurrences, each starting from scratch; each beginning and each end is absolute. Not a single episode is to be continued,...

Our question raises issues of sense and meaning. In essence one becomes what one participates in. In other words, I am what I look at.

And this was of course the reason behind the ancient pilgrimages. Striving towards – and reaching – a holy place would bestow holiness upon us, cleanse us of our sense. Does the same thing happen when we travel to unholy, sinful places? To sad and vacant places? Joyful, fruitful places?

Olga Tokarczuk, *Flights*, translated by Jennifer Croft (Fitzcarraldo Editions, London 2017, pp 178-179)

Legend:
 home
 garden
 water colour salon
 pilgrim route
 scary days at night
 artists speaking
 delicious red wine
 post office
 chicken visualization
 walking and spelling
 place to buy cheese + fruit
 bells in the night
 Circling back - thinking through
 map of walking August 2017 La Romieu

zone of the unknown potential

part of the courtyard

if there is a question: what is that question?
 question mark route
 why can I not live with my family?

Figure 40: *Circling back - thinking through*, participant map [left], reading [right].

If ideas can be linked to elements in an imagined palace to aid memory, then could the inverse work in real space? What would my route through town be if I associate specific thoughts to places, and then followed my thoughts from place to place? I invited participants to think with me about this in the context of the contemporary pilgrimage and its relationship with the places it passes through, creates and/or maintains. We started in a cloister, historically a place for individual contemplation. In this engagement, however, we experimented with thinking as moving collaboration, using a walking question conversation to initiate a shared cycle of inquiry.

Fluid Cities

three public engagements developed with Trena Noval, first iteration curated by Deland Chan

How can we think beyond ourselves?

How might we activate affordances within settings to cultivate attitudes of mutuality in human-to-land and human-to-human interactions? How might we shift economic and social outlooks toward more environmentally sustainable forms?



Figure 41: *Fluid Cities Stanford*, photograph by T. Noval.

Site:	Stanford University Human Cities Initiative annual Expo, Stanford d-School (2017); <i>Tangible Intangible Heritages Conference</i> , University of East London (2018); <i>Infrastructure for troubled times</i> , Centre for Spatial Environmental and Cultural Politics, Brighton University (2018)
Duration:	Stanford: 2 hours; London: 40 minutes; Brighton: 2 hours
Participation:	Stanford: 5 snagged unintentional, 30 intentional participants (students, academics, architects, scientists, entrepreneurs, engineers); London and Brighton: intentional participants, 30 and 6 participants, respectively.
Funding:	Stanford: Human Cities Initiative; London and Brighton: none
Materials:	<i>Table 15</i> , coloured display rounds, paper, pens, tea
Tactics:	readings, physical movement, table as place device, cycles of inquiry, charette, gift, embodied exchange, mapping, round robin reading,

Fluid Cities (2017, 2018) grew out of *Uncaptured Land* and *Circling back* and comprised three public engagements. It is discussed in Cut 3 (Volume 2, 95-120). Stanford and London iterations feature in *I was there* (2021) (Volume 2, 52-53). The description below is adapted from a paper I wrote with Chan and Noval (Chan, et al., 2021).



Figure 42: *Fluid Cities*, photograph by T. Noval.

Fluid Cities
Human Cities Initiative
Stanford D.School
December 6, 2017

Running Order (65 minutes):

- 1) Sign In, Name Tag
- 2) Introductions and Embodied Image Making Warm Up
- 3) Challenge Introduction
- 4) Design Sprint - Initial Ideas
- 5) Designing a New City - Putting it Together
- 6) Synthesized Strategies
- 7) Reflections - Final Image Making
- 8) Reflections - Share Out/Close
- 10) Invitation to Return

Fluid Cities
The Assignment

The global cities where we live are fueled by industrialized, capitalist economic systems. Unfortunately, these systems do not necessarily create the holistic fluid spaces we require to connect to each other and to the land we live on. They are based on the idea of extraction for growth - growth that is generated by taking resources from the land (earth) to create and contribute to our modern lives. We take, but give little back.

What do we return to the earth to support the health and life of our planet? Can we build better systems for reciprocal care of our urban landscapes that more fluidly supports a rounded view of our world?

Life in contemporary cities also often lacks opportunities to fill our need to connect with each other in authentic and meaningful ways. The traditions of exchange among neighbors and communities has long left the fabric of human to human interchange.

In this time of our changing, unstable political world - don't we need to start to reconnect to each in more meaningful ways? What systems might we create to make the exchanges between people more meaningful?

We think both these ideas are radical perspectives to support new regenerative possibilities for future cities. We are interested today in engaging with you to rethink our cities and systems to support our need for fluid lives. We offer two challenges to consider...

Marscke and Noval
Human Cities Initiative
Stanford D.School
December 6th, 2017

Figure 43: *Fluid Cities*, running order [left]; prompts [left].

The title, *Fluid Cities*, expresses our perception of cities as aggregations of interlinked systems, which flow into, around and through one another, including: the flow of humans and other species of fauna and flora through migration and settlement; the flow of capital and infrastructure development; the flow (and overflow) of natural phenomena (fog, fire, water) and the flow of ideas, images, prospects and perspectives. The engagements focussed on human-to-land and human-to-human relations, prioritizing care and stewardship. We hoped to capture humanising forms of communities, cities and spaces and humanising methods for building them.



Figure 44: *Fluid Cities* Stanford gift, photograph by T. Noval.

Challenge 1:
The Setting
The Healthy Environment

Part 2

How can our cities better support health and quality of life by creating possibilities for a more human reciprocal relationship with the land?

Use the following questions as a starting point to propose elements of a city that incorporate the radical idea of environmental and human reciprocity. What we mean by this, is a city where the land and its resources do not just support human life, but one that also incorporates systems to maintain the health of the surrounding environment and all the living things that share that environment with us.

How can we organize the flow of cities where we truly see ourselves as part of the living landscape we co-inhabit with other living things?

How do we design cities to allow humans and other living things to be in sync with each other?

How can we create places that meet the needs of our intertwined histories, memories and relationships that extend beyond the built environment?

Challenge 2
The Processes
Human To Human Exchange

Part 2

How do we create new cities that emphasizes better human to human experiences based on strong economies of human exchange?

Although our economy is dominated by capitalism, our social world is underpinned by other forms of exchange, such as traditional or social economies that govern most personal exchanges – the trading of favors or meals among friends or care of children, for example. These kinds of exchanges involve direct human interaction, but in our current capitalist culture instruments of exchange are not human to human, but abstract, including things like investing, lending and speculation. These activities mostly exist in virtual realms referred to as “markets”. It is good to remember, however, that “the market” is an abstraction that can dehumanize interaction and hide, exploit or hinder other forms of human to human exchange and exclude large groups of people and cultural practices.

In the new radically human city, therefore, we may want to change the balance among systems of exchange to emphasize systems of generosity and favor + more localized exchanges between people that support their everyday lives. What would this look like?

What kinds of exchange can we envision for a radically human city?

Can we imagine other ways of organizing the flow of cities to support the need for more authentic human exchanges?

What different arrangements of human processes can we employ to design human cities to be more fully inclusive of human cultures and potentials?

Figure 45: Fluid Cities challenges.

For Stanford, we prepared two challenges associated with city development, each comprising a provocative text or poem and a question. The Setting (The Healthy Environment) related to the tangible material context and began with Atwood’s *The Moment*. The Processes (Human to Human Exchange) related to the intangible processes that sculpt and influence our physical environment and began with the following quotes:

The nature of gift transactions [human to human exchanges] is fundamentally different from the nature of capital transactions....where gift-based economies exist, societies utilize the giving of objects and services to create and receive social bonds and to strengthen social ties...it holds out a prospect of weaving an alternative fabric, an instant or gradual community, through the inherent power of the gift to create bonds between giver and receiver. (Purves & Aslan, 2014)

Fluid Cities



Figure 46: *Fluid Cities* Stanford charette, photograph by T. Noval.

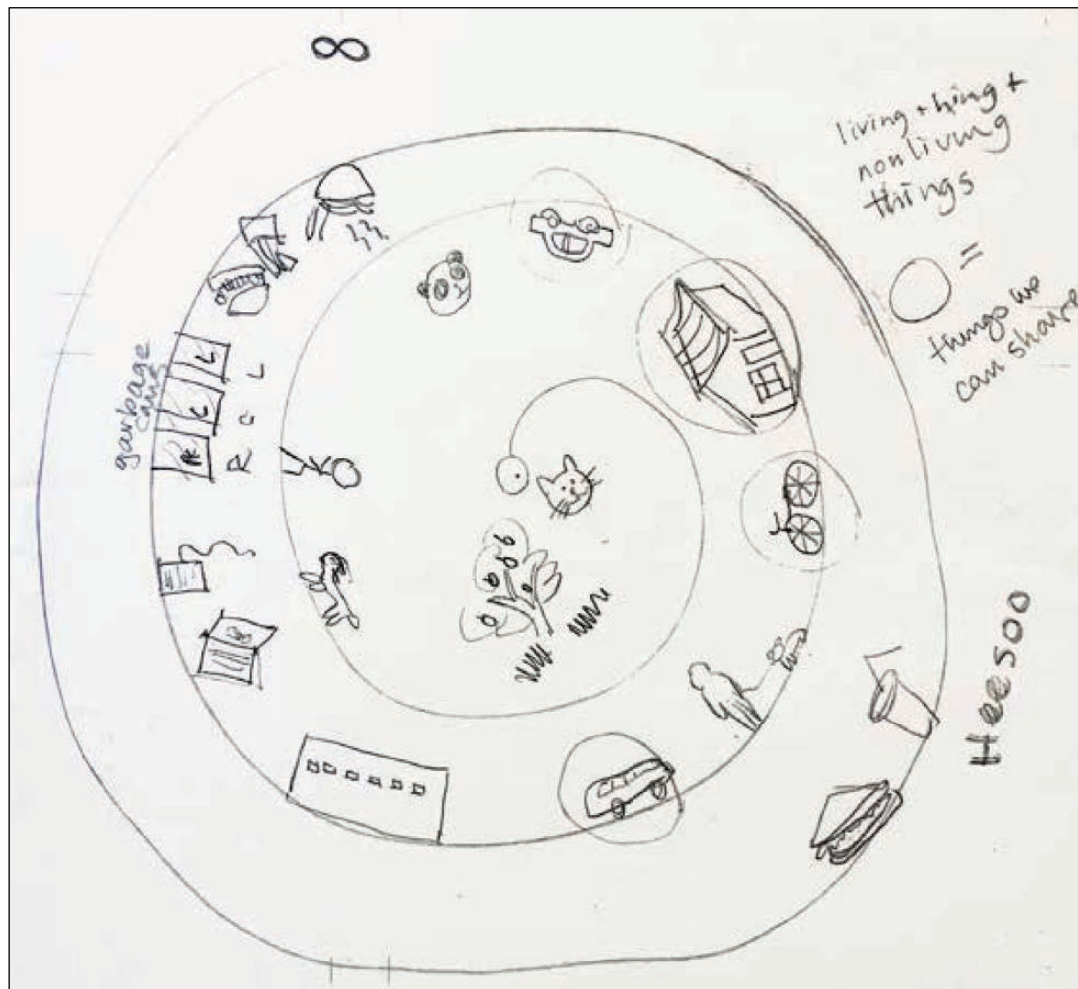


Figure 47: Stanford *Fluid Cities* participant proposal.

An economy genuinely local and neighborly [sic] offers to localities a measure of security that they cannot derive from a national or a global economy controlled by people who, by principle, have no local commitment. (Berry, 2015)

We invited participants to form teams to respond to these challenges. Each group developed and presented one or two proposals, which we combined into a map of a fluid city of ideas.

Fluid Cities



Figure 48: Brighton handout and gift.



Figure 49: London *Fluid Cities*, exchanges, photograph by T. Noval.

In London, after first introducing the project and some of the outcomes of the first iteration, we guided our academic conference audience through a fast moving, playful version that relied on quick exchanges of questions and responses. In Brighton the engagement was held at a small round table and incorporated short question transforming exercises.

The Land and Me (2019)

Three-part public engagement developed with
Trena Noval

*If the land could speak, what would it
say?*



Figure 50: *The Land and Me*, flyer photograph by T. Noval.

- Site: 3 public venues in Santa Rosa California – see project data for each engagement in following pages
- Participation: open to public, varies – see project data for each engagement below
- Funding: City of Santa Rosa Art in Public Places Fire Response Initiative Round 1
- Materials: varies – see project data for each engagement below
- Tactics: varies – see project data for each engagement below

In 2017, forty-four people died in a wildfire that destroyed 2,800 homes and 400,000 square feet of commercial space in the city of Santa Rosa, California. The following year, Trena Noval and I were awarded a commission by the City of Santa Rosa to deliver *The Land and Me*, a three-part ephemeral public artwork responding to the fire.

I discuss *The Land and Me* in Cut 2 (Volume 1, 61-92) and it features in *I was there* (2021) (Volume 2, 52-53).



Figure 51: *The Land and Me*, words by participants, photograph by T. Noval.

The 2017 and subsequent fires in California and around the world are powerful reminders of how much we need each other, our land and our ecosystems to survive and thrive. For *The Land and Me*, we proposed to create a listening space for sharing and honouring what the community had learned from their experience of fire and its aftermath. Through two neighbourhood-scaled public conversations, we planned to build a community of interested local residents – a *community of inquiry* – that would collaborate with us to create a public participatory performance event, to take place in the City centre.

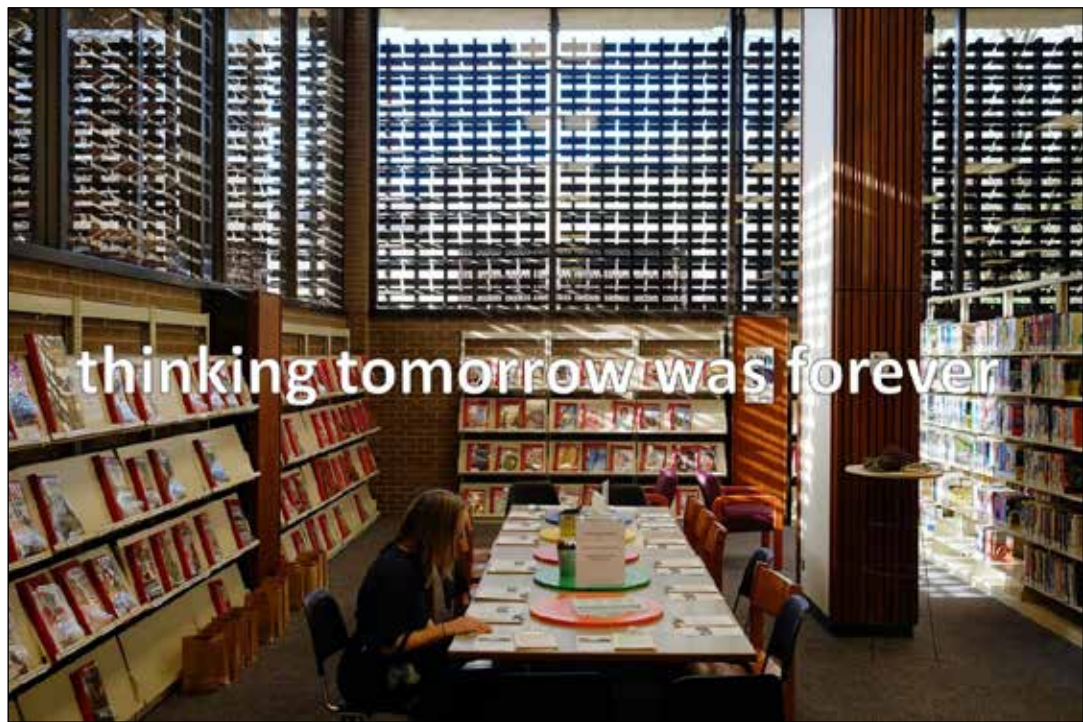


Figure 52: *The Land and Me Part 1: Circling back walk and talk: a walk in the stacks*, words by participants, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.

As outsiders who had not experienced the trauma of the fire, we felt unqualified to address that experience directly, and therefore proposed to pay attention to the land and the community's relationship to it. We wanted to let participants choose whether to engage with their memories of the fire or not as they felt in the moment. We planned to invite those gathered to observe the land, not only as the physical place 'outside', but as an internal connection, both to the land and to all the living things we share it with. Rather than dwelling on emotionally charged affective memory, we hoped to open a possibility for the site of trauma to become a new locus of connection.



Figure 53: *The Land and Me Part 1: Circling back walk and talk: a walk in the stacks*, words by participants, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.

Re-traumatised in 2018 by another devastating wildfire only 150 miles away⁵ which covered the City with smoke for weeks, the Santa Rosa community was still very much dealing with trauma and the complexities of rebuilding on a massive scale. Holding activities in fire-damaged neighbourhoods was out of the question. After conversations with community members and visits to potential sites, we decided on a 'Walk and Talk' in a country park as our first engagement. For the second, we chose a community centre that had served as an evacuation centre for the second and a historic round barn for the third.

⁵ The 'Camp' fire in Paradise California October 2018.



Figure 54: The Land and Me Part 1: Circling back walk and talk: a walk in the stacks, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.

We planned to bring into play a combination of three site-based methods of engagement developed collaboratively in earlier projects: *inquiry*, *observation* and *exchange*. To these we added *performance* as an explicit component that would link to the final performance event.

We invited five local artists who had responded to the fire in thought-provoking ways to work with us. We invited composer/musician Eki Shola to lead part of our first event, and dancer Nancy Lyons and poet Ernesto M. Garay to lead parts of the second. Bringing their local perspectives into the project in this way grounded it in place in a way that, as outsiders, we could not do on our own.



Figure 55: *The Land and Me Part 1: Circling back walk and talk: a walk in the stacks*, words by participants, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.

The Land and Me did not set out to solve or heal anything. We hoped to foster an ephemeral community, which might send ripples out to the broader network that makes the place, city and region. We wanted to elicit fresh ways of querying how we live with the land in this time of environmental crisis and trauma. We aimed to create a space for the emergence of new perspectives on the adjustment processes that this community had undertaken as they recovered.

We were invited by the commissioning authority to develop and present the project within 4 months which corresponded to the winter rainy season in Northern California when it generally rains part of every week and the hills turn bright green with new grass. Fire season is at the end of the hot dry summer season when the grass on the hills is golden. The first human inhabitants of this land practiced regular controlled burning.

The Land and Me Part 1: Circling back walk and talk, a walk in the stacks (2019)
Central Sonoma County Library, Santa Rosa CA

public engagement: 14 participants, developed
with Noval and Eki Shola

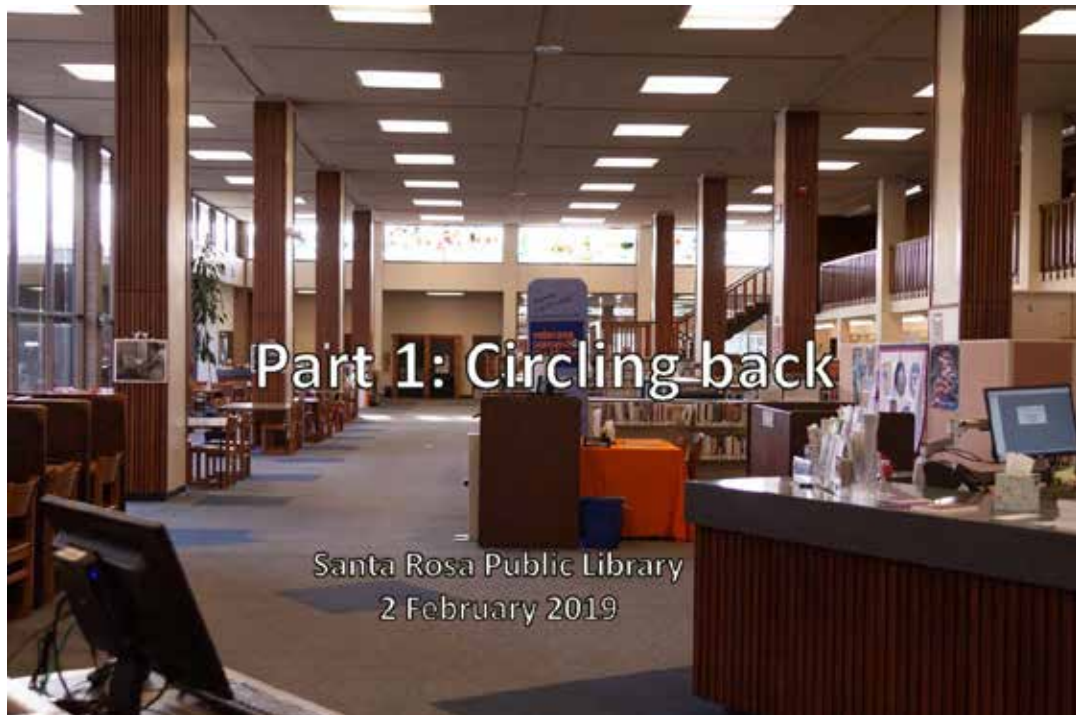


Figure 56: *The Land and Me Part 1: Circling back walk and talk, a walk in the stacks*, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.

- Site: Santa Rosa Public Library (Central Sonoma County Library)
Duration: 1 afternoon
Participation: open to public, 14 intentional participants (architects, artists, landscape architects, dancer, anthropologist, medical doctor/composer/musician, lawyer/activist, children's theatre professionals and others)
Funding: City of Santa Rosa
Materials: shaped cards, pens, bag of snacks, gift of a hand-made ear trumpet
Tactics: physical activity, readings, cycle of inquiry, walking, collecting resources, gifts, narrative transformation, reflective discussion, round robin performance

Noval and I saw walking on the land as a way to collect resources and to ground the inquiry in the specifics of the local landscape. As it happened, rain nudged us all into to the airy reading room and stacks of the public library. We first invited participants to describe a place where they felt connected to the land, using drawings, words and gestures.



Figure 57: *Circling back*, participant drawing.



Figure 58: *The Land and Me Part 1: Circling back walk and talk, a walk in the stacks*, words by participants, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.

Shola then led us through an exercise of listening to the land. After exchanging our individual experiences of listening to the land with a partner and a series of question-generating exercises, we walked in the stacks to find and present possible responses to our questions. We ended by reading selected words, phrases and questions aloud in a round robin reading.⁶

⁶ In our round robin readings, each person reads out a word, phrase, statement or question in a sequence to make a simple collaborative performance.

The Land and Me Part 2: Landscape in the Round (2019)

public engagement, developed with Noval,
Ernesto M Garay and Nancy Lyons



Figure 59: *The Land and Me Part 2 Landscape in the round*, set up, photograph by R. Spencer.

- Site: Finley Community Center
Duration: 1 afternoon
Participation: open to public, 20 intentional participants (architects, artists, landscape architects, dancer, anthropologist, medical doctor/musician, poet and others)
Funding: City of Santa Rosa
Materials: *Table 15*, tree branches, clay, collage materials, poster paint, drums, home-made refreshments, printed words and phrases from Part1, gift of a hand-pulled print
Tactics: sculpting, movement activity/dance, reading aloud, collaging, poetry writing, gifts, reflective discussion, performance

We began by asking for help to assemble *Table 15*. As I explained why I had made the table, we brought the sections to the centre of the room and clipped them together. We arranged sketches, words and phrases collected at the first session on it, and threaded apple branches through holes in its surface. When we were finished it felt as if a piece of the land was in the room with us.



Figure 60: *The Land and Me: Part 2*, words by participants, photograph by R. Spencer.

We explored our question, *If the land could speak what would it say...?* through four ways of making: painting and collage, modelling, movement and writing poetry. We also practised performing through movement and poetry.

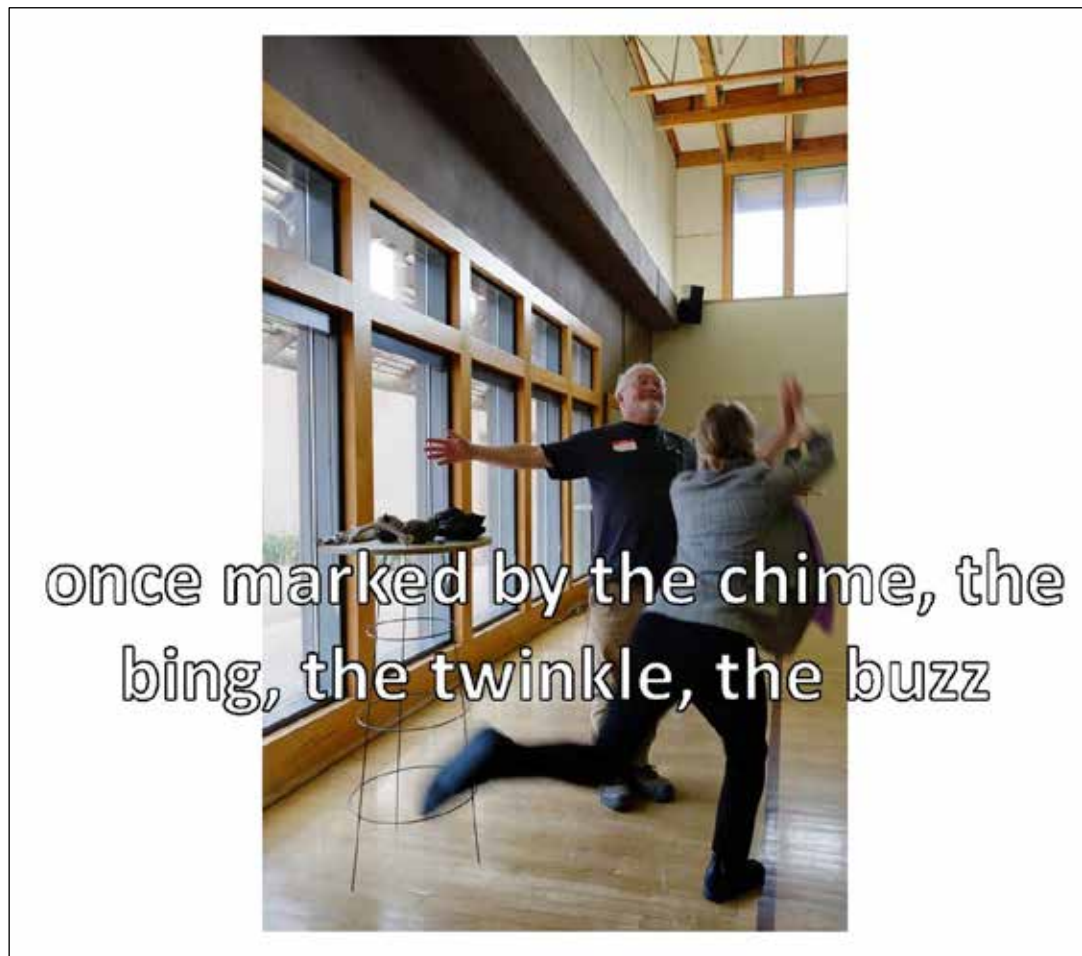


Figure 61: *The Land and Me Part 2: Landscape in the round*, words by participants, photographs by R. Spencer.

The Land and Me Part 3: If the land could speak....? (2019)
DeTurk Round Barn, Santa Rosa CA

public participatory performance event
developed with Noval, Shola, Garay, Lyons,
Ben Roots, Carole Flaherty, Irma Bijou, Kasia
Krzykawska, Lea Good-Harris, Margie Purser
and Susan Cornelis



Figure 62: Greeting arrivals, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.



Figure 63: Venue for *The Land and Me Part 3*, Santa Rosa, CA.

Site:	DeTurk Round Barn
Duration:	2 afternoon rehearsals, 1 evening participatory performance event
Participation:	open to public, 12 collaborators, 60+ snagged unintentional and intentional participants.
Funding:	City of Santa Rosa
Materials:	<i>Table 15</i> , tree branches, printed phrases from Parts 1 and 2, gift booklet of poetry written in Part 2, other materials provided by each collaborator.
Tactics:	open house stations set up by individual collaborators, participatory readings, drumming and movement, assembling the table, participatory poetry reading, music performance

Twelve local participants joined us as collaborators for the final event. The setting, a historic barn originally built as a place to present horses for sale, had been one of two round barns in the City – the other was lost in the 2017 fire. This beautiful wooden structure played a significant role in development of the event. Our first rehearsal took place on an unusually stormy day – rain coming through the roof combined with a sharp wind which blew the doors open and slammed them shut again. The weird, awe inspiring atmosphere gave us a feeling that something extraordinary was happening.

The Land and Me Part 3



Figure 64: Objects from the land, photograph by T. Noval.



Figure 65: *The Land and Me Part 3 If the land could speak...?*, Open House set up, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.

Each local collaborator set up a station in the open house for their own practice. The event was attended by about sixty people who joined in a participatory performance. We invited everyone to bring something meaningful from the land. As each person entered, they placed their object on one table and picked up words or phrases from another. During the first half – the Open House – each artist established a space to offer conversations about the land speaking through their practices including: drumming; dance; poetry; collaborative painting; mapping; healing soils; labyrinths; music; and bearing witness to trauma through watercolour journaling.

The Land and Me Part 3

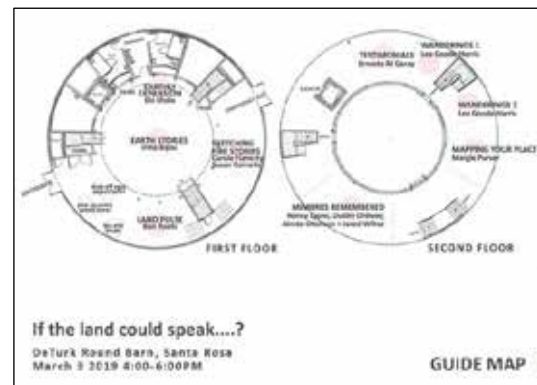


Figure 66: Open House guide map.

<p>OPEN HOUSE (4:00-4:45 PM) PLEASE EXPLORE!</p> <p>downstairs:</p> <p>SKETCHING FIRE STORIES with Susan Cornelis and Carole Flaherty</p> <p>EARTH STORIES with Irma Bijou</p> <p>LAND PULSE rhythm with Ben Roots</p> <p>upstairs:</p> <p>MIMBRES REMEMBERED dance with Nancy Lyons, Dustin Ordway, Aimée Otterson and Jared Wiltse</p> <p>TESTIMONIALS poetry with Ernesto M Garay</p> <p>WANDERINGS with Lea Goode-Harris</p> <p>MAPPING YOUR PLACE with Margie Purser</p> <p>If the land could speak...? DeTurk Round Barn, Santa Rosa March 3 2019 4:00-6:00PM</p>	<p>PERFORMANCE (4:45-5:50 PM) PLEASE JOIN IN!</p> <p>Procession follow Ben Roots</p> <p>If the land could speak...? initiated by Kasia Apolinarski Krzykawska listen, then join in with your words on cue</p> <p>Set a place for the land assemble and embellish our table</p> <p>Testimonials poetry reading led by Ernesto M Garay</p> <p>Earthly Expansion music by Eki Shola</p> <p>Closing led by Nancy Lyons</p> <p>Final words (5:50-6:00 PM) Tara Thompson, Carol, and Trena</p> <p>Breakdown (6:00-6:55PM) music by Ben Roots</p> <p>PROGRAM</p>
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Figure 67: *The Land and Me Part 3: If the land could speak...?*, programme.

The performance half began with a procession, bringing us all around the upper balcony edge from which each person spoke the phrases they held in their hands, across the empty space, creating a group poem. As each phrase sounded, its speaker allowed the printed words to fall from their hands and flutter to the floor below.

The Land and Me Part 3



Figure 68: Words and phrases, photograph by T. Noval.



Figure 69: *The Land and Me Part 3: If the land could speak...?* film still by J. Gouldthorpe.

A few days after our first rehearsal, one of the team mentioned how the fluttering papers had reminded her of something she couldn't quite place. Later, she remembered that for many days after the fire, partially burnt papers would flutter into her garden. The shape and fluttering of our cut-out phrases looked uncannily like these charred paper missives from unknown houses.

The Land and Me Part 3



Figure 70: Poetry reading, photographs by J. Gouldthorpe.



Figure 71: Assembling *Table 15*, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.

We gathered together to build *Table 15* and adorn it with apple branches, the objects from the land, and the scattered words. Gathering around, Garay led a poetry reading during which participants read poems they had written during the project, and Shola played music she had written since losing her home to the fire. The event officially ended with a short participatory dance, followed by spoken reflections from the City's arts coordinator and others.

The Land and Me Part 3

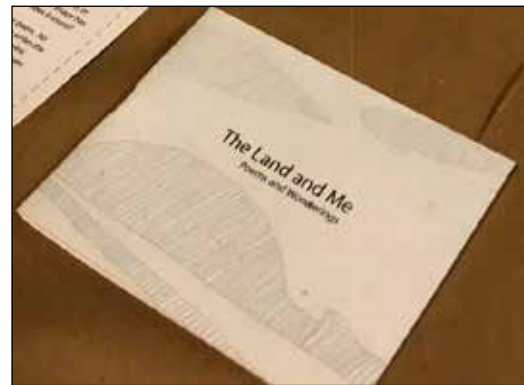


Figure 72: Gift of poems written in Part 2, photograph by T. Noval.



Figure 73: *The Land and Me Part 3: If the land could speak...?*, Shola performing, photograph by J. Gouldthorpe.

Various engagements at *machinaloci space* (2018-2020)

Berkeley CA

public encounters and performances



Figure 74: *Bonsai Studio* (2020), Grant Foerester.

What makes a neighbourhood a place?



Figure 75: *The American Front Yard* (2019), Rojas, Kamp, Noval, Wettrich and Mancke.

- Site: *machinaloci space*, a 500 square foot project space and storefront in Berkeley California
- Participation: open to public, numbers vary with engagement, all intentional participants
- Funding: none
- Materials: *Table 15*, coloured display rounds, coloured paper shapes, tape, drawing materials, collage materials, snacks
- Tactics: place device, question seeking, narrative transformation, physical engagement, charette, mapping, reflective conversation, DIY performance

Since 2018, I have presented and curated a number of public engagements in *machinaloci space*, a place that is dedicated to playful research into alternative ways of being, making and doing together. Many of these have taken place around *Table 15* (see a full list on the *Table 15* portfolio page, Volume 2, 14). Some of these feature in *I was there* (2021) (Volume 2, 52-53).

Gathering voices

I was there (2021)

documentary film

What do you remember?

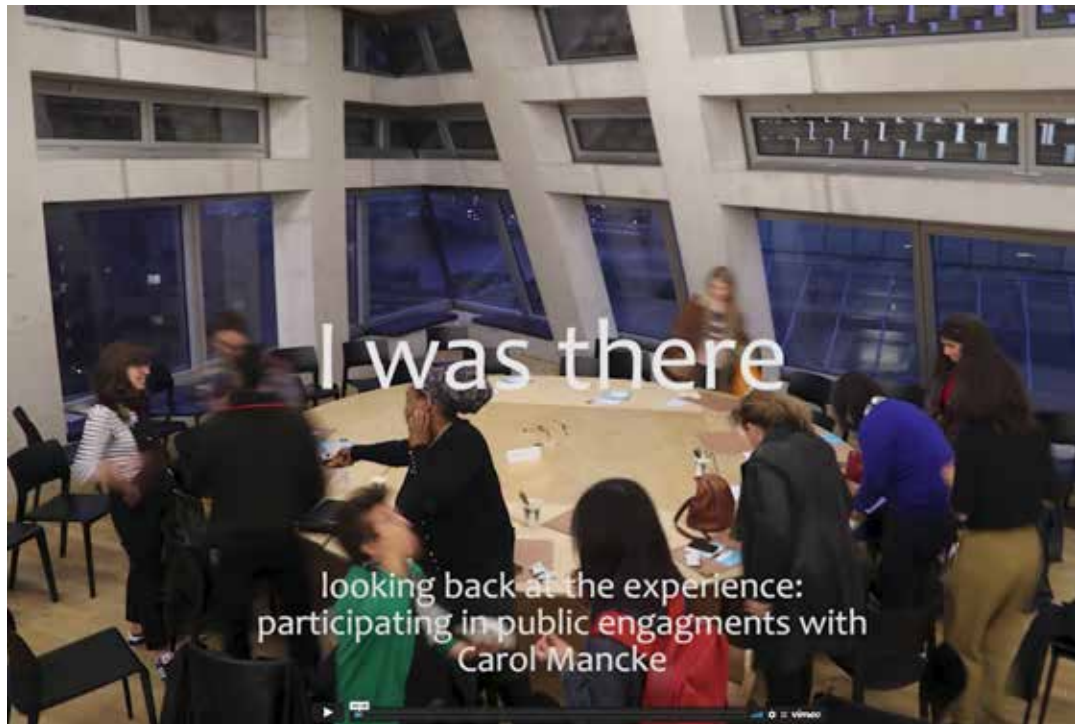


Figure 76: *I was there* (2021), still showing *Table 18* (2015) at *The Democratic Table* (2016) by Anna Kontopoulou at Tate Exchange, photograph by P. Wareing.

In December and January, 2020-21, I interviewed 20 participants and collaborators in one or more of the public engagements documented here. I asked each person to recall and reflect on their experience, which had taken place between two and six years earlier. I wanted to hear what they remembered, what they might have taken away and how they think about the experience now, and I was curious if their comments would support my thesis. Combining footage and images of the engagements into a scenic narrative and with participant voices, the video serves as a documentary of the practice and communicates something of what the public engagements were like and what they meant to or sparked in some participants.

I was there (2021)

documentary film

What do you remember?



Figure 77: *I was there*, still, collage of participants and collaborators interviewed in 2020-21.

I came to see the interview process as another form of public engagement made possible by the digital platforms that have become ubiquitous during the COVID 19 pandemic (2020-21) and our ease with using them. It opened a view to some of the after-effects and affects of my public engagements. I reflect on the interviews and the film in the Conclusion of Volume 1 (153-172).

LINK TO FILM: <https://vimeo.com/515905991/ocbo1a77d6>

Tactics

Each public engagement comprised a crafted progression of activities incorporating techniques drawn from fine art practice, collaborative design processes, theatre, pedagogy and experienced-based intuition. I generally prepare a loose score to guide an engagement. Noval and I also designed, printed and assembled handmade packets for participants, which included questions, challenges, prompts, relevant texts, running order and maps as needed.⁷ Whilst there was overlap between projects, as a series, engagements built on those preceding it in terms of the direction of attention (topic), materiality, participatory strategy and agency, methods of expression and techniques for intellectual, emotional and physical engagement.

Place device

In my practice preceding this research, I often combined techniques into a layered method I call *place device*. I would first explore a site's *affordances* to find or create a *clearing*, thereby setting the ground for something to happen. I would then ask you to help me construct a temporary *intervention* that invites interaction. This, in turn, might involve some kind of *DIY performance*, through which you and I would engage physically and/or collaboratively with the site, the intervention and each other. In this way, I would lure you away from simply looking, and toward actively colluding in the creation of the artwork. The *place device* provides opportunities for critical engagement with the place, other people and the shared meanings that emerge through the encounter. In this research, the *intervention* piece of the *place device* has generally been one of my tables.

The public engagements that make up this research moved through a related series of stages, including establishing a *clearing*; activating contextual affordances, building an *intervention*; *grounding* in place and time; instigating and maintaining a *cycle of inquiry*; building a *community of inquiry*; extending that community's reach and exchanging *gifts*. The following is a brief precis of some of the specific techniques I employed along this arc.⁸

Establishing a clearing

The projects generally begin with finding, defining or creating a setting conducive to enhanced receptivity – a *clearing* – a place where you (a participant or passer-by) might be

⁷ Everything I do in my practice involves work by others and many of the projects presented here were developed in collaboration with other artists and curators who are acknowledged in the project portfolio. All of the public engagements further evolved during their presentation together with all participants and collaborators. As my practice is the common thread that both ties all these collaborative efforts together and links to my written speculations, for clarity I have opted in these pages to use first-person singular when the element of practice is primarily derived from my practice and plural when its origin is shared.

⁸ Some of the following text draws on a paper Deland Chan, Trena Noval and I wrote about *Fluid Cities* (Chan, et al., 2021).

able to slow down with me in the midst of everyday movement to establish a ground for something to happen. In these projects, this process involved exploring the affordances of each site/situation and introducing my table as a shared platform for structuring relations with the place and with other participants.

Affordances for critical spatial practices⁹

I explore site and situation looking for physical, cultural and social affordances that I might activate to draw attention to or invite consideration of a relevant topic from a critical perspective – a process that resonates with what Jane Rendell calls ‘critical spatial practice’ (2006) (2009). In *Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie* (2014), my performative interventions were crafted to draw attention to the unacknowledged centrality of cars in the lived experience of that place and, if possible, to wedge open space for social interaction somewhere in the vast portion of the city’s public space that has been allocated to cars. *Fluid Cities* London (2018) presented an implicit critique of the academic conference context.

In *Six rounds of six: Risk!* (2015), Manca Bajec and I introduced other ways of playing the game, using the surface of *Table 18* to incorporate protest and alternative possibilities for world domination. Other events in *Six rounds of six* were also conceived to change the way ‘the game’ might be played – for example, by juxtaposing the thriving alternative community with gardens and public places built by people who live there at nearby Bonnington Square, against the empty ‘creative placemaking’ rhetoric devised to sell housing to investors.

The degree of criticality varies relation to the context of each project. In the case of *The Land and Me*, we initially considered an overtly critical position in respect of the kinds of misunderstanding or disregard for the ecologies of Northern California that lead to increases in the number and severity of wildfires. Empathy for the vulnerable, still suffering community we encountered there, however, drew us to a different kind of engagement.

The specific architectural character of the spaces in which public engagements took place informed what happened. In most of these projects, we developed tactics in response to sites which were given to us. However, in the case of *The Land and Me*, we were able to select all the venues. Scale, quality of light, spatial configuration and architectural

⁹ *Affordances* are the physical and spatial clues in an environment that offer possibilities for thinking and action. The psychologist James J Gibson first defined the term affordances as what an environment offers an animal, for better or for worse (Gibson, 2015). The definition encompasses the environment and the animal together, underlining their complementarity. Affordance theory looks at the world not simply as a collection of objects, shapes and spatial relationships, but also possibilities for action that they offer. I expand the definition to include thinking. To visualise affordances, I think of children finding ways to play in a place that is new to them.

character influenced the development of the form and content of each engagement. These settings actively contributed to the generation of fellow feeling and shared meaning among participants, in other words, to the creation of a *community of inquiry*.

During *Turning Tables*, we attended to the invisible force field of power produced by the architecture of the room, as if we were iron filings tossed onto a magnetically charged surface. Understanding and working with pre-existing power fields to the advantage of an engagement is part of the process of understanding the affordances of places, and how to activate them.

Intervening together

Inviting participants to assemble the table with me, we build a shared platform together, deciding its placement collectively through collaborative action. We practise and embody Arendt's notion of *work* in real time, manifesting, in real space, her metaphor of a table representing our common world (1998, p. 52). Through this action, participants also encounter the table as an active part of the engagement, not just a given infrastructure. Participants' active collusion also blurs the boundary between artist and participant, transforming everyone in the room into collaborating co-participants.

DIY Action/performance

Do It Yourself action or performance is an action undertaken by a viewer when encountering an artwork. I invite and/or encourage viewers to interact physically with an artwork in some way, and thus 'perform' it themselves. *Table 18* and *Table 15* invite table-inspired everyday actions, which participants undertake without thinking. In *Ellesmere Port Boogie Woogie*, drivers created part of a parking 'mandala' by choosing to pay attention to my markings and park their cars in an unusual configuration. *The Land and Me* offered many opportunities for participants to choose to perform together.

Grounding in place and time

Gathering focus: reading aloud

Reading or listening to a poem – or other text that resonates with a project's questions – elicits a personal response connecting the ideas and images in the poem to my individual perspective. By reading aloud, we invite participants to enter the shared space of inquiry with their own private connections in mind as well as to set an intellectual and emotional stage for what comes next. The text also provides a context for the overarching questions around which the engagement is structured.

Gathering focus: physicality, play, physical dialogue

Learning from Augusto Boal (2002), opening with a simple physical exercise helps participants to enter a fully embodied process of imaginative thinking. This can ease tension, raise energy and encourage playfulness.¹⁰ It primes participants to think with their bodies, bringing the register of embodied knowing into the shared thinking process. In *Turning Tables* and *The Land and Me*, we took this a step further, engaging in forms of physical dialogue using gestures, bodily shapes and body placement in relation to others to communicate and build relations non-verbally.

Walking and mapping

As an activity that leaves traces or marks on a surface, walking is also a form of drawing. For me, the physical action of moving in space – moving an arm when drawing, or one's legs when walking – enables generative forms of thinking to emerge. The motion brings issues into focus and allows disagreements between internal and external experience to ease. In part because of the slower, more attentive engagement with materiality they demand, both drawing and walking stimulate and support a form of thinking that circles back, re-considering thoughts from successive, changing positions. Talking and walking with others seems to enable thoughts and feelings to be exchanged smoothly, without catching in closed loops. They thus encourage a form of collaborative thinking that moves outward even as it circles back.

My shoes touching the ground when walking leave traces, laying down an actual full-scale map of my physical and the accompanying mental journeys at full 1:1 scale. A small-scale map, drawn or assembled by hand, is a system for organising information, impressions and feelings about a real, imagined or proposed place. Mapping can be a tool for discovering, communicating and activating affordances of a place, as well as proposing alternative routes and connections.

Instigating and maintaining a cycle of inquiry

Developing questions together

Crafting broad challenges in the form of questions and orchestrating a process through which they can be transmuted collaboratively, can enable the emergence of a new set of questions, which reflect the gathering's specific concerns in that place and time. The

¹⁰ Augusto Boal is best known for the form of transformational political theatre known as *Theatre of the Oppressed*, which he developed in South America and Europe from the 1950s until his death in 2009. Boal was a friend and collaborator of Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005). Among Boal's techniques are a series of physical exercises described in the book *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (2002). He used these to help participants shake off habitual patterns of moving and speaking, to open their bodies and minds to new ways of thinking and being.

breadth and/or ambiguity of the original question(s) leaves room for an array of positions across a range of registers to surface. A questioning process that accepts ambiguity can draw out ideas lingering in peripheral vision, allowing each person to bring personal reactions, associations and interests into a shared field of matters that are of concern to the entire group.

Transforming questions and narratives

Passing questions through playful *question conversations* – conversational exchanges where only questions are allowed – generates unexpected new questions that are in tune with the gathered group.¹¹ Each party responds to a question with another question, and so on back and forth. Outlawing statements makes it difficult for anyone to introduce superior knowledge or facts, which might shut down the exchange. Also, because it forces the brain to work differently, a question conversation shakes up habitual patterns of thought, and can cracks open fixed ideas and narratives.

Somewhere between hunches and fully formed ideas are inventive possibilities that can be brought into play. In struggling to shape a new question during question conversations, I find myself in an unstable space where familiar narratives become unreliable. Shifting or destabilising narratives was central to *Uncaptured Land* and also important in *Fluid Cities*, *Circling back – thinking through*, and the first two parts of *The Land and Me*. In *Uncaptured Land*, we also introduced a provocative narrative as a prompt and encouraged participants to transform or reinvent it. In *Fluid Cities*, we used design challenges in a similar way. In *The Land and Me*, we brought in a variety of artistic methods that engaged minds, hands and bodies in different ways to elicit qualitatively different routes for finding and expressing shifting narratives.¹²

Observing, gathering resources or evidence, making connections

By drawing attention in the physical environment to what can be perceived in relation to questions, activities that invite participants to explore and observe the setting can reground the inquiry back into the specific place and time. They also illuminate the various ways that each person in a group interprets the same questions, perceives the same environment, and constructs meaning, thus offering opportunities to disclose and explore this variety.¹³

¹¹ I used question conversations in *Circling back - thinking through*, *Uncaptured Land* and *The Land and Me* as well as in other gatherings hosted at my tables.

¹² Sculpting, drawing, collaging, writing, reading, performing, moving, making music and dancing, telling stories, etc.

¹³ This relates to Rancière's characterisation of *dissensus* as a gap between what is perceived and its meaning that divides the political sphere discussed in Volume 1 (27-29, 103-105).

Objects, recollections, images, texts, and fragments of thought brought back to the table become resources for subsequent engagements. These augment future prospects for each person to make their own connections between the components of an engagement. We invite participants to notice connections between their internal and external worlds, and to express it through creative processes, bringing them into forms that are perceivable by others. Thinking with Arendt, this sequence – manifesting internal realities and bringing them to the table to exchange – is also a process of making something appear in public and becoming recognised as real.¹⁴

This was particularly meaningful in the final event of *The Land and Me* where audience and co-participants brought personally significant objects from the land to display and share. Placed on the table, these emotionally charged objects enabled us to step into other people's experience of the fire, and to begin to reckon with their relationship with the land around them in its aftermath as a public activity.

Charette

As a method of intensive collaborative work using sketching, model making, diagramming and writing often employed in planning and design processes, the charette can work well with participants from different backgrounds.¹⁵ Seemingly straightforward ideas from one field can spark surprising directions of thought in another. A lack of shared background becomes generative, and incorporating sketching and diagramming allows participants to communicate ideas across language barriers.

Building and practising a community of inquiry

Exchange, embody

Inviting participants to exchange written and spoken questions as if they were gifts, making eye contact and shaking hands, builds fellow feeling. Short interludes of movement create opportunities for participants to physically embody ideas embedded in the engagement. Multiple exchanges also render responses anonymous, the property of the group rather than of any one individual, giving participants a rare opportunity to express and occupy other points of view publicly, and to see and hear their own occupied by others. This dissipates any sense of ownership of particular ideas or expressions, allowing what is generated to belong to everyone.¹⁶

¹⁴ This is discussed in the Preface of Volume 1 (1-4).

¹⁵ Urban legend has *charette's* origin in carts used to collect and carry final student projects to the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Students, always keen to add finishing touches, would climb onto the cart and continue working until it arrived at the school, hence the idea of short intensive working and the English phrase *on charette* meaning to be in the midst of an intensive working period just before a deadline.

¹⁶ This relates to *plural mind* which is discussed in Cut 2 (Volume 1, 61-92).

Listen, tell, perform

In the first part of *The Land and Me*, we invited participants to think of a situation or place in their personal lives where they had a strong relation to the land, and then depict it in words or drawing. We then asked them to describe the place and their relation to it to another participant, as if they had just met on a train somewhere far from home. The listener then wrote or drew what they heard, and then shared this back.¹⁷ The listener thus received an invitation to enter the teller's world, and the teller heard and saw their own story through another's eyes.

Providing opportunities for participants to create, display and present collaboratively developed narratives builds a corpus of knowledge, bodily know-how and meaning. Which is shared by the group. Introducing simple performance techniques – show and tell, round robin readings, gesture mimicking exchanges, exquisite corpse – playfully challenges participants to find meaning together.¹⁸

Blurring boundaries: co-participation

An artist organising a public engagement has responsibilities that sit outside shared participation.¹⁹ However, the tendency for the artist (me) to become the focus of attention is problematic, and contradicts my third principle: non-hierarchical participation. Although it may be possible to entangle artist and participant positions and blur the boundary, I can never experience what happens in the same way that other participants do. Nevertheless, I look for and experiment with ways that might allow me to disappear into the work. In *The Land and Me*, this took the form of inviting members of the community to co-host engagements. This allowed Noval and me to step into the group, experiencing at least part of each gathering as co-participants.

¹⁷ The method is inspired by *Playback Theatre*, a form of improvisational theatre where an ensemble of performers solicits stories from the audience and then play them back then and there for the teller. I studied this form with Jiwon Chung at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre School in CA in 2017..

¹⁸ I have introduced a form of the surrealist game of exquisite corpse in which unrelated questions and answers are read aloud as a performance.

¹⁹ For the safety of the group, for example.

Gifts

The writings of Lewis Hyde (1979) on gift economies – and later Ted Purves and Shane Aslan Selzer (2014) – trace a significant relationship between artmaking and gift-giving, especially in the context of ephemeral participatory art practices. All participants in these engagements gave the gift of their attention, and we reciprocated with hospitality and a gift which they could take away. The gift might be a drawing made on the spot, a hand-pulled print, a handmade object used during the gathering and/or some kind of nourishing food and drink.²⁰ Also, our hand-assembled packets were gifts, which symbolised the unique shared experience we created together and the emergent community of people and meaning that each project brought to life.

Gathering participant voices

The public engagements presented in the portfolio were undertaken between 2014 and 2020. This extended period of research made it possible for me to gather information about the after-effects of from participants – something that is not always easy to do in the context of participatory art. When gathering participant comments for *I was there* (2021), I also collected evidence of contribution which I discuss in the Conclusion to the thesis (Volume 1, 153-172). I include here a few examples of comments gathered which are not included in the film.

In respect of *The Land and Me*, a number of participants spoke of the cumulative effect of moving through different forms of creative expression, how it consolidated meaning and brought them into a deeper connection with both the theme and the emerging community on inquiry. As K. Anderson wrote:

The biggest takeaway for me is that art experiences are much more varied than our usual notions and that a sequential developing interactive experience [...] brings the community together in [...] process of developing each participant's awareness and engagement with both the arts and the focus of the gatherings [in this case, our relationship to the land]... As the experience progressed, our 'art' responses became more thoughtful and expressive than, perhaps, any of us would have gotten to on our own.

In *The Land and Me* (2019), we had a diverse participant/collaborator group in terms of ethnicity and age. It was also a particularly well-educated group with a high proportion of people pursuing second careers as artists, designers or musicians. There was not much in

²⁰*Fluid Cities Stanford*: tea and teacups donated by Berkeley artist, David Cook. *The Land and Me*: ear trumpet for listening to the land, bag of treats, hand-pulled screen print, chapter book of poetry. *Circling back*: hand drawn map. *Uncaptured Land*: home-made cakes and tea. *Ellesmere Port*: drawings of cars. In other projects, I have given away printed t-shirts and hi vis vests; original drawings; and hand-stencilled yoga mats.

the way of conflict or even disagreement. We were surprisingly *simpatico* in the best kind of way. Of course, as artist/participant K. Krzykawska noted:

Sometimes [...] it's much more interesting to disagree because actually we can learn much more from being with people we disagree [with].

Agreement in a group like this, however, also happens when those gathered want to agree or have a need to agree. As anthropologist/participant M. Purser said:

Remember that this was a community that was not in some kind of stasis. We were already dealing with the transformations that came with the aftermath of the fire. So again, we're back to that helical structure of transformation that is not an event. It's a process. And what your project did as participatory art is added a mechanism [...] or a] conduit; ...[a] way to experience the transformation as something other than trauma.

The Land and Me developed in a very organic way. Noval and my desire to let participants guide content and process as much as possible – our reticence – made it especially difficult for us to understand in the moment exactly what was happening. This comment and others included in the film gave us valuable feedback on our approach.

Reflections

Although each project was different in content and spirit from the others, there are common points for interrogation and critique:

Friction/Conflict/Exclusion

The question of who is and who is not at the table is always present. There are many who would never choose to sit at any table outside their own family circle, for whom a table itself represents oppression and exclusion. I see my tables as entirely open and inclusive, which reflects my personal ease in discursive settings, relative comfort with school and academic environments, and my appetite for collaborative work around tables in design processes etc. Outside my front door, here and now, however, are many people who would find my big 'friendly' table frightening.²¹

None of the public engagements described in these pages addressed politics per se. Nor have I made any overt attempt to introduce or engage conflict in any project so far. In only one engagement hosted at either of my tables has a hint of conflict surfaced.²² The lack of conflict in my public engagements suggests to me that the participant groups have been too homogeneous.

To better understand the interplay between my work and the ideas and practices of other thinkers and artists in relation to politics and conflict, I embarked on the speculation which has become Cut 1. This in turn led me to question in Cut 4 how the body participates in public collaborate thinking.

The question of outcomes or products

Participants of *Fluid Cities* Stanford produced an interesting array of propositions. Chan, Noval and I analysed these using free association to uncover narratives, using three analytical frameworks.²³ For Chan, *Fluid Cities* offered a model for thinking across disciplines within planning/design processes in the service of building more human cities.

²¹ Also, in the summer of 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone experiences some fear of such a table.

²² During *The American Front Yard* (2019), a slightly contentious discussion developed, concerning who might be missing from the table, and whether any conversation was meaningful without representatives from a wider diversity of communities.

²³ 1) HCI's human city principles (building cities for people at human scale; embracing the periphery through a process of radical inclusion; seeking new from the old by valuing existing knowledge; working across disciplines by adopting a transdisciplinary mindset; and moving beyond a single prescriptive model by acknowledging a range of scales and intentions.); 2) Leonie Sandercock's alternative ways of knowing (through dialogue; from experience; through local knowledge of the specific and concrete; through learning to read symbolic, non-verbal evidence; through contemplation and through action-planning) and 3) Harvard University's School of Education Project Zero's *Artful Thinking* (Chan, et al., 2021).

Sitting in a tech hothouse in the heart of Silicon Valley (Stanford University dschool), it seemed natural to think in terms of products. However, I wonder how best to understand outcomes or products in the context of a collaborative thinking practice – they do not sit well with my first principle: participation builds through an open-ended, evolving process that neither aims toward nor settles for a solution or product. In Cut 2, I speculate about what thinking together without aiming for answers might be, and its potential valuable. The format of *Fluid Cities* resembled a design team exercise in many ways. In Cut 3, I take a closer look at this form of collaborative thinking to consider the consequences of employing components of design processes in an art context.

Affect, vulnerability, choice

For the most part, my public engagements did not fit a familiar type of gathering, and participants did not know each other in advance. I noticed that a sense of tension or anxiety tended to colour the first part of most engagements. In those engagements that incorporated moving around, observing and collecting things and/or exchanging things with others in smaller groups, anxiety tended to recede, becoming replaced by a quality of camaraderie. There was a sense of being constrained, set free and then returning by choice.

Sitting at a round table in the centre of a room means that every person has their back to part of the room. Although in theory we can rely on the people on the other side to ‘have our backs’, many people – including me – find this exposure uncomfortable. For others, the fact that all places are equally visible, and there are no seats from which one might slip away unnoticed, is unsettling and feels coercive. These reflections fed into the speculation about how the body participates in collaborative thinking, from which Cut 4 is derived.

[END OF VOLUME 2]

Volume 2 references²⁴

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²⁴ See Volume 1 Reference for Bibliography for the entire thesis.

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