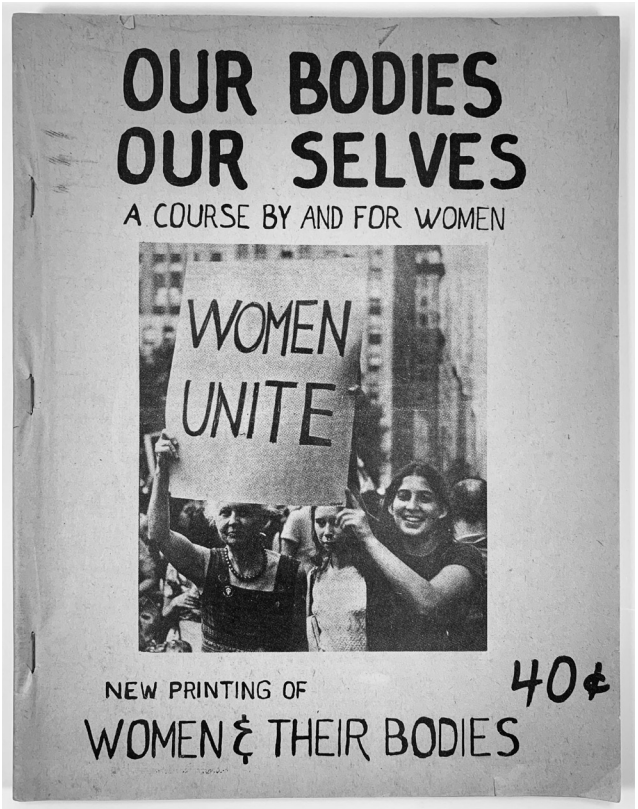
The Post-Political Curator's Handbook

Claire Louise Staunton

Preface



0.1 *Squatters' Handbook*. Advisory Service for Squatters Voluntary Collective, London, 1979.
0.2 *Our Bodies Our Selves: A Course by and for Women*. New England Free Press, Boston, 1973.
0.3 *Grand Domestic Revolution Handbook*. CASCO/Valiz, Amsterdam, 2014.

This is *The Post-Political Curator's Handbook*.

The handbook is for curators, artists and cultural producers who practice critically and want to work 'politically'. The handbook gives instructions on how to practice in places where the possibilities for political engagement by the public and artists have been eliminated. If we cannot see or understand the processes of de-politicisation — the foreclosure of political agency — we continue contributing to the growing political vacuum. Therefore, this handbook offers both solidarity and practical techniques for action.

The Post-Political Curator's Handbook is both the documentation of my practice-led research and is my practice-led research. The directions for the post-political curator in this handbook have evolved out of my research projects and their analysis. To illustrate the instructions, I use photographic documentation, press material, artists' scripts, and correspondence from 5 projects undertaken during the period of my doctoral research (2016–20). Because the instructions for the post-political curator come from my position within the field of contemporary curating, I also refer to other curators' and artists' practices. The production of the handbook is a component of my curatorial practice, from the selection of projects, the assembly of visual materials, the theoretical contextualisation, to the speculative proposals for a new mode of practice.

This handbook takes its form from the traditions of activism and community organising: *Our Bodies, Our Selves* (first published in 1970), *The New Woman's Survival Catalog* (1973) and *Squatters' Handbook* (published and updated since 1976). It contributes to a recent tradition of instructional books for curators which bring together in one handbook: theoretical texts, documentation of projects and instructions to navigate the complexities of the new field of curating, e.g., *Grand Domestic Revolution Handbook* (2014), curated by Binna Choi and Maiko Tanaka.

The Post-Political Curator's Handbook includes instructions, a glossary of terms, a list of references with a directory of services and relevant websites; it is easy to reproduce, to distribute and to read *for politically engaged artists and curators*.

Without being recognised as a citizen and without access to political struggle, the people of a town, city or country are disenfranchised and unable to meaningfully change their lives and their communities. In the UK, new housing developments, heavily regenerated neighbourhoods and 21st century garden towns offer a glimpse of a near total post-political existence, one where the political has been 'designed out'. These 'enclosures' serve as a microcosm for a de-politicised future world.

Practitioners of 'critical curating' or 'social practice' often try to bring the political with them in order to work with art and artists to critique the system, to intervene in political machinations, to create dissensus (widespread dissent amongst communities) and/or to work with communities to resist domination. Such ambitious work assumes that curators and artists can (and should) bring about changes in society that politicians and policy makers have failed to make. Socially engaged practices may be very useful, interesting, art-historically important and may help build stronger communities, but they address the symptoms of the de-politicisation, not the disease of de-politicisation itself. In some instances, they may even advance the march of the de-political.

This handbook is not a call for cultural producers to down tools. This is not a call for curators and artists to stop collaborating with the public or engaging with political concerns. This is not a criticism of all socially engaged and critical practices. This is not an unequivocal directive for how all curators must work. We must keep working and finding new ways of struggling against de-politicisation.

This handbook aims to give the critically engaged curator the information, the vocabulary, the textual resources, and examples for a practice that does not contribute to de-politicisation. Both a guide and a call to action, this handbook proposes a mode of curating that is sensitive to the latent political possibilities that de-politicisation obfuscates, that is protective of the precariousness of the political, that is supportive of its growth and that upholds the presence of the political in the public domain. It is a different way of seeing the context in which we work and

an attempt to re-position the role of the critical curator.

It is important to recognise that politics, the political, their meanings and the forces that shape them are changing all the time. As politically engaged curators and cultural producers, our practices must evolve, respond to, and take the lead in the constantly shifting terrain of the (post) political. In the future and in collaboration with other curators who align themselves with the post-political curator, this handbook will need to be regularly updated to keep up with the continuous changes.

The handbook is presented in 7 sections with guest texts between them to provide a theoretical touchstone (*Rethinking the Commons,* Stavros Stavrides), alternative strategies (*Direct Urbanism,* Barbara Holub), narratives of practice (*Lurking 2006–*, Verity-Jane Keefe) and proposals for the future (*Demand the impossible,* Stephen Pritchard). Stavrides' text is transcribed from his keynote at the conference *Right to the (New) City* at the former bus station in Milton Keynes in 2016. Holub, Keefe and Pritchard's contributions were from the conference *The Coming Community* at MK Gallery in 2019. I curated both conferences in my capacity as Research Curator at MK Gallery, Milton Keynes.

The Post-Political Curator's Handbook opens with "Section 1: Terms of Engagement", an outline of the terms and concepts such as de-politicisation and the post-political, followed by an explanation of the concepts' functions and limitations in practice.

To make the terms and concepts clear to the reader, examples of curatorial and artistic practices are shown in the context of major new housing developments or planned settlements. References are made to histories of large-scale housing developments and 'new towns' because they can be seen as the testing ground of de-politicisation. This serves as an appropriate locus from where the processes of (de)politicisation can be discerned and to where curators and artists are increasingly lured — by the compelling complexities, placemaking schemes and generous developers. The strategies and tactics in this handbook have been shaped by my doctoral research and curatorial practice in large-scale town planning.

Sharing this knowledge with other curators continues the tradition of learning from the practical wisdom of others. Although the illustrations are particular to my projects, the instructions can be more broadly applied wherever the post-political condition is normalised, or the forces of de-politicisation threaten the fragile political sphere. Asking other curators to contribute to further editions with their own projects is also a way of operating in a post-political mode since it rejects competitive advantages between peers.

"Section 2: Recognising the Post-Political", introduces the reader to the post-political lens. The post-political is not a fixed reality; rather, it is a tendency that threatens the potential for dissensus, conflict and difference. To be able to discern the processes of de-politicisation, we must be able to identify the dynamics of power and the varying forms of agency in any given environment. Through examples of curatorial practice in Cranbrook, Devon, Section 2 outlines the importance and limitations of critical curatorial projects. Section 2 then advances strategies for a post-political practice by learning how to discern and observe the latent or obscured political vitality of a given context. This requires a shift of perspective in critical practice: away from seeking out opportunities for participatory, community and consensus building and towards locating and focusing on the unseen and unmarked possibilities (Rogoff, 2008). This is a practice that takes time, trust, relationships, and the acts of listening and learning.

Sections 3–7 propose a post-political practice that collaboratively mobilises, activates, and propels what is already political (or could be), but what is obscured or suppressed. A post-political curator is not concerned with giving a voice to the 'voiceless', publicly exposing inequity or heroically platforming the disenfranchised. Rather, the post-political practice is unspectacular but transformational on a micro level and builds over time which is (at least to begin with), contingent on the existing relations in a neighbourhood, town, or city.

Time is a key element in the post-political curator's practice, hence the prefix 'post'. A post-political curator is not beyond politics, nor do they

propel the processes of de-politicisation. Rather, they can perceive the de-politicising processes and, with that awareness, intervene and de-stabilise the image of post-political certainty. Sections 4, 5 and 6 includes examples and proposals that renegotiate the way that we experience, reject and reset the temporality, tempo and timeframes in cultural production as a tactic for actualising the political. The handbook suggests three curatorial methods relating to the temporality of the political that can be activated by the post-political curator: Belated, Contrapuntal and Andante.

"Section 7: Post-political Curating and Community Organising", aligns post-political curating with community organising since they share common concerns and methods. This section considers what each practice can learn from the other with a common ambition to grow solidarity between people in resistance to the acceleration of de-politicisation.

At the back of the handbook is a glossary explaining words that may be new to the reader and/or specialised terms in the disciplines in which this handbook functions. I have also included a directory of sorts that lists references from the text, services, organisations, and websites that are intended to be useful to anyone wanting to practice as a post-political curator.

Section 1:
Terms of Engagement

What is de-politicisation?

The process of de-politicisation involves the denial of real political choice, the delegation of decision-making to technocratic mechanisms and the avoidance of conflict and debate in favour of consensual procedures alongside a growing public disengagement from politics. Due to de-politicisation, it is impossible to know who is responsible for decision making and how we can influence change in our communities, towns, and cities.

Theorists such as Wendy Brown, David Harvey, Chantal Mouffe, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Ranciere and Slavoj Zizek have written about the evacuation of the political and the post-political condition in slightly different ways, but they all agree on the source of de-politicisation: global corporate power, the dominance of neoliberal thinking and the rise of consensus-oriented and technocratic governance. Writing specifically about the de-politicisation of towns and cities, the geographer, Erik Swyngedouw defines the condition in the following way:

> The evacuation of the political defines the very possibility of the polis, characterised by the rise of a neoliberal governmentality that has replaced debate, disagreement and dissensus with a series of technologies of governing that fuse around consensus, agreement and technocratic management. (2007, p.58)

What is the post-political?

The post-political is both a) an analytical frame to trace and unpack a process of de-politicisation and b) a condition wherein genuine political engagement is foreclosed or obscured.

The post-political condition is a hegemonic order in which political conflict or debate is suppressed. It is the outcome of the process of de-politicisation and does not exist (yet) as a fait accompli, but there are post-political arrangements and policies which try to eliminate political debate in favour of reaching a broad consensus. The term post-politics is another way of talking about the post-political arrangements of a given context. The consequences of this regime of de-politicisation are that political

conflict and debate become reduced to policy problems to be managed by 'experts', policed by regulators and legitimised through public consultations. Democratic accountability is little more than performative as our representatives become subordinate to non-state, multilateral institutions (such as Development Corporations, World Trade Organisation etc).

Because of these de-politicising institutions or mechanisms, what was once considered central to political contestation — such as the distribution of scant resources or state intervention into the market — is no longer considered a debatable concern. In the words of Margaret Thatcher (1980), 'There is no alternative' so what is there to debate? Facilitated and upheld by the tools and institutions of de-politicisation, the very notion that there could be an alternative to the existing regime of neoliberalism is unthinkable. As a direct result, major political parties are increasingly indistinguishable since their manifestos feature only minor differences about how to implement policies rather than fundamentally different belief systems.[1] Opposing or differing world views are seldom debated by the political establishment, and, inevitably, the electorate feel they are left with little choice and disengage from the political entirely. Political conflict is made more difficult by the absence of any public space, or space that is not privately owned to which residents have free access to gather, protest or simply be seen. Ultimately, it comes down to the idea that if there is no conflict and only consensus, then there is no truly political.

1 For example: following the financial crash of 2008, the Conservative–Liberal Democrat government announced a major austerity programme with the slogan "we are all in this together". Despite the Institute of Fiscal Studies and numerous other research bodies claiming that deep cuts were regressive and counter-effective, more than 250,000 public sector jobs and the services they provided were slashed by 2012. Local Labour Party and Green Party councillors carried out the cuts without resistance, blaming them on the governing coalition. The Guardian on 14 February 2011 reported that "Labour councils shed 50% more jobs than Tory areas".

CONSENSUS!? You keep talking about it like it is a bad thing. I thought consensus was all about harmony and equality?

Consensus politics deny or resolve the conflict that is inherent and necessary to the truly political. Often referred to as 'third-way' politics, consensual decision-making results in compromises that fail to recognise or accept conflicting positions or ideologies. The truly political is based on the fact that there are different positions and that decision-making results in exclusions of certain viewpoints or people. It is the challenge of politics to

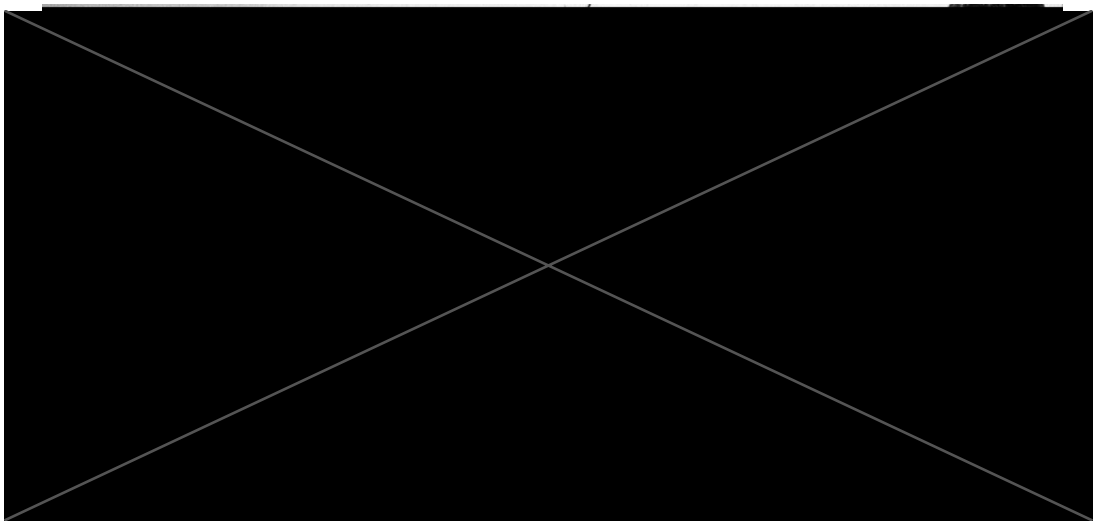
take responsibility for the division and manage the exclusions. Consensus politics (according to Mouffe, 2020) leads to apathetic individualism and counter-political collective identities. These dangers undermine democracy.

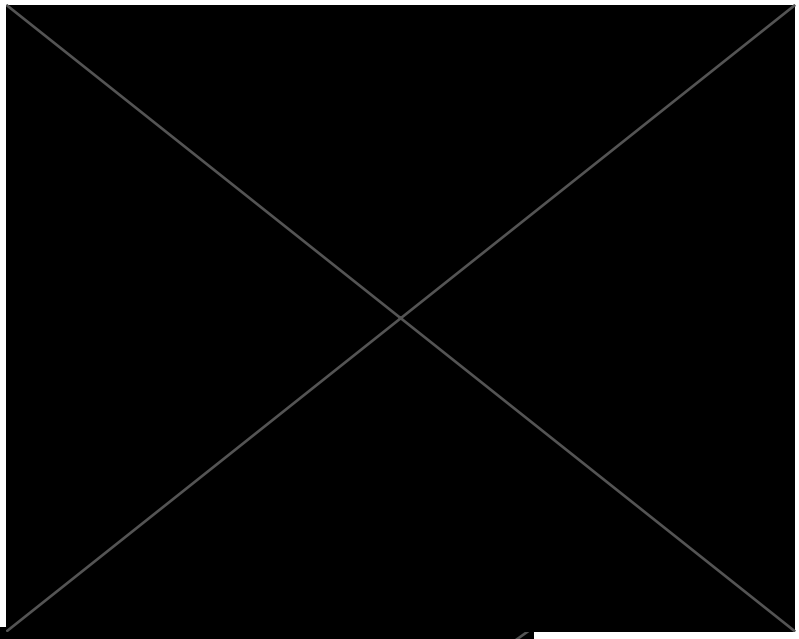
In operation, consensus politics or post-political consensus can most clearly be observed in governance structures related to urban planning and development policy. It is uncritically accepted that urban development on a large scale will lead to economic regeneration, attracting investment capital and consumers. Mega projects, like Ebbsfleet Garden City or Thamesmead Regeneration, claim to provide a solid foundation for fostering future growth and functional transformation which is projected beyond the city limits and linked to regional recovery strategies (Moulaert, Rodriguez & Swyngedouw, 2002). This kind of development is a major shift away from more traditional approaches of redistribution or broadening ownership, for example. In order for such mega projects to be possible, they must rely on an institutional or quasi-institutional organisation of governing that takes the form of horizontal associational networks of private (market), civil society (usually NGO) and state actors providing what until recently was provided or organised by the national or local state (Swyngedouw, 2005a). Such arrangements that are beyond-the-state do not employ democratic debate at any level, but they do engage in "participatory" processes with endless consultations that are inclusive but are engineered to arrive at consensus with zero accountability.

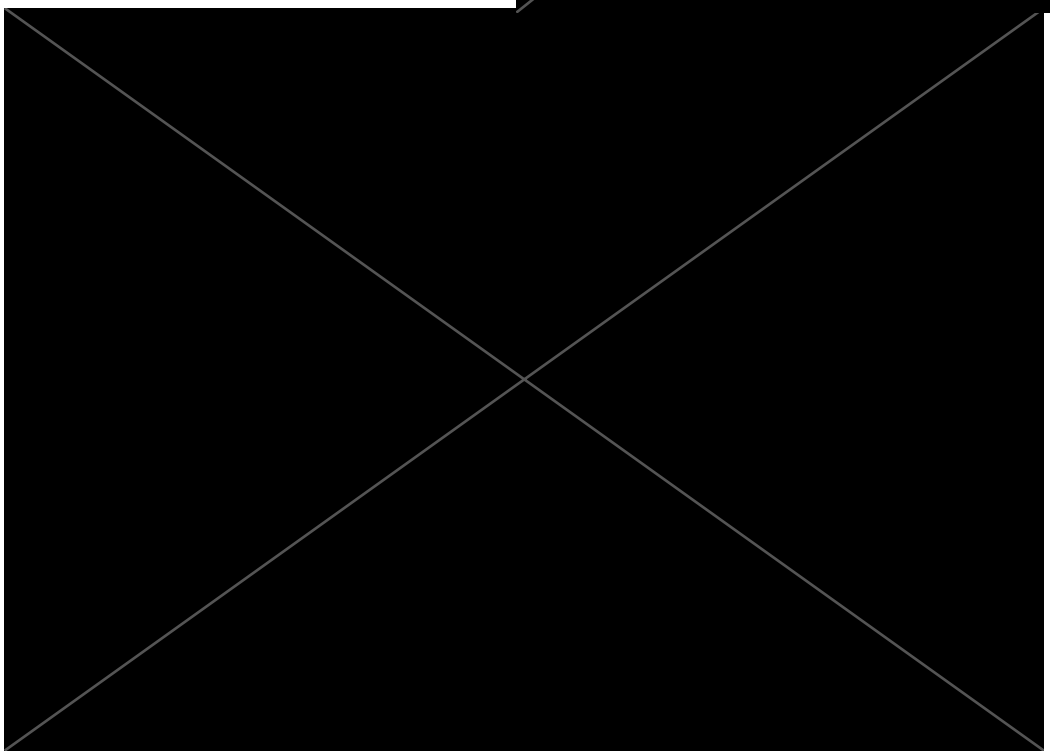
If that is the post-political, what then is the political and what is politics?

The Political: the struggle or antagonistic relations between groups for power and the distribution of resources.

Politics: the mechanisms, systems and bureaucracies that distribute the power and resources that sit on top and obfuscate The Political.







1.1 The Ryde, Hatfield, image from Stuart Whipps, *Necessary Amendments: Homes for the People*, 2019.
1.2 Central Lancashire Development Corporation, photo by Keith Gibson, 1972.
1.3 Milton Keynes Development Corporation, Architects Department, photo by John Donat, 1971.

What does de-politicisation have to do with curating?

De-politicisation narrows the scope of political action by political actors, and, most importantly for this handbook, citizens. It is a process which strips individuals and communities of their agency to affect change. Where de-politicisation can be considered good[2], the justification for subsequent restrictions to civil liberties and access to political action ought to be considered.

Curating regularly contributes to the processes of de-politicisation. Even those curators who claim that they practice critically, or politically, and those who present programmes about politics are, in fact, upholding the evacuation of the political from society. A true story:

2 For example, if there was a broad consensus on the human cause of climate change this would depoliticise the issue. Policy makers could propose regulations without having to repeatedly debate the causes of environmental degradation.

A "politically engaged" curator walks into a bar… and she is asked to develop a public programme as part of a placemaking initiative in a newly built neighbourhood that has been receiving some bad press in the local media for antisocial behaviour, drug abuse and theft. She invites a couple of politically engaged artists to spend some time with the people in the neighbourhood, and it becomes clear that there are very serious problems with inconsistent policing and young people who have no safe places to go to. There is no community centre, no sports fields, no suitable playgrounds and no town square. Because it is a brand-new development outside of the city, there is no town council to intervene or address the growing concerns. It is not clear to anyone how to report their concerns, other than by calling the police. The developer consortium that is building the houses and owns ALL of the land is very reluctant to engage with resident concerns out of fear of bad press and the consequent threat to their profit margins. Furthermore, there is no reason to work with the young people and the residents towards a resolution because their only concern is their profit margin. Together with the artists, the curator works on creating a forum where residents and members of the development consortium can discuss their concerns freely and in confidence through the framework of a workshop

in the ‘neutral’ space of an art centre. The workshop is just one part of a day-long ticketed event that presents theoretical perspectives and other artists’ films that touch on similar concerns or situations.

The above scenario presents a political problem that is chosen by a curator to investigate, critique and perhaps even "resolve" through an artist’s commission and public programme. With the artists, the curator does her best to develop a compelling programme for both the residents and members of the wider public, but they do not have the power or access to resources that the community needs. This ought to be a problem with a political dimension that is debated publicly with all parties involved and then followed by action taken to address concerns, including the adequate allocation of provision. Instead, however, the young people were criminalised, and a well-meaning politically engaged curator (and the funders, art gallery and artists) felt it was her responsibility to ‘help’ the community articulate the problem.

At best, the socially engaged art project has a therapeutic function and helps the community members feel better about their predicament, but the problems remain. At worst, the socially engaged art project silos a political problem into the field of art that exhausts, exploits and/or pacifies the community members so that they ultimately give up their struggle. The curator is left feeling frustrated, because despite her commitment to her work, she could not even begin to resolve the issue. In between the best and the worst, however, are the barely discernible green shoots of solidarity between the constituents and an emerging collective desire for political agency, which the post-political curator needs to learn to look for.

Not all curating contributes to the denial of political choice or action, but much of it can. This handbook was designed to inform curators of their implicated position. It also instructs them how to push back from imposing or colluding with the post-political arrangements.

What should a post-political curator do?

This handbook suggests methods for post-political curators to work with artists, members of the public, organisations, human and non-human actors, and artworks in order to:

- Discern the political potential
- Recognise the post-political arrangements and de-politicising processes
- Deploy strategies to support and protect the growth of those political beginnings
- Facilitate partial story-telling, exhibiting, publishing
- Reflect critically on our position and actions

Section 2: Recognising the Post-Political

This section helps the curator adopt a post-political perspective. Again, the post-political, understood as an analytical framework, is a lens that allows us to trace and unpack a process of de-politicisation. When a curator is employed by an organisation or initiates a project with a public, community group or organisation, they undertake historical and contextual research as part of their practice. This handbook supports a curatorial strategy that includes an assessment of the political and de-politicising forces in a given spatial context as an essential element of that curating practice. The following checklists and methods for identifying processes and actors in de-politicisation are not specific to curating or art-making and so are more generally applicable. However, the examples of practice that follow will demonstrate the post-political lens within a curatorial framework.

Listed here are a number of key indicators of de-politicisation in an urban or suburban context within a so-called "liberal democracy" that have been extrapolated from a UK context, but nevertheless are meaningful in any neo-liberal context. It is not an exhaustive list and will shift considerably depending on the context in which the curator is working (i.e., neighbourhood, institution, housing block, country, student body).

A de-politicised context does not satisfy each of the below criteria, but if a number of them are present in the same space, there is de-politicisation at work.

How to identify de-politicising gestures that pass for urban policy and politics.

Check-list for practical de-politicisation:

- Absence of a clear governance structure
- Unelected leadership
- Extra-large private-public hybrid projects
- Horizontal associational networks of private, civil society and state actors
- No official route to raise concerns, complaints or grievances
- Lack of accountability

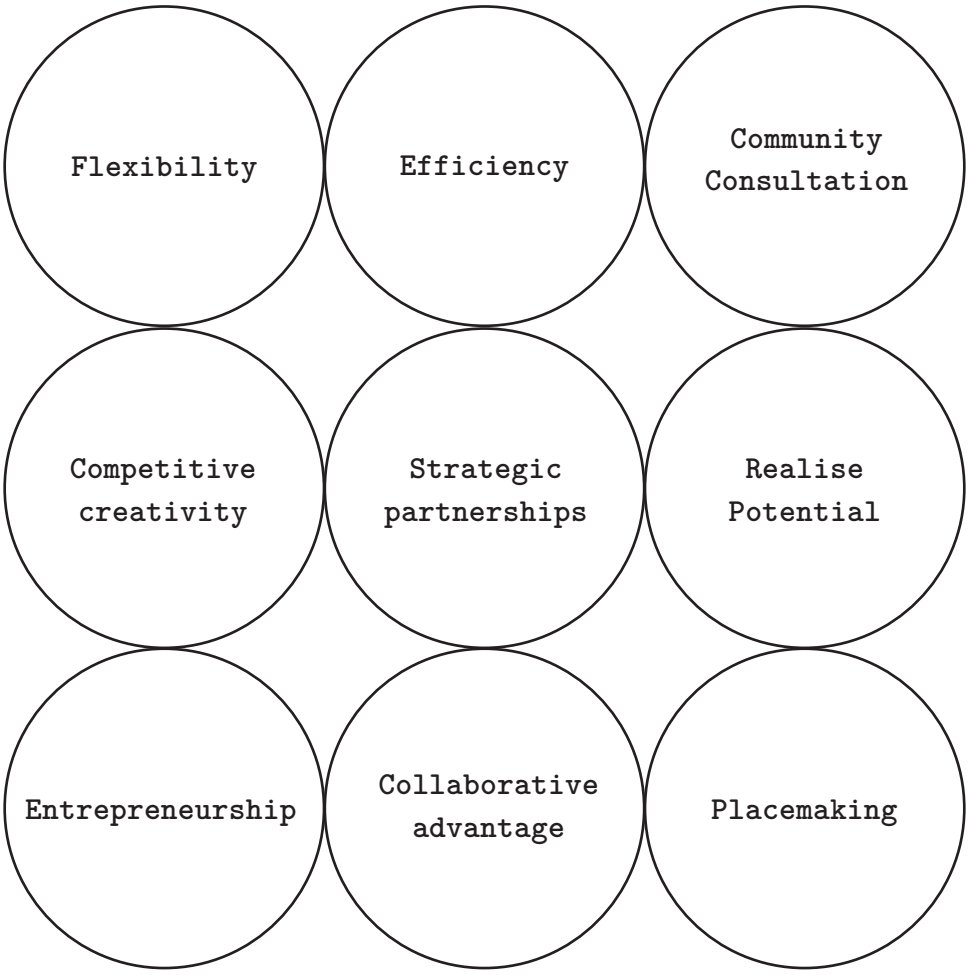
How to identify where debate and conflict is foreclosed or designed-out

Check-list for the foreclosure of conflict:

- Zero public space (i.e., accessible without restrictions in use by the public)
- No freely accessible services, events, groups
- No local media
- Frequent public consultations
- Participatory modes of governance
- Placemaking schemes

One way to identify if the process of de-politicisation at work is to observe the language being used in marketing and communication material.

Consensus Bingo: Take a website, strategy document or masterplan and mark the matrix every time you see one of these words:



It is much more challenging to identify the repression of resistance efforts/the political. It is easier to identify the nascent or burgeoning political which will at the same time reveal the processes that keep it suppressed or de-legitimised. We will now look at a project that I curated in Cranbrook, the largest new settlement in Devon since mediaeval times.

Project: Growth Point, Cranbrook, Devon (2016)

This curatorial project serves as an example of how curating can be a method to identify the processes of de-politicisation at work and, crucially, to discern the political. It is important to make clear that the question of the political was not investigated through the content of the artists' and public programme. Rather, it is through the process of curating the project that the political complexities become apparent. This project demonstrates how a curatorial project can operate on a number of registers simultaneously: the aesthetic, the social, the political. The post-political is a lens through which we can curate, perceive and analyse the conditions where we practise.

The Project

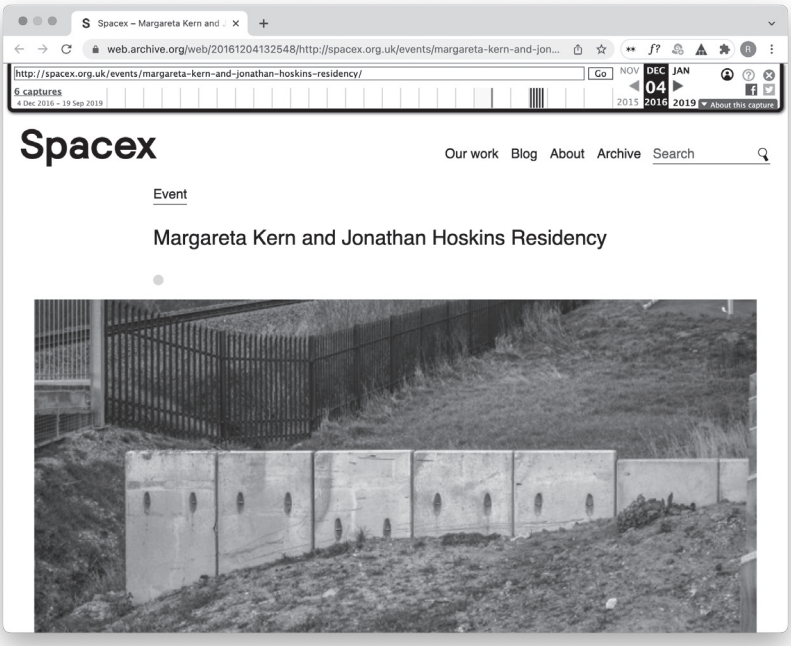
Spacex (now closed) Exeter-based contemporary art gallery and studio collective invited me to curate a research residency at the new town of Cranbrook, Devon. I invited the artists Margareta Kern and Jonathan Hoskins to spend 3 months working in the new town. We three identify ourselves as critical and research-led practitioners who seek to challenge dominant narratives in society as a collective enterprise. Spacex was interested in opening up opportunities for future collaborations with the Cranbrook development consortium (The Exeter and East Devon Growth Point) under the rubric of 'cultural placemaking'.

I have a long-standing interest in the visual culture and politics of new towns in the UK post-WWII era (e.g., Peterlee, Stevenage, Milton Keynes), and Cranbrook is one of the first new towns to break ground in the twenty-first century. Kern and Hoskins wanted to explore the physical and psychological dimensions of Cranbrook new town at an historical moment when the role of the state in shaping urban development and providing social housing is being dramatically restructured. The other stakeholders included the University of Exeter, whose Arts & Culture out-reach office sought to make inroads into Cranbrook for academic research and public engagement. Ginkgo Projects Cultural Consultants and the part-time community engagement officer for Cranbrook were both appointed by Growth Point consortium as part of a Section 106 agreement to develop a cultural strategy and support the community, respectively. The development consortium welcomed the *Growth Point* project without hesitation, and although they did not fund it, they offered space and time for the research residency.

The Growth Point Research Residency

The artists used 3 months in 2016 to investigate the ways in which

2.0 Growth Point Slide courtesy of Exeter and East Devon Growth Point.
2.1 Screen grab from spacex.org from 2016, now archived.
2.2 Documentation of *Living Together* symposium, Phoenix Theatre, Exeter, 28 June 2016.
2.3 Image from *Cranbrook Must Not Fail: A Convention of Future Experts* Margareta Kern and Jonathan Hoskins, 2016.



infrastructure and governance impact upon everyday life in Cranbrook: from the collection of rubbish to the laying of the broadband cables, from the design of children's play areas to the organising of public transport, and from cul-de-sacs to the open fields around a town. Their research consisted of cycling to, from and around the town, meeting one-to-one with residents about the issues highlighted above. They met with the New Community Projects Officer in the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point about the flood risk in Cranbrook, and they joined in the parent and baby groups. They also conducted desk research to investigate local media, social media and archives into the history of the Cranbrook.

Kern and Hoskins planned on taking the research gathered during the residency to work towards a radio play, exploring a range of experimental narrative structures that allow different voices and ways of understanding space to come to the fore. Their interest in the potential of radio and sound for this residency was a response to the relative absence of physical infrastructure in a town that is still being built and with a host institution, Spacex, that no longer has a permanent public gallery space.

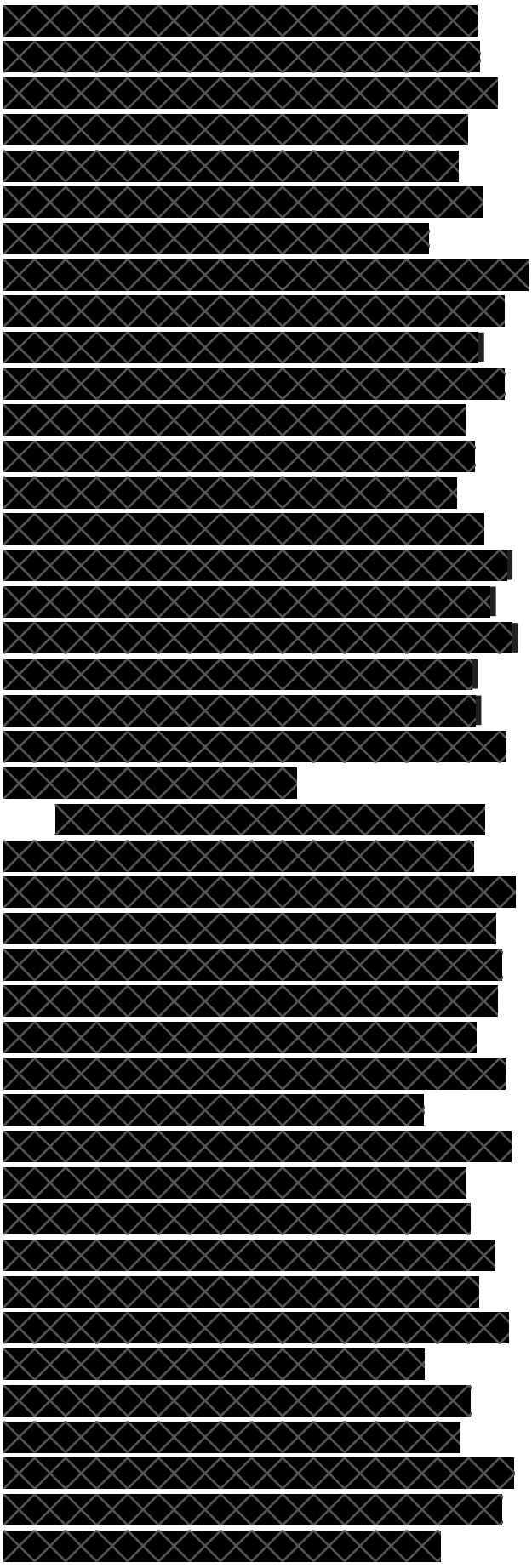
The *Living Together* Event

The end of the research residency was marked by the day-long event, *Living Together* at Exeter Phoenix multi-arts venue led by the curator. The discursive event was staged as a critical consideration of the new town with varying contributions from academics whose work unpacked the aesthetics and politics of housing developments: a keynote from Dr Ben Campkin from UCL Urban Laboratory titled *Images as Urban Infrastructure*, with contributions from Torange Khorsani of architecture/artist agency Public Works and Clive Barnett, Professor of Geography and Social Theory, University of Exeter. There was a screening of the video work *Zonen* (2005) from artist Pia Ronicke and finally *Cranbrook Must Not Fail: A Convention of Future Experts*, a workshop devised by Kern and Hoskins with Cranbrook residents, a community development worker, council planners and academics from Exeter University. The artists planned on using the dialogue generated through the workshop to co-produce the radio play.

The title of the event, *Living Together*, referenced Roland Barthes' lectures titled *How to Live Together* (1977), in which he speaks about 'idiorrhythmy', a productive way of living that recognises and respects the individual rhythms of the other. The event was designed to give the residents and interested members of the public an opportunity to think about how infra-structure comes to shape the rhythms that we adopt and to consider its affective dimension. The curator invited participants to engage with their predicaments playfully and critically.

The *Cranbrook Must Not Fail: A Convention of Future Experts* workshop:

The artist-run workshop was open to the public to attend in person. Those who participated were Cranbrook residents, Exeter university students



The Post-Political Analysis

Employing the post-political as critical framework, this example of practice lays bare the potentially political and the de-politicising arrangements that forestall its emergence. The residency *Growth Point* facilitated a close engagement with the people and place which fostered trust. The period of research enabled the curator and artists access to a variety of stakeholders with varying degrees of power. The symposium *Living Together* framed the theoretical and aesthetic concerns of infrastructure in a new town, offering relevant knowledge in support of the stakeholders and recognition of the unique challenges of living in a new build development. Through the workshop, *Cranbrook Must Not Fail*, Kern and Hoskins created a space that enabled the residents together with consortium staff and planning specialists to articulate their concerns.

The post-political curator is a protector and must develop protective strategies to hold spaces open, even for a moment, with the hope that the political can form without the threat of being quashed.

Cranbrook Must Not Fail: A Convention of 'Future Experts'

led by Margareta Kern and Jonathan Hoskins

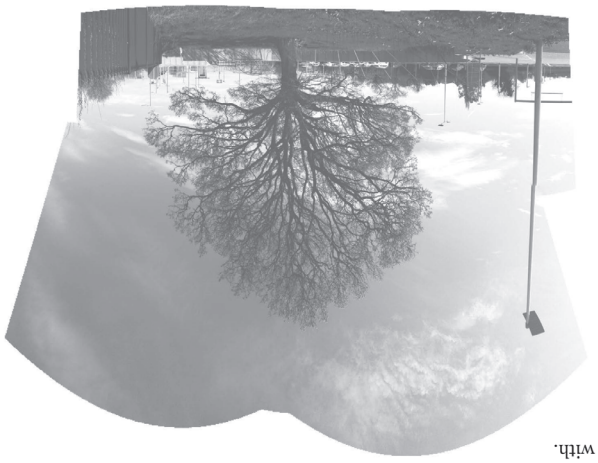
Top Studio 2.30-4pm
Phoenix Exeter
28th June 2016

Part of *Living Together*
Organised by Spacex and
Claire Louise Staunton

In the past two months we have been visiting and researching the new town of Cranbrook as a physical and psychological proposal for a new community. We now invite you for the presentation and consideration of the future risks we have identified.

The convention will take the shape of a chaired but open and generous discussion where everyone is welcome to assume a 'future expert' position. We especially invite anyone who will become an expert on Cranbrook through some kind of involvement in the town, leading up to its completion in 2031. All kinds of expertise and experience will be invaluable, from civil servants, parents, researchers, artists, retailers, teachers, ramblers, commuters, activists and students.

With the future expertise to hand, we will conduct a 'risk analysis' to help ensure the town's spaces are completed without failure, and to establish exactly what that would mean. We are particularly concerned for the future of infrastructure, and whether in 2031 it will refer to things like water and broadband provision, or supportive relationships and an identity you can be happy with.



This Convention of Future Experts is concerned with how Cranbrook is experienced by anyone who encounters it, both now and in the future. Through discussion we will try to find ways of thinking about planned spaces in towns and villages. We want to be attentive to aspects of everyday life that are important but often dismissed - moments of discomfort, awkwardness, bemusement, irritation or a sense of the uncanny.

Two months of research has led to this Convention. Throughout this time we have been looking at Cranbrook through the lens of physical and social infrastructure. This is usually understood as the objects that enable everyday life, such as public transport, domestic utilities and communal spaces. These objects are important, but they are only one half of the picture. They only become 'infrastructure' when they are involved in processes with people in everyday life. These processes - and our experiences of them - are the focus of the Convention.

From our research, we have identified a number of 'risks' that we will present for analysis at the Convention. Each concerns an encounter with an infrastructural process in Cranbrook, as experienced in everyday life.

We invite everyone to assume the position of a 'future expert' at the Convention. We make this invitation so that we can recognise the value of analysis from all forms of 'expertise'.

It is also a way for us to consider encounters with things that don't exist yet. So, if you think that you may have an expertise in rambling, parenting, research, art, retail, teaching or activism by 2031, particularly in Cranbrook, then we invite you to speak from this position. If you want to assume another name, that's fine too.

After we introduce each risk, we will invite the Convention to analyse it further through discussion among its future experts. We hope that we can begin to approach a different way of thinking about everyday life in a future Cranbrook that's of use to us all.

The event will be audio recorded. The transcription of the recording may be edited and published later. We are also planning to develop a radio play from our research after this event, and it may include the performance of parts of the transcription. In any case, no one involved in the research or this event will be identified by name without their prior, express permission.

For further information, or to stay in touch, please contact us on hoskinskern@gmail.com

Budget breakdown >> Labour: 62 days or 31 days each (including visits to Cranbrook; research and project development at other locations) // Artists fees: £4300 (£2150 each including £150 per diem) // Travel: £503 // Accommodation: £1077 (including accommodation & travel for Living Together event) // Sound recording at symposium: £300 // Flyer printing: £84 // Child-care for Cranbrook residents who attend the Living Together event: £40 per day per person.

Funded by Arts Council England, Exeter City Council, Foyle Foundation and supporters of Spacex's Kickstarter campaign 2015.

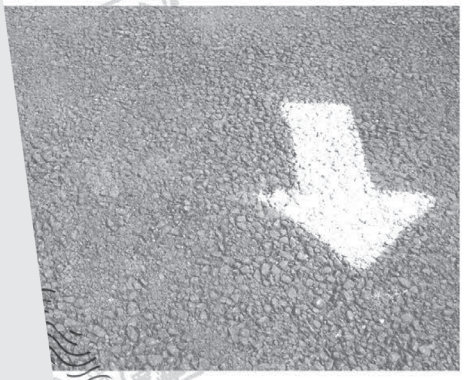
Text, design and printing by Hoskins & Kern, 2016

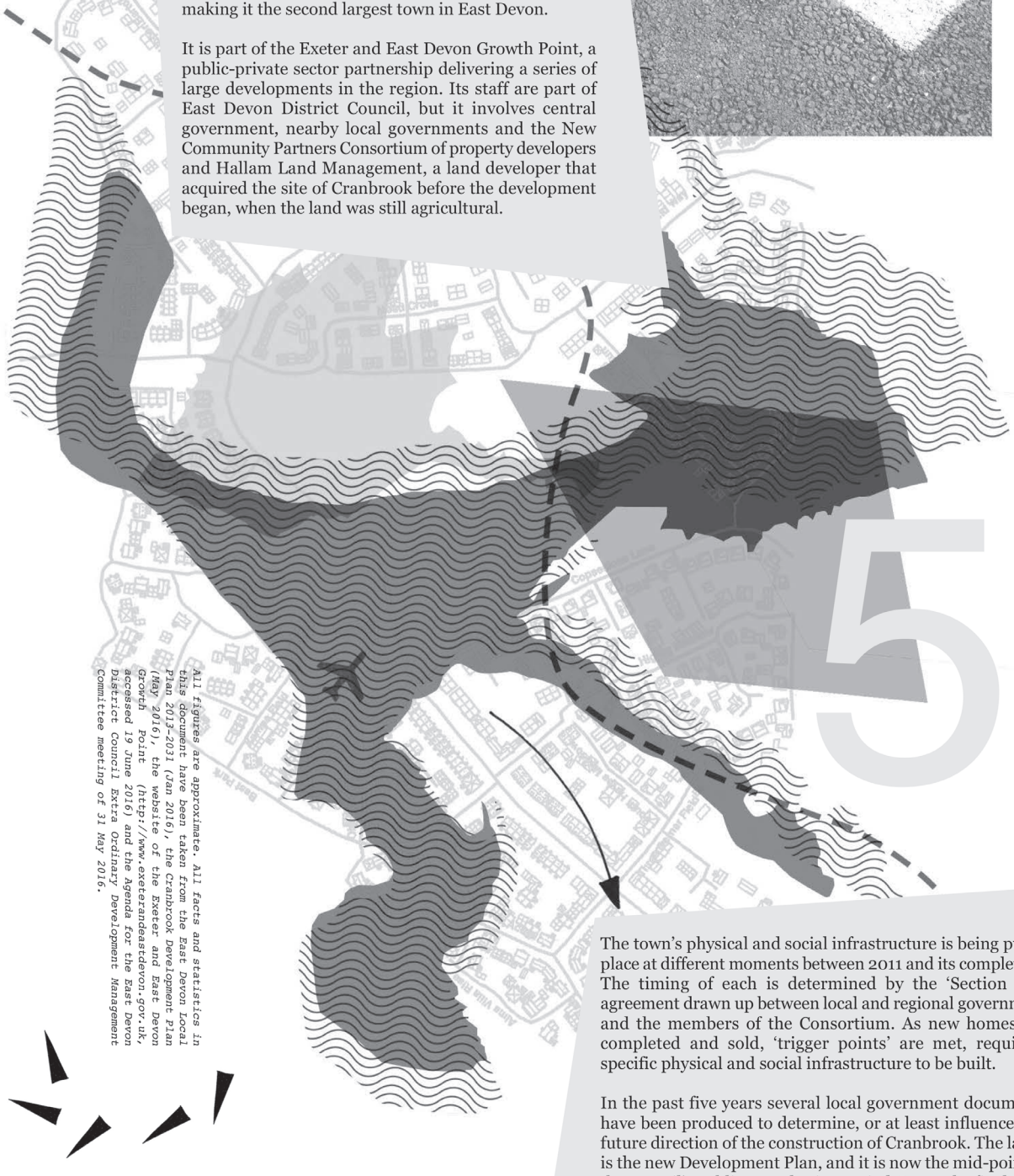
Cranbrook

is a new town that is currently under construction in East Devon, close to Exeter. It is the first "free standing new settlement" in Devon since the Middle Ages.

Construction began in 2011 and now 1,300 houses have been completed and are home to 3,000 people. By 2031, Cranbrook will comprise 8,000 homes and 20,000 people, making it the second largest town in East Devon.

It is part of the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point, a public-private sector partnership delivering a series of large developments in the region. Its staff are part of East Devon District Council, but it involves central government, nearby local governments and the New Community Partners Consortium of property developers and Hallam Land Management, a land developer that acquired the site of Cranbrook before the development began, when the land was still agricultural.





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The town's physical and social infrastructure is being put in place at different moments between 2011 and its completion. The timing of each is determined by the 'Section 106' agreement drawn up between local and regional government and the members of the Consortium. As new homes are completed and sold, 'trigger points' are met, requiring specific physical and social infrastructure to be built.

In the past five years several local government documents have been produced to determine, or at least influence, the future direction of the construction of Cranbrook. The latest is the new Development Plan, and it is now the mid-point in the council's public consultation period. Later, the final draft of this document will determine the final stages in the completion of Cranbrook.

All figures are approximate. All facts and statistics in this document have been taken from the East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031 (Jan 2016), the Cranbrook Development Plan (May 2016), the website of the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point (http://www.exeterandeastdevon.gov.uk, accessed 19 June 2016) and the Agenda for the East Devon District Council Extra Ordinary Development Management Committee meeting of 31 May 2016.

Post-political arrangements are discernible when political conflict or antagonism is silenced or foreclosed: in this case, any potential conflict between the Growth Point Consortium and the residents of Cranbrook cannot be made public, neither as part of a curated programme nor in open letters published in the local news, for example. Even before a collective could form in order to bring their action to a public platform, the aggrieved parties censor themselves. They are not threatened by individuals, politicians, nor even the consortium. It is the threat of market devaluation that forecloses antagonistic exchanges.

The project would have been impossible if it had been designed as a campaign to collectively and artistically expose the inequities that the residents faced with the aim of holding the development consortium publicly accountable. Even if there had been any involvement or engagement, there would have been unsurmountable negative consequences for many of the people living in Cranbrook. The post-political conditions of Cranbrook engender neoliberal governmentality. Neoliberal governmentality refers to an art of governance where the exercise of political power can be modelled on the principles of a market economy (Foucault 2008 p.131). The consequence of power being de-centred, away from the state and aligned with the market, is that citizens play an active role in their own self-government.

Key Lessons from the *Growth Point* Project in Cranbrook, Devon:

1. Cranbrook is a post-political enclosure: the new town in its master-planning (no public space), its lack of any local state infrastructure (only the private-public consortium) and the volatility of the UK housing market (particularly new builds) has excluded the possibility for public political conflict. This does not mean, however, that it is completely evacuated of the political.

2. The project was a strategic tool for the curator, artists, and residents to discern the nascent resistance and the fragile political emergences: the mothers who are at once concerned about the communal facilities available to them while their children were too young for school and the mothers who were afraid of the criminalisation of their teenagers who had nowhere were beginning to coalesce around their associated concerns. Homeowners and consortium planners began to realise that they shared the same distrust in the consortium leadership. Residents made clear that they needed a more accountable, transparent, and democratic governance structure in place (at the time of curating, a town council was barely established). What became clear to the stakeholders was that theirs was not an individual experience. It is a common experience within a community that is atomised by design, which keeps them from collectivising and acting.

3. The space created by art is considered benign enough to host conflict: the stakeholders agree that the safe space created by *Growth Point* (throughout

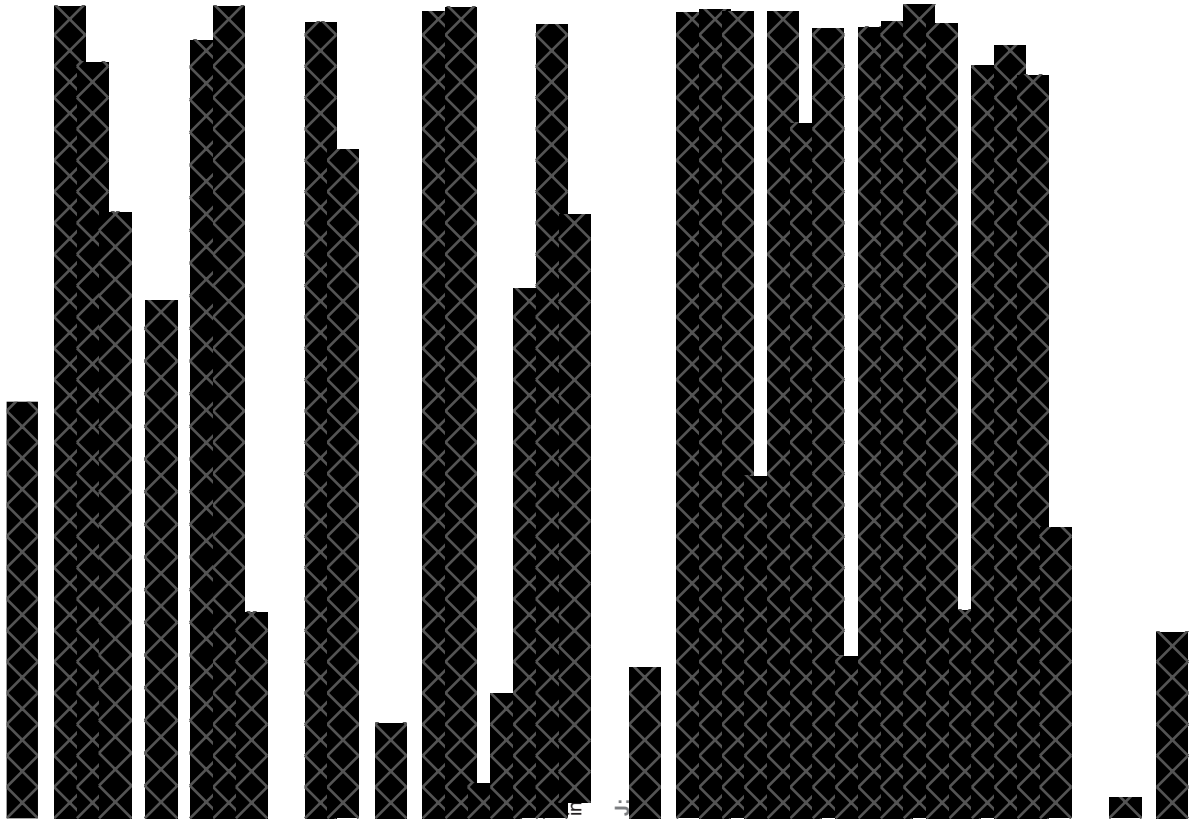
the process of research as well as at the symposium and workshop) would not threaten their livelihoods. Speaking with curators and artists as part of an art project is perceived to be far enough removed from the consequences of making the concerns public that they can passionately share their concerns over the fairness and legality of the consortium's actions.

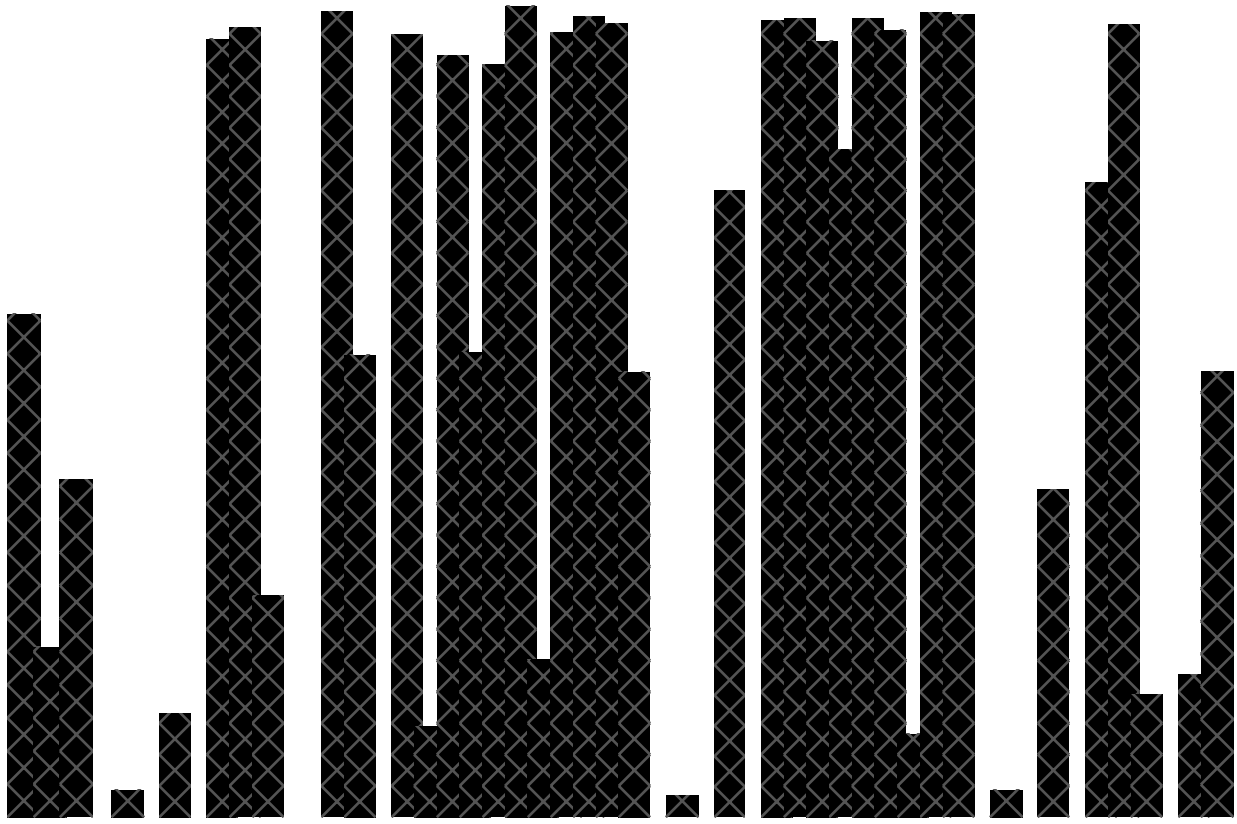
4. The space created by art is considered strong enough to keep residents safe from market harms: being (or perceived to be) benign is actually the strength of the space created by the curated project. However, in doing so, it supports the idea that these concerns need to be kept out of the public domain and/or within the confines of the 'benign' art field. It could be argued therefore that it maintains the de-politicisation.

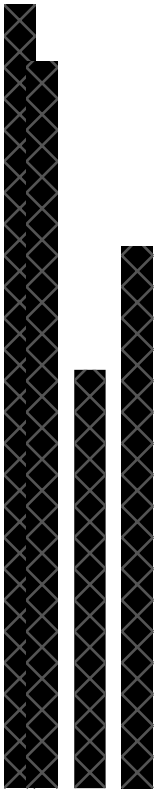
The Post-Political Curator

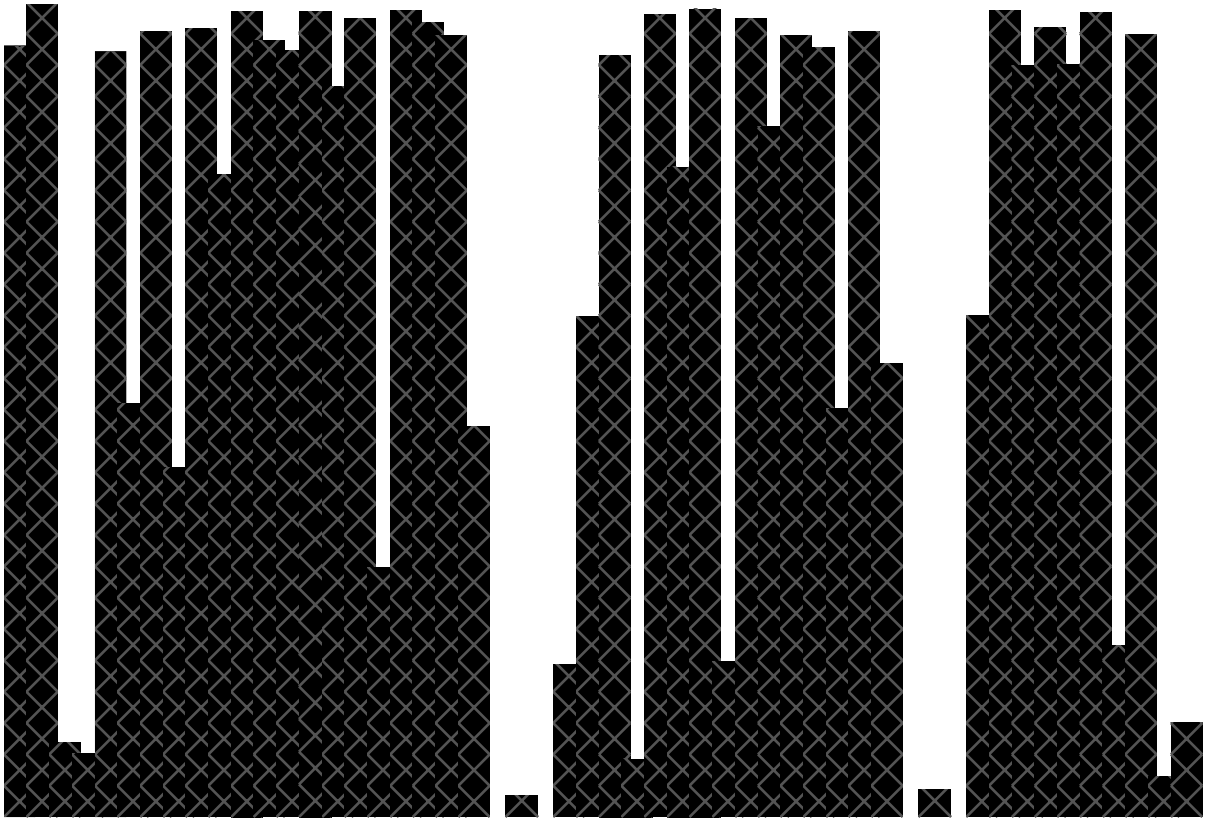
***Growth Point* is a demonstration of how to discern the political and the process of de-politicisation by adopting a post-political lens. This means that the curator can come to discern the processes of de-politicisation at work and green shoots of political agency that are being silenced. It is not a demonstration of how-to curate projects that facilitate the political, nor does it equip the residents with anything more than a collective recognition of their predicament. Clearly, if the objective of the curatorial project were to produce a public platform to somehow articulate and exhibit the latent political rumblings in Cranbrook, there is a significant ethical dimension to consider. Political debate and accountability in the public sphere are worthy ambitions, but at what cost? The Post-Political Curator must invoke the etymological root 'curare', literally to care. She does not just care for artists, artwork, or communities: she cares for the emerging political formations, the alliances that are beginning to take form. She must be able to see them before she can curate with them, and for them.**

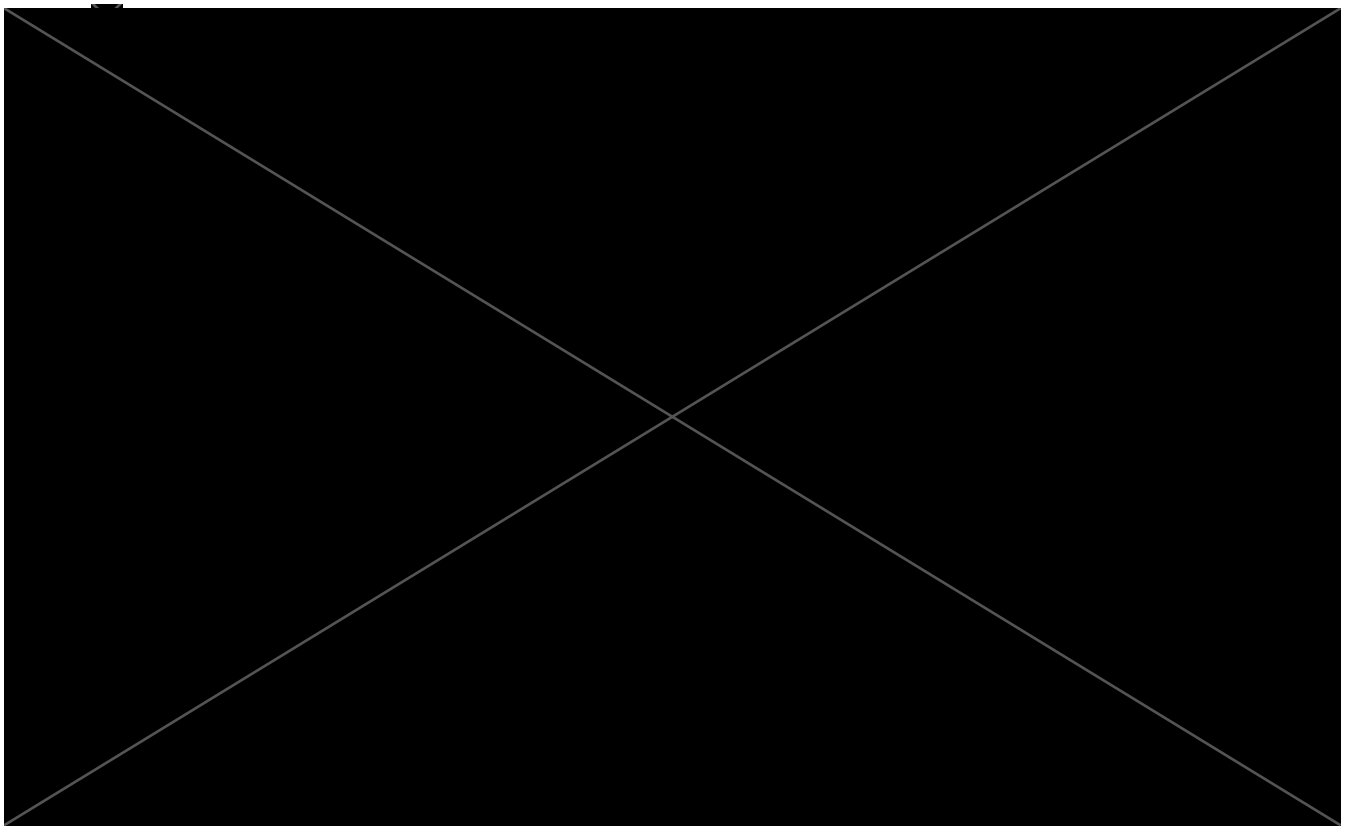
What follows is the script for the *Cranbrook Must Not Fail: A Convention of Future Experts* Margareta Kern and Jonathan Hoskins, 2016. Courtesy of the artists.

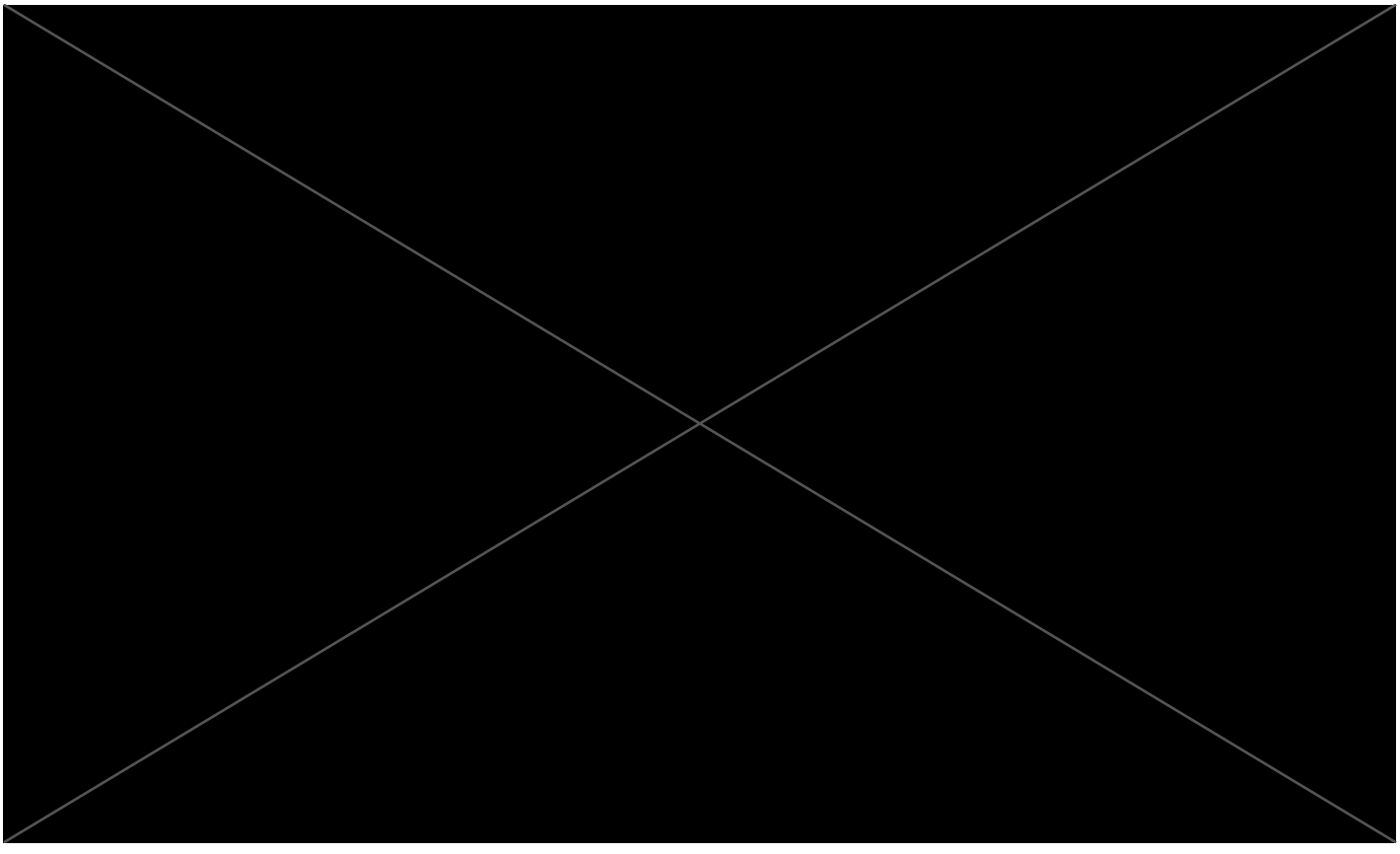


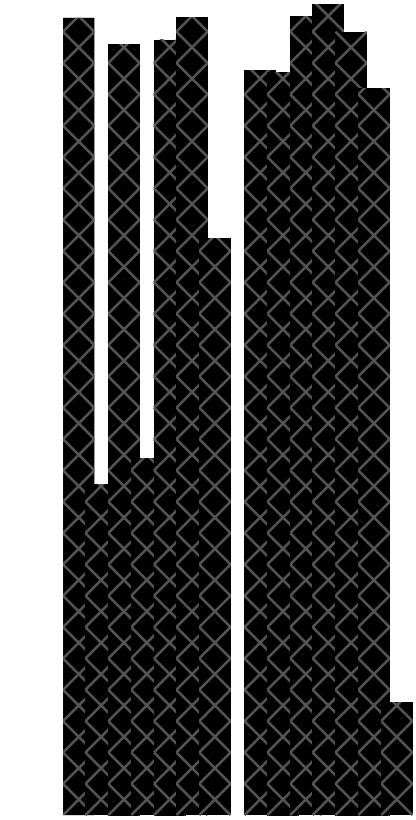


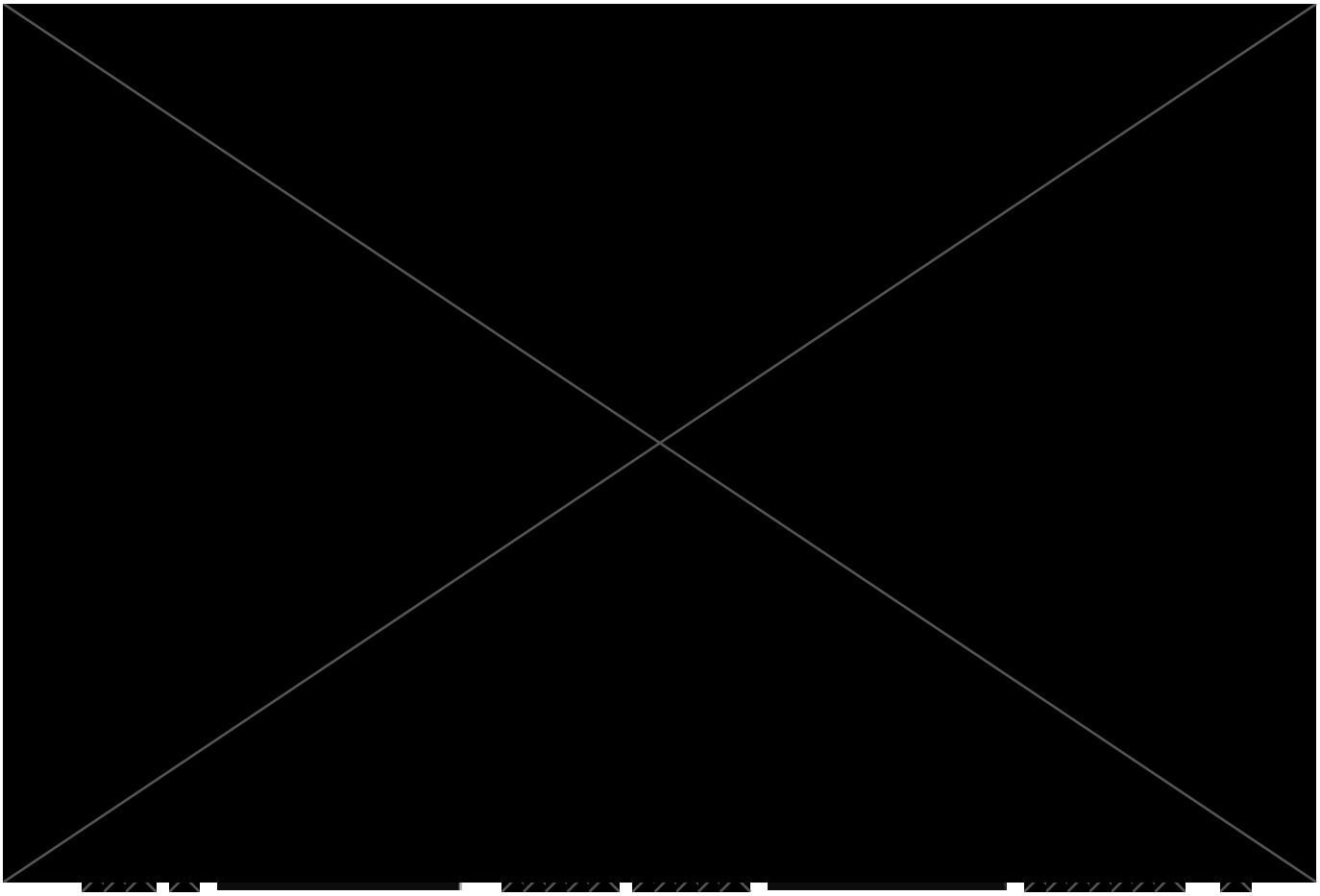


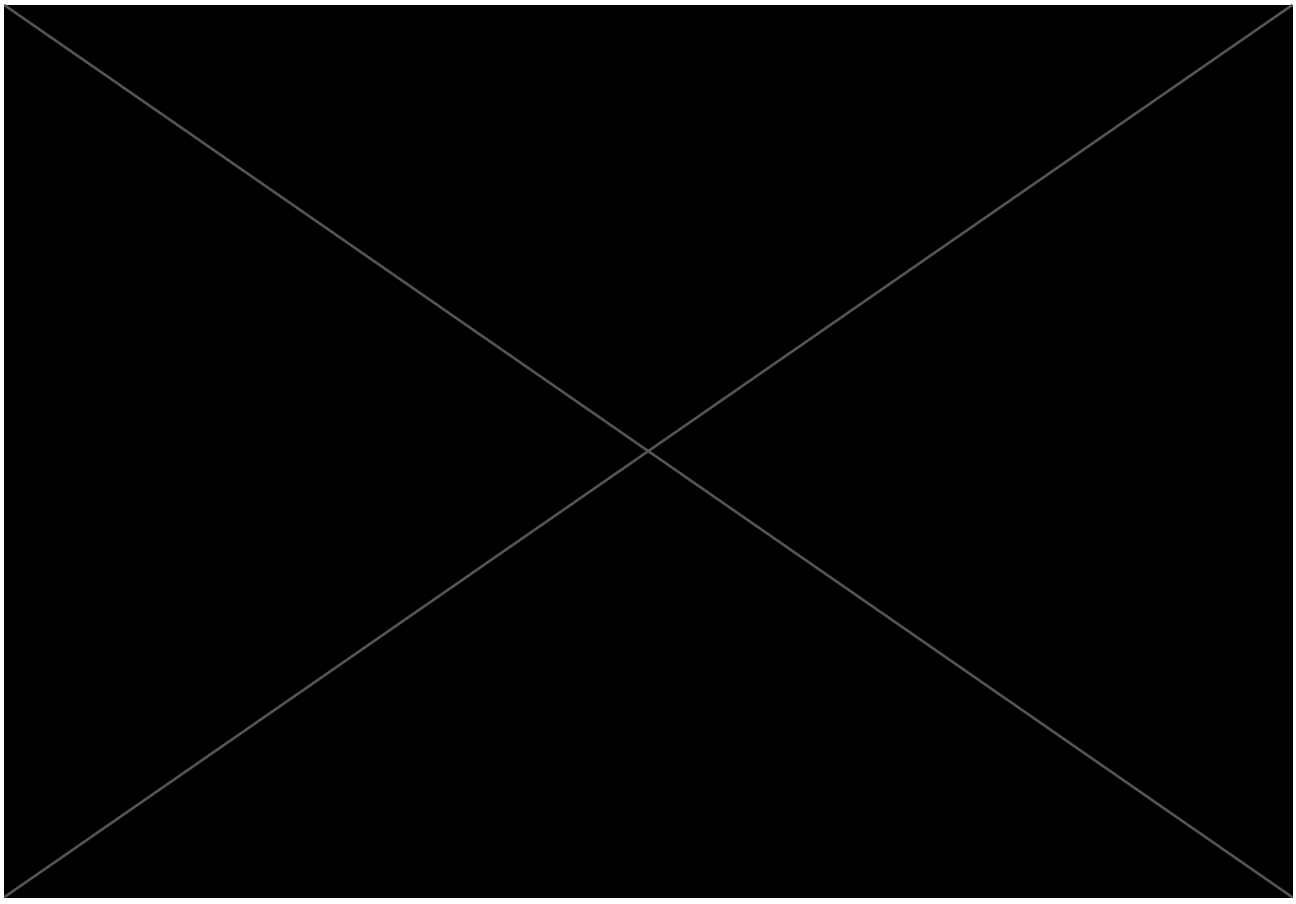


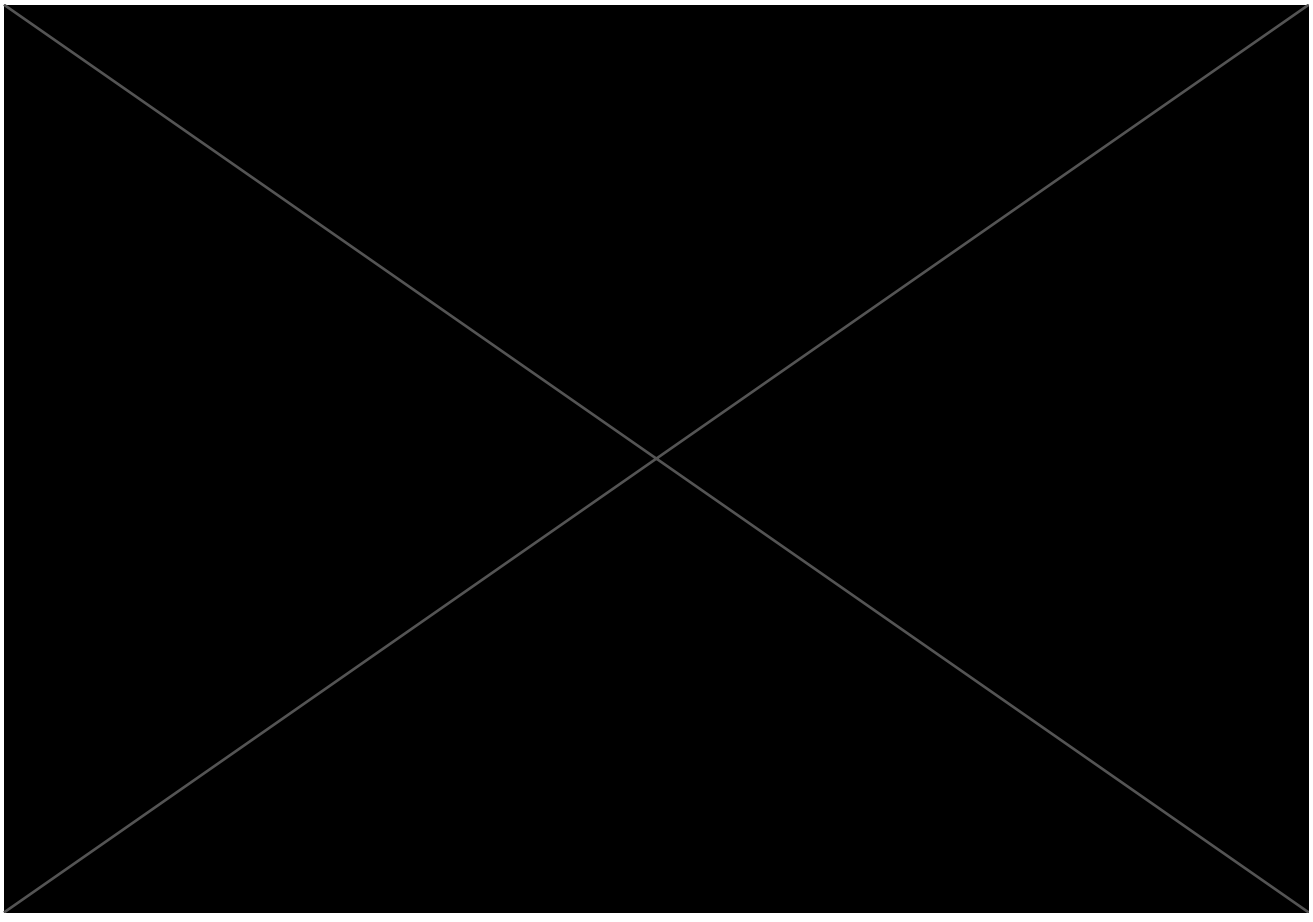


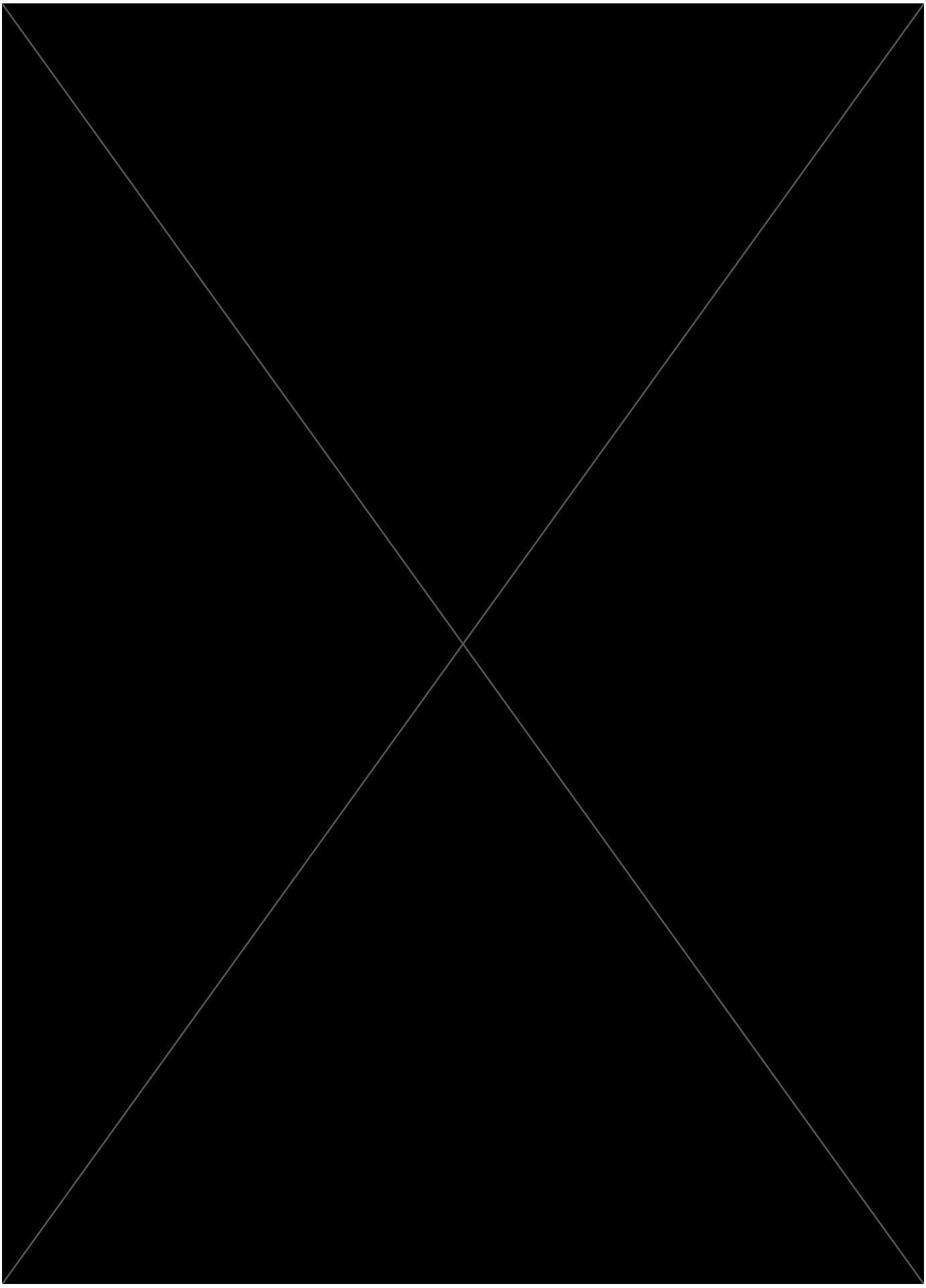


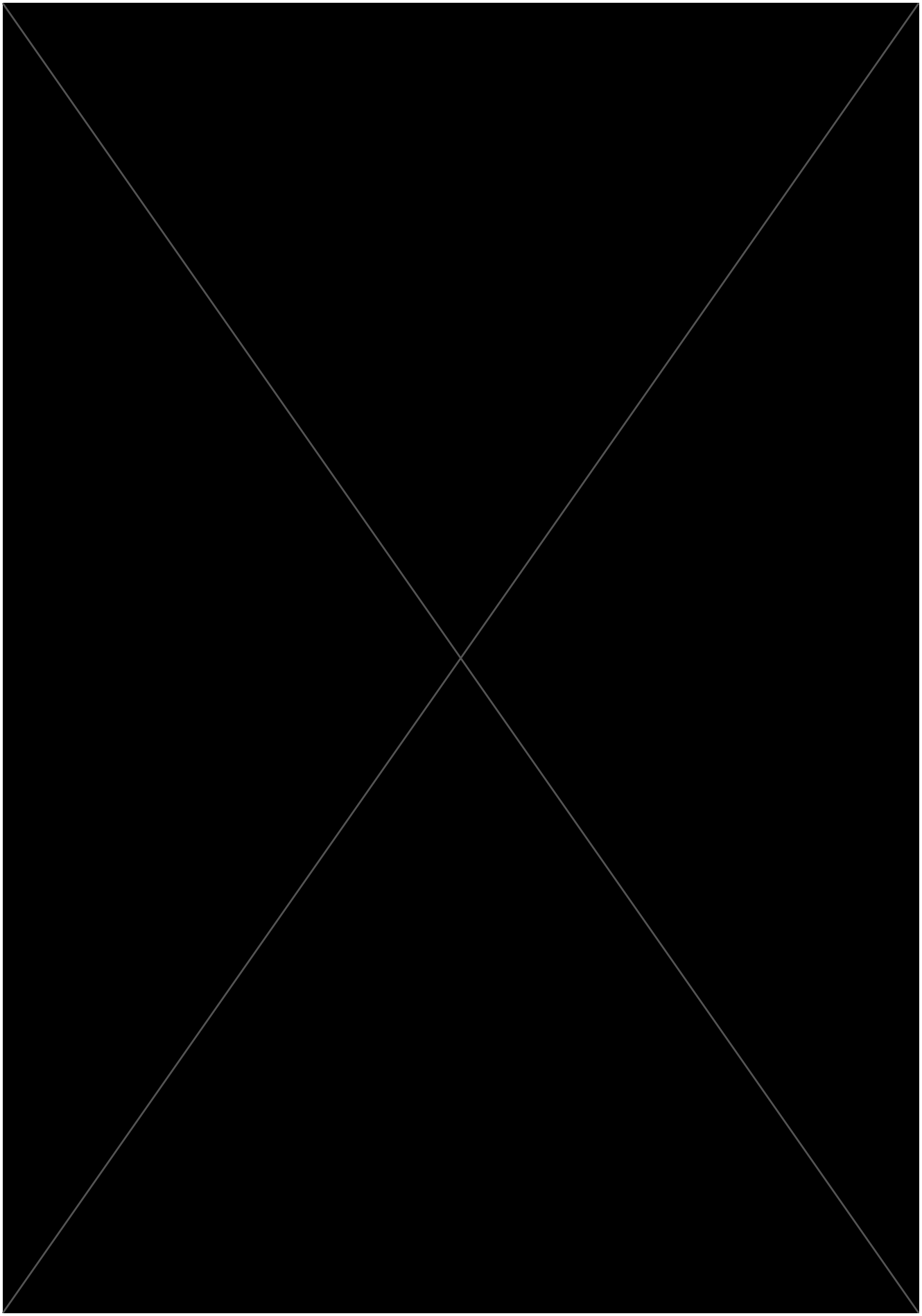


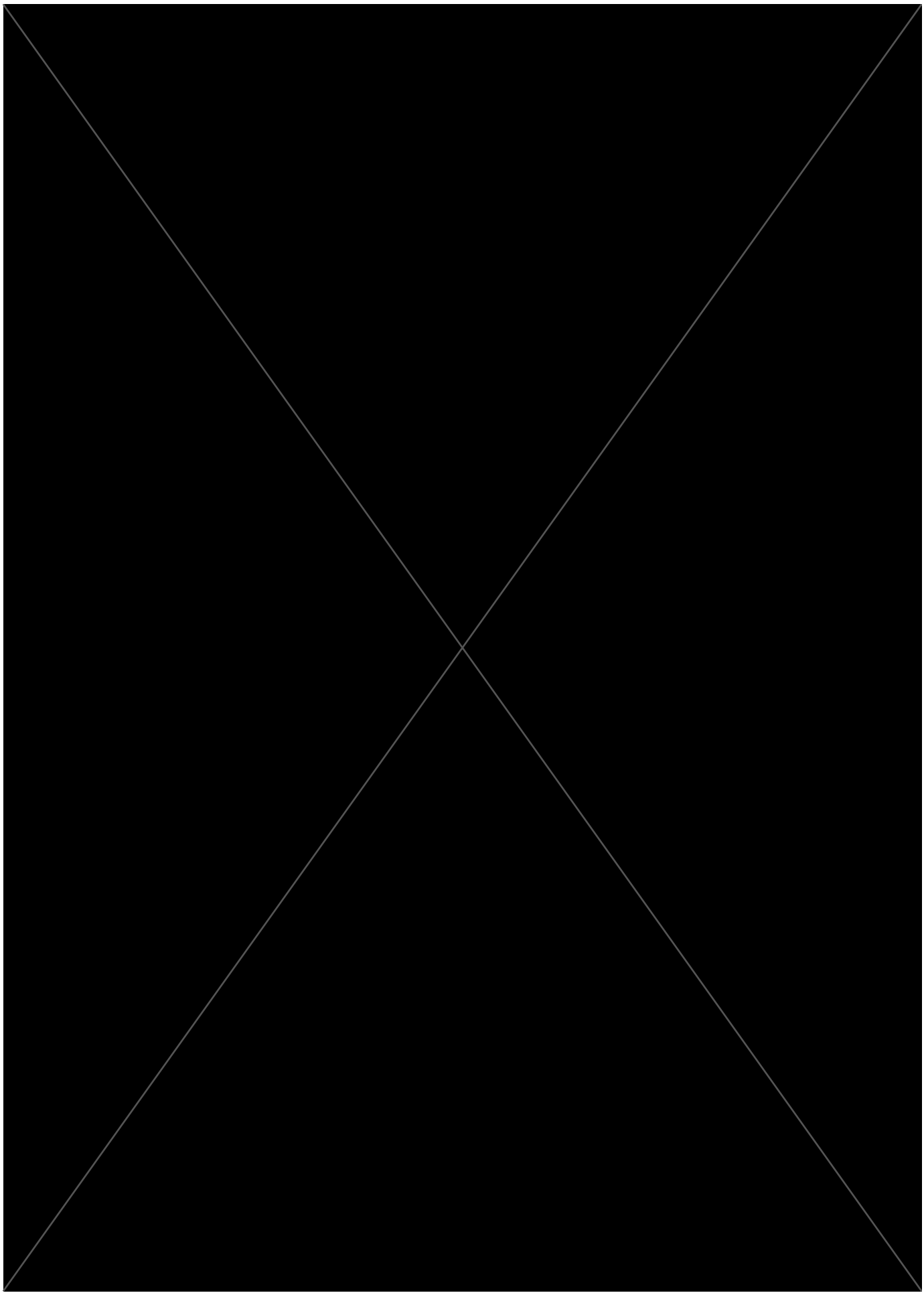


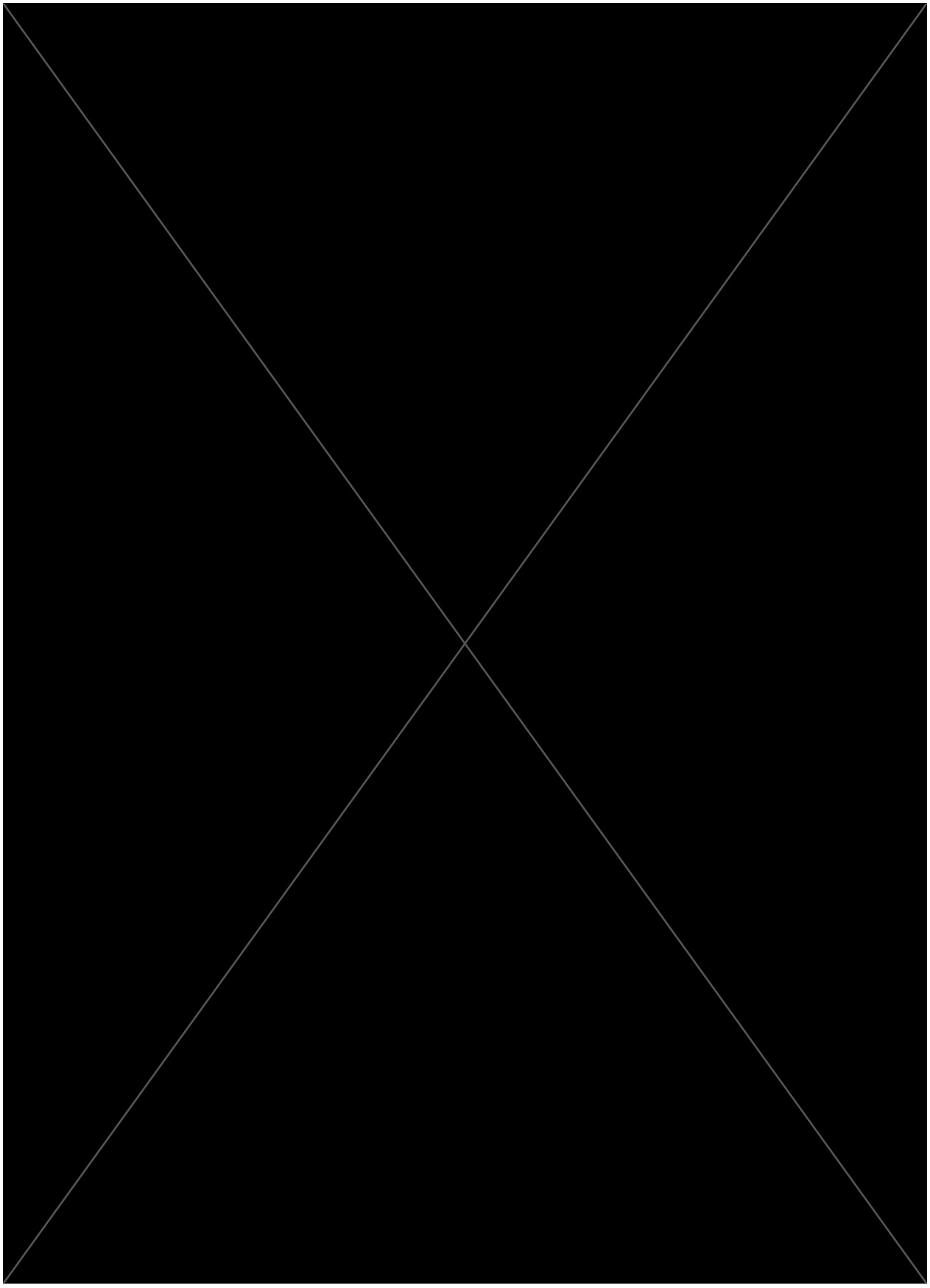




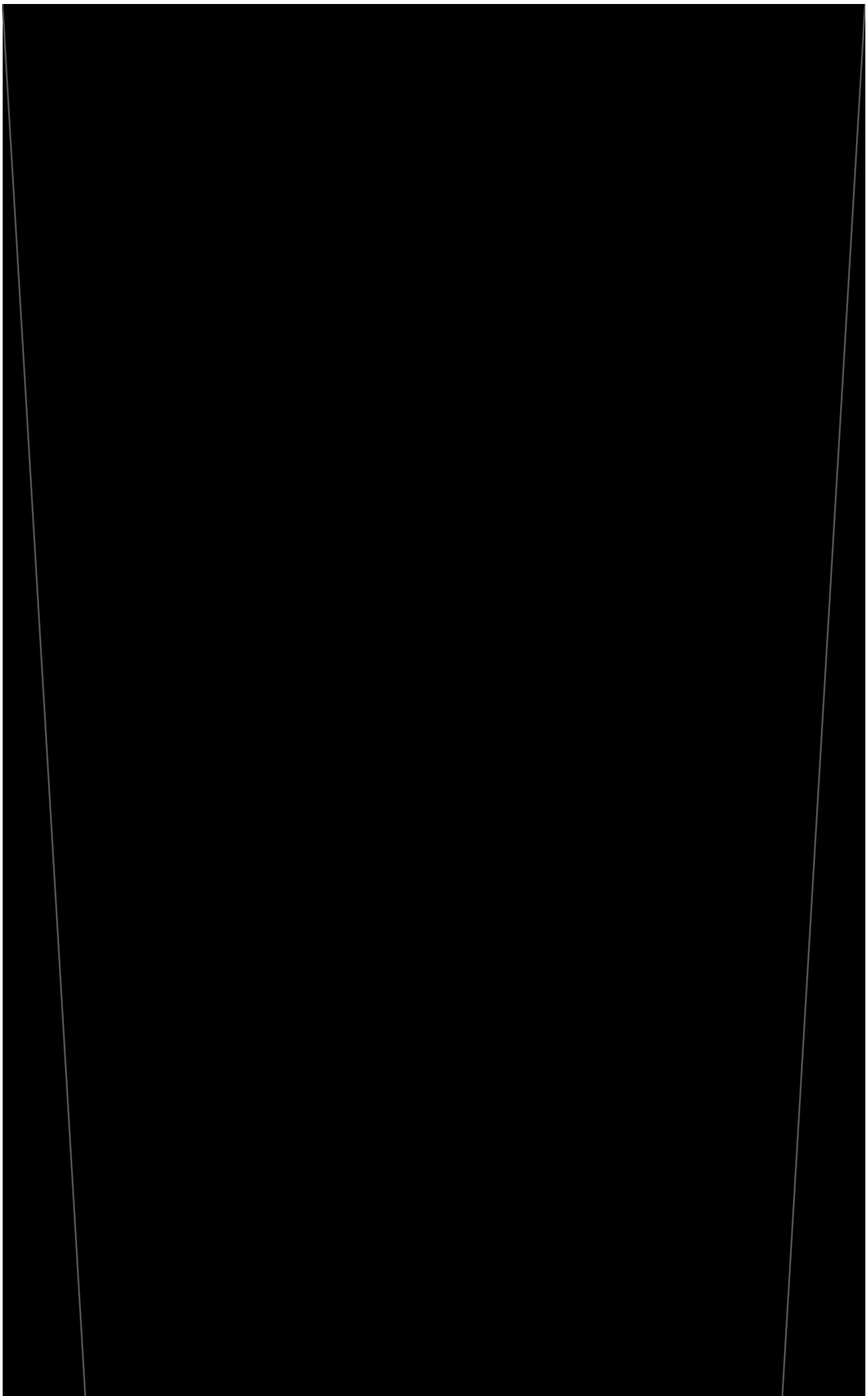








2.5 Cranbrook must not fail presentation notes



Demand the Impossible:
New Communities and Concrete Human Existence
Stephen Pritchard
24 May 2019

The UK is facing many crises. Our NHS is in crisis. Our schools are in crisis. Our government is in crisis. We face a staggering homelessness crisis. Many of our families and children are suffering from abject poverty. Racism and fascism are on the rise. Our culture (or rather our cultures) are in crisis. And, of course, we are facing a housing crisis of a magnitude not faced since the end of the Second World War. People are being dispossessed of and displaced from their homes and there's nowhere, for many, to go.

And we talk about creative placemaking...

Don't get me wrong, we need to build entirely new cities, towns and villages and we need to build them all over the UK, not just centred around the South East of England. We need to build much more than just new villages, towns and cities, however. We need to build new economies that deal with the London-centric population and wealth accumulation that has for far too long sucked the life and the people from other UK countries and the English regions into its all-consuming core. This needs new infrastructure and restructured investment of a kind never before imagined.

We need to make new towns and cities and villages that are well-connected — in every sense of the word; that are able to mitigate the climate catastrophe this country and our planet now faces; that provide real jobs that give people real security – not precarious post-Fordist living which fetishises artists as its ragged heroes. We need to return to local living – whether in villages, towns or cities.

We need these new places to have all the facilities that future generations will need. We need community centres and sports facilities and green spaces. Far too many have been sold-off for profit or destroyed by thoughtless developments. And, of course, the communities who have lost the most are those who had the least to begin with: working-class communities. We need communities. We need community spirit. Capitalism and neoliberalism have devastated our communities and our ways of being and living together creatively.

This text was edited from Stephen Pritchard's contribution to The Coming Community: Art, New Towns and Place on 24 May 2019 at MK Gallery, Milton Keynes. Pritchard was invited to share his thoughts about place-making and what it could mean in a 21st century new town.

We must Demand The Impossible.

Unfortunately, creative placemaking does not demand the impossible. It reproduces and reinforces the already possible. And it does this over and over and over again. Pretty bunting, patches of grass, rainbow pedestrian crossings, bikeable, walkable, commissioned street art, quirky sunflower street signs, saccharin-sweet salve to the onward march of a neoliberalism that is well-versed in disguising its heartlessly selfish greed behind colourful and fun symbols of capital.

I have written my critique of creative placemaking at length elsewhere and will not rehearse my arguments in detail here today. Suffice to say that we need to think much bigger and demand the impossible right now!

We need to take back our existing cities, towns and villages from the grabbing hands of capital and profit. We need to take back our new towns, cities and villages before they are even built; whilst they are being built. We have a right to the city (and other places where we live) and we must exercise our right to the city by demanding the impossible.

We need to organise ourselves and we need to demand we are, at national, regional, and, crucially, local levels fully able to participate in the planning of our social, economic and political systems at every level.

We live in — and this is becoming increasingly apparent as each day passes — a failing representative democracy that has always favoured the few, not the many. We need to rethink this political system and put people at the heart of everything that we do, every decision that we make. We need participatory democracy and that should be, wherever possible, devolved to as local a level as is possible.

I'm talking about a *radical* shift in how we govern ourselves and those who have ruled over us for centuries and centuries will not let their grip on power slip. Our rights have never been gifted to us and they will not now. We have always had to struggle. And it is the struggle that is behind my notion of place guarding – something very different yet in some ways similar to placemaking.

The trouble with placemaking and, perhaps even more so with creative placemaking, is that it does not and cannot offer people the freedom to take

back the city because it is often rolled out as an integral part of neoliberalism's totalising system. Creative placemaking uses art to window-dress neoliberal regeneration and renewal agendas.

The crucial question here is: 'Why should we (re)make your places for you?'

People, communities, cultures already exist in places. They produce and reproduce their own social spaces.

Creative placemaking is ultimately a state- and local authority-led policy, filtered down to arts institutions and then on to artists and down to participants and audiences via agencies, funders and a raft of philanthropic foundations and charities. Agencies typically seek to 'empower' marginalised people and places through a mixture of socially engaged art, education and outreach.

Whilst creative placemaking could avoid criticism that it is simply remaking places to fit white, middle-class norms, thereby effectively acting to help gentrify neighbourhoods, by being deployed in new cities and towns, it will still, I argue, serve as a toolkit for state- and local authority-led governance, planning and design principles that are tied to false forms of "participation" and "inclusion".

Place guarding is different. It puts people first, not place. It puts the people who either already live in an area threatened by redevelopment first, or, in the case of new towns and cities (which of course also have existing populations and environments, etc.), place guarding puts the existing *and* new inhabitants at the heart of deciding what the new urban space needs.

People need to decide on what development and redevelopment is needed, not be "consulted" when planners and government officials have drawn up "draft" plans.

Place guarding is about demanding the impossible. This impossible is, of course, possible: a realisable utopia.

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Utopia stands in opposition to the present culture and against the dominant ideology that controls our social, political and economic thinking with mantras

like There Is No Alternative. Critical utopias seek to imagine new visions of that which has not yet been realised but which is imminently realisable.

This type of thinking is about hope for a better world and a radically different world from the one we live in today. It is about thinking about both what has and has not yet been achieved. It is about visualising futures that go beyond a commodity society and global economy based upon the exploitation of humans and nature and natural resources.

Critical utopias imagine futures that cannot be fully articulated because they do not yet exist.

My approach to place guarding is grounded in praxis – in practice as research *and* research as practice – in thinking *and* doing. Living and being, creatively.

Henri Lefebvre in *Critique of Everyday Life* wrote:

> Our towns may be read like a book... [They] show us the history of power and of human possibilities which, while becoming increasingly broad, have at the same time been increasingly taken over and controlled...

He points out that it is not academics or populists or middle-class people, or even artists alone, who are best placed to decide upon the everyday lives of working-class people. Working-class people and communities should be trusted to build the places and spaces they need and desire *together*.

Rethinking our cultures is clearly part of that. We must break free of a limited and narrow definition of culture and instead accept that, in the words of Raymond Williams, culture is ordinary. It exists in the everyday. It is everyday life. And it is only by being trusted to fully participate in the unfulfilled possibilities of everyday life and our cultures and cultural activities that everyone can begin to experience the possibilities of concrete human existence.

This is because space is socially produced. It is a concrete abstraction. And to socially produce space based on the principles of neoliberal capitalism transforms such spaces into commodities to be produced, distributed and consumed. This is the language (no matter how it is dressed up) of creative placemaking.

Utopia — and particularly critical utopias — are tomorrow's possibilities. Creative placemaking is the product of neoliberalism — make no mistake. And neoliberalism is a false utopia, offering only further oppression for the majority of people. As Lefebvre pointed out in 1968, "To put art at the service of the urban does not mean to prettify urban space with works of art."

***

Rather, it is only by placing the working-class at the forefront of the political agenda (of which planning is a part) that we can "profoundly modify social life and open another era". This is radical change, not the superficial change offered by the Trojan Horse of creative placemaking.

We must demand the impossible and we must demand it now! The impossible is possible, if only we decide to make it so. The possibilities of living and being creatively in new towns, cities and villages can be imagined together now, if we are serious about participation and participatory democracy and dealing with class oppression and about cultural democracies at local levels.

Imagine what our new cities and towns could be. Let's *not* make the same mistakes again. We must look to our futures together and that means radical system change. We can plan our futures together. We can take back the cities, and we can trust the people who will live in our new towns and cities to plan them the way they want.

There are many people working to put people ahead of place. I'm working and have worked in Middlesbrough to put local services first; in Cardiff with Creative Commons Cardiff on a policy initiative to safeguard and expand grassroots culture in a new city-wide alliance; in County Durham pit villages on a people-powered plan to take back land demolished by Category D legislation; with Super Slow Way as a critical friend asking how far can you go?; and as a co-organiser for the Movement for Cultural Democracy that is developing a radically different grassroots approach to rethinking our cultures with participatory democracy and redistributed funding at its heart.

As Mark Purcell says, the "possible world is a long way off" but it is simultaneously "right in front of us".

Let's begin by imagining our new places and reimagining our existing places together. We can and must be radical. We can do things differently. Imagine the places where we live and will live in the future as John Berger imagines fields: Remember what it was like to be sung to sleep. If you are fortunate, the memory will be more recent than childhood. The repeated lines of words and music are like paths. These paths are circular and the rings they make are linked together like those of a chain. You walk along these paths and are led by them in circles which lead from one to the other, further and further away. The field upon which you walk and upon which the chain is laid is the song.

Let's reimagine art as everyday life and let's be creative and critical in the ways we demand the seemingly impossible and make radically new possibilities possible today!

To reconnect to ourselves and reconnect with nature, we need a revolution of everyday life.

> We *do not need art or artists or communities popped into convenient little boxes*.

Section 3:
Time Rebellion

What time is the post-political?

In order to address the conditions of the post-political, or to curate using a post-political critical framework, this handbook places significant emphasis on temporality and the time of the political. As Wendy Brown (2010, p.21) has said, the prefix 'post' in post-political signifies a formation that is temporally after that to which it is affixed, but it does not indicate that it is over or completed. So, neither has the political disappeared nor is there a brand-new era of the exclusively post-political condition but the 'post-' does signify an important juncture or deviation from the political which is only possible after the political comes into being. What then is the temporality of de-politicisation — and what concern is it of the post-political curator?

Temporality, here, relates to the way in which a sequence of events, a kind of history, is physically experienced by those who live through them or experience them, rather than a measurable and calculated notion of time/chronology. As demonstrated in the example of *Growth Point* in the previous section, post-political arrangements are pre-emptive, predictive and risk averse. The privatised, securitised enclosures of consumption foreclose any possible event that may impede the progress of de-politicisation through self-governance and policing. There are three key aspects of temporality that the post-political seeks to uphold:

1. The alienated labour-time of capitalism

Much is written about the labour-time of capitalism with the underlying assumption outlined by Marx:

> As exchange-values, all commodities are merely definite quantities of congealed labour-time. (1990, p.130)

De-politicisation ultimately serves capitalism to reinstate the class dominance of the capitalists at the expense of other sectors of society (Harvey, 2005). A temporality that focuses on episodes, aims, events and

timelines regulates our behaviour for maximum productivity. Capitalist conceptions and practices of time can be understood as a formulation to alienate, subsume and reduce the concrete, reproductive times of human lives via abstract clock-time (Martineau, 2015, p.278). Post-political curators must be 'time-rebels' to complicate the process of value formation (Rifkin, 1987, p.13).

2. The forward marching, linear and amnesiac episodes that maintain this alienation

Neoliberalism upholds the belief that constant innovation in a linear pattern of growth is a means to achieve human progress. As the artist, Renate Lorenz, makes clear in their edited publication *Chronopolitics, Art & Research* (2014), such a fixed notion of linear time (chrononormativity) is not an *effect* of colonialism, homophobia, capitalism, and asymmetries of power; rather, it is its *foundation*. The ideal condition of the post-political enclosure is one with no historical past and no future horizon, only the present moment that facilitates production at pace. This kind of 'stuck present' (Groys, 2011, p.90) allows for short-termism when it comes to housing development for example. There is a drive to build houses but no infrastructural planning for future communities, such as schools, hospitals, nor mitigation against climate change. There seems little evidence of a recognition of human or natural history, presumably they are not considered relevant unless they can contribute to growth and progress. The post-political blindness to history and the future horizon is a potential opportunity for the post-political curator to exploit.

3. The accelerated tempo of de-politicisation

Under capitalism, time is money, and therefore workers can never work fast enough. This tempo of accelerating growth and efficiency bulldozes through any attempts at forging community connections or forging political alliances since it not only exhausts us, but it is fuelled by competition between workers and groups of people. Competition between exhausted

individualised communities forecloses the possibilities for growing political participation, thereby contributing to processes of de-politicisation.

The Post-Political Curator as a Time Rebel

The post-political as an analytical framework, or the post-political curatorial method, enables us to see the pace of change and the chrono-politics of a context. The next section proposes that a post-political curator's strategy is to work against the chronology of de-politicisation to care for and protect fragile political movements which will emerge to rupture the linear, processual and ahistorical march of de-politicisation.

The post-political curator's first task, once they have identified the already existing, burgeoning political movements in a place, is to help it to carry on undetected. Once it gathers strength or is no longer too precarious (but precarious enough), then they can work collaboratively with the community and artists alike, filled with political energy, to mount a public challenge — using their skills of exhibition, performance and display. But before this can happen, how do they hide the political in a different time-space? How do they help to shield it and nourish it with knowledge? To strengthen it?

The aim of this section is to articulate curatorial methodology deploying temporal shifts/ruptures/disjuncture to both shelter the political potentialities and facilitate the production of deeply situated art in a de-politicised context. It is the responsibility of the post-political curator to continuously refigure new methods to hack temporalities for the sake of the political, as de-politicisation advances and reproduces. This handbook proposes three modes of practice that the post-political curator can deploy to resist the temporality of de-politicisation: *belated*, *contrapuntal* and *andante*.

Section 4: Belated

The terms 'belated' (Roberts 2015), 'deferred action' (Foster 1996) 'anachronisms' (Hayes 2014) in this handbook refer to a method for practice that reaches into the past for unfulfilled revolutionary potential to address contemporary political concerns. Kerstin Stakemeier summarises the actualisation of a belated event:

> reaching for fragments of the not yet forgotten past to excavate with them present potentials, hoping that the past is never forgotten, and that the present is never forgive. (2007)

A belated curatorial or artistic practice excavates a failed struggle from the past and re-activates it to challenge the present order. That struggle came too early or was too short-lived the first time around, but now is the right time. This is an unashamedly avant-gardist call for renewal, invoking art as a revolutionary force.

What belated must also not be is a rehearsal or re-enactment of a modernist utopian imagination. Firstly, there was never a time when these utopias were realised — this is precisely the point. Secondly, this nostalgic tendency can be seen in the rhetorical framing of the newest garden towns on the level of marketing and is in fact symptomatic of the depoliticization of history by stripping it of any radicality.[3]

3 See "inspired by Harlow": https://hggt.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/APPROVED_HGGT_AR_20211.pdf.

José Esteban Muñoz (2009) evokes Ernst Bloch's The Principle of Hope in his concept of 'queer futurity,' which is a utopian future that is to be imagined by queer subjects. Munoz looks to traces and ephemera of radical moments of queerness to activate the possibility of a future which has historically been denied to queer subjects. I want to make clear the distinction between the futurity of utopian thought and rehashing the modernist utopia as it was, and as it failed. Roberts uses the term Werktreue, indicating that the radical history ought to be faithful to the original intent, not the original content. Nor can it function as a nostalgic 'haunting' (Fisher, 2012) of a future that failed to materialise. There are spectres of the past all around us — revolutionary and reactionary — but the post-political curator must undertake a 'deciphering enterprise' (Muñoz, 2009, p.42) to a potentiality that hasn't yet been manifested, in the interests

of the political. Marina Vishmidt warns us though that 'futurity, prefiguration and the utopia of communing is too convenient for the incessant repetition of capitalism which considers temporality as a resource' (2014). To avoid this, the transhistorical operation of 'belated' must not be without foundation (Hayes, 2014, p.71) and the anachronistic method of working with 'belated' potential cannot function within just any contemporary context.

The transposition of the intentions of a past political struggle into the present must serve as a history of what has otherwise been corrupted or erased. As Sharon Hayes says when she refers to a history of feminism:

> …to unspool a historic trajectory so that another present or future moment might have been, or might be, possible. (p.71)

The following example of belated practice demonstrates how deferred action is instrumental in all aspects of curating — from the research and planning stages through to more public manifestations and artists' commissions. Curators know that curating is not just about what is exhibited. The public appearance is the tip of the iceberg — there is also the research, the obsession, the administration, the bartering, the manipulation, the permission seeking and the common ground to be established. We as curators know that preceding any appearance is a long prelude of conversations and a tail stretching out in time, especially if it is a continuous project or an institutional programme. Even if the event ends or the exhibition closes, there are recurrences as others take interest, continuing conversations, sequels, and whole new events which develop out of the embers of the previous project. There are also versions edited and reproduced in catalogues or updated web archives which document the past and stretch into the future.

In this example of practice is what Elizabeth Freemen called 'a usefully distorting pull backward' as a method to foster the political (2014, p.63). As outlined in the previous section, the new town or a major housing development is the key arena through which the post-political consensus becomes constructed (Swyngedouw, 2007) and is the ideal context in which to focus the post-political lens.

The following example of belated political imaginary narrates the belated history that is reactivated for the present moment by Ed Webb-Ingall, whose practice consistently reaches to methods from the history to ignite present struggles. I commissioned Webb-Ingall to respond to the exhibition I co-curated, Lie of the Land, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, March –May 2019.

The Project:
Ed Webb-Ingall
Community, Land, Trust (2019)

Whereas the previous project discussed, *Growth Point*, served to reveal the de-politicising pressures in Cranbrook and the political murmuration in a new community, artist-filmmaker Ed Webb-Ingall's commission *Community, Land, Trust* (2019) in Milton Keynes serves to reignite a belated political imaginary for present struggles. How might an activation of 1970s community art and video in the post-war new town of Milton Keynes serve to support a contemporary political movement? In order to realise a belated mode of practice, a piece of the past is examined as a resource for the present moment not in terms of its form, but for its political intent.

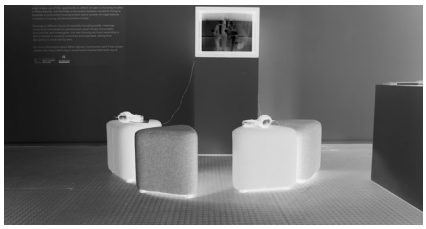
***Community, Land, Trust* was commissioned as part of *Lie of the Land,* an exhibition curated by Fay Blanchard, Tom Emerson, Niall Hobhouse, Sam Jacob, Gareth Jones, Anthony Spira, and Claire Louise Staunton.**

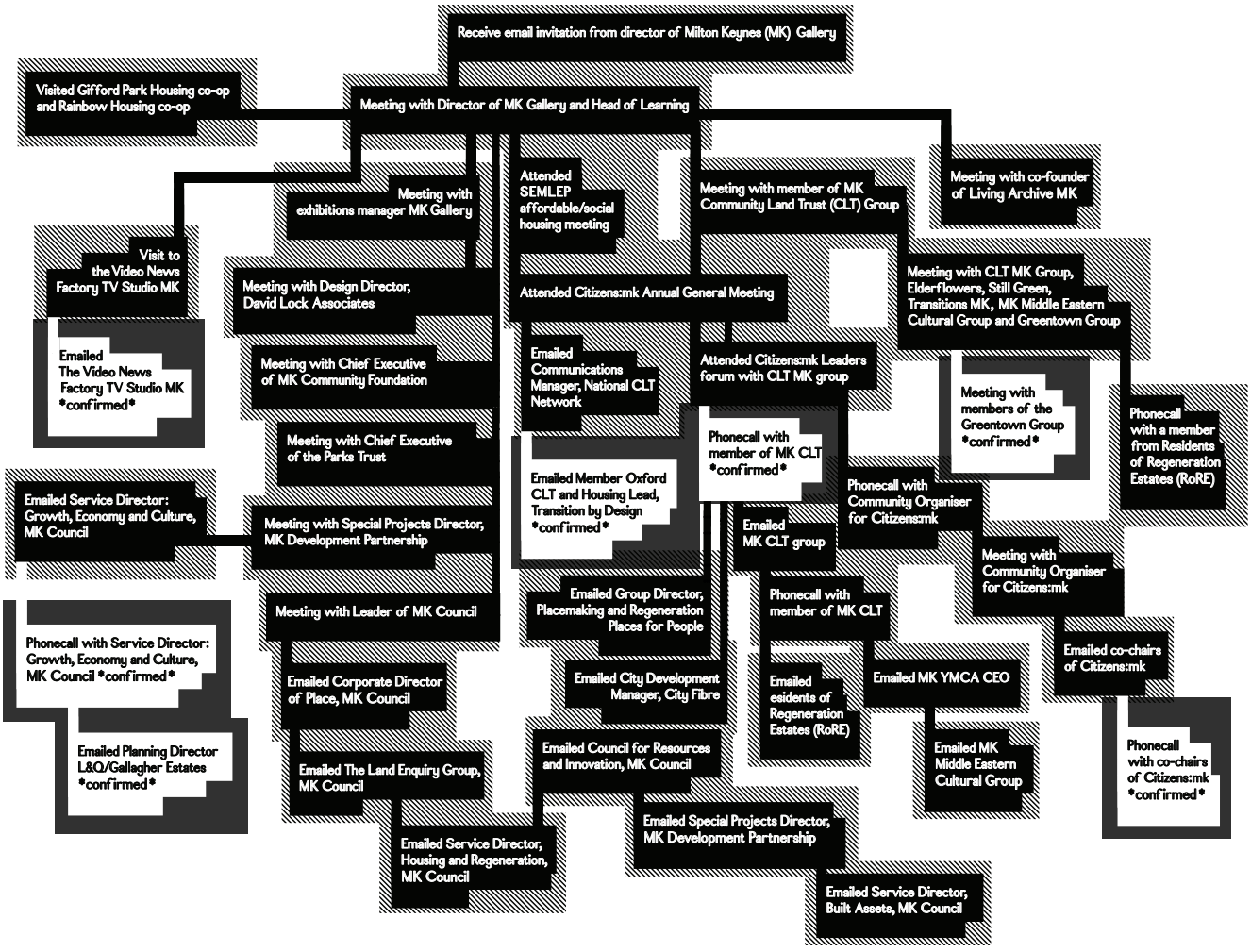
The Historical Context

Milton Keynes is a large settlement surrounded by countryside, equidistant between London and Birmingham, established in 1967 to relieve congestion from the major cities. Milton Keynes was founded under the New Town development scheme, a major Labour government infrastructure programme designed to re-build Great Britain following the destruction of the Second World War. There had already been at least a dozen new towns already established around the country from 1949 onwards and Milton Keynes was one of the latest towns designated as part of the New Town scheme.
To facilitate the large-scale master-planning of new towns, a development corporation was set up by the central government. Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) (like the other development corporations) was an unelected body composed mostly of civil servants and planning professionals who could bypass all planning laws and procurement policies of the time.

***The Plan for Milton Keynes Vol II* was devised by the MKDC in 1970, including a social development strategy. This strategy demonstrated the newest theories around community development which emphasised the importance of citizen participation in developing their own communities. A social development department was set up within the MKDC with the mission to stimulate and monitor the city's social goals.**

The Social Development Department sought to facilitate bonding between new arrivals to the town and considered art and cultural production central to this pursuit. Community newsletters were among the first and successful initiatives that the community officers initiated and supported in each of the Milton Keynes neighbourhoods, as they evolved.





4.1 Still from Ed Webb-Ingall, *Community, Land, Trust* (2018/19).
4.2 Installation of *Community, Land, Trust* at MK Gallery, Project Space, 2019.
4.3 *Community, Land, Trust* Infographic (2019) Fly poster in 8 parts. Designed by Rosen Eveleigh.
4.4 Exterior of *Community, Land, Trust* at MK Gallery, Project Space, 2019. Window Vinyl in twelve parts. Printed by Signarama. Designed by Rosen Eveleigh.

The local presses (8 different titles at their peak) were energised by the inaugural 'writer-in-residence' Trevor Story, who shared a large house with the first community artist-in-residence, Liz Leyh (of Inter-Action) in 1977. They were both funded by the Arts Council and MKDC. The social development department helped set up 4 workshops across the new town staffed with "animateurs" who offered classes and equipment for photography, pottery, screen-printing, fabric design, weaving, embroidery, painting, silversmith and jewellery design.[4] One of the more technologically significant artist-led activities was community video which exploited Milton Keynes' new form of public broadcasting, cable-access television. The following text comes from the artist-filmmaker of *Community, Land, Trust.* Ed Webb-Ingall's research and articulates how the history of community video in Milton Keynes shapes his working methods:

Playback: Reactivating 1970s Community Video
Ed Webb-Ingall (2018)
Royal Holloway, University of London

In the 1970s, community video practitioner Carry Gorney developed techniques that borrowed from feminist consciousness raising in order to work with alienated women in Milton Keynes. Amongst her many initiatives, she developed the use of video for community participation. While working with Inter-Action (1977), she created Sweet 16, reminiscences on video filmed by sixteen-year-olds in living rooms and kitchens on a Milton Keynes housing estate. Subsequently (1978-9), in collaboration with Channel 40, Milton Keynes, she initiated Women Talking, a series of television programmes made by women, which were broadcast over a twelve-month period.

Gorney had a background in theatre, community arts and outreach work. She was invited by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation arts officer to initiate a project using the arts to animate and create an identity in the new town. At that time, Milton Keynes consisted of a few newly built housing estates in the middle of the Buckinghamshire countryside, 50 miles north of London. Gorney's first project in Milton Keynes was with teenagers under the age of sixteen. This project was called *Sweet Sixteen* and it was through this work that she came into contact with the wider community of Milton Keynes. Gorney explained in an interview in 2017:

> We got the kids who were under 16 to interview anybody who was over 16 on their memories of what it was like to be 16: the music, the clothes, the boyfriends, the arguing with your parents. And it just took off. And that was when I started working with the Milton Keynes cable TV community cable TV channel 40. And they... and we worked together. And the most interesting part of Sweet 16 was we sat in people's houses in their living rooms, and there was somebody, the person whose house it was, who would invite a cross-section of people on the street to come in.

Gorney's project emphasised discussion and collaboration, and the needs of the participants formed its focus. She drew on

4 Ibid 166.

Community, Land, Trust

In 1976, Milton Keynes made its first broadcast on local cable television network 'Channel 40'. The central factors behind the cable television experiment were to make information about the new city accessible to residents and to encourage individuals and groups to share their interests, experiences and points of view with others. 'Community, Land, Trust' recalls the original spirit of Channel 40 and imagines what it might look like forty years after it stopped broadcasting.

This installation is the result of a series of conversations that took place following an invitation for Ed Webb-Ingall to make a video project reflecting on the themes of the exhibition 'The Lie of the Land'. The new video makes use of this opportunity to reflect on past co-housing models in Milton Keynes and facilitate a discussion between residents trying to establish a community-housing project and a number of organisations involved in housing and land provision locally.

Drawing on different forms of assembly, including public meetings, community consultations and television panel shows, this project accounts for and investigates the way housing and land ownership in Milton Keynes is currently controlled and organised, and asks how decisions are made and by who.

Works on show:

How to Run a Meeting (1977), 22:13
Part of a series of programmes broadcast on Channel 40, developed by Kate Hancock and Carry Gorney for a project called 'Captain Intrepid and his fight against boredom'. From The London Community Video Archive.

A selection of books and pamphlets selected for their relevance to the themes of the installation.

Community, Land, Trust Infographic (2019) Fly poster in eight parts.
Printed by Icon Graphics. Designed by Rosen Eveleigh

How – Who – Where – Can – Why (2019) Window Vinyl in twelve parts.
Printed by Signarama. Designed by Rosen Eveleigh

Community, Land, Trust (2018/2019) 36:39
Single Screen Video, looped.

Milton Keynes Community Land Trust

In 2016/2017, Lawrence Morgan and Andy Coaton started relationship building and lobbying local authority in Milton Keynes as a social enterprise and not-for-profit developer called 'Community Housing Action:MK'. Their sole purpose was to support the development of community-led housing groups and project-manage builds of community-led housing schemes.

In 2018/2019, Citizens:MK 'House the Homeless' Campaign set the goal of supporting a Community Land Trust in Milton Keynes. As part of this campaign, the Leader of MK Council stated, "I will arrange for campaign leaders to meet with the appropriate Council Officers to discuss the viability of a Community Land Trust in Milton Keynes". The meeting that makes up part of the video in this exhibition is the result of this statement.

In 2018, the CLT campaign group leveraged the relationship with Citizens:MK, and the connections made through previous networking opportunities, to host their initial community engagement event. This meeting led to the formation of the current steering group.

The Milton Keynes Community Land Trust is looking for people to support the project in any way they feel comfortable and capable, this includes spreading the word through outreach and engaging as a member of public at appropriate council and scrutiny meetings of local authority.

For more information about Milton Keynes Community Land Trust project please visit: http://mkclt.org or email leadershipteam@chamk.org.uk

Glossary of terms in ‘Community, Land, Trust’:

Citizens:MK is an alliance of community groups, working together for a thriving, inclusive and fairer Milton Keynes.

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are non-profit corporations set up and run by community groups, who act as stewards to develop and manage affordable homes as well as other assets.

MK Futures 2050 programme consists of six linked projects with the aim to provide opportunities for everyone who spends time in the city.

A co-operative (also known as a co-op) is an autonomous association, united to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

Spencer Street or Rainbow Housing co-op, established in 1977, consists of twenty-four terraced houses in one street. It is situated in the north of Milton Keynes.

Strategic Land Management involves securing sites, gaining planning permission, developing sites and the sale of the developed properties or the land as a whole.
PLC: Public Limited Companies

SME: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Trust:
- A firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something.
- An arrangement whereby a person or group holds property as its nominal owner for the good of one or more beneficiaries.

Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) operated from 1967 to 1992 to oversee the planning and early development of Milton Keynes.

Land Banks are portfolios of land which could be used for housing and are owned or controlled by a single organisation.

Plan:MK is the new Local Plan for Milton Keynes. It sets out a vision and development strategy for the whole of the Borough.

A Local Plan is a set of documents that set out the local authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in their area.

The Town and Country Planning Association is an independent charity. It works to improve the art and science of town and country planning.

A Master Plan is a long-term planning document that provides a conceptual layout to guide future growth and development.

The Labour Government's 2008 paper stated: A Community Land Trust is a local community-controlled organisation set up to own and manage land and other assets in perpetuity for the benefit of the community.

An initial fund supported an increase in the number of additional homes delivered by the community-led housing sector; to provide housing that is affordable at local income levels and remains so in perpetuity.

A newly proposed fund supports applications for capacity building, pre-development revenue funding, capital funding for local infrastructure projects and to fund the costs of acquiring land and building community-led housing schemes.

Developers can work in partnership with CLTs to ease relations with the local community and satisfy the local authority that the community will benefit from any proposed development.

Registered providers include local authority landlords and private registered providers (such as not-for-profit housing associations and for-profit organisations).

Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act are to secure affordable housing, to specify the type and timing of this housing and to secure financial contributions to provide infrastructure or affordable housing.

Affordable Housing refers to housing that is affordable by that section of society whose income is below the median household income. As a result, it becomes the responsibility of the government to cater to the rising demand for affordable housing.

The Minimum Income Standard identifies what incomes different types of households require to reach a socially acceptable living standard.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is one of the largest landowners in the country; with an estate nearly equal to 2% of the UK land mass

4.5 Handout text from *Community, Land, Trust* at MK Gallery, Project Space, 2019

The Politics of Public Space

One's right to live, roam and enjoy the English landscape has always been determined by class, race and gender, although the shifting and ambiguous boundaries of access have forever been in flux. From the sixteenth to the twentieth century, subsequent British governments passed over 5,000 enclosure acts, affecting nearly 7 million acres of common, public land. Enclosures were vital in the development of capitalism, as they facilitated the creation of a whole class of landless, working people who had no way of surviving other than through selling their labour. Early anarchist groups, including the seventeenth-century Levellers and Diggers, rose up against the enclosure movement, believing that all men were equal and that land ought to be redistributed to the common people. Their resistance was crushed, and the effects of enclosure shaped public space for the centuries that followed.

The Lie of the Land charts the unstable boundaries between public and private landscapes through artworks and artefacts. Material relating to radical uprisings foregrounds landscapes as topographies of exclusion, including stately homes and their sprawling grounds, their decorative boundaries maintained by labourers and enjoyed exclusively by the landowners. These estates, which were often built with the profits of slavery, with their 'exotic' plants presented as a spectacle of wealth and progress, evidence the strong links to colonialism. Charting the shifts in access to the landscape, *The Lie of the Land* highlights Stowe, a key counterpoint to the gridlines of nearby Milton Keynes and the first private garden to be opened for public leisure. Stowe's opening up in the eighteenth century played a central role in the evolution of the public park, and was soon followed across the country in the interests of the health and wellbeing of the common man. The Victorians considered the picnic an essential element of the enjoyment of the grounds, and it came to epitomise Englishness in the summer months, which continues today.

Even within the grounds of the public park, however, fees and 'poor doors' delineated areas according to class and beyond their borders the fight for access to land continued. The Ramblers Association battled for the public right of way through private land from the 1930s onwards, staging a mass trespass across Kinder Scout in the Peak District as an act of protest against the lack of access to wild spaces across the country. Contested public spaces continued to be sites of protest, and the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp is another example of the way in which the public made demands on the use of common land. Throughout the 1980s, Greenham Common was used by the government to store nuclear weapons, the destruction of which was called for by more than 70,000 women. The more recent artwork of Ingrid Pollard brings into sharp focus the overwhelming whiteness of the countryside by documenting her body in rural settings. As a black woman she transgresses racial and spatial boundaries, challenging accepted notions of blackness as exclusively urban. *The Lie of the Land* puts forward the English landscape shaped by centuries of contestation and encourages the viewer to look beyond the rolling hills of the countryside to see a more complex composition of tension and conflict.

4.6 Text by Claire Louise Staunton, *Lie of the Land*. Fay Blanchard, Gerrie van Noord, Anthony Spira eds., MK Gallery, 2019.
4.7 Installation of *Lie of the Land,* MK Gallery, 2019.
4.8 Installation of *Lie of the Land,* MK Gallery, 2019.

the methods used by feminist consciousness raising groups of the 1970s, who, through sharing their experiences, set out to 'make the personal political'. Using strategies antithetical to traditional hierarchies of organisation and discussion, participants would meet regularly, usually once a week, often in the home of one of the members and form affinity groups with shared outlooks. There was no formal leader and the discussion tended to be structured by going around the room, each woman taking turns to talk about a specific theme, speaking from her own experience. These personal accounts became the basis for group discussion and analysis, determining the subject matter covered in the videos, which included childcare, education, socialising and personal relationships.

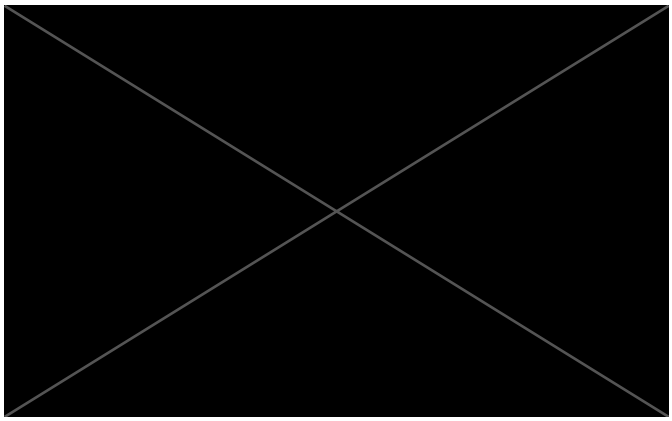
It is important to recognise that the work that Gorney and her artist colleagues in the Social Development Department successfully facilitated new political movements in the new town, which then became a real threat to the MKDC. Their work was creating, energising, animating and galvanising a self-organised community. Guy Ortolano details in his book *Thatcher's Progress* (2019, p.143) several well-organised protests that Margaret Thatcher encountered on her visit to the city in 1981 and the MKDC was embarrassed.

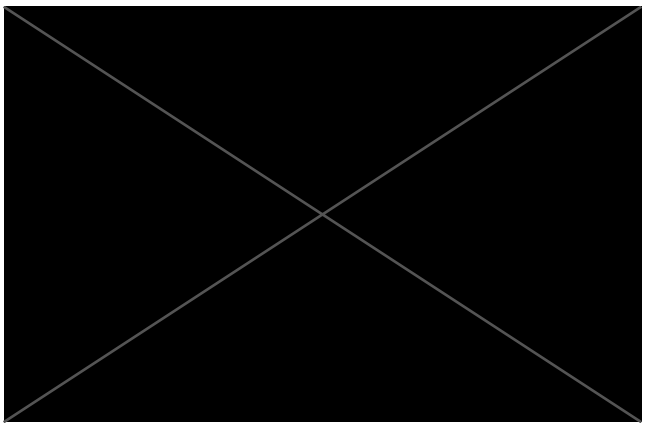
The MKDC was an unelected body, insulated from local politics and represented the first major state-sanctioned step towards de-politicisation. The residents of Milton Keynes felt that keenly, so they radicalised and acted. The protests were the direct result of the support and resources of the community development department, the community centres, and the artists. The communities of early Milton Keynes were politically-engaged and motivated. They had the physical (placards, banners, newsletters) and social tools (tenants organisations, community networks) to represent themselves. Communities defined themselves against rather than alongside the development corporation (Ortolano, 2019 p.143). They were angry because much of the housing was inadequate, the rents too high and, crucially, no one was being held accountable. On several occasions, their protests and publicity led to major changes with regards to housing maintenance and repairs as well as public transport. Participation in political action was analogous to participation in community art for that short time in Milton Keynes. The Social Development Department had achieved what they set out to do — a new town of self-organised communities.

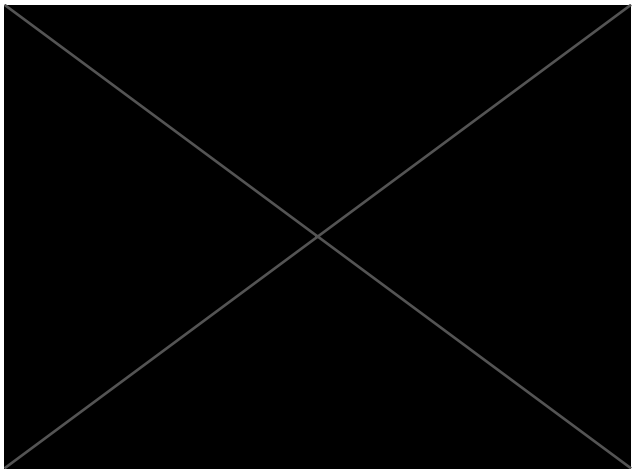
By 1981, however, the MKDC decided that the wrong sort of community was developing: the kind that challenged their authority and threatened their ability to work with the new Conservative government (Ortolano, 2019, p.179). As a direct result, the Social Development Department shifted its priority and funding away from supporting self-organised communities towards initiatives that supported the enrichment of the individual and their family. The community artists and 'animateurs' either moved on or significantly reigned in their political ambitions.

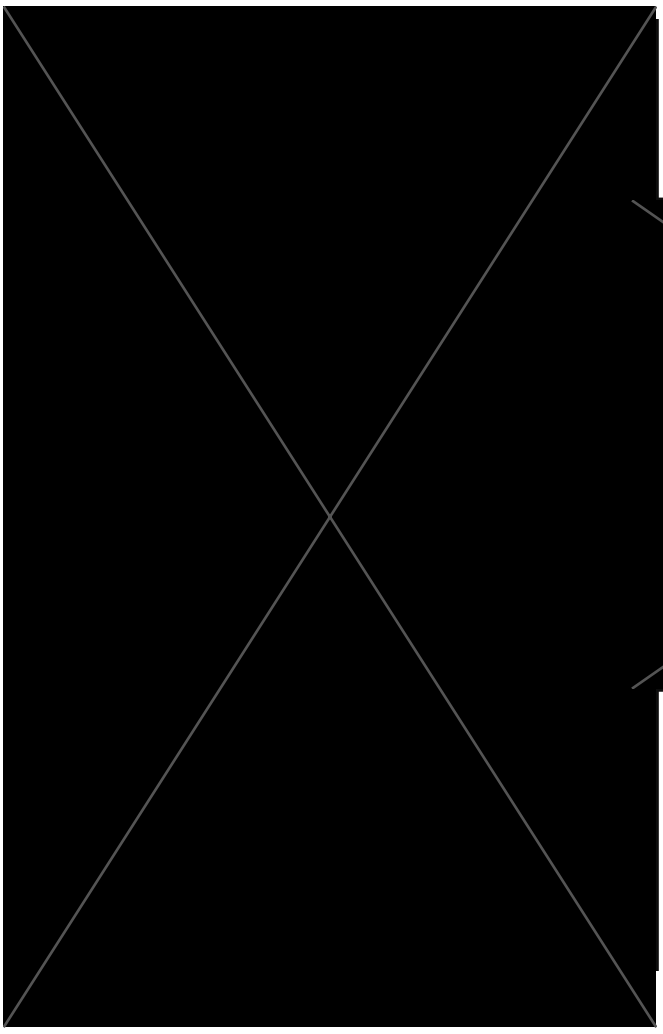
The Post-Political Analysis

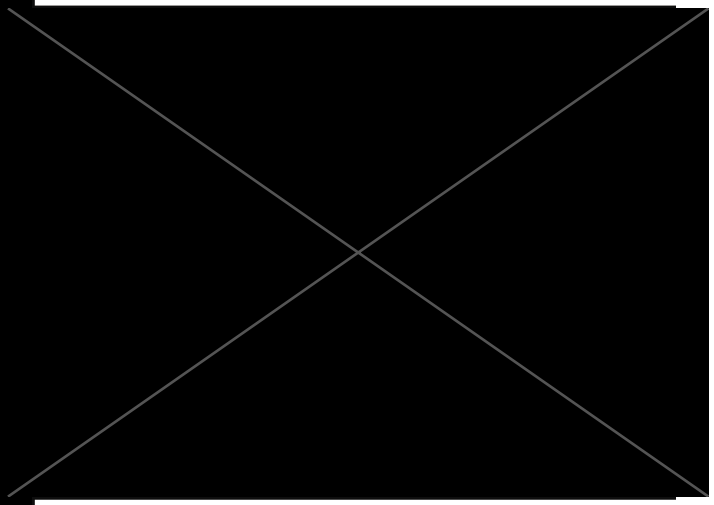
In *Community, Land, Trust*, histories of aborted community art and failed housing experiments are dragged into











4.10 Still from Channel 40 production, Channel 40 Production, video (c. 1976), courtesy Carry Gorney.
4.11 Still from Channel 40 production, Channel 40 Production, video (c. 1976), courtesy Carry Gorney.
4.12 Thatcher's visit to Milton Keynes Shopping Centre was met with a demonstration.
4.13 Community Art in Milton Keynes (date unknown).

the present moment as a method to support emergent housing movements. Although ultimately failures, they were significant moments when cultural production was central to political change in new towns. The political movements of the past that Webb-Ingall draws upon failed because they were squashed by the depoliticising forces of the arriving neo-liberal hegemony. Practising in a belated mode however, the community video and television programmes as well as the housing experiment could be understood as premature, and potentially vital for the present struggles. Webb-Ingall's work *Community, Land, Trust* actively resists the forces of de-politicisation by making space for and supporting the emerging political movements in Milton Keynes, as well as by strengthening their connections with other similar movements in the UK. The 'usefully distorting pull backward' manifests itself not only in terms of Webb-Ingall's content — housing experiments of the 1970s — but also in terms of his method of video-making which he drew directly from *How to Run a Meeting* (1977) developed by Kate Hancock and Carry Gorney for a project called 'Captain Intrepid and his fight against boredom' that was broadcast on Channel 40 in 1977.

Key Lessons from *Community, Land, Trust*

1. Belated political imaginary as an artistic method can hold a space for the political in the present moment.

2. Failures of the past are an artistic resource to support the struggles of the future: Radical energy dragged from the past can energise present political movements.

3. 'Belated' modes of practice can function in terms of form as well as content: Webb-Ingall's *Community, Land, Trust*, his use of the panel show format and interview process, was a reactivation of the community video making and cable access TV Channel in Milton Keynes from 1976–1979. The belated video methods were used to connect an historical housing experiment with contemporary housing struggles in Milton Keynes.

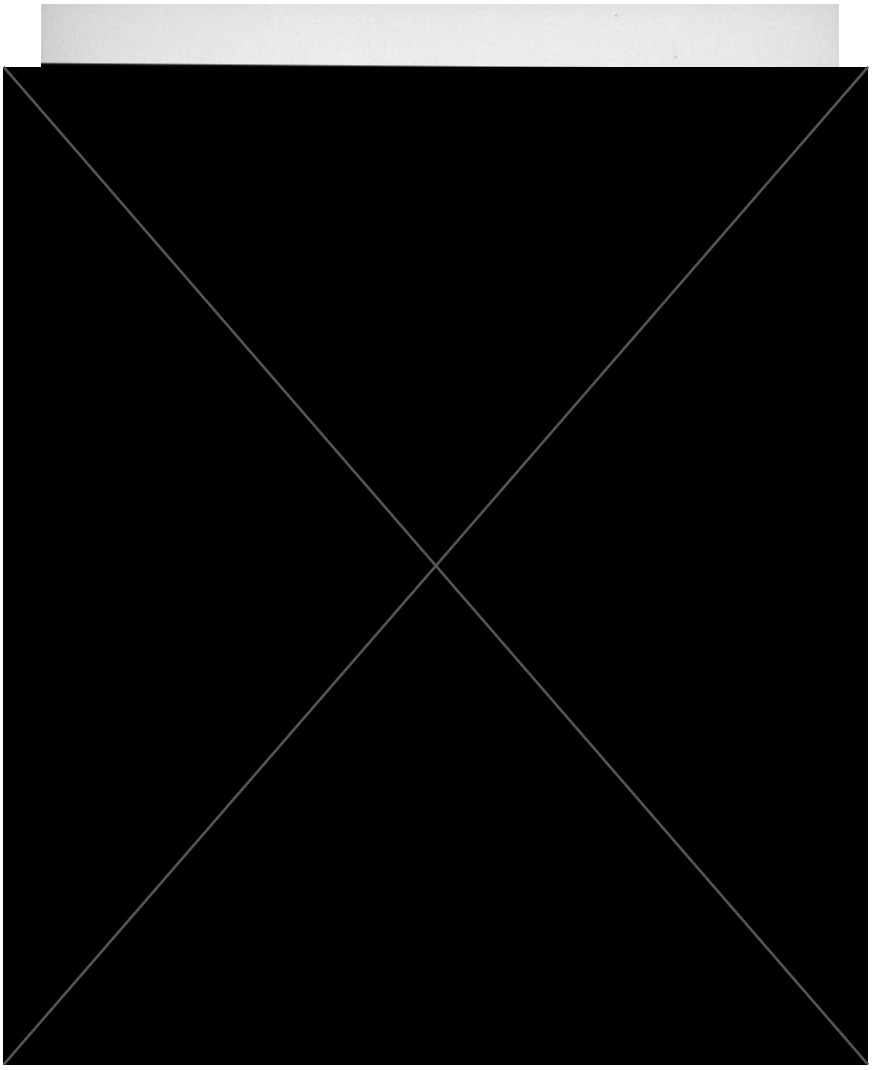
Section 5:
Contrapuntal Forms

The term 'Contrapuntal Forms' is borrowed from Barbara Hepworth's first public sculpture of the same name, commissioned by the Arts Council for the Festival of Britain (1951) and gifted in 1953 to the new town of Harlow. Carved from Irish blue limestone, the sculpture of two figures is more than 3 metres tall and now stands on a plinth at the Glebelands housing estate. The title of the work refers to the compositional method in music often called a 'fugue' where the relationship between two or more musical lines are harmonically interdependent yet independent in rhythm and melodic contour. In film, a contrapuntal score is when the music contrasts so much from the image that it brings about a heightened emotional experience in a dialectical unity. Hepworth never articulated a chrono-political motivation, but the sculpture was created for an exhibition that sought to present a vision of Britain's future and now resides in one of the nation's most visionary post-war new towns, Harlow. Contrapuntal Forms seemed an apt appellation for a chrono-political curatorial tactic.

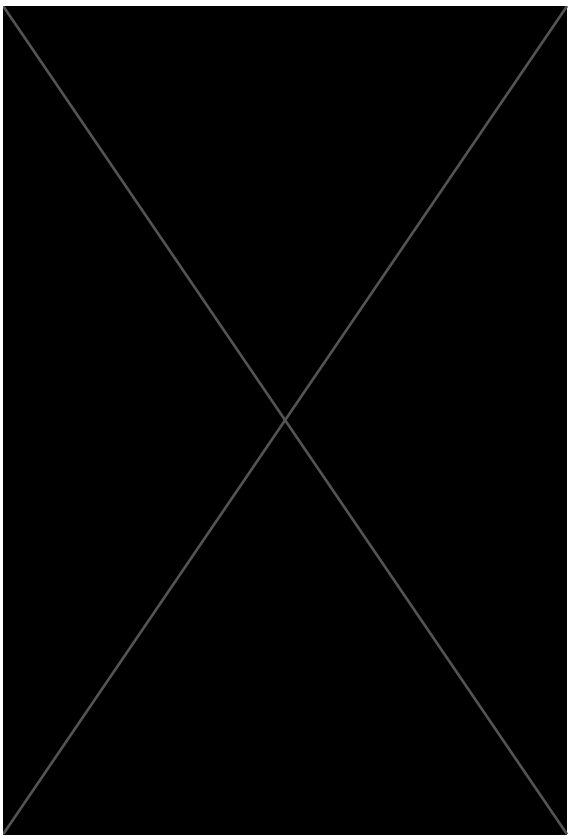
This mode of practice does not adhere to the linear chronological order of capitalism and de-politicisation but instead weaves together different ways of experiencing time into a multi-temporal composition, which may include the belated.

Contrapuntal Forms is a proposal for time rebellion: reproductive time, circular temporality, ancestral time, ecological time, capitalist time can occur simultaneously, contrapuntally and be radically political. Contrapuntal time rebellion addresses the specific strategies for protecting the political and supporting the production of public art in a seemingly history-less and futureless depoliticised enclosure. It is a complex condition, one very particular to the new private-led development, that requires multiple specific strategies and tactics to address.

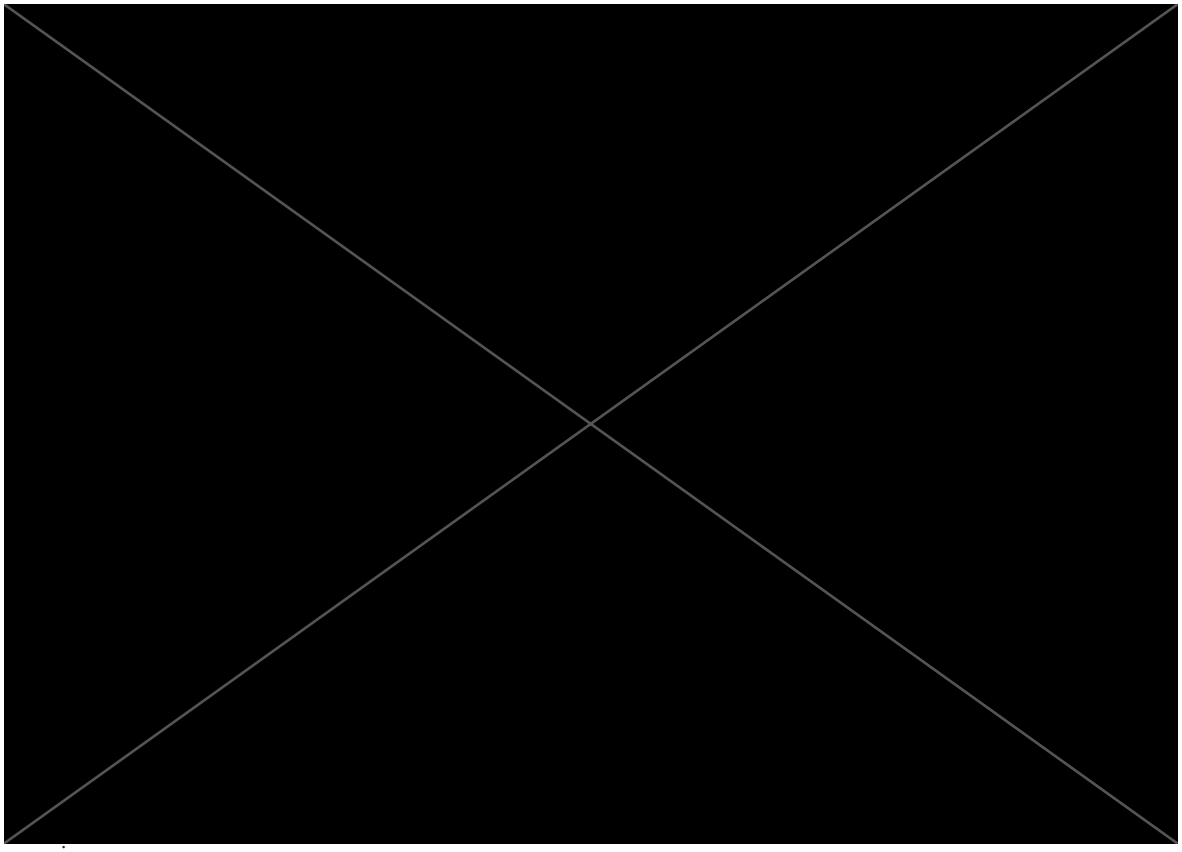
A curator may also be a parent and/or community organiser and/or lover and/or carer and/or boss and/or employee and/or weightlifter and/or marathon runner and/or worshipper and/or homeowner and/or landlord and/or tenant. A post-political curator lives those identities at the same time, often in conflict with and informing one another. The transference from



5.1 Barbara Hepworth *Contrapuntal Forms* (1951).

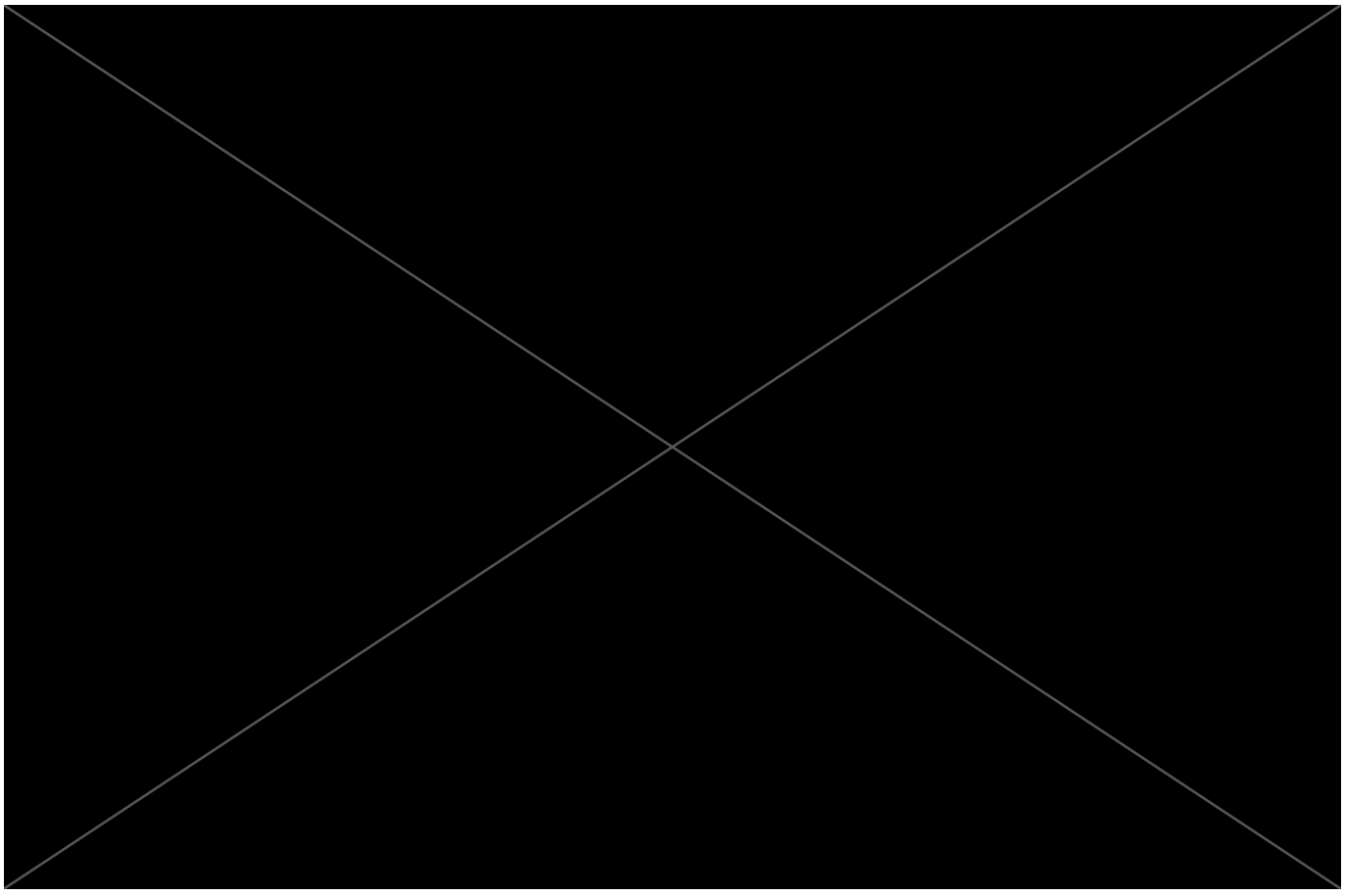


5.2 Barbara Hepworth *Contrapuntal Forms* (1953) Harlow, Essex.



Digital collage. Courtesy of Rasheedah Phillips.

5.4 Rasheedah Phillips, *Mmere Dane: Black Time Belt*, 2021. Digital collage. Courtesy Rasheedah Phillips.



one sphere of life into another is an important holistic and feminist practice that complicates the temporalities of reproduction, embodied history, and ancestral time. The life-work of the post-political curator is a valid political concern that is tessellated with that of the communities of which they are a part and with which they work.

When art was expanded to include life-practice by feminist artists of the 1970s, it was a radically political provocation. Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Maintenance Art*, for example, applied the same repetitive, cyclical and interminable rhythm of her work as a mother of young children. Here the contrapuntal occurs in the bringing into the foreground the background work of on-goingness and survival (the maintenance work of mother and sanitation worker).

There is obviously a problem if the curator or cultural producer cannot distinguish between what is labour and what is life. This is ideal for the neoliberal order but not for sustaining a healthy life. But what if that engagement was a radical one which involved an intentional de-professionalisation of the curator where they collapse the (false) distinctions between all positions? Contrapuntally situating the professional and the amateur in one figure will necessarily be complicated as one is ethically and officially (professional) bound and the other is committed out of love or interest (amateur). Post-political curating is a mode of practice that weaponises the post-political curator's life-work as an offensive strategy against de-politicisation. Since the rhythm and pace of neoliberalism and de-politicisation are inescapable, what differentiates the post-political curator is their awareness of their predicament and their effort to complicate, queer and take some agency over it. By enfolding their life-work into their practice, conscious of the risks that this might pose, could provide the post-political curator with material or points of connection within the community.

By looking at two very different examples of contrapuntal practice, Black Quantum Futurism and the activity of Little Kunst, this handbook indicates how a multi-temporal practice can support and facilitate the growth of political movements.

Black Quantum Futurism (BQF) are Camae Ayewa and Rasheedah Phillips from Philadelphia, USA. Theirs is a practice that is curatorial, artistic, musical, legal, activistic, cultural, personal, communal, performative, published, poetic and healing. Fundamentally, they are concerned with black ancestral temporality, and their work involves dismantling the western colonial measures of chronology in order to shape an intersectional future.

Mmere Dane: Black Time Belt is an online archive and exhibition co-produced by BQF that maps several historic all-Black towns and Freedom Colonies across the United States pre- and post- Civil war — many destroyed by displacement, development, racist violence, and environmental injustice. BQF argues that a linear chronology keeps marginalised communities locked into a stuck present, bereft of tools, disconnected from resources, with limited and inequitable access to time, memory, and rooted location. BQF recognises that time, experience, and episodic memory is bound up in the places we call home, wrapped around the objects that inhabit them, and embedded in the land itself. BQF's work revives and maintains the Black Time Belt as its own time zone, in opposition to a linear, standardised chronology,

> *The Black Time Belt* will consider both the historical past and the present social context of these towns of communities, while creating visions of an alternative, speculative future where the towns survived and thrived through the interventions of future generations sending messages back to the past to warn the communities. (BQF, 2020)

Project: Little Kunst (2014–ongoing)

I founded Little Kunst in London in 2014 to provide free crèche services for artists, curators and attendees of events at the expense of the art institution. In response to the failed campaigns against the closure of nurseries at art schools across the capital, and an increasing hostility towards children and babies in the art institution, Gigi Barker and I developed a new model to raise the visibility of children and childcare in the art world. Childcare sessions are shaped around the artists' events and engage with the content. Children are not siloed away from the carers, but rather both are cared for by Little Kunst with the aim that all parents and carers can access the artistic programming in a welcoming and supportive way.

Crèches have been set up at Raven Row, South London Gallery, MK Gallery, Flat Time House, The Showroom and off-site for Keep it complex — Make it clear! Little Kunst has also made childcare arrangements for artists undertaking major commissions for South London Gallery and The Bluecoat, Liverpool. Little Kunst has evolved into an advocacy group campaigning for better support from art institutions on behalf of cultural producers who are carers.

The Post-Political Analysis:

BQF's projects are unambiguously contrapuntal. BQF's practice is concerned with the oppressive nature of western colonial chronologies on Black and Brown people, and they seek methods for resisting, complicating and undoing them. They are rebelling against normative conceptions of time by inviting audiences to consider intimate ancestral and cyclical temporalities as a public act of defiance. While they may not use terms like 'contrapuntal' or 'post-political', their work legitimises a Black and Brown experience of time which forges solidarity between oppressed groups in preparation for a future which is celebratory and deeply political. BQF's work is curatorial as well as artistic and editorial. In method and in content, they are enmeshing the personal, historical, speculative and aesthetic to create a different time-space to facilitate political growth.

Little Kunst's contrapuntal engagement is less emphatic in terms of its time rebellion, but that is because it serves as a facilitator for time rebellion. Little Kunst supports cultural producers without acting like children do not exist and do not impact on their work. Raising the visibility of children in the space of labour works towards breaking down the distinctions between the fields while calling upon art institutions to support carers' and parents' needs. Their needs are apparent and impossible to ignore.

For Little Kunst, the life-work of the cultural producer is literally life.

5.5 Little Kunst at Raven Row, 2018.
5.6 Little Kunst at Raven Row, 2018.

As an advocacy group, Little Kunst is demanding that art institutions rethink their policies for parents. Institutions that do not consider childcare for their constituents do so because they assume that there is a fee-paying parent and/or a female head of household who is doing itall (McRobbie, 2013, p. 140). This framework for childcare is a product of a neoliberal ideology which does not value care labour or support from the welfare state (Dhillon& Francke, 2016). It is a classist assumption. In this advocacy activity, Little Kunst is pushing back against the institutions that are foreclosing the opportunities for children and their working parents to assemble.

Little Kunst is contrapuntal because it brings together in a singular arena, the life-work of the artist or the curator. Therein occurs a temporal rupture which in turn enables working people to come together in political and aesthetic assembly.

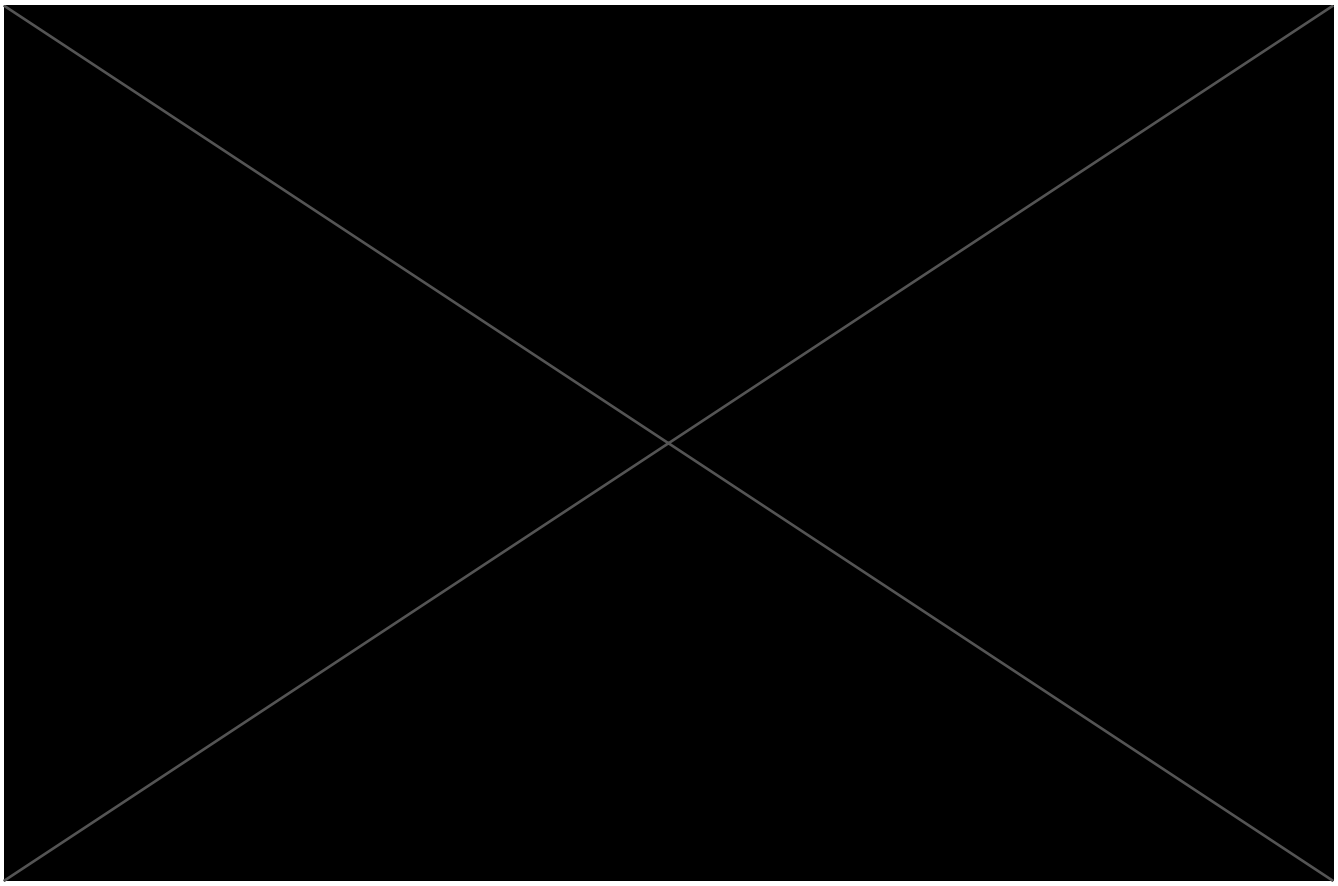
Key Lessons from Contrapuntal Forms:

1. Life-work can be weaponised against depoliticization. By intertwining the cyclical rhythms of parenthood or ancestry and the linear chronology of capitalist productivity, the latter can lose its totalising grip on our experience. This is however a risky practice since the opposite is possible. To weaponise life-work, it must be actualised in solidarity and in community with other life-workers.

2. Becoming attuned to ancestral time opens up a future horizon which challenges the stuck present of de-politicisation, which can only metabolise short term.

3. Operating within different temporalities is a protective act that can obscure the truly political from the processes of de-politicisation. What looks like a creche can become a parents' union with power and influence. What looks like an archiving project can be a future strategy for revolution.

Section 6:
Andante



6.1 LA Tenants' Union.

The crises in capitalism lead resistance from one skirmish to the next. Wearyingly, activism synchronizes itself to capital's tempo. On the other hand, political organizing, whose pace distinguishes it from activism, has the potential to organize time differently. The disorganization of the temporality of the crises *in* capitalism is one device in the conjuncture between political organizing and the cultural actions of popular education. Were it scored for musical performance, popular education would be denoted *andante*: a walking pace sustainable over the long haul.

Andante Politics: Popular Education in the Organizing of Unión de Vecinos Ultra-red, 2011

This section considers andante as a practical tactic to resist de-politicisation. 'Andante', a term used in musical composition, indicates to the musician that they are to play at a slow, walking pace. I have borrowed it from art activist group Ultra-red who in 2012, initiated the *School of Echoes, Los Angeles* to cultivate a network of popular educators and organisers committed to moving beyond complicity with capital and the state, which continues to fight for tenants' rights today.

Imported into a curatorial field, it is a form of practice that actively rejects the accelerated tempo of contemporary capitalism by co-producing projects at a slower pace, sustained over the very long-term in a singular location. Andante practice is a form of time rebellion that resists the tempo of capitalism and moves beyond conventional activism by being too slow to detect. Activism is not yet possible in post-political enclosures since any emergence of a public sphere is silenced — either made practically difficult with no public space to gather or through self-censorship of neoliberal governmentality. Even where the political sphere is possible, activism is responsive in nature and operates at the tempo of de-politicisation to make any struggle highly visible as a short-term strategy. Andante is, instead, the defence mechanism of the sloth. Andante practice can sustainably protect nascent political movements by evading the vociferous pace of de-politicisation.

Curating in its most visible forms seems concomitant with capitalist work-time and the rhythms of (over)production. However, taken as a sustained practice of research, making public and documentation, curating also has the potential to work at a much slower pace. Liverpool Biennial is an interesting example of these contradictions. The Biennial is both committed to the eventful nature of advanced capitalism and to their ongoing work as community-based and infrastructural. It is obviously a huge challenge to sustain such a slow and endless professional practice, but it is worth considering the possibilities and learning from those who do, like artists Verity-Jane Keefe and Ultra-red, as this section will detail. They are not curators, but their work is distinctly curatorial (i.e. concerned with assembly,

collecting and constituting publics), and the post-political curator can learn from their slow paced and long-term practices that are embedded within specific neighbourhoods and do not rely on permanent visibility within art worlds to sustain them.

'Slow curating' is a term that has been around for years[5] and Megan Johnston's method invokes Michael Serres notion of 'the parasitic' and applies it to curating (2009). An andante post-political practice is not this. This handbook is not for a curator wanting to bring the political to a post-political enclosure, but rather it is for a post-political curator who seeks to protect the already present but threatened political agency and works with artists and cultural producers to develop strength and resilience.

5 Slow Curating is a working framework that embraces methods to facilitate deep connections to community, locality, and reciprocal relationships (between people and between art/objects and audience) and evolves over time. It is a practice that enables, explores, and expands museum and exhibition experiences for more relevant audience engagement.

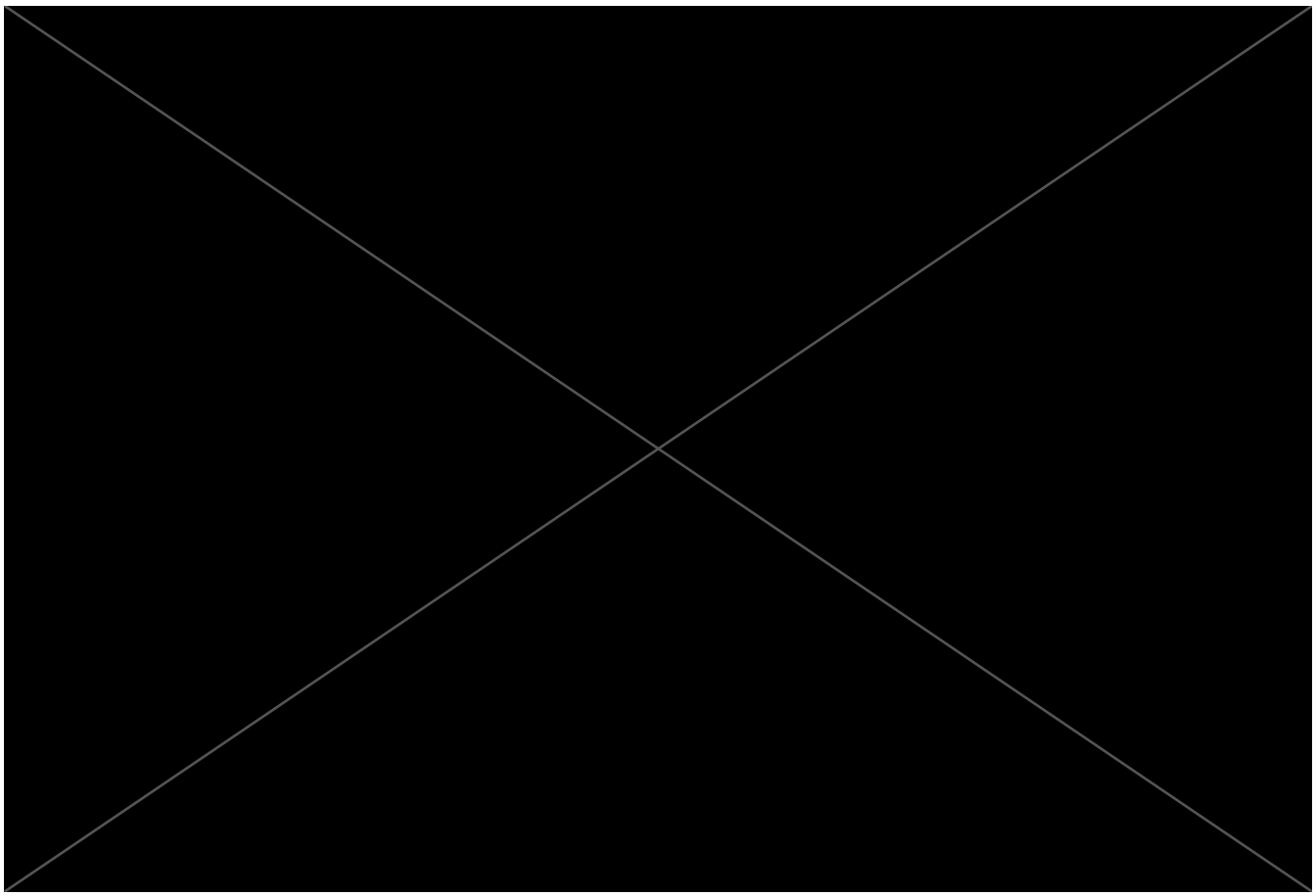
By looking at the andante practices of Keefe and Ultra-red, we can ask how a curator might also practice in a way that protects the already present but threatened political struggles in a place? How can they work with artists and cultural producers to develop strength and resilience? Can this slow tempo of practice escape the surveillance of de-politicised spaces by moving so too slowly to be perceived? In the next section, the handbook will reflect on how the andante practice and other modes of time rebellion can be adapted to a post-political curatorial practice as a community organising practice.

Ultra-red is a popular education and sound art collective founded in 1994 by two AIDS activists (Marco Larsen and Dont Rhine) but has expanded to include members in Berlin, New York, Los Angeles, and the U.K. Each team contributes to practices of listening and political education in long-term contexts of political struggle. The Los Angeles team of Ultra-red founded the popular education and organising collective, *School of Echoes Los Angeles* in 2012. The twenty members, comprising educators, artists and organisers, many of whom spoke different languages and were of various races, ages and genders, met monthly to experiment with pedagogical modes. They asked each other what the issues were in their communities? What they all had in common was the threat of gentrification. After years of listening to the various housing campaigns in Los Angeles, *School of*

Echoes started building the L.A. Tenants Union in 2015. In *101 Notes on the LA Tenants Union* (2019), they emphasise that they are tenant organisers, not housing activists. This is an important distinction that this handbook will address in the next section.

`We are working on balancing long-term thinking and strategy with the urgency of impeding evictions. (Rosenthal, 2009)`

In the UK context and without an emphasis on political organising, artist Verity Jane Keefe claims that she practices 'lurking'. Lurking is a form of andante practice that builds connections between people and develops collaborative projects with them over decades.



6.2 LA Tenant's Union.

Practice: Verity-Jane Keefe, *Lurking* in Barking and Dagenham, London (2006–ongoing)

Artist Verity-Jane Keefe spoke at the 2019 conference at MK Gallery, *The Coming Community*, of her practice as a form of 'lurking'. She chooses to spend years and decades in a single estate or borough. She has been making work in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham since 2006, which include a mobile museum housed in a van and a roaming cinema. In the past 5 years, her work in the borough has focused on the Becontree Estate, where she has become an integral node in a network of residents as part of a commission celebrating the estate's centenary by CREATE London. Keefe's work with estate residents strengthens their community bonds, often in opposition to threats of displacement or disintegration.

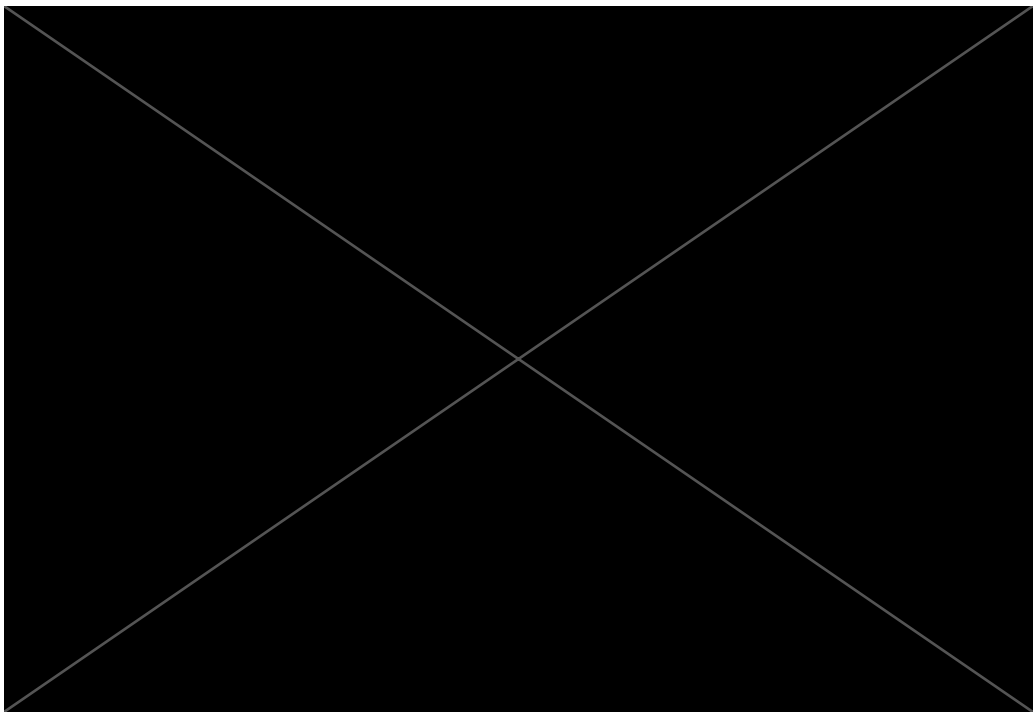
Keefe's recent public project *Living Together* in Becontree considers the past 100 years of social housing through the lens of Becontree, once the largest public housing estate in the world. Keefe's projects with residents are manifold and are mostly kept within Becontree for the engagement of local people only. She has produced handbooks for every single resident in the estate (30,000), which includes historical and practical information about the neighbourhood. She has re-activated the original Public Services in Dagenham Map, updated from its original publishing date of 1929. For *Living Together*, there is an online TV channel, a billboard project across the borough, a series of public walks, a writer-in-residence. Central to the project is a collaboratively produced collection for the estate with residents. Material collected is wide ranging and relates to...

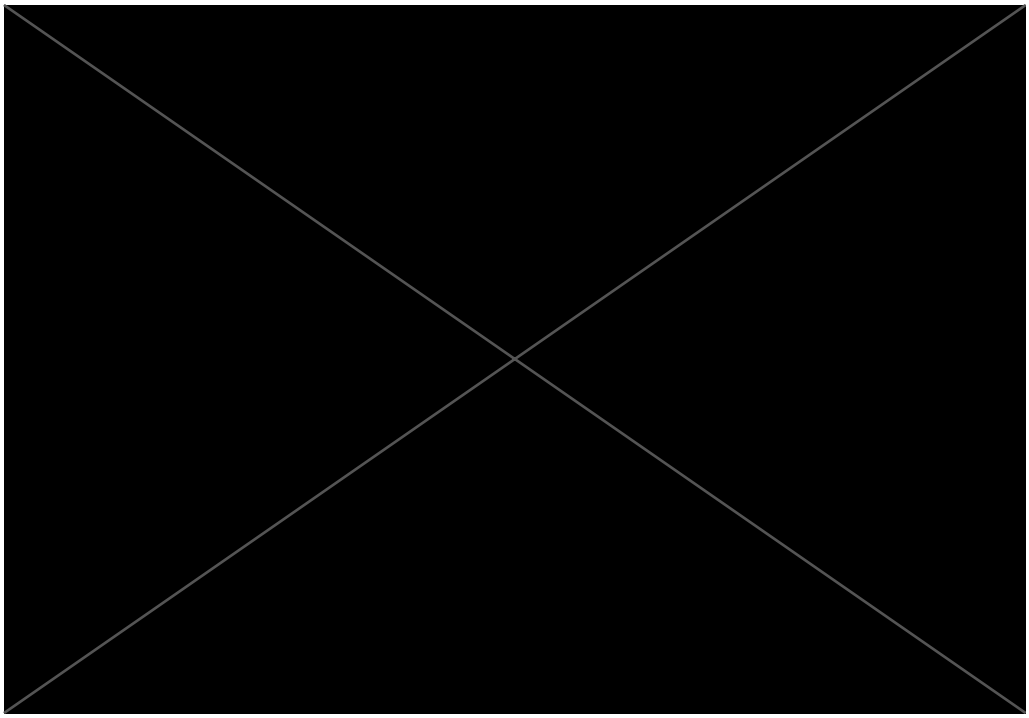
... key issues such as industrialisation, de-industrialisation, immigration, east-end drift, trade unionism, work, workers' rights, the left, the right, the far left, the far right, regeneration, neoliberalism and some hefty changes to housing policy and notably and visibly, The Right to Buy. It will reveal and give status to the often invisible lived experience of a place which includes wide-reaching subject matter, as well as reflecting upon the anecdotal, recording the local vernacular of people and the built environment which will involve creating a Becontree specific material palette.[6]

Select 'artefacts' are made publicly visible at select moments throughout the year through the online TV channel and at an exhibition in RIBA London. Keefe says that it is necessarily an inconclusive collection, and one of its aims is to make visible the systems and political complexities of the town which are forever in flux (Keefe 2021).

Rather than a handbook that tells people how to live, this is a publication

6 Ibid.





6.3 Verity-Jane Keefe, *A Residents' Handbook for the Becontree Estate*, 2021.
6.4 Verity-Jane Keefe, *A Residents' Handbook for the Becontree Estate*, 2021.

sharing observations on how people are living today. Artworks, conversations and texts lead us through the tensions, differences and similarities that surface across an estate that is the size of a town. *Handbook for the Becontree Estate* features the impact of Right to Buy, crazy paving, politics, immigration, de-industrialisation, regeneration and everything in between (Keefe 2021).

The Post-Political Analysis:

Although Ultra-red's andante practice is overtly political in terms of its organising activity, their methodological strategies are analogous to Keefe's, such as building close relationships with residents over the very long-term, resulting in trust and collaboration with the ambition of catalysing structural change. Furthermore, they both choose carefully what is made public and for whom.

Ultra-red's work facilitates politicisation. As sound artists, they use their auditory expertise to listen to people who are struggling and to compose their voices in unison so that they can be heard by the right people in the right way. Their work contributes to the resistance of gentrification, a process which carries all of the marks of de-politicisation. They take gentrification and challenge it with the political, scaffolded by art. In both content and form, Ultra-red are pushing back against the post-political horizon.

Keefe's understatedly political work is pre-emptive or preparatory. Her practice of lurking allows her to navigate the politics and discern the political in a context so that she can support its green shoots. Keefe lays the groundwork for future political movements by articulating and making visible the concerns and inequities in Barking and Dagenham for example. She does not try to solve the problems through her art practice; rather, she makes it possible for residents to come together, to access resources and strengthen the solidarity between them so that they will have the capacity to struggle. She does this over decades so that the bonds she helps build are imperceptible to the forces of de-politicisation, which depend on atomised, self-regulated communities (see Cranbrook).

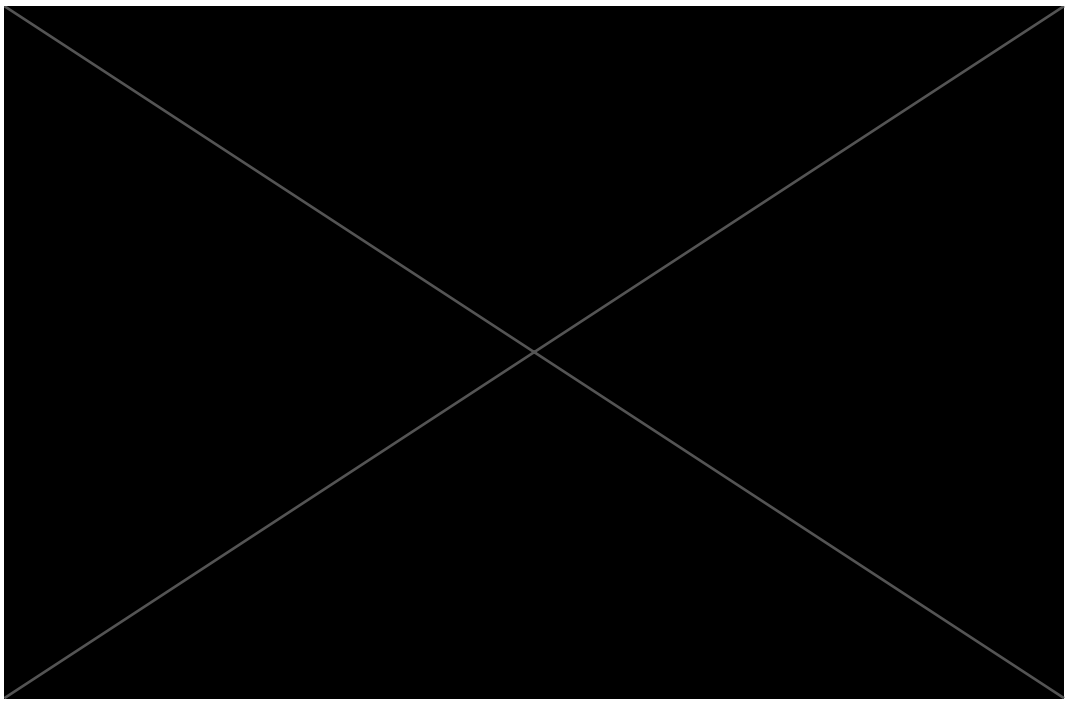
Key Lessons from Andante Practices:

1. The post-political curator must slow down. They must put down roots in a place, make connections with people and build trust within communities, and this cannot be rushed. This is common practice for socially engaged projects, but the timescale for andante practices is not just years but decades. This facilitates the contrapuntal as their andante practice becomes indivisible from their life-work.

2. The post-political curator must slow down. Andante practices must be so slow that the structures of solidarity they help build are imperceptible. The andante practices of the post-political lay the groundwork for political movements of the future.

2. Andante practices are defensive. Their metabolic rate is slow and quiet

until the moment comes when the post-political curator then uses their skills of exhibition and amplification in support of a political struggle.



6.5 Verity-Jane Keefe, *Lived in Architecture Becontree at 100* at RIBA Architecture Gallery, October 21st 2021–February 12th 2022

Lurking:
Thoughts after the act / An Afterword

Verity-Jane Keefe

It's really interesting reading back on this, almost three years later. Like a timestamp, of many timestamps in email form. My practice has shifted and evolved so much since then, this speculative conversation went to a dead end, although I've met them since and it continues: we love what you do — do you? — this is what it would take and mean in practice — silence. Lurking as practice. It's how I've always referred to my processes of close looking, of hanging around, growing and ageing with a place rather than dropping in and popping up and popping off. What happens when you stay, when you remain? I'm weeks away from completing a fifteen-year process of working and lurking in Barking and Dagenham, and two weeks away from a five-year period of working in Thamesmead. Multiple commissions, residencies, self-initiated proposals and invitations in both. Major outputs now as part of the drop the mic moment (all by design, trying to plan my exit), taking with me what residue remains.

Without going too deeply into the last three years, I have realised that lurking is a device that I also rely on as defensible space, as protection and the intangible. I've had to deal with and navigate terrible institutional behaviours and practices, bullying, manipulation and gaslighting — and the only thing that has pushed me through is the knowledge that they can't take my practice. My work is protected by the intangible nature of its production, this almost invisible thread of process, lurking, relationship development and sustaining, setting up groups, keeping them going through pandemics, developing work together, transferring power where possible.

My first solo exhibition is in its last few days at the time of writing this. In the Architecture Gallery at the RIBA on Portland Place. This is the first time my practice has been represented within a gallery context, something that I had actively avoided for a long time, apart from group shows etc. Can an artist that works in the way I work show in a gallery context, my approach was to think of the space as the offsite, as a container for the observations, close looking, thoughts and lurking. It has come with an entire new set of institutional issues,

The following text with images, *Lurking*, is transcribed and edited from Keefe's presentation at *The Coming Community*, a conference I organised at MK Gallery about creative placemaking in new towns and housing developments. It articulates her methods of slow and consistent place-based practice which she approximates to lurking. For context, the programme from the conference is included.

wranglings and tensions that I have had to push through as a way to make the work, this defensible space I spoke of, the returning back to site to lurk as way to make the work to come back to the gallery has been both necessary and vital.

The space between what is said and what is done with art practice that exists in the public realm / socially engaged practice / public art etc has grown immeasurably over the pandemic, with policies of care implemented as ways to get funding, panic to protect organisations rather than support individuals and so much performative posturing of politics, whilst I've been working away quietly, and slowly — and at pace — and slowly — and excessively — as lurking.

How do thoughts turn into things? How do I maintain high quality processes and outcomes, embed and embrace risk and complexity, with, for and without people / partners / funders / stakeholders? These chapters of situations are closing, but I will shift my lens elsewhere and continue to work in the way I work. My practice doesn't clock off, or leave, it reflects and responds. So lurking is critical, to allow the slowness and altering pace to help with the reflection and development, as well as the making and support structure it provides me.

6.1.0 Verity-Jane Keefe.
6.1.1 Verity-Jane Keefe at *The Coming Community* conference, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes 2019.

isbet
Director, Art Night
et is a curator based in London.
tic Director for the 2019
rt Night. Alongside this Helen
Visiting Lecturer at art schools
he Royal College of Art and
and curates a range of projects
ons and galleries across the
was Curatorial Fellow at Cubitt
ondon from January 2017 – June
as worked with organisations
pen Source, Creative Time,
ouse and the Contemporary
where she was involved in
rt strategy and resulting art
e for the North West Cambridge
nt. Helen is Artist Advisor
t development programme
led by Wysing Arts Centre and
Acquisitions Committee for
gest loan collection of modern
nporary art, the Arts Council
Her publication *It Disappears in*
d and Gold was published by
in 2018.

hen Pritchard
Pritchard is an artist and
researching and practising
projects in community
create spaces for community
ent, resistance and liberation.
n focuses on interventions
t movements opposing
on, displacement and corporate
and seek creative approaches to
radical socialist democracies.
d has lectured and presented
nd internationally and is part
emic panel consulted in the
of Everyday Creativity: From
nd Culture for Everyone to
and Culture by, with and for
radical proposal for rethinking
icy for Arts Council England.

He also a published academic and an established blogger.

Zoë Sawyer
Offsite Curator,
Eastside Projects, Birmingham
Zoë develops Eastside Project's public programmes such as Park Life in Banbury. Alongside working on commissions, solo and large-scale group exhibitions, Zoë has over ten years' experience working within both small and large-scale organisations, most recently as Curator at Project Space Leeds and The Tetley, Leeds throughout its transition into a nationally recognised Arts Council England NPO. Independently, she initiated theartmarket & Kunstfreund gallery in Leeds, from 2006–12 and is co-founder and director of practitioner-led collective Mexico, who have produced projects at Focal Point Gallery (2015), The Harris Museum (2015), Eastside Projects (2014) and Two Queens (2013).

Sir Nicholas Serota
Chair of Arts Council England
Nicholas Serota has been Chair of Arts Council England since February 2017 and is a Board member of the BBC. He is currently Chair of the Durham Commission on Creativity and Education and was a Board member on the recent Cultural Cities Enquiry. He was Director of Tate between 1988 and 2017. During this period Tate opened Tate St Ives (1993) and Tate Modern (2000 & 2016), redefining the Millbank building as Tate Britain (2000). Tate also developed its national role by creating partnerships with 35 regional galleries across the UK through the Plus Tate network.

Barbara Steveni
Barbara Steveni founded the Artist Placement Group (APG) (1966–89), as well as its successor Organisation and Imagination (O+I) (1989–2009) in order to reposition the role of the artist in society. For the APG, the artist was no longer restricted to or defined by the burgeoning culture industry nor conceptual modes of practice. Rather, the artist would work within what was called 'industry' in the UK of the 1960s. By way of the APG, artists were placed into governmental and commercial sectors which included two new town development corporations, with Stuart Brisley in Peterlee and Lois Price in Milton Keynes.

Alastair Upton
Chief Executive, Creative Folkstone
Alastair became chief executive of Creative Folkestone in 2012, an arts charity established to regenerate Folkestone that runs five projects and an extensive learning programme. This includes Folkestone Book Festival, Folkestone Artworks, Quarterhouse, the Creative Quarter and Folkestone Triennial, the UK's largest exhibition of newly commissioned artworks. Between 2006 and 2011 Alastair was chief executive at the Bluecoat, Liverpool's arts centre, where he oversaw its re-opening in 2008 following a redevelopment. Prior to this Alastair was the Director of Charleston, home of the Bloomsbury group of artists here he co-founded Small Wonder, the first festival dedicated to short stories and built the Charleston Festival.

Dr Ed Webb-Ingall
Ed Webb-Ingall is a filmmaker and researcher working with archival materials and methodologies drawn from community video. He collaborates with groups to explore under-represented historical moments and their relationship to contemporary life, developing modes of self-representation specific to the subject or the experiences of the participants.

Stuart Whipps
Stuart Whipps is an artist based in Birmingham, UK. He often makes work about things he doesn't understand and doesn't know how to do. Currently this includes restoring a 1979 Mini with the assistance of former British Leyland workers, training to make geological thin sections at the University of Birmingham and working with a seventeenth century sign language devised by Sir Christopher Wren. He has exhibited his work nationally and internationally received a number of awards. He works predominantly with photography and video alongside reconfigured existing or remade materials.

The Coming Community is supported by an Arts Council National Lottery Project Grant

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DESIGN: MARK EL-KHATIB

MK Gallery

Friday 24 May 2019, 10am – 8pm
MK Gallery, Milton Keynes

The Coming Community: New Towns, Art and Place

Cover when folded

Introduction

The Coming Community: New Towns, Art and Place **explores the potential for art in new and expanding communities. By exploring legacies of art and culture in the first generation of new towns, we consider what might be learned from such examples. The symposium interrogates contemporary practices and understandings of placemaking from a civic perspective, and how they can be applied responsibly in 21st century new towns.**

In recent years, a surge in global migration and housing crises have accompanied a renewed use of garden city and new town masterplanning as an appropriate framework to manage urban growth. At the same time, the notion of creative placemaking has emerged as a 'new' strategy for building communities and creating a sense of place through artistic practices and cultural infrastructure. Understanding the impact that artists and arts organisations made on new town communities in the post-war period is therefore particularly relevant at this time, as well as a consideration of the potentials and problems of contemporary placemaking.

The symposium brings together leaders in the field of creative placemaking to share how they centre people and communities in their work, as well as critics of the instrumentalisation of art by this field. Through artists' presentations, films and workshops, we examine the past and present of new town creative ecologies. Together we explore the capacity for artists and art institutions to contribute to the new generation of planned towns and cities.

Programme

10:00 Registration and Coffee
Café

10:15 Introductions
Sky Room

10:20 Film Screening
Stuart Whipps
Necessary Amendments: MK Insider 2017

10:35 Panel 1: Post War New Towns Art History
Katy Lock (TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ASSOCIATION)
Dr Alina Congreve & Kate Harding (HARLOW ART TRUST)
Dr Sue Fitzpatrick (YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY / WARRINGTON)
Barbara Steveni (O+I, APG)
CHAIR: Jes Fernie

11:55 Panel 2: Creative Placemaking
Dr Cara Courage (TATE EXCHANGE)
Dr Stephen Pritchard
Sir Nicholas Serota (ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND)
CHAIR: Fiona Boundy (MK COUNCIL)

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Panel 3: Art And Culture in 21st Century New Towns
Alastair Upton (CREATIVE FOLKSTONE / OTTERPOOL)
Kevin McGeogh and Marc Jaffrey (EBBSFLEET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION)
Tom Littlewood (GINGKO PROJECTS)
CHAIR: Katy Lock (TCPA)

15:05 Break Out Sessions
A) Gallery 1
Exhibition tour by curators Fay Blanchard and Claire Louise Staunton with artist, Dr Ed Webb-Ingall
B) Sky Room Discussion
Post-war New Town culture-led regeneration with GLASSBALL, Mat Jenner (TACO!) and HARLOW ART TRUST
C) Learning Space Workshop
How to work together? Convened by Torange Khonsari (PUBLIC WORKS) with EBBSFLEET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, Marc Jaffrey and WHITSTABLE BIENNALE

16:05 Coffee Break
Sky Room

16:25 Group Feedback

16:35 Panel 4: Artist-Led Proposals for 21st Century New Towns
Assemble
Zoe Sawyer (EASTSIDE PROJECTS)
Barbara Holub (TRANSPARADISO)
Verity Jane Keefe
CHAIR: Helen Nisbet (ART NIGHT)

17:55 Concluding Remarks

18:00 Break

18:30 Film Screening
New Towns, Our Town: Stories on Screen introduced by Jemma Buckley (INDEPENDENT CINEMA OFFICE)

New Towns, Our Town: Stories on Screen is an innovative film project that seeks to increase the visibility of, and pride in, the new town movement, and the unique social history and heritage of these pioneering towns.

Featuring glimpses of the original rural landscapes before they were transformed for new arrivals from a London devastated by the Blitz, this collection of rare archive films sheds light on the experiences of these towns' early pioneers as well as following generations. Promotional films by the development corporations that oversaw construction, television documentaries from the UK and beyond, as well as amateur footage from residents themselves, reveal how these groundbreaking towns have been continually reshaped in and by the public imagination.

With the UK's ongoing housing crisis, the lessons of the new towns are once again at the forefront of social and political debates. This programme reflects on new town legacies distinguishing myths of bleak architecture and endless roundabouts from the reality of the people and communities who call them home.

20:00 End

Lurking

Verity-Jane Keefe

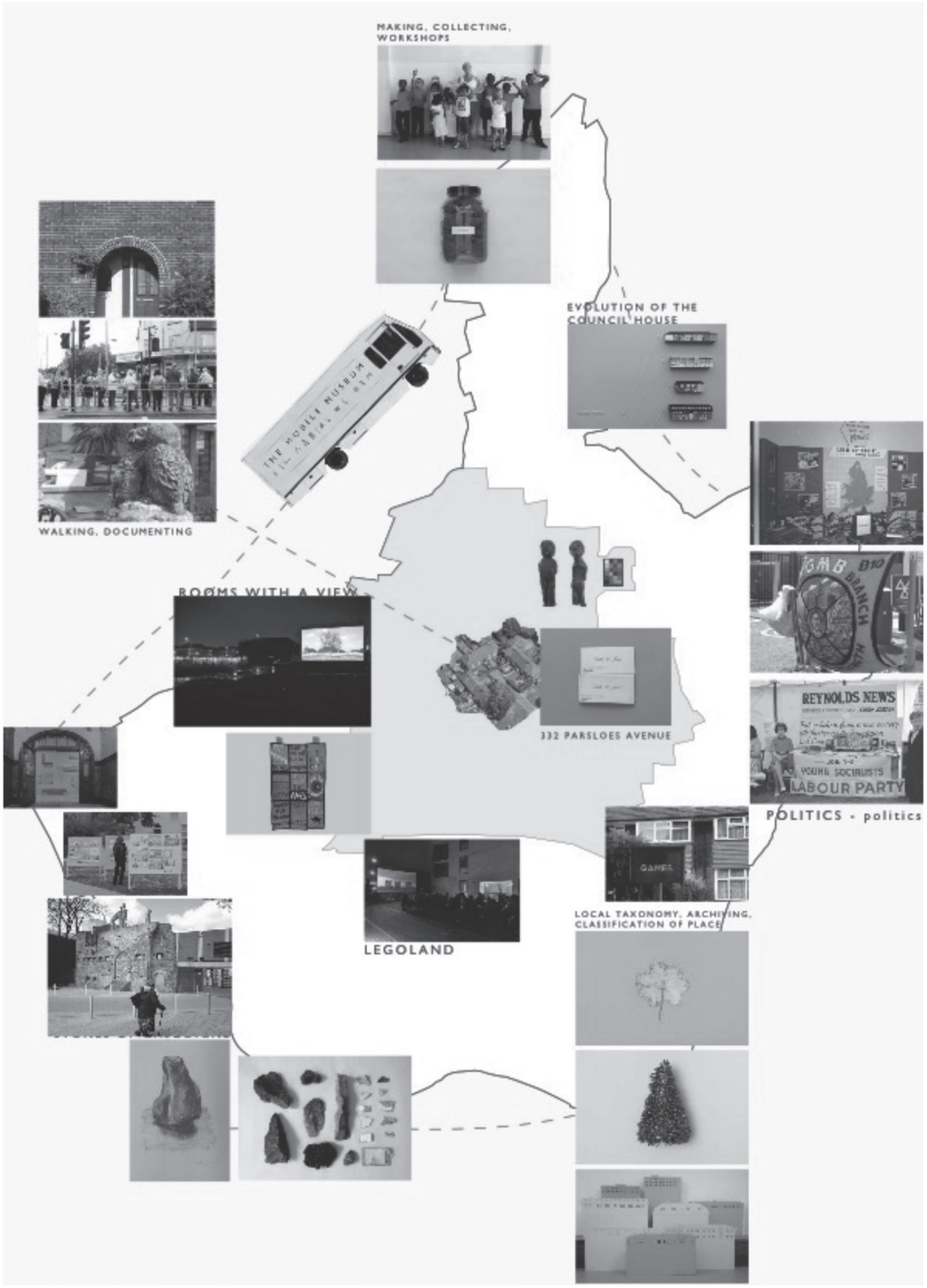
Transcribed and edited from a presentation at
The Coming Community at
MK Gallery, Milton Keynes 24 May 2019

I am an artist from a fine art sculpture background. This is important because the art world that I graduated into in 2003 was a very different beast from what it is now, and I think that has shaped the way that I work. Very few galleries were interested in public practice, socially engaged and embedded models and research-driven modes of production. I kind of freaked out a bit. I would like to say I had a plan, but I didn't. In the absence of a model that I thought worked for me, I sought to create my own plan. This has become key to how I work now: embracing not having a plan. I work all over the place, mainly on the edges of the city in outer London. I am developing new work in Detroit as well so there is an international flavour there but for the past 14 years, I have been embedded within the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. This is a diagram that I did recently for 10 years of practice to piece some of it together.

[Diagram 1]

I am committed to long periods of engagement, close looking and testing before actually committing to finding outcomes. It is quite hard sometimes when working in a very public context trying to communicate what you are going to do to get buy-in from clients and commissioners. It is about communicating methodology and process rather than a fixed outcome. When I say long periods of engagement, I mean really growing old with Barking and Dagenham. I was 24 when I first started working there and I am 39 now. Another project I am working on in Thamesmead, I have been there for 4 years. Again, this isn't really a strategy it's just how I work, and for want of a better word it is underpinned by lurking. What happens when you stay in a place and your practice changes and evolves with the place versus dropping in, chipping off, popping up, popping down next?

[Slide 1]



6.1.2 Diagram 1.

All my commissions pretty much have been self-generated except a few and developed with a variety of stakeholders as clients, demolition companies, developers, and local authorities. The local authority model is one that I have been most interested in historically but working at the intersection — so working within Barking and Dagenham in the period that I have worked there, the culture team has been deleted, the art team was deleted, and I find myself moving between the cracks, working with planning policy, regeneration, heritage, libraries — I am really thinking about that means. I am really interested in what the role is, and potential of the artist in the context of a regeneration project could and should be. The lived experience of regeneration from a resident's perspective who often feel like regeneration is something being done to them right the way through to the way it is communicated to them on hoardings.

I try to interrogate this notion of public in its widest, transient, and potential future versions of itself. I am mindful that work needs to make sense not just to those people that are privy to the processes but those who experience a stage of it; the outcome or the work in a separate context away from the place that it responds to. Not being overly reliant on me telling you a story about a place, in a place. Regeneration, participation, consultation, collaboration, community, engagement, legacy, resilience, public, placemaking, these are all buzzwords that are just chucked all over the place, on hoardings, in funding applications, in artists' briefs and in clients' desires.

What I try to do in my work is to test what these words really mean and how working in such a way can inform and shape not just the built environment but what the experience of living and passing through it is and potentially can

6.1.3. Slide 1.

be. The artist isn't a social worker; we can't fix places or make them better — which assumes places and communities are broken and need to be fixed. We see artists quite often in places stretched in all directions trying to fill the gaps that have been left by austerity as the backdrop of one of the biggest housing crises and I just don't know how I feel about that. I often find myself standing between local authorities as a conduit between different departments and communities demystifying and decoding jargon, giving a platform to residents in places where they live and don't. Brokering these relationships has become an important part of how I work.

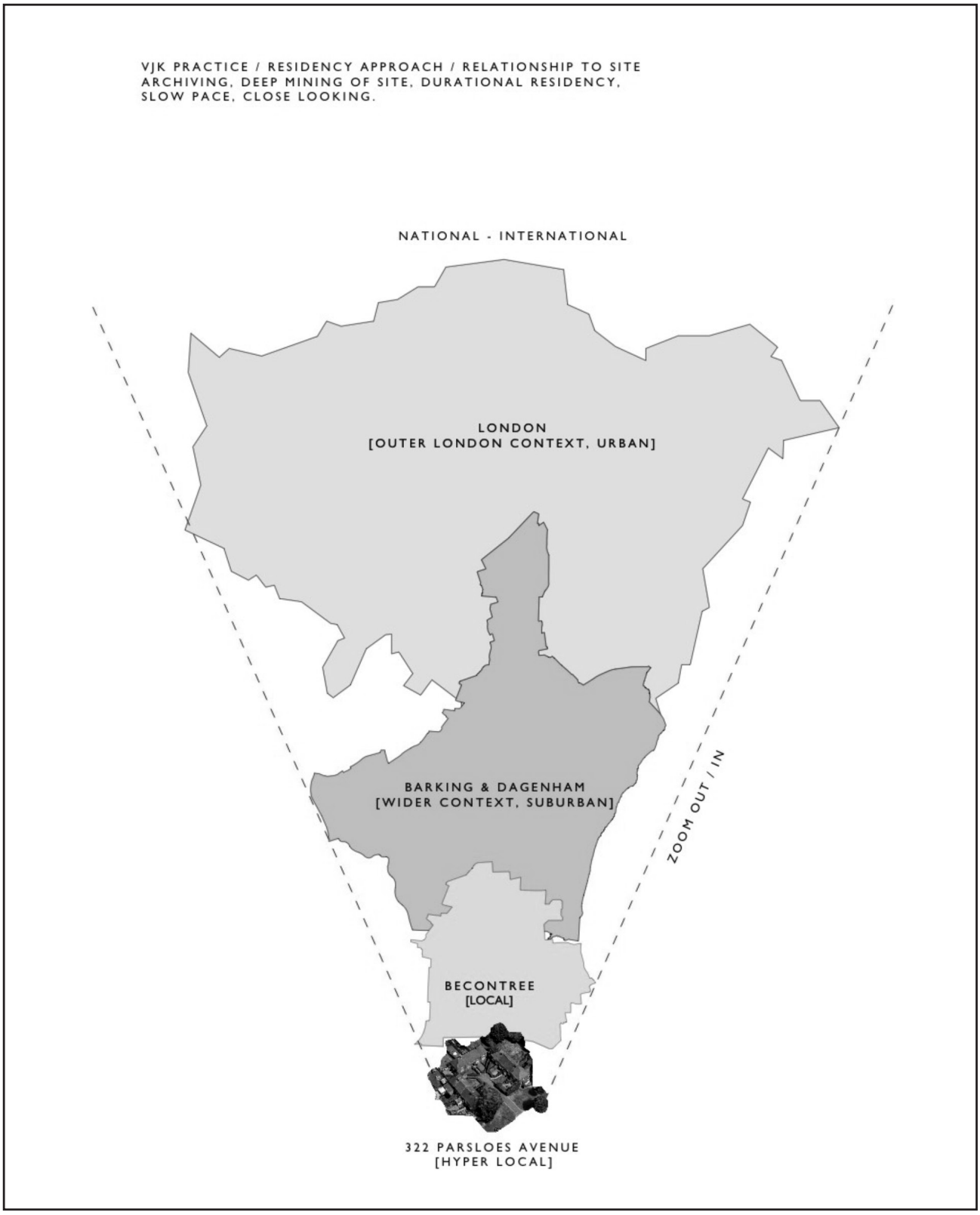
On to an actual proposal. I quite like to do diagrams to de-scramble my brain. Thinking about how I am working in a hyper local context and the zooming in and zooming out can make sense in the local, national contexts and I am thinking about that a lot.

[Becontree diagram]

Claire Louise in her email, asked us (thanks for the invitation as well I think it's really good to be on this last all female panel in good company) to present a speculative idea based on current or previous work of how artists could or should work in a 21st century new town. I have been thinking about that and it is something that I have recently been doing – trying to make proposals for a developer and a consortium and when making proposals what I am talking about my practice, what that really means is that I am interested in residency models of practice but the more informal residencies models rather than a more formalised one. I am interested in how I can operate in between the cracks where possible I always try to create my own brief or work with a client or commissioner to re-write the brief, re-visit the brief, how to embrace failure, how we can take risks, how you can own your own politic how you can be committed to both high quality processes and outcomes not just really great processes and really crap art at the end of it. I am going to read out an email threa which are semi-fictional scenarios underpinned by real events and emails.

27/07/2017
Hi Verity,

Great to meet you this morning. It was great to get an insight into the work that you have made and also to find out that you have a street named



6.1.4 Becontree diagram.

after you in my hometown. We were so blown away with the breadth of work that you have produced about the borough, we loved it. Whilst critiquing the regeneration cycle at all moments (??) Please keep in touch and as mentioned, please send over a couple of ideas of how we can work together as it would be really great to have you on board!

Kind regards,
Potential Commissioner.

31/07/2017
Dear Potential Commissioner,

Really good to meet and share my work with you. I have a number of ideas that I would love to do at XX place. The main one I suppose is, being a long-term artist in residence for the site and the development. I'll write up more about what I think this would look like and involve and some examples of where I think this has worked and failed but I thought I would throw it out there as my best-case scenario. By long-term, I mean I am committed to getting old with this residency. What does a 10-year residency look like for you, 15 years? How could you handle that? What would be the value of having a long-term artist in residence who could feed into all aspects of the development, even the parts that are more challenging and potentially hold you to account? What is the public realm? What is private? Where can generosity be found within the scheme? Which spaces could be the most democratic? How does this development talk to the rest of the borough? Who are the residents? How much power do you genuinely want to give to residents? How much do things cost? Obviously, it would involve various tangible creative outputs and main strands to be confirmed and revisited at different milestones. Basically, an opportunity to really occupy the space creatively, react, to look, collect, document, respond, critique, make, shake things up, let them fall down input over a number of years. I enjoyed the conversation surrounding development hoardings, road names that should be and could be more than just the factory that they now sit on. Façade treatments, placemaking, what does that even mean etc. and so on. I genuinely believe the key is creating a site-specific formula for the development that looks at the past, present and speculates for the future and has a dialogue with what already exists. Use the site as the icon, as a real place that is dripping with history and life and embraces the very specific geography in which we find it. I do not know what that

formula might be, I am just pushing it out there. I think it will take a little time to scratch the surface and reveal the value before reverting to the usual devices of commissioning a cultural strategy, a public art framework, placemaking strategy or whatever it might be called.

Really looking forward to discussing this this with you,

Verity

Silence

Speaking on a panel with MD of said company on 4 occasions over the course of 2018

MD of said company: *Verity, what happened — how come we are not working with you yet? We really need to get you down!*

Silence

Workshop with same MD April 2019

MD of said company: *Verity, what happened, how come we are not working with you yet? We need to get you down.*

Verity-Jane Keefe: *Ah, you know what I emailed you a proposal as requested, Potential Commissioner, and no one bothered to reply.*

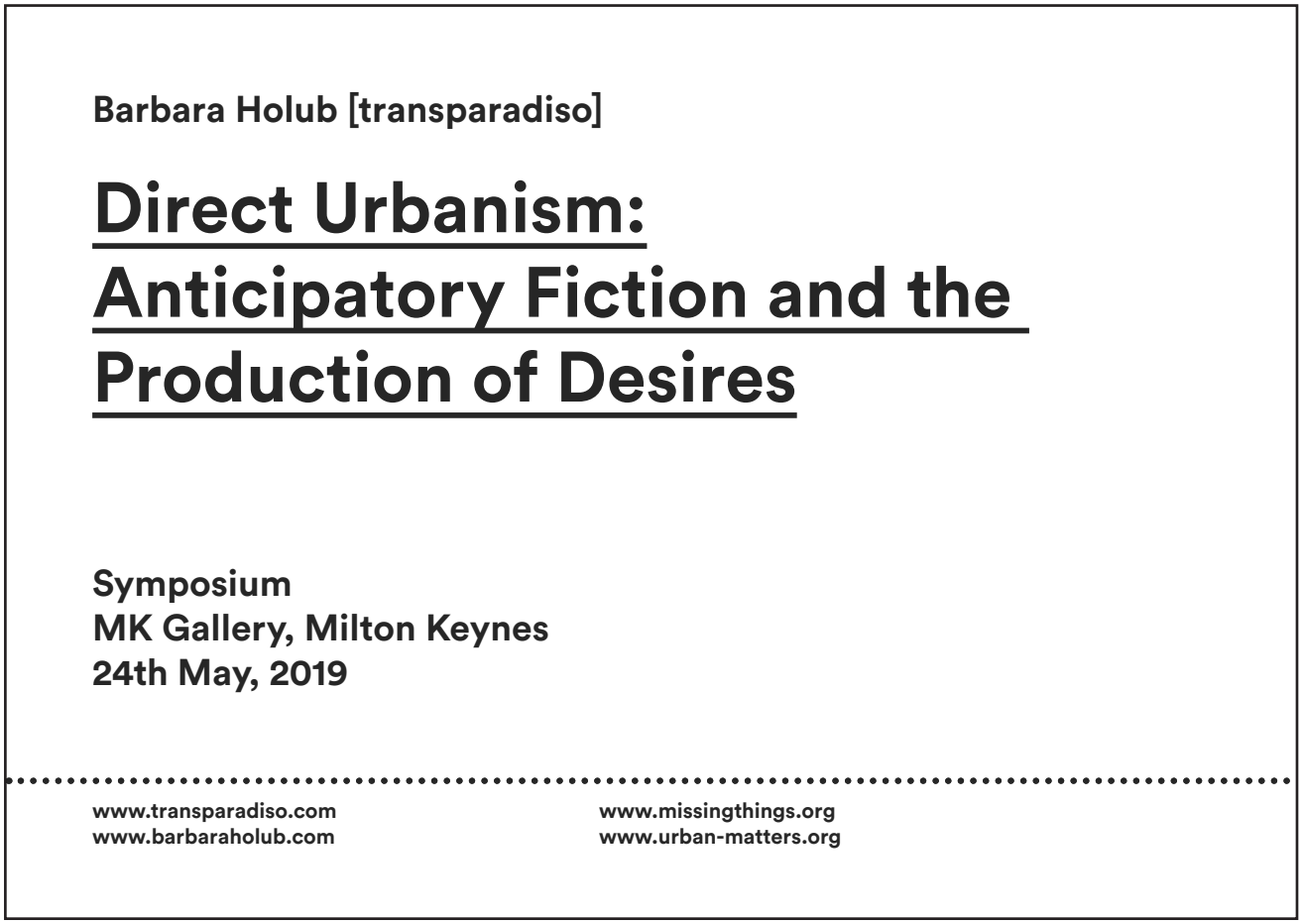
01/05/2019
Verity,

Hello, I think we corresponded some time back. I have been asked to follow up on a conversation about completing one of your commissions in X place. I hope this makes sense to you. It would be really good to meet in any case. Would you be able to meet anytime in the next month to discuss?

Thanks
Potential Commissioner.

Direct Urbanism: Anticipatory Fiction and the Production of Desires

Barbara Holub
24 May 2019



These slides are taken from a presentation given by Barbara Holub at *The Coming Community: Art, New Towns and Place* on 24 May 2019 at MK Gallery, Milton Keynes. The presentation articulated Holub's working methods as a member of transparadiso, an interdisciplinary collective with Paul Rajakovics. Holub introduces a mode of practice that transparadiso calls Direct Urbanism, which involves artistic interventions in urban planning.

Direct Urbanism

1 Direct urbanism involves art and artistic strategies in a durational process in urban development - on an equal level to conventional planning strategies:

_for a socially engaged and process orientated urban development
_for addressing current urban issues as complex societal issues
_emphasizing public space as space for appropriation by the inhabitants/ users/ consumers (see Michel de Certeau)

2 Direct Urbanism is a new method of planning beyond „bottom up" and „top down".

3 Direct Urbanism relates to direct action (Emma Goldman):
It produces „situations" for direct engagement and action, returning responsibility to people on site

Which conditions does direct urbanism need?

– Openminded partners committed to engaging in an open ended process:
> no predetermined results

– Participation is not a „general solution": we need to differentiate between different experts and expertise, and at which point they should be involved along the process

– Consider conflict as productive force

„When I sit in a trap, I behave like an artist."

Antanas Mockus

We have to differentiate between *art* and *artistic strategies*:
for employing artistic methods one does not need to be an artist

Planning Unplanned proposes the transdisciplinary role of the „urban practitioner":
_between the fields of art, urbanism, sociology and other fields of expertise

What does the urban practitioner need?

We need to consider the diverse and often conflicting agendas and roles involved in urban development:

– How can artists and artistic practices maintain their critical voice –and being considered experts on an equal level to other experts like urban planners or sociologists?
– How can artistic-urbanistic practices contribute to establishing new societal values enhancing common acting and counteracting urban development primarily based on neo-liberal decisionmaking?

Artistic-Urbanistic Strategies

→ Anticipatory fiction

Anticipatory fiction takes the envisioned final outcome of a process and assumes it has already become reality. This conviction helps overcome barriers and can achieve much more in the long run than dealing with any "expected" difficulties. Anticipatory fiction goes beyond the production of desires[67] or the creation of visions. It works by developing narratives that transgress the seemingly doable, involving poetic moments as well as introducing new values other than that of the prevalent neoliberal governance.

→ Macro-Utopia

„Direct Urbanism promotes a macro-utopia: it operates by employing an „anticiaptory fiction that allows for latent, hidden visions we usually ignore due to self-censorship. The conflicting interests of the various groups involved are used to develop a design practice geared to conflicts, whose first mission is to produce a psycho-cartography of divergent ideals and role models."

(transparadiso: Barbara Holub, Paul Rajakovics, Bernd Vlay. „On Direct Urbanism and the Art of Parallel Strategies", in: open, 2007, NAi Publishers)

Artistic-Urbanistic Strategies

→ Conflict as a productive force

We need to reconsider conflict and start developing a "culture of conflict" as a possible productive force for changing single-minded attitudes instead of aiming to eliminate conflict altogether. This applies especially to our Central European culture, where openly addressing conflicts is something that is avoided. Conflicts are pushed to the outer edges and made invisible so as to not obstruct the comforting feeling of well-being, which politicians, in particular, try to convey.[71] This "forced" consensus means eliminating differences on the surface, even though differences are what constitutes lively urban environments. Opposing interests need to be publicly discussed rather than arranged behind closed doors. Artistic practices can create settings and narratives for playing out moments of conflict and even compelling them by using the art project as a rehearsal area for conflicts to be acted out.

>> 2 Projects: Production of Desires
as basis for a socially engaged urbanistic program

→ Production of Desires

The term production of desires was introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari* and established in art discourse engaged in critical spatial practices by the "Park Fiction" project of Cathy Skene and Christoph Schäfer.
transparadiso employs the method of the production of desires for generating visions for social, cultural and communal qualities of living together beyond economic interests. In collaborative processes we encourage residents to take their interests in hand themselves. We consider the results of the production of desires as basis for a manifold programming for urban developments in existing quarters as well as in new urban quarters – beyond conventional urbanistic programs. acted out.

* See Gilles Deleuze / Félix Guattari: Anti-Oedipus (Chapter 1: Desiring Machines), Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1974, 1977, p. 38.

What can art *not do* in the context of urban development?

Art is not a problemsolver:

– Art cannot resolve larger societal problems stemming from systems that produce social and economic inequality.

– Art cannot be an interim solution for neglected neighborhoods:
If art and artistic strategies are involved in urban issues, they need to be integrated in a long term perspective of urban development introducing new societal values and involving larger societal aspects.

– Art does not fulfill expectations of commissioning parties in a direct way.

– Art must not take over responsibilities of other domains
(thus exempting these domains from their responsibility)

– Beyond „Best practice":
tools and strategies cannot be transferred on a 1:1 level

What can art *do* in the context of urban development?

– Art asks questions that others don't ask
– Art can use its position as an extra in society as „péruque" (Michel de Certeau)
– Art projects in urban public space offer a different view on existing situations
– Artistic strategies unveil hidden potentials
– Art can create poetic moments – beyond the spectacle

The specific context needs to be taken into account:
> learning from other contexts with similar problems/ issues

Section 7: The Post-Political Curator and the Community Organiser

Before the reader stops reading — curating is not the same as community organising. This handbook is not suggesting that the post-political curator should uncritically adopt a practice that has evolved out of resistance movements fighting against oppressive powers. The curator's proximity to the institutions (state and non-state corporations) that it was created to resist places community organising at risk of being co-opted into those institutions.

The previous section highlighted the post-political curator, working with the time-based strategies in section 4, 5 and 6 (belated, contrapuntal, andante) towards structural change. There are obvious methodological commonalities between the post-political curatorial methods and those of community organising, but there are differences. Curators indeed may also already be community organisers. This final section proposes why they must be and how they can function together.

When working in 21st century new towns, where there is little opportunity for political agency to emerge, curators are often de facto organising, like in my example of working in Cranbrook, Devon in Handbook: Section 2. It is important for curators working in post-political enclosures to be aware of and critically reflective with respect to their involvement with communities. It is important for post-political curators to weaponise their organising capacity.

What is community organising?

Community organising is the practice of bringing people together to take action around their common concerns to overcome social injustice. Doing so would give communities more control over their own lives, bring increased resources and improved services to their towns and neighbourhoods and enable them to engage more fully in the democratic process (Beck & Purcell 2013, p.256). What makes community organising different from other forms of activism or mobilising is the emphasis on professional and community leaders building relational power by organising people and organising money (McAlevey, 2017). Conventional activism and mobilising bring together peo-

ple around a cause that everyone agrees with. In community organising, the focus is on achieving long lasting, structural change, and to do that, there is a central emphasis on leadership. The reason why this is relevant to the handbook is that community organising demands accountability, refuses to be placated by de-politicised consensus politics between administrators, and makes calls for systemic change which inevitably involves conflict. It is the practice of the political.

Community organisers build relational power by engaging people who both agree and do not agree with the cause and those who would never have considered themselves as activists. To do this effectively, the organiser must find the right leaders who are trusted by many and can bring even more people into the campaign. People are initially brought together over a specific injustice and are motivated by outrage, but the ultimate goal is to transfer power from the elite to the majority: from the 1% to the 99%. Community organising relies on public negotiations to win, rather than the closed-door deal making typical of both activist advocacy and mobilising strategies. A successfully organised community needs a public platform and the widest reach.

Community organising always includes a power analysis, a strategy and tactics. 'Ordinary' or non-professional people help make the power analysis, design the strategy and work towards achieving the outcome. They are essential, and they know it. Adapted from Jane McAlevey, (2016) *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* the core tenets of community organising are:

a) Power analysis: an exercise involving ordinary people to decipher the often-hidden relationship between economic, social and political power. Organising groups transform the power structure to favour constituents and diminish the power of their opposition.

b) Strategy: the specific objective for campaign-based organising is to get the majority to wrest power away from the elite minority. A power-

building strategy must be developed to recruit specific large numbers of people whose power is derived from their ability to withdraw labour or other cooperation from those who rely on them. The base is expanded through developing the skills of organic leaders who are key influencers of the constituency and who can then recruit new people.

c) Tactics: the large numbers of people can influence change through mobilising people through strike action, sustained and strategic nonviolent direct action and elections. Shifts in power come from mass negotiations with large numbers involved.

Are curators and community organisers natural allies?

Socially and politically engaged curators and community organisers share many of the same skills and experience. Community organisers need to have the skills, the strategic nous, the perspective and the resources to organise. This does not mean that they are leaders of a political emergence but, rather, that they are able to discern the political and the aesthetic potential of a given situation and foster it. Historically, they have been well connected community members with a cause. As organising itself is a burgeoning field practice, a community organiser is increasingly a highly skilled professional who can communicate with and relate to multiple stakeholders: from those in positions of power like developers, politicians, employers, those with influence like journalists and the media as well as those with little individual power including artists, producers, and members of the public. They are persuasive speakers who are committed to empowering their constituents through long-term engagement. Community organisers can recognise key individuals that are natural leaders: those who are able to command attention, influence others to think differently, deliver their messages in a compelling way. Community organisers are strategists who are continuously reshaping their strategies to keep up with societal shifts and cultural changes. More recent developments in community organis-

ing involve a collective process of critical reflection to sustain long-term campaigns for structural change. A community organiser does not need to be from the same community but needs to stand in solidarity with the causes of the community and identify a common motivation in their own life and be able to communicate that to their constituents.

How is a curator different from a community organiser?

Having similar skills and networked position means that they are transferable, but they are not interchangeable. Fundamental to curatorial practice, even when it is socially or community engaged, which distinguishes it from community organising, is the centrality of art, aesthetics, art history and/or cultural production.

More recent developments in community organising involve a collective process of critical self-reflection to sustain long-term campaigns for structural change. While politically motivated curators usually have the skills and experience of self-criticism, it is much more challenging for curators to build long-term strategies and a real commitment to structural change due to practical and financial concerns.

On a pragmatic level, the resources for a project and the salary of the curator usually come directly from a developer, development consortium, local council, regional arts council under the rubric of placemaking or from an arts institution with a public engagement budget come from placemaking funds (i.e., the de-politicising/de-politicised institutions). Projects are usually funded for one year at a time, and even institutional support from the Arts Council England is only guaranteed for three years. Sustained contemporary curatorial projects that seek to make structural shifts inside and outside the field of art often become institutions or institutionalised because this is currently the only acceptable framework for funding bodies.[7] With such funding also comes a formal evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative values of the project according to a predetermined but undefined metric set by the funders.

7 See Inter-action, a radically political art and theatre project in London and Milton Keynes in the 1970s is now an apolitical inclusive arts charity. While their focus to improve the life chances of people with support needs or disabilities or in challenging or vulnerable circumstances is political in nature, the organisation is no longer explicitly political in its aims.

More than just being different, the contemporary curator is, in many instances, at odds with the community organiser, which is why this handbook seeks to introduce a new form of post-political curatorial practice. The emergence of the curator in recent decades is symptomatic of the neo-liberalisation of the cultural sector. A parallel growth in community organising is symptomatic of the neo-liberalisation of contemporary life. The art curator is seen as a flexible influencer that can bring visibility, social and cultural capital, and legitimacy to a predefined 'project', often as part of culture-led placemaking schemes. The management and mediation of art through a well-recognised curator's 'project' adds value to an artist's work, even when curating socially engaged art works that seek to undo the commodification of individual authorship.

The curator can also be responsible for de-politicising an artist's practice. The curator who works with artists in the institution and the public realm alike acts as a kind of bodyguard, placing herself between the artist and the expectations placed on them by funders, directors, politicians, and the press. Curators build buffers between the art making and the bureaucratic mess of funding, health and safety, administrative detail, evaluation, and audience figures — so that the artist can carry on creating, undistracted. The distance between the bodies of power and the working artist is also supposed to avoid any conflict or disagreement between the artist and other stakeholders. In doing so, the role of the curator has the power to de-politicise the potentially political dimension of the artwork or practice.

Post-political curator as a community organiser?

Can a curatorial project be post-political if the very existence of the curator is constitutive of the neoliberal hegemony? This handbook argues yes. The post-political curator, or a curator deploying post-political methods, can work against this tendency and curate differently. As evidenced in the first section, using the example of *Growth Point* in Cranbrook, a curator's post-political practice can, on the one hand, hold open a safe space

for conflict which one the one hand facilitates governmentality, upholding de-politicisation. But, on the other hand, it can serve to foster fragile and burgeoning struggles. This liminal space was made possible through the perceived benignity of art and neutrality of the art organisation. The tension between the strength and weakness of the space of art is the sweet spot for the post-political curator — but it is a risky balance.

Josie Berry (2019) and John Roberts (2000) warn that the merging of life and art makes art amenable to the forces of neoliberalism and thus de-politicisation. While the history of class struggles within the field of art does not neatly match up with the history of emancipatory politics and organising, there is a need to move beyond a purely intellectual form of resistance.

Ultra-Red, the sound artist collective and activists from whom this handbook takes the tactic of andante tempo and claims that organising is a fundamentally aesthetic practice and that social movements have an aesthetic autonomy. In Ultra-red's mission statement (2011), they dispute that, indeed, there even is a stark division between life and art:

attention to the aesthetic autonomy of struggles takes seriously the creativity of political organizers and the protagonists of struggle.

The long and slow practice of community organising serves as a tool of resistance and perhaps even subterfuge for political communities in a depoliticising world. Political organisers must choose the right time to launch their offensive and mobilise their communities in their struggle for power. Post-political curators working at an andante pace can theoretically recognise this and can contribute to the efforts of building power and might even introduce a renewed consideration of the aesthetics of organising. Ultra-red's political-aesthetic proposal in their mission statement does exactly this (2011):

If we understand organizing as the formal practices that build relationships out of which people compose an analysis and strategic actions, how might art contribute to and challenge those very processes? How might those processes already constitute aesthetic forms?

Considering Ultra-Red's position in relation to the curatorial is an exciting proposition for the post-political curator. Post-political curatorial strategy must refrain from prioritising how their events of knowledge (Rogoff, 2008) might focus on and address political struggles but rather how their events of knowledge are part of the political struggle. What differentiates the political work of curating from the political of community organising is that curatorial practice is still largely focused on the production of cultural forms, be they exhibitions or events — moments of making public. Indeed, it is valuable to hold on to this function of curating to understand what a post-political curator might do in relation and in difference to the community organiser. The post-political curator must therefore continuously consider the aesthetics of organising. Framing, articulating, translating and protecting the aesthetic dimension of community organising is one way that the post-political curator can work against de-politicisation.

How does the post-political curator weaponise their position?

A curator has access and privilege that a community organiser does not immediately have. The post-political curator is conscious of the expectations of her to ascribe value to cultural production. They have made the decision to leverage her visibility, social and cultural capital to build relational power as part of a larger mission to create fundamental change. They continue to buffer the artists from the expectations of funders, directors, politicians, and the press and deals with the messiness of curating until the time is right. They embody the contradictions that this predicament presents as a means to protect communities and the artists that work with them.

The post-political curator has already identified the latent political emergences or the obscured pockets of resistance in a place (like Cranbrook). They can discern the struggle and the demands that are made by the community, but their job is to collaborate, over the long term, with artists and members of the public to develop a strategy for transferring power.

Bringing artists and art into the activity of community organising with a post-political perspective can be so many things: affective, challenging, imaginative, useful, utopian, joyful and archival. Artists are leaders, facilitators, communicators, mirrors, storytellers, world makers and pre-figurers. Like all cultural production, this all depends on the artists and their collaborators. The post-political curator as community organiser conceives of curated projects as creative tactical manoeuvres, inviting artists to work as allies in a long-running campaign led by organic and local leaders. What this kind of curating-as-community-organising can facilitate is building people power and financial power, the essential components of a successful political movement. The practices of a post-political curator can shield the building of this power in the sweet spot between benign and unassailable.

The drive for novelty endemic to cultural production can be re-conceived as an asset. It can be an important way to keep ahead of the creeping de-politicisation and to constantly re-energise the political movement. Crucial to this approach however is to remain mindful of the tempo of capitalism and to avoid matching its pace. The temporal dislocation of an andante tempo is a defence mechanism for the fragile political formations. The compulsion for newness must be directed towards the tactics and cultural actions, not the long-term political strategy.

DANGER — HIGH RISK STRATEGY

To usher in community organising strategies casually into curating like it is a new, fashionable method risks their being used to normalise critique and dissent. There is a tendency for curators and arts institutions to neutralise a political struggle by defanging the radicality of political claims, by making them consumable and normalising critique (Staniszewski, 1996). To usher in community organising strategies casually into curating like it is a new, fashionable method risks their being used to normalise critique and dissent. Normalising critique not only makes people more accepting of being controlled, as Marina Vishmidt says (2008, p.260), but it enables the hegemonic establishment (inside and outside of the field of art) to learn

how to control better. Like machine learning, the so-called powerful bodies use critique and sparks of resistance to finetune their hegemonic and de-politicised arrangements. New technical procedures and bureaucratic pathways are enabled to deal with these rising concerns.

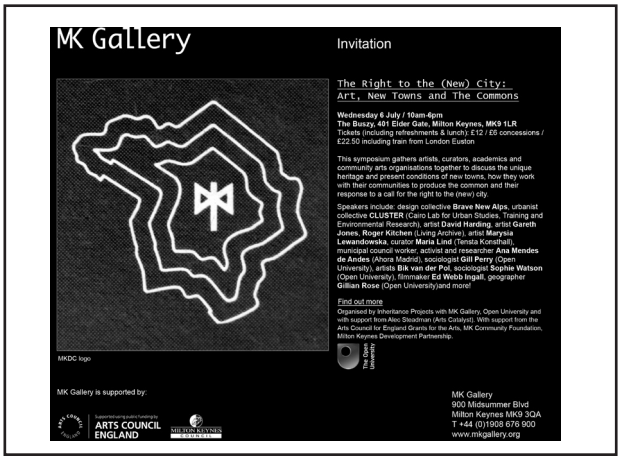
The methods of community organising are equivocal. It is a practice with tools, strategies and tactics that can be and are already used by commercial developers.[8] Community organising methods may work equally well for discriminatory campaigns. The post-political curator can work against this tendency and curate differently.

8 See 'corporate organiser' Will Brett who uses community organising strategies for Tudley Garden Village Proposal by the Hadlow Estate who have faced fierce resistance from current residents: https://willbrett.info/Projects.

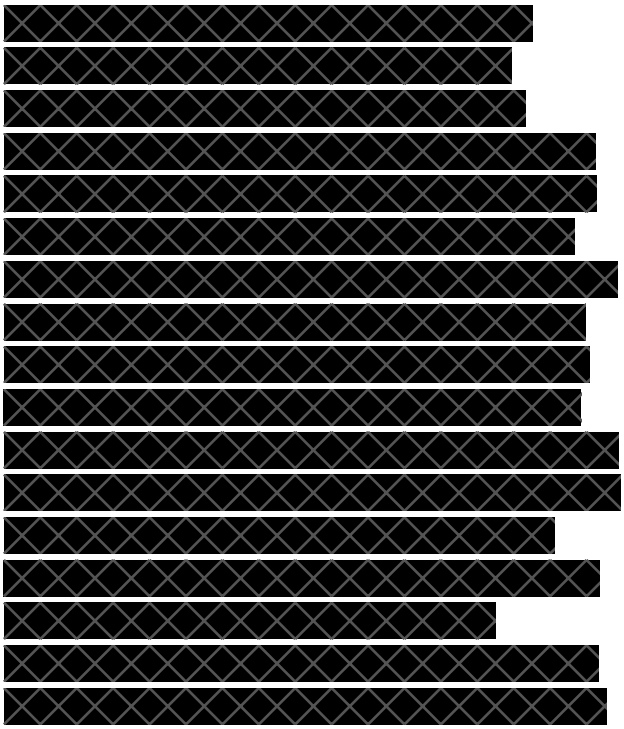
Project: Right to the (New) City: New Towns, Art and the Commons, MK Gallery at the Old Bus Station, Milton Keynes (2016)

Right to the (new) city **was a day-long event held in the former Milton Keynes bus station while MK Gallery was closed and undergoing major refurbishment. The day's talks, screenings and workshops led by theorists, artists, curators, and community workers considered Lefebvre's (1968) demand for the 'right to the city', specifically in relation to new towns. Lefebvre claims that capitalist logic forecloses the possibility of making new meanings in and of the city and his 'right to the city' is the call for a collective redress of the commodification of our social relations by capitalism. He makes a demand, on behalf of the people, for the democratic right to participate in and to appropriate the city as if it was a collective work of art. The day's discussion was to focus on what Lefebvre's demand means in a new town and how new town communities, artists and institutions could make and remake the city as a common endeavour.**

Little Kunst **provided space and childcare services for the day's guest speakers and audience members at the expense of MK Gallery. The order of the day's events:**



The Community Asset workshop:



9 A building or other land is an asset of community value if its main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future. The Localism Act states that 'social interests' include cultural, recreational and sporting interests. https://mycommunity.org.uk/what-are-assets-of-community-value-acv.

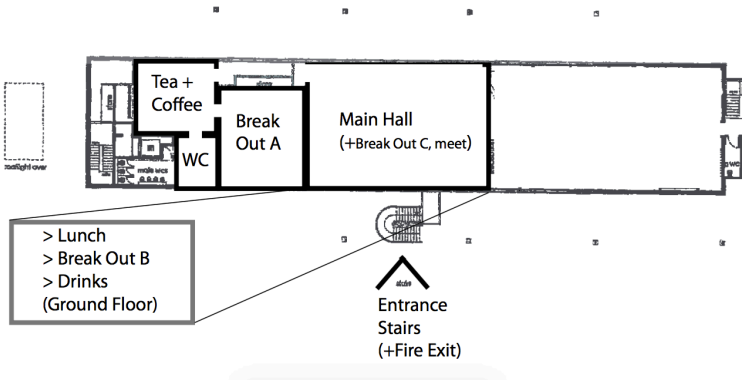
Right to the (New) City: Art, New Towns and the Commons
Wednesday 6 July / 10am - 6pm
The Buszy, 401 Elder Gate, Central Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes MK9 1LR

This symposium, organised by MK Gallery in partnership with the Open University gathers artists, curators, academics and community arts organisations together to discuss the unique heritage and present conditions of new towns, how they work with their communities to produce the common and their response to a call for the right to the (new) city. 'The right to the city' calls for a collective redress of an uneven distribution of power through the production of a commons. It is the right to create the city as a collective work of art (Lefebvre).

Supported by the Arts Council England Grants for the Arts, the Open University and MK Community Foundation.

For wifi please connect to BT Openzone, select Broadband and sign in
Username: swright@mkgallery.org
Password: Blyth1976

FLOOR PLAN



SCHEDULE

All panels take place in the main hall. Please see floorplan overleaf for breakout locations, lunch and refreshments.

10:00 - Registration (Main Hall)

10:30 - Introductions
Anthony Spira (Director, MK Gallery), Claire Louise Staunton (Research Curator, MK Gallery) and Alec Steadman (Arts Catalyst/Cemeti Art House)

10:40 - Screening
New video commission *The Insider*, 2016 (6mins 30) by Stuart Whipps introduced by Gill Perry (Open University)

11:00 - PANEL 1: *Defining the Commons*
Stavros Stavrides (NTU Athens, author of 'Common Spaces') chaired by Sophie Watson (Open University)

12:00 - PANEL 2: *Commoning Practices*
Brave New Alps, CLUSTER, Marysia Lewandowska, chaired by Alec Steadman (Arts Catalyst/Cemeti Art House)

13:20 - Lunch from Chin's Kitchen (Waiting Room)

14:20 - Keynote
Maria Lind (Director, Tensta Konsthall), chaired by Claire Louise Staunton (MK Gallery)

15:10 - PANEL 3: *New Town Practices*
Bik Van der Pol, David Harding, Gareth Jones chaired by Claire Louise Staunton (MK Gallery)

16:30 - Coffee & Tea Break

16:45 - Breakout sessions (See page 3 for more info)
PLEASE NOTE: Spaces are limited. Please choose your group at Reception.

A) Community Media Roundtable (Dance Studio): Ed Webb Ingall (Royal Holloway) with Ismail Ali(People Make Videos), Gillian Rose (Open University), Roger Kitchen (MK Living Archive)

B) Community Asset Workshop (Waiting Room): Mara Weiss (Public Works), Will Cousins (David Lock Associates)

C) Commons Tour (Main Hall & Offsite): Darren Umney (Open University)

17:45 - Closing Remarks
Gill Perry, Gillian Rose, Mara Weiss (Public Works) and Alec Steadman

18:00 Drinks provided by MK Food Revolution (Waiting Room)
BREAK OUT SESSIONS

There are 3 break-out sessions to explore specific issues in more depth, with an opportunity for audience members to be actively involved. Please make your choice by taking a coloured piece of paper from reception. There are a limited number of spaces for each group.

A) Community Media Roundtable (Dance Studio)

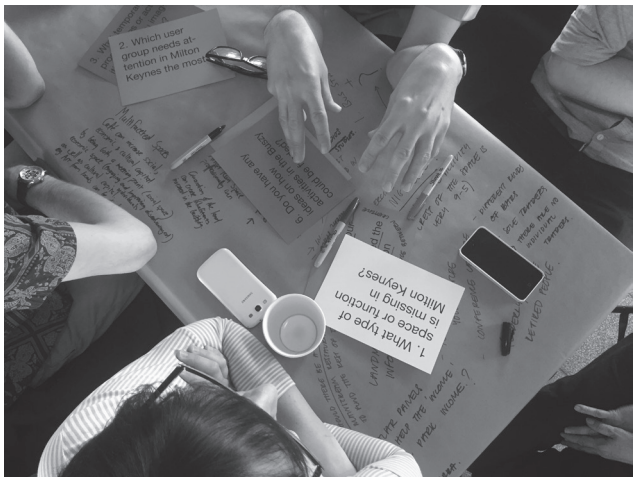
A roundtable between practitioners and theorists about the relationship between technology and the development of 'community'. Led by geographer **Gillian Rose (Open University)** who will speak about the differences between the conditions in Milton Keynes during 1970's and today in relation to the ideas of technology and community. **Roger Kitchen (Living Archive)** will share his specialist knowlegde about the short-lived community access Channel 40 and the Living Archive project. Researcher and filmmaker **Ed Webb-Ingall (Royal Holloway)** will discuss his involvement with community film-making and **Ismail Ali(People Make Videos)** will share his experience of navigating his city through the use of video. Audience members will be encouraged to contribute to the discussion.

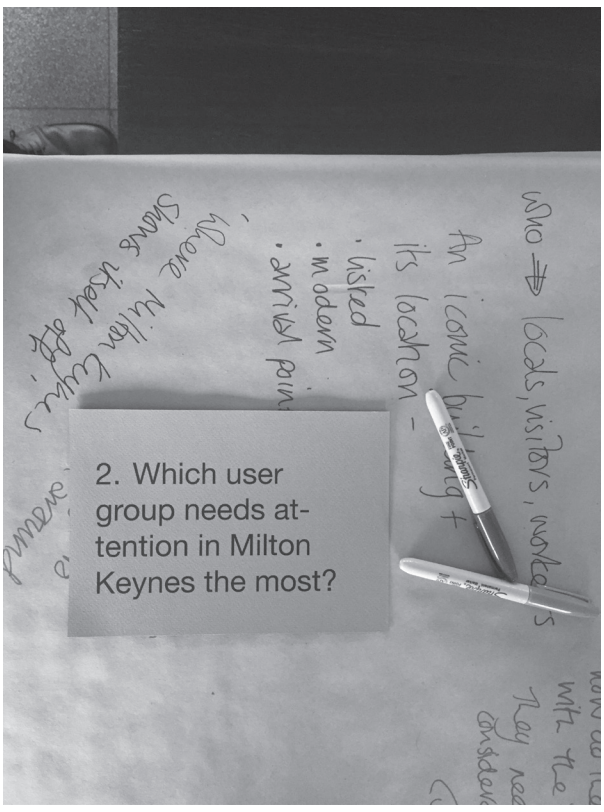
B) Community Asset Workshop (Waiting Room)

This symposium is being held in the former MK Bus station, the Buszy Building. The listed building, currently managed by the MK Development Partnership is restricted for community use but is currently vacant. This workshop, led by architect **Mara Weiss** of Public Works with planner **Will Cousins (David Lock Associates)** we hope will generate ideas for possible future use of the Buszy Building.

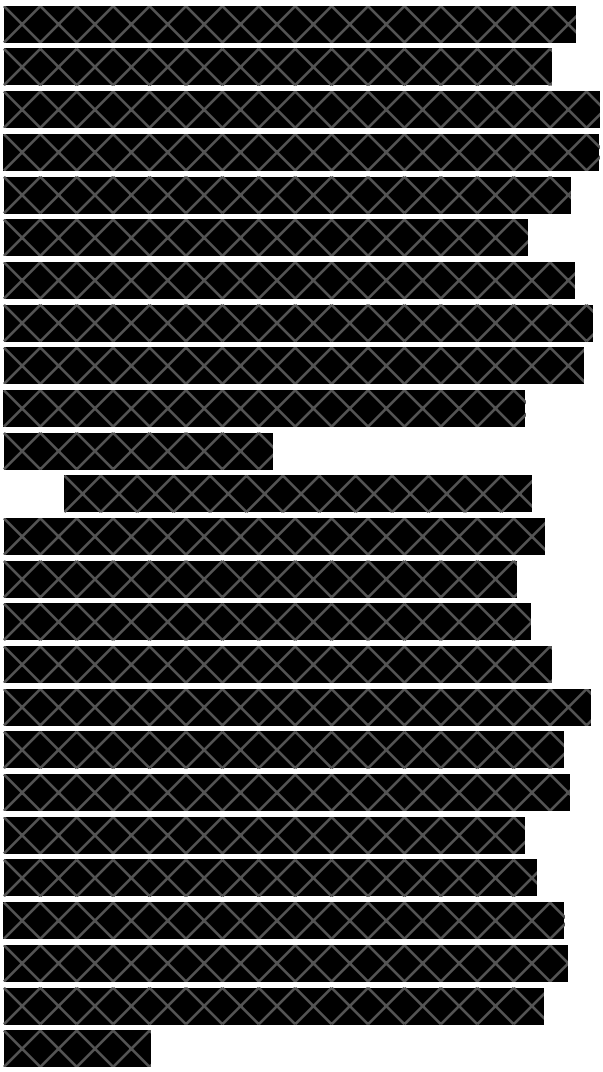
C) Commons Tour: *Common; Lane; Village; Green* (Main Hall & Offsite):

Artist/Researcher **Darren Umney (Open University)** is presenting *Common; Lane; Village; Green* which will bring together a number of visions of the public realm and the connections between them. A short talk in the Main Hall will be followed by a longer walk along Common Lane, an old footpath which would have passed directly through the conference venue on it's way from Bradwell Common at the top of the hill to Loughton, a medieval settlement still to be found beyond its modern double boundary of the A5 trunk road and the West Coast Mainline. This is an approximately two mile walk, on paved ground, and should take around 45 minutes. Participants intending to come along should bring clothing appropriate for the weather conditions of the day.





7.3 Workshop.
7.4 Workshop.
7.5 Workshop.



Outcome of the Workshop:

The discussion was lively and the ideas that were brainstormed included a centre for architecture and urbanism, a co-working space with an independent cafe, an artists' studio complex, an educational hacker space. But, in 2016, there was a new MK Museum on the horizon and millions were being spent on expanding and renovating MK Gallery, the city's contemporary art gallery. The conference was held 14-days after the Brexit referendum, and the war in Syria was forcing millions of people from their homes. The 'threat' of refugees seeking asylum in the UK had been used by the Brexit campaign to scare voters and energise nationalist sentiments. Milton Keynes was created in 1967 to address the need for housing, but, by 2016, it had the highest number of homeless 18–25-year-olds in the country (Scott, 2018).

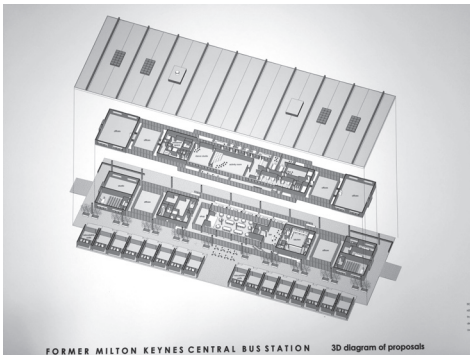
The workshop leaders asked: what does Milton Keynes really need? Several of the workshop participants suggested that the bus centre could be a centre for the homeless in Milton Kenyes.

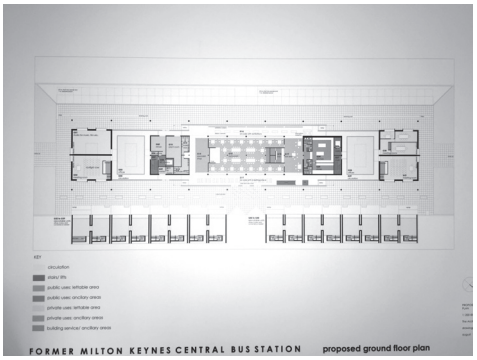
The response from the politicians, planners and organisation directors was that this proposal was not possible, given that the building was for community use (implying that those without secure housing were not community members) and that a workshop at a conference organised by MK Gallery ought to focus on what cultural use would be most appropriate for the building. The proposal to use the old bus station to secure housing for the homeless however began to pick up traction.

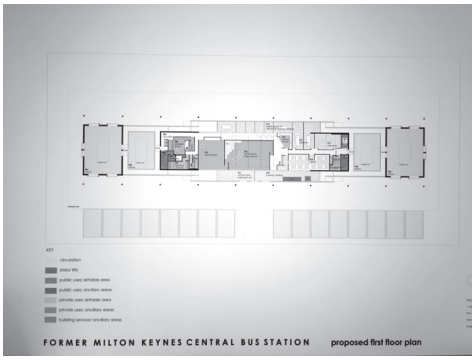
An Exercise in Power Analysis:

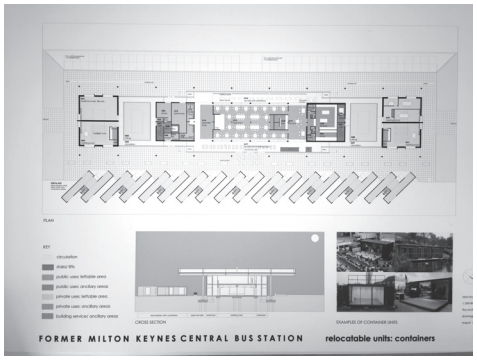
This chart maps the power and influence in a neighbourhood, campaign, or industry. It is commonly used in community organising to map the power relating to a single issue to ascertain who holds the most influence and where more influence can be sought. This can also be a curatorial tool, for the post-political curator who is seeking to identify and support political agency.

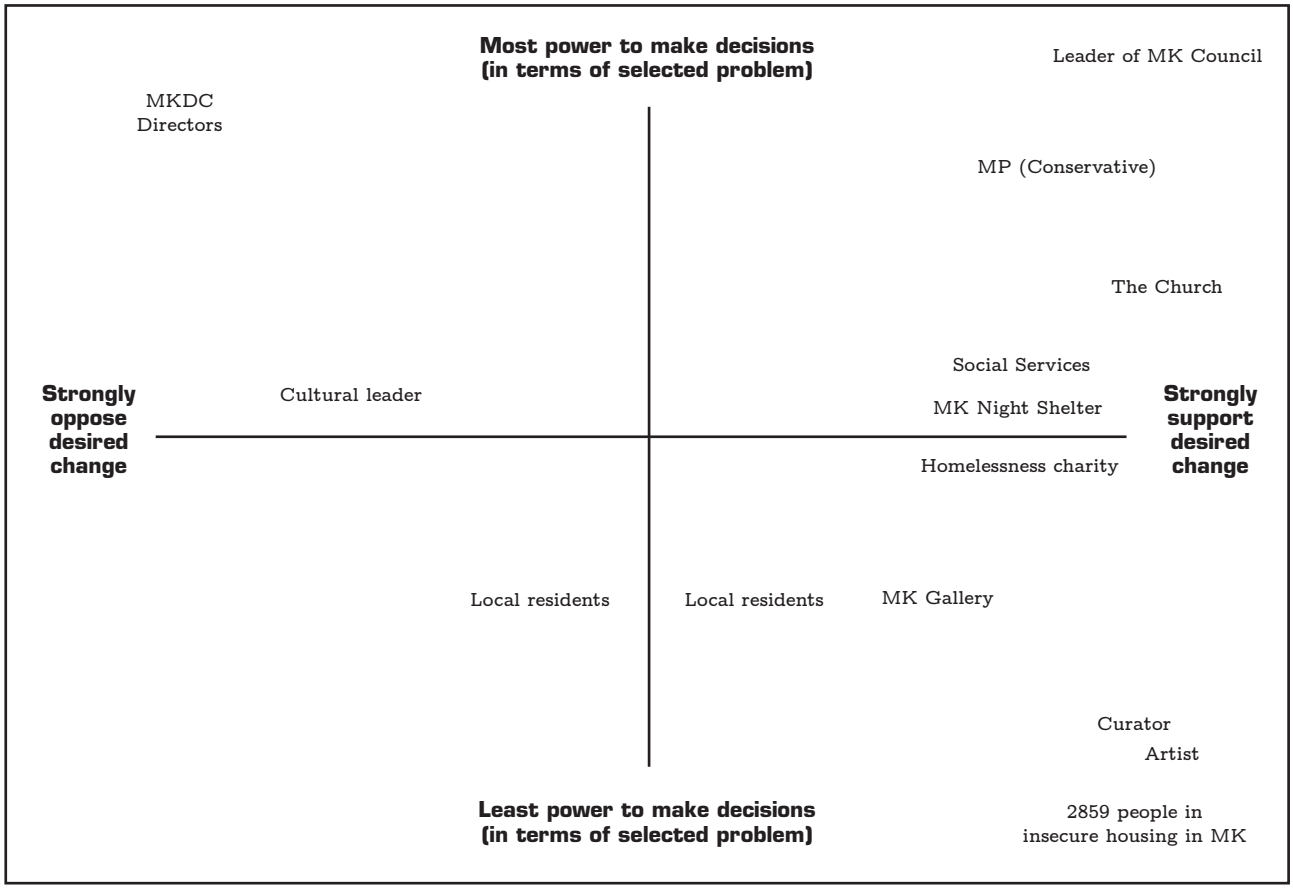
This power analysis maps the individuals with influence, in terms of changing the use of the bus station for











7.6 Former Milton Keynes Bus Station, Courtesy of MKDP.
7.7 Power analysis.

the benefit of Milton Keynes residents without secure housing. In the process of mapping power, it becomes clear that the task of designating the use of the bus station was a wholly undemocratic process and without organised pressure; it would be decided by a public-private partnership company (MK Development Partnership). As a crucially important step towards community organising and disrupting the post-political conditions, the workshop organised by MK Gallery laid bare the de-politicised conditions of the new town's planning and development.

The power analysis illustrates the importance of community organising around an issue to shift the balance of power. The most influential property owners and planning authorities began to lose power when key cultural figures renounced their stake in the project, and even more so when the new town residents and community groups began organising.

Outcome for the Old Bus Station, Milton Keynes:

In November 2016, the MK Development Partnership announced that the Old Bus Station would house the Winter Night Shelter and other charity services to address the homelessness crisis until March 2016. During this period, the Partnership would be inviting proposals from businesses and organisations to take over the building for the long-term. Under pressure from community groups, Milton Keynes residents both those with and without secure housing, and the Housing and Community Committee of MK Council, the MKDP accepted the Winter Night Shelter in partnership with 29 other charities to take over the bus station in the long term, providing a range of support and services for the homeless people in Milton Keynes. The city's most valuable piece of real estate is now in the service of the most vulnerable rather than the most profitable.

Post-political Analysis:

Firstly, this project demonstrates what was outlined in the second section of this handbook. The space created by art and curating (conference, workshop) is considered benign enough by those who hold power, and so they entrust it with their political problems (the empty bus station). The space created by art and curating is also simultaneously strong enough to catalyse a resistance to those who hold power. This duplicity is part of the political potential of art and can be weaponised by the post-political curator.

It is also important to recognise the event as a curated whole. That is to say, the theories introduced by Stravides, the practices of commoning presented by the artists and curator guest speakers and the workshops and performances were informed by one another. There is no doubt that the words and actions that preceded the workshop informed the responses of the participants. While the workshop leaders cannot claim responsibility for the outcome of the Old Bus Station, what is important to see is the role that cultural programming or curating can have in igniting, galvanising, and supporting a political movement. It is especially important to note the withdrawal by

cultural leaders of Milton Keynes from participation in the competition for the bus station following the workshop. Their refusal to compete is an act of responsibility to their community and is an important political move in a space with no political accountability. The de-politicised administration of Milton Keynes' planning and development was fractured by community organising in favour of the residents with insecure housing and the methods employed by the curator, workshop organisers and community members are post-political strategies.

Aligning community organising with post-political curating is more of a strategy than a tactic. As such, there are no 'lessons' to take away from this section. Rather, it is a call for post-political curators to consider how they can practice in solidarity with political struggles. Following Stavros Stavrides' presentation is a manifesto for the post-political curator which brings together the key lessons from the previous sections that looks forward to a new mode of curatorial practice in de-politicising conditions.

Rethinking the Commons: Common spaces as potential spaces of emancipation

Stavros Stavrides

The Right to the (New) City, Old Bus Station, Milton Keynes
7 July 2016

My presentation tries to somehow question the problem of commoning and commons by linking it to the issue of space. Does the notion of the commons and all this discourse circulating on the commons have anything to do with space and the city — or is it discussed as a general term that is transposed or translated into the city space? I think that when we try to address the problems of commoning through a theorisation and appraisal of the specific experiences of the urban environment, we will inevitably develop more theoretical tools, we will inevitably search for new formulations, and perhaps we will devise new models that have serious outcomes and consequences within the discussion about commoning. In a nutshell, city space has its peculiarity of being at the same time something that we might share — therefore connected to the discussion of commoning — but also the means through which we can shape forms of sharing. So, the city is not simply out there; it is part of our everyday life. It is part of the processes through which we form relations with others, affecting the potential processes of sharing. We are thinking of the commons through the city.

My first thought is that in order to understand how commoning arises as a problem in today's contemporary cities, we must learn from recent events that have revealed a new issue at stake in city life. The new issue at stake is the problem of redefining what it means to be in public space — redefining what it is to be shared through and in space. This concern has arisen not just because it is a growing trend within academia. I really believe that it has arisen because important social experiences have asked for new ways of understanding public space.

The following text is a transcription of the keynote given by academic theorist and political organiser, Professor Stavros Stavrides. It set up a theoretical context for the day, and in this handbook, grounds some of the discussion around spaces of the political and the threats of de-politicisation in theory. Stavrides does not use the terms 'post-political' or 'de-politicisation' since he is concerned with notions of the commons and how to construct a collective political agency. By placing Stavrides' thoughts on the commons in this handbook, signals to commoning as an act of resistance against de-politicisation, as much as it is about building the political.

Let us first of all question the idea of a movement in general as an inadequate term to describe what we have recently experienced through the 'Squares' movement, the Arab Spring movement and the Occupy movement: were they really social movements or were they part of a deeper restructuring of attitudes that have to do with forms of disobedience? I'm trying to use here the idea of 'societies in movement' (2007, p.10) that came from Raul Zibechi, a Uruguayan theoretician whom I deeply respect. He tries to understand 'societies in movement' as those societies which do not only develop out of eruptions and forms of visible discontent and clashes; rather, they are societies in which everyday habits are also being questioned and everyday forms of discontent appear. They could be considered only minor events, but through them, we understand that there is movement underneath the appearance of order and the reproduction of the existing social relations.

7.1.0 Stavros Stavrides.

Drawing from this idea of 'societies in movement' in relation to the Squares movement, it was clear that they were not simply a demand-centred series of events; this was reinventing forms of social relations, or rather forms of social organisation, explicitly connected to a generalised feeling that this kind of society is not doing us any good. This is a form of discontent that explicitly delegitimises the dominant rhetoric of the welfare state. Of course, it helps that this happens in a period of crisis: there is no welfare state in Greece anymore, and there are lots of problems with welfare states across the world. This delegitimization has led to a kind of collective effervescence, a collective inventiveness of forms of organisation, based on improvisation which is a form

of collaboration. Improvisation is a form through which you can develop new habits and new ways of linking and connecting to others.

Jeffrey Alexander wrote in 2011 that Tahrir Square in Cairo had become a living and breathing microcosm — so we are talking about the performance of people being angry with their governments and explicitly stating specific demands; it is rather, a process through which people discover ways to form relations. It is through those relations that they can address the major problems of any kind of social organisation. They can ask, for whom is this society? For whom are these decisions being taken? What is good for us and who is going to decide that?

In this context, we can start rethinking the process of commoning, or the question of the commons. What is to be shared? What is to be preserved as common? We must think of it as a process of recognising what is essential for our common life. Commoning is a process which not only invents things, practices, and goods to be protected, but also the forms of social predictability (or institutions) through which we attempt, as a 'society in movement', to establish ways of preserving and expanding what is considered essential for this society's survival.

I am borrowing here from American geographer, David Harvey and his idea that the commons is not a thing; it is a relation (2012 p.73). This fits very well into the discussion of the commons that focuses on the verb and not the noun: commoning as a process. But I would also add to that a very important contribution also coming from Latin America, from Gustavo Esteva a Mexican thinker and activist: the idea of 'communalidad'. The closest translation is 'commonality', and the essence of this idea is an experience of the world as a 'we'. 'Communalidad' is a process through which we create, as he also says, a horizon of intelligibility. It is a form of understanding the world and not simply adding to this world another arena of sharing things; it is an understanding of the world produced through a process of sharing. It is meaningful that our lived experiences are at the core of commoning which is reappraisal of the composition and function of 'we'.

I suggest that we should talk about institutions of commoning or, rather, institutions which sustain and expand commoning. Let us not leave the word 'institutions' to an understanding of society based on a central organisational core, the state, or something that looks like a state. If we did, then the

institution would be the ways through which this central core organises society. Of course, because a centrally organised core is hierarchical and dominating, those institutions would then be forms through which the major choices connected to this form of organisation are implemented in society. It is through those choices that mechanisms of social reproduction are implemented.

We ought to take the meaning of the word 'institutions' and connect it to a new understanding of society. That is, we ought to connect it to 'communalidad', this new horizon of intelligibility, which is focused on a 'we'. If we do so, we will find out perhaps that there are institutions or forms that may guarantee certain ways through which a society attempts to predict and to regulate the future. But those forms are not necessarily linked to domination, hierarchy, and exclusion. Institutions of commoning could perhaps be connected to forms which establish an ongoing process. They are perhaps the ways through which we can guarantee that commoning will go on because one of the essential ideas behind this is that commoning cannot exist unless it keeps on developing. If commoning is being closed-in, then whatever kind of social group, whatever kind of subsection of society, whatever kind of imagined or fantasised enclave of otherness, commoning is bound to die. For commoning to exist as commoning, it always has to overspill the boundaries, always fill the boundaries of any existing community that is supposed to help in the preservation of the practices of commoning, and always overspill the boundaries either imposed from outside or created from inside by those who believe that they can somehow establish forms of sharing.

I think it is essential for commoning to invite newcomers. It is essential for commoning to always be able to expand and, thus, let us try to find out how this can happen. I suggest at least three conditions through which institutions of commoning can be shaped as open institutions that are institutions always open to negotiations between those who participate in commoning. And those three conditions include, firstly, the idea of comparability. Institutions of commoning should establish forms of relations through which there can be comparisons between those who participate. What is a comparison? It is not simply the acceptance of difference; it is the attempt to establish common ground. What is commoning? It is the invention of this common ground as a continuous process. Common ground does not mean homogenisation but indeed a place that we shape together as common without forgetting the fact that we enter into this process as different. So let us try to find an example of this, and here I think the Squares has shown that it is possible to do that: they have developed this kind

of institution of compatibility. Let us try to find the forms through which we can really invent, imagine, test this possible common ground.

And one more step: let us establish forms of institutions through which not only comparability is possible, but also translatability. What is a translation? I think it's a magical process. It's really an inspiring process, because it is an attempt to bridge a difference between two languages while knowing this is never truly possible. It is always a process that is connected to recurrent attempts, tests, corrections, but then again, sometimes efforts to bypass very difficult barriers, those barriers that indeed separate languages, not simply as systems of meaning, but also as forms of expression of different experiences which most of the time have no reducible one to the other.

7.1.1 Indignados Movement, Puerta de Sol, Madrid courtesy of https://www.publicspace.org.
7.1.2 Indignados Movement, Puerta de Sol, Madrid courtesy of https://www.publicspace.org.

7.1.3 Protesters gather in Tahrir Square on February 1, 2011. Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Image. 4 January 2011 protest in Tunis. Christopher Furlong/Getty Images.

7.1.4 Protesters gather in Tahrir Square on February 1, 2011. Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Image 4 January 2011 protest in Tunis. Christopher Furlong/Getty Images.

Translatability can possibly be thought of as the idea of inventing common ground and always developing this common ground, not in the direction of homogenisation, because we know from translation that this is not – it's not desirable, but it is also not possible. If you want to eliminate differences, you are bound to kill differences in the process: if you want to eliminate in terms of producing homogenisation, you are killing differences, you are killing them in the process, you are not simply leading them towards negotiation that will finally produce the final synthesis. This is a nightmare – it has always been a nightmare, although it was well-intended many times. But the idea of establishing practices of translation is accepting from the beginning that this will not lead to a final transparency, to a final, let's say, comparison between two different areas, two different languages, that will make one transparent to the other.

And the third one, the third condition, looks more difficult, but it has also emerged in various examples of everyday forms of solidarity that have emerged not only in the city squares during the Squares movement, but also keep on emerging in societies in deep crisis. We had important experiences in Greece during the recent refugee crisis. Here, the mechanisms that developed did not simply reflect a process of comparison or translation – which is important – but also new forms of producing things together, new forms of collaboration, that perhaps are based on – if you allow me to say that – the quintessence of sharing, which is the sharing of power. If you are not at least attempting to go towards that direction, that is, forming ways through which you can share power, then you cannot expect that all the other preconditions of sharing will ever be able to develop. If you do not accept not only the process working towards commoning but also the ways through which you consider all the others with whom you collaborate in establishing those processes as equal, then you are bound to repeat the problems that have to do with hierarchy, with specification of roles in terms of being in the end forms of repetition of what exists and its essential logic, which is the logic of domination through various forms of accumulation of power. And we are not talking about power as the ability to assert violence; we are talking about power in all its levels.

To put it briefly, of course there is no way to go beyond power, because human relations will always create forms of power, on all the levels, from the micro to the macro, but it is important to recognise that we can only deal with this process if we can invent artifices of equality, to borrow a phrase from Jacques Rancière. There are forms, institutions, if you want, that are the mechanism

through which we continuously prevent any accumulation of power. This was a real contribution to the discussion about democracy that happened through the experiences of the Squares and the recent solidarity movements.

So, democracy was being developed not through the abstract discourse on rights or equality as a natural-based condition but indeed evolved through specific experiments of sharing decisions, of sharing tasks. Also, it's important to know that democracy was being really embodied in practices that had to do with minor, everyday things, like cleaning the square: the police attacked it; the tear gas remains. This was a process through which people indeed discovered the power of being able to share things without necessarily referring to some central form of organisation, some central authority, some leadership that would produce those decisions.

So, these are briefly some kinds of initiatives that have emerged during this crisis in Athens, and I seriously believe that we have to learn from what people really do when they are faced with situations in which they feel that their lives are not in their hands. And this lack of trust for the state, this lack of trust for whatever kind of welfare provision, this sudden understanding that nobody's there to help unless we organise, unless we produce things, unless we do things that help us survive, this new kind of conscious and imagination at the same time is really producing new ideas about commoning and new practices through which commoning is being explored.

You know that the first days of the refugee wave have produced spectacular responses from the people in Athens, and also, we have new forms of self-managed refugee support centres. These were places in which refugees were invited as equals in the formation of these kinds of centres as centres of protection and development of a common life. And I'm not talking about the centres organised by the government or supported by certain NGOs: I'm talking about initiatives that have developed really from the bottom, from the bottom-up, from those below, as Latin-American colleagues say, "those below", those people who are also victims of austerity, also victims of the same processes, but they were really willing to give help and support. This is also happening in self-managed social centres in Athens, which is also an important struggle in the making to protect the housing rights.

I end up looking at a process which really produces a different kind of space, through practices of commoning that really implement their own experimental

institutions of commoning. And this kind of space I would propose to call "common space", to clearly distinguish it from public and private space. From private, it's easy to understand the difference, but I think the second difference from public spaces is the fact that public space is a space usually given to people by a certain authority which authorises its use. So, this authority develops the rules, and depending on the period of history, this could be a very autocratic authority, or a very democratically looking authority; nevertheless, it is the authority, a certain form of organisation, that is based on the centre, a specific authority, that actually gives to people the right under certain conditions and that is always in control of those conditions to use the space. So public space has historically been a space connected to authorities, although of course people have many times bypassed or challenged those rules.

I think we are in a period in which a new kind of space emerges, and it's not by accident that this happens in and through existing public spaces in forms of occupation of public space, which might be the result of these new kinds of commoning processes that raise again the issue of the city as commons. And those spaces, those common spaces, are different because they are created from below, and then because the rules of use of those spaces are being developed by the communities, emergent communities, open to new kinds of communities, through which those spaces are being used.

The lesson of the Squares is once more the lesson of not simply defining the space of a certain community, of an Avant Garde or whatever. No, it's a space which is inclusive, and this produces, of course, problems, about how to develop forms of controlling collectively potential threats. This was a major issue – but at the same time there is the matter of how to keep on, how to keep the pores, if you want, of this space open, how to keep the osmotic relations with the rest of the city going, in order to sustain this expanding commoning. So common space is a threshold space or a porous space or a passage-like space: I've used all those terms in some of my attempts to theorise. It's a space, therefore, which is always in the making; it is precarious in its conditions; it is fragile, but it is also inspiring and potentially produces new opportunities of forming things together.

And my last two points, which I will just mention briefly, is the result of this process of rethinking commoning on two levels. First, on the level of subjectivation, are we talking about new kinds of subjectivities, of action, of struggle that arise through processes of commoning? Yes, I think so. These

are subjectivities that are created in the process of entering something which is being collectively shaped, the new*w*comers – this is also a word that Rancière uses – and these subjects are also in what I attempt to term in a threshold condition. So, for example, a doctor that chooses to volunteer and help in a social clinic, or a teacher who chooses to volunteer and help with lessons in language for immigrants' children, is not any more somebody who has a specific knowledge, a specific role in society, a specific work to do, if you want, a specific profile: it's somebody who is also through this process experiencing some kind of crisis of identity because his or her identity is being enriched by this participation in a common process. So commoning does not simply accept individuals with their already existing identities and then gives them work to do. No! Commoning transforms individuals, creates out of these individuals' processes through which they can even challenge their own identity or the forms which this identity was built.

And the second and last point on this process: this also raises issues of prefiguration, that is, what is happening is really something in which people attempt to think about the possible future. Indeed, it is. And many attempts, and many everyday attempts, even within the forms of organising a collective kitchen for those that cannot even afford everyday food in Athens. Even in those minor, sometimes mundane practices of everyday solidarity, there seems to be new ways of predicting or projecting to the future a possible more just, more humane society. But I would say in a slightly different way from those who actually support this idea that all these acts are acts of prefiguration, that prefiguration as a process – that is, the creation of something which hints towards the future and attempts to test the possibility of a certain future: this is not simply a process that gives examples, searches for possibilities, expresses potentialities. At the same time, I would suggest, it creates real conditions. Real people are affected by those experiments. Real people see their lives changing.

So, if I may, I would suggest that this is a process through which the possibility of a more just and democratic society is not only explored, but also enacted, in contradictory terms, of course, because everything around us is fighting this possibility, but at the same time, informs through its way to discover this possibility as we live in it. So commoning is perhaps producing those days, destroying at the same time this idea that there is no alternative. Alternatives are being built through processes that happen every day, and, let me suggest, by real people.

Section 8: The Post-Political Curator's Manifesto

Manifesto
for the Post-Political Curator

Manifestos mine the past to form demands from the present moment to shape the future. They are written in the future tense, which leap-frogs over the immediate predicaments to imagine a future 'not yet here' (Muñoz, 2009 p.1). A manifesto is 'belated' in the sense that it is determined by a historical past that is 'invoked to disrupt the terms of the present' (Guy, 2016). A Manifesto for Post-political Curators borrows from a tradition of artists' declarations and produces its own non-linear temporality that calls for a utopia as a 'political act' (Zizek, 202, 559).

- Post-political enclosures are the desired outcome for processes of de-politicisation. Those places that are facing de-politicisation are not yet completely evacuated of the political. It is the post-political curator's task to discern the potential political agency which is subject to the threat of de-politicisation.
- Post-political curators ought not to expose the fragile political potentialities, but rather they must deploy their criticality to identify and articulate the conditions which de-politicise.
- The space created by the post-political curator is considered both benign enough to host conflict and strong enough to keep residents safe from market harms. This is a blind spot that the post-political curator must exploit.
- The post-political curator must figure out ways to best protect and defend the emerging political movements that are threatened by de-politicisation.
- Operating within different temporalities is a protective act that obscures the truly political from the processes of de-politicisation.
- Political failures of the past are curatorial resources to support the struggles of the future. Radical energy dragged from history can energise present political movements.
- 'Belated' modes of practice are about form (medium) as well as content (political struggles).

- Entwining the post-political curator’s curatorial work with their life-work can be a weapon in the struggle against de-politicisation.
- The curator must be attuned to ancestral time to open a future horizon that is illegible to and untouchable by the forces of de-politicisation.
- The post-political curator is a slow and steady ‘lurker’ who hangs around and grows roots in a place. They lurk slowly enough to be imperceptible.
- The lurking pace of andante practices is also a steady one as the post-political curator supports others to lay the groundwork for the political movements of the future.
- The post-political curator is duplicitous and disguises political struggles in curatorial projects.
- The post-political curator does not take the place of the community organiser, but where there isn’t already a community, their work can begin to build a movement.
- The post-political curator’s work can hold open and protect the space for communities to self-organise.
- The post-political curator can weaponise their privilege, their access to resources and their proximity to power to support the emergence and growth of potential political movements.

Appendix

Glossary

andante

'Andante' is a term used in musical composition which indicates to the musician that they are to play at a slow, walking pace. It is used by the artists collective, Ultra-red (2011/12) to describe their popular education and political practice. Imported into a curatorial field, it is a form of practice that actively rejects the accelerated tempo of contemporary capitalism by co-producing projects at a slower pace, sustained over the very long-term in a singular location.

belated political imaginary

A belated curatorial or artistic practice excavates a failed struggle from the past and re-activates it to challenge the present order. That struggle came too early or was too short-lived the first time around, but now is the right time.

community organising

Community organising is the practice of bringing people together to take action around their common concerns, often to overcome social injustice.

critical practice

Critical practice is a framework for practice (curating, art, writing, social work) informed by critical theory. Critical theory is an approach to philosophy that is oriented toward critiquing and changing the social organisation of economics, politics, culture and the arts to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them (Horkheimer, 1982, p.244).

curating

Curating is a professional practice for setting up public events, exhibitions and publications.

curatorial

The curatorial explores what takes place on the stage set up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator. It therefore refers not to the staging of an event, but to the event of knowledge itself (Martinon, 2013).

contrapuntal

Contrapuntal is a compositional method in music often called a 'fugue' where the relationship between two or more musical lines are harmonically interdependent yet independent in rhythm and melodic contour. In film, a contrapuntal score is when the music contrasts so much from the image that it brings about a heightened emotional experience in a dialectical unity.

de-politicisation

De-politicisation is a process that involves the denial of real political choice, the delegation of decision-making to technocratic mechanisms and the avoidance of conflict and debate in favour of consensual procedures alongside a growing public disengagement from politics.

enclosure

Enclosure is, historically, the subdivision and fencing of common land into individual plots which were allocated to those people deemed to have held rights to the land enclosed. The common ownership of land, and the history of its enclosure, provides a template for understanding the enclosure of other common resources, ranging from the atmosphere and the oceans to pollution sinks and intellectual property (Fairlie, 2009).

neoliberal governmentality

'Governmentality' is a term used by theorist Foucault to describe the art of governance — the strategies and tactics by which a society is rendered governable (Foucault, 1991, p.87–104). Neoliberal governmentality refers to an art of governance where the exercise of political power can be modelled on the principles of a market economy (2008 p.131).

post-political

The post-political condition is a hegemonic order in which political conflict or debate is suppressed. It is the outcome of the process of de-politicisation and does not exist (yet) as a fait accompli, but there are post-political arrangements and policies which try to eliminate political debate in favour of reaching a broad consensus. The term 'post-politics' is another way of talking about the post-political arrangements of a given context.

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Directory

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Milton Keynes Development Partnership
www.mkdp.org.uk

Liverpool Biennial
www.biennial.org

Cranbook Town Council
www.cranbrooktowncouncil.gov.uk

Exeter and East Devon Growth Point
www.exeterandeastdevon.com

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation
https://ebbsfleetdc.org.uk

Post-political Projects and Organisations

BAVO
www.bavo.biz

Black Quantum Futurism
www.blackquantumfuturism.com

LA Tenant's Union
https://latenantsunion.org

Mmere Dane – The Black Time Belt
www.blacktimebelt.net

New Town Culture
www.newtownculture.org

Ultra-red
www.ultrared.org

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