Caring to Listen

Developing listening practices to better understand experiences of socially engaged artists from working class backgrounds

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Epigraph

"Let me begin by saying that I came to theory because I was hurting-the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend, to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing."

bell hooks, Theory as Liberatory Practice, p.1, 1991

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Abstract

I examine how working-class backgrounds shape experiences of success when working as a socially engaged artist in the UK. This research is important because until experiences of class inequality are better understood in relation to the working conditions and cultures of socially engaged art, the social turn cannot claim to be inclusive or ameliorative. Without evidencing how inequality in socially engaged art practices is understood and addressed, the socially engaged art sector risks making minor adjustments to the capitalist status quo. To undertake this praxis, I deploy a practice as research methodology. Specifically, the dynamic praxis system. Academic findings arising from my praxis, evidence a paucity of research quantifying and analysing the experiences of working-class artists involved with producing contemporary socially engaged art. This represents a crisis of knowledge in terms of understanding how class background determines creative ideation *and* access to employment and validation when working as a socially engaged artist. More research is needed to understand the causes, scale, and experiences of multi-ethnic working-class people, involved with the production socially engaged art today. Responding to these knowledge gaps, I develop artistic research processes, including *The Convivial Listening Protocol*; a new practice as research method that uses listening and privilege mapping activities to better understand how class origin shapes creative aspirations and experiences of people working as socially engaged artists. Findings arising from *Caring to Listen* will be of interest to socially engaged artists and academics researching inequality in the field of socially engaged arts and the creative and cultural industries. Further, this praxis will be of use to scholars and artists examining how theories and practices of listening and care can facilitate candid conversations and action on pervasive intersectional class inequality. A structural problem endemic to the arts, and society at large.

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Preface: Autotheorising Myself

"Most simply, autotheory is the integration of the auto or "self" with philosophy or theory, often in ways that are direct, performative, or self-aware – especially so in those practices that emerge with post modernism."

Lauren Fournier, 2021, p. 13

Drawing on feminist practices of autotheory (Fournier, 2021), theories of relational ontology, and situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988, 1991), I put into practice the idea that all knowledge is shaped by specific relational encounters. These experiences are not to be dismissed and excluded under the guise of the god trick; otherwise known as the myth of researcher objectivity, the "view from above, from nowhere" (Haraway, 1988, p. 589). As I situate myself, I recognise that my location and my position is in flux, mutable. My situation changes depending on socio-economic, emotional, physical, and cultural factors. So too am I shaped and coloured by the ideas that enter my psyche and body. Ideas that allow me to position myself, to reflect, to act. In conducting praxis with and in the real world, I situate myself as an artist-researcher who thinks, feels, and acts with others.

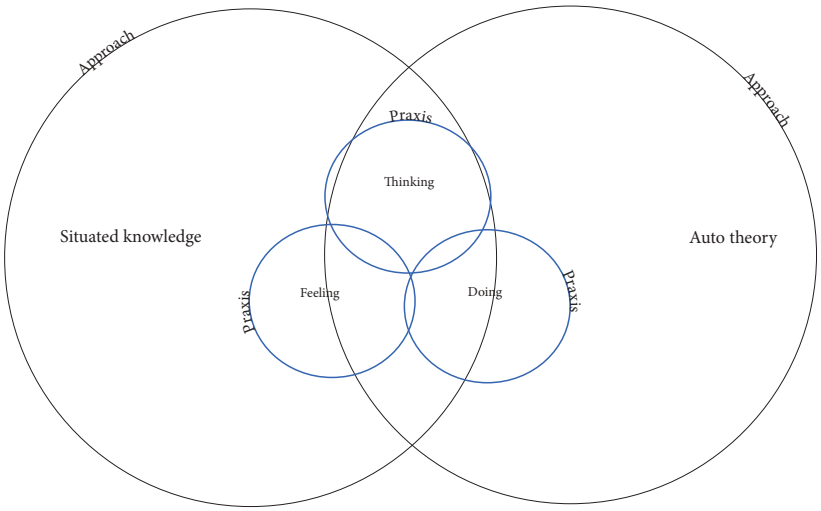


Figure 1. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Thinking-feeling-doing*. [Illustration].

My academic and artistic view is not objective, nor is it general. It is specific. A product of the social, material, relational, and intellectual environments that I occupy. Knowledge is assimilated, gained, tested, and contested through and within these encounters. Situated knowledge as a theory, recognises that knowing and thinking "are unconceivable without the multitude of relations that make possible the worlds we think with" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 70*)*.

In foregrounding how my own lived experiences are folded into my praxis, I build on the work of artist and academic Lauren Fournier, author of *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (2021), who puts forward the case for working with the mess of lived experience, intellectual, emotional, emergent and unstable, and is interested in interrogating what constitutes self, and relations with others.

Autotheory is a method of analysis, writing and making art, that gives significance to thinking through what factors, experiences and relationships help conceptualise and enact identity. Autotheory as defined by Fournier, is the integration of the self, of lived experience

folded into art, philosophy, and theory. This integration of self with theory, is often self-aware, self-narrated, inter-textual, and at times performative (Fournier, 2021, p. 13). Autotheoretical practice has strong links with auto-ethnography, a method of qualitative research where the author uses self-reflective writing and art practice to connect autobiographical experiences to wider cultural, social and political realities, meanings and understandings.

Working examples of people who use autotheory in their creative work include Carmen Maria Machado, Adrian Piper, Johanna Hedva, Cassie Thornton and Maggie Nelson. The content of these creative works is drawn from real life, real bodies. Autotheoretical artists use lived experience as information to help make sense of the world, to inform analysis and action in and with the world. In drawing on embodied and affective first person lived experiences, the autotheoretical impulse pays close attention to documenting and analysing all aspects of self. To work autotheoretically is to listen closely to self in relation to wider social experiences. It is to value and care about the intricacies of one's own situated and social experience. Autotheorising self as artistic method, declares I matter, my experience matters. The value of autobiographic and autotheoretical method and experience, is that it helps make sense of, shape and critique the systems at play larger than ourselves. Lived experiences are not narcissistic or excessive. They are valid consequences of the socio-economic, relational and ecological systems that sculpt our day to day realities.

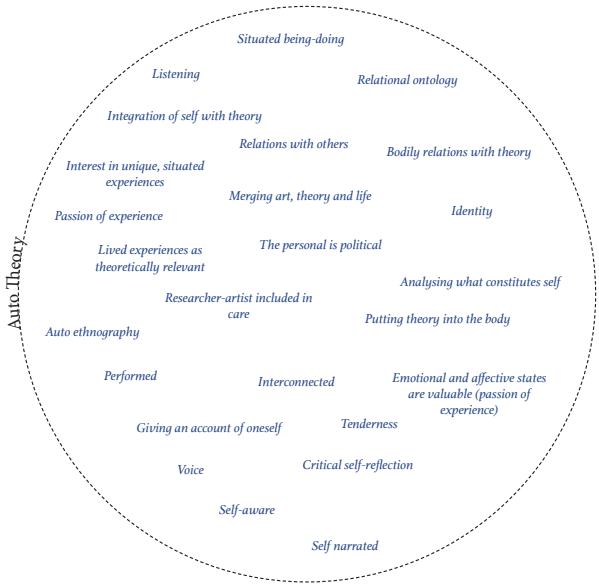


Figure 2. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Doing auto-theory*. [Illustration].

For many critics, autotheoretical practice is deemed non-objective, narcissistic, non-intellectual (Kraus, 1997; Fournier, 2021). However, I, with many other thinkers contest this, viewing lived experience as intrinsically part of the experiences, opportunities and forms of various timbres of education that enables thought, academic research, and criticality to be enacted and undertaken in the first place. As Fournier proffers "Autotheory reveals the tenuousness of maintaining illusory separations between art and life, theory and practice, work and the self, research and motivation, just as feminist artists and scholars have long argued" (Fournier, 2021, p. 10).

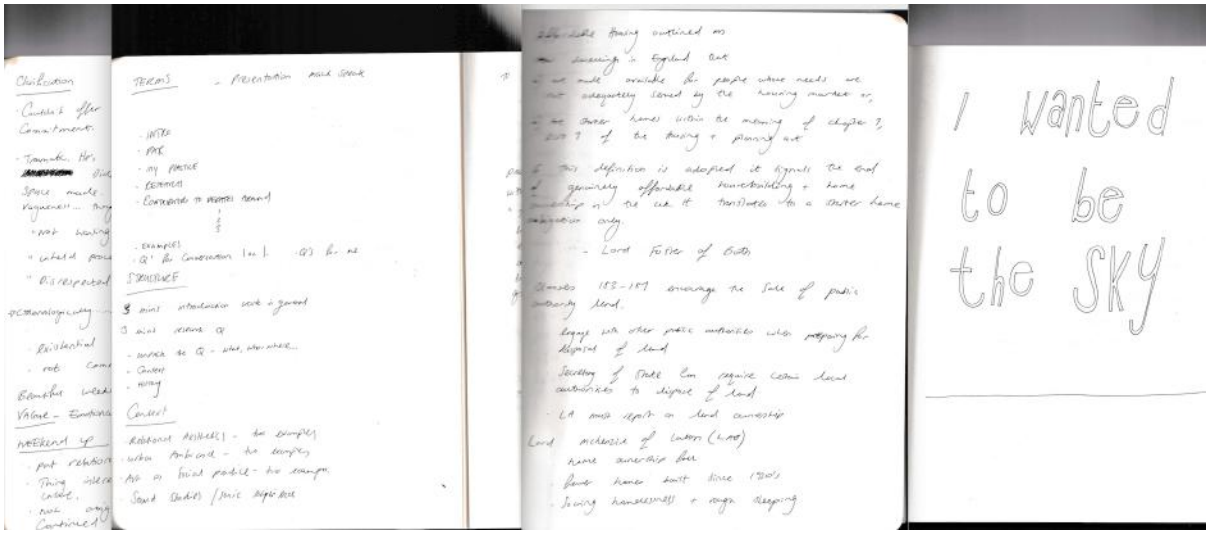


Figure 3. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *March - April 16 Sketchbook Scans* [screenshot collage].

Autotheory and situated knowledge may be dismissed by the academic canon as self-indulgent, narcissistic, non-objective, unreliable. However, as many feminist theorists and artists have argued over the decades (Braidotti, 2019; Gilligan, 1982; Haraway, 1988, 2016; Tronto, 1993, 2015), the self is inseparable from what we know, how we know, and even the questions we ask of the world through various research questions, methods, and practices.

Figure 4. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *March - April 16 sketchbook scans [screenshot collage].*

Here, I take a moment to draw on my own worlds, utilising an autotheoretical approach to think through the relationships, encounters and my own experience of self that has given shape to this six-year journey. This is of use to my praxis, because foregrounding my lived

experiences contextualises and concomitantly outlines the relational embodied, material spaces that have shaped, disrupted, and enabled my artistic and academic work.

At the time of writing (Sept, 2021), I am a 37-year-old cis-gender white woman. I have no children, am in a social-sexual relationship, and live in a housing co-op with nine adults and four children. In this set-up, I live in a flat with one other female friend. In terms of my professional work, I am an artist, educator, and researcher. I've been working professionally as an artist for over fifteen years and have a background in socially engaged arts and activism. I come from a low-income single-parent family and am a twin. I worked professionally as an artist and campaigner throughout my twenties, earning enough to live, but not earning enough to save.

Five years ago, in my early thirties, I secured a permanent lecturing post at University of the Arts London, and alongside completing my PhD have been able to save some money during this period. I consider myself a class hybrid. I have access to significant quantities of social and cultural capital but am from a single-parent family without much money.

At the time of writing, I locate myself in the class group spanning new affluent workers and the traditional working class. I do this because I take home significantly less than the median full time pro-rata salary of £31,461 (ONS, 2021), though this is in part due to being on a 0.6 contract. I have savings significantly less than the technical and established middle class average of £66 and £27k (Savage et al, 2013, p. 234-237). I do not own my home and, instead, I pay rent which puts me in the working class and new affluent worker sector. I do have a secure and stable income, which is above the mean of the average working-class household income of 13k (Savage et al, 2013, p. 240).

Over the last five years, I have been cutting my teeth as a university lecturer, alongside completing this PhD. This has been demanding. Pursuing a PhD and a career as an academic was motivated in equal part by me wondering if I would be allowed into the academy (which reveals my own sense of imposter syndrome), and by the need to earn more money than my PhD stipend to support myself and my family.

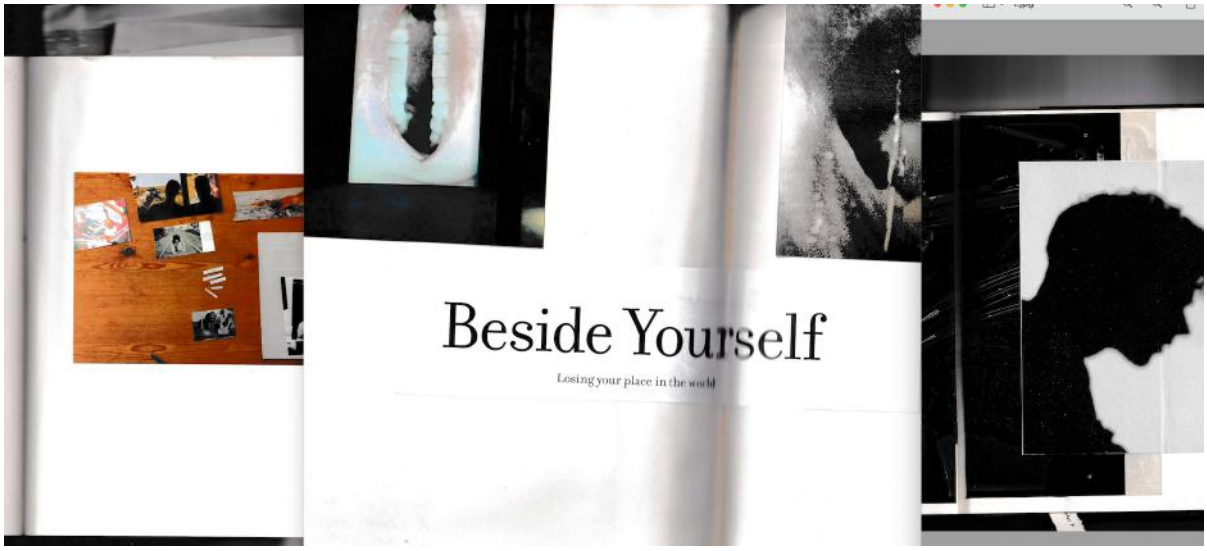


Figure 5. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *March - April 16 sketchbook scans* [screenshot collage].

Since graduating in 2006 I have lived in 28 places as a tenant. What I have called home has ranged from a small boat, to a cabin, an old library, to various large, shared households in London, Bristol, and mid-Wales. At the time of writing, I have recently, as of two weeks ago moved into a newly renovated flat, part of a co-op I've been involved in and working on for the last few years.

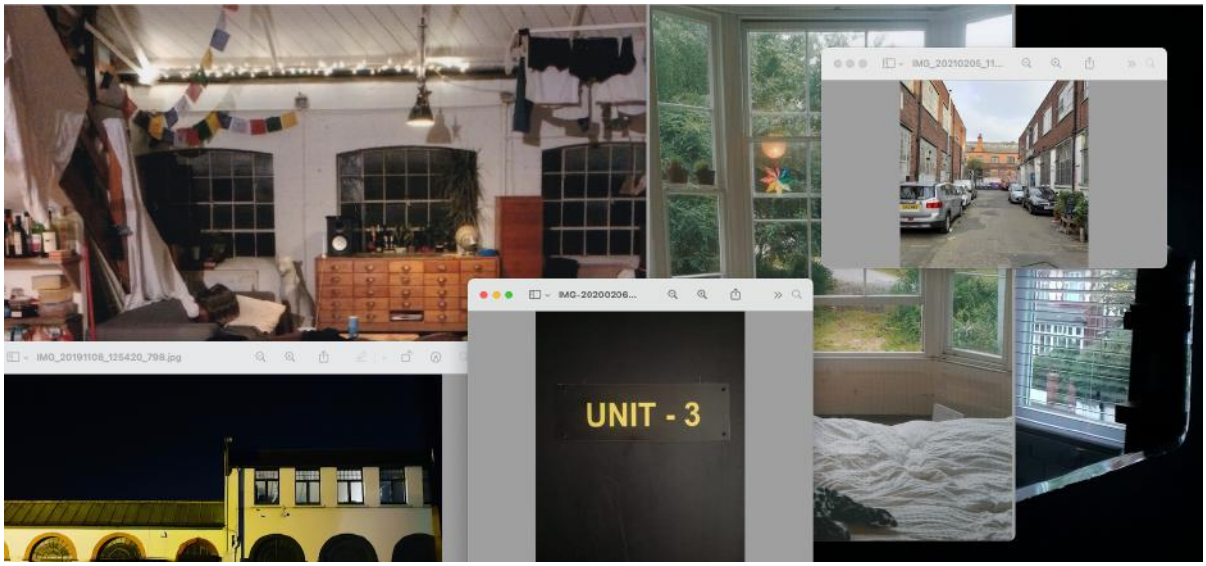


Figure 6. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Some of the places I've lived over the duration of the PhD* [screenshot collage].

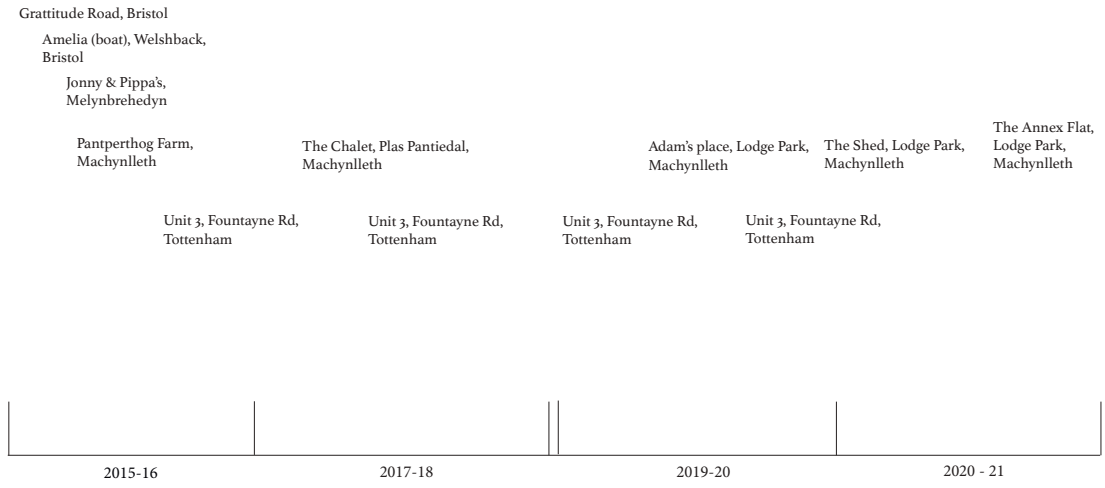


Figure 7. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Some of the places I've lived over the duration of the PhD* [screenshot collage].

The space and privilege of doing the PhD have led to my reflecting on the question running throughout this thesis: *Can listening practices help understand how class background shapes creative ideas, and experiences of success, when working as a socially engaged artist?*

In asking myself this question, as well as asking this question of the field, I have had the time to reflect on my own intersectional class experience. Below, I take a moment to situate myself, articulating how experience to do with housing, employment and care have carved and shaped my own ability, desires, and access to resources to develop my own socially engaged art praxis.

Overall, my decision to embark on this PhD was motivated by a strategic desire to work in a job that is not separate or distracting from the limited time I have to make my artwork. I was motivated to get a job that generated regular income that is enough for me to live off and save, in an attempt to realise housing security, and occasionally support my brother and his young family. At the time of starting this PhD I had about £1k savings, was renting (as I continue to do), and had been working as a freelance artist and campaigner throughout my twenties. Since securing a permanent 0.6 job in academia, I have had the privilege of PAYE

job security and of earning enough to be able to save a small amount every month.

Seen through an autotheory situated knowledge lens, it feels important to briefly give name to the privileges and inequalities I feel run through my everyday life. In doing so, I tease out and acknowledge how unequal distribution of resources shape and enable / inhibit my academic and artistic labour. It is important to do this because I recognise that while I have struggled to secure affordable housing, job security and financial surplus, I am at once inextricably privileged. It is important to me to give a balanced account of my lived experience of my privileges as well as my experiences of struggle.

My privileges are many. They come in the form of my whiteness, the fact that my skin colour doesn't summon prejudice, fear, guilt, dismissal and at times erasure of racialised and racist relations. I am not from a persecuted ethnic background. I am well educated. My education and my own sense of being educated, intellectual, critical, and creative is a privilege and a resource that I consistently draw on. Other privileges include my access to forms of social capital. I have friendships with people who have supported me indirectly during the PhD. For example, during the second lockdown I lived rent free for 6 months at a friend's parent's holiday home. I am also broadly healthy and able bodied. I have inherited epilepsy (that I grew out of in my twenties) and since getting ill with suspected Covid in March 2020, I have had an ongoing cough and general fatigue.

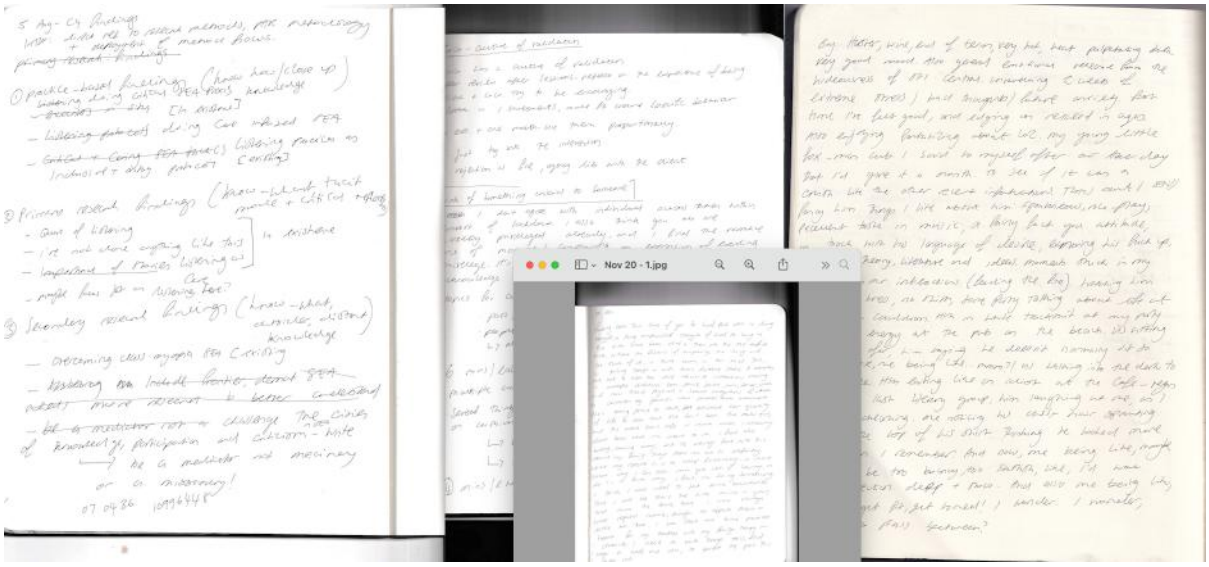


Figure 8. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *November 2020 sketchbook scans* [screenshot collage].

In terms of lived experiences of struggles associated with inequality, as aforementioned, I have been directly impacted by the realities of violence and poverty within my immediate family. My twin brother has two young children and over the last few years has been separating from an abusive partner. This set of circumstances has seen him go through multiple court cases, become diagnosed with type two diabetes, and liaise with social service workers who specialise in the care of children who are considered as being at significant risk. While he works a 48-hour week in a pub, he often falls short on money for rent or food at the end of each month. Mum owns her house but has a small pension, so doesn't have financial reserves to bail my brother out. I often step in to help. I won't go into detail here, as it is simply too complex a situation to give a decent account of, but the complexities of my immediate family have required financial and emotional labour from me, which at times have impacted and informed my praxis.

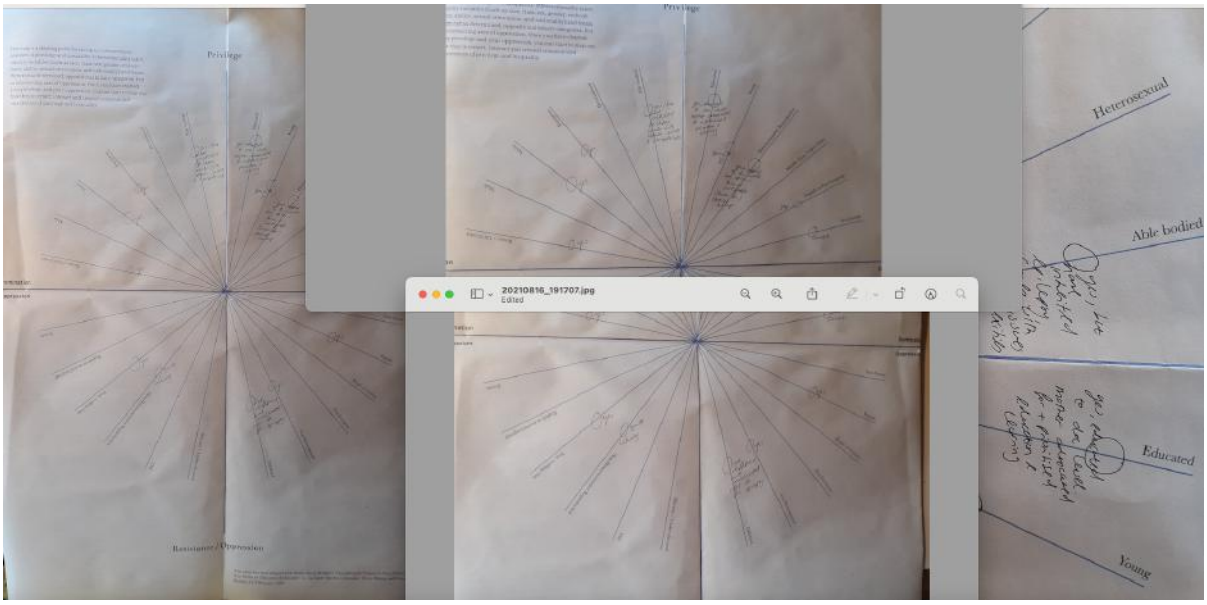


Figure 9. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Mapping privilege and inequality activity from Convivial Listening Protocol* [screenshot collage].

This thesis is not focussed on the affects and causes of my own personal proximity to familial precarity, but more, explores how the complex, demanding and exhausting experiences of trying to live without regular and adequate income, in a society scraping back its welfare state intersects with an ability to produce, think up and get on with artistic and creative expression.

While the focus of this thesis is not the intricacies of my day to day life, my lived experiences are part of this thesis. These experiences are of value within the context of this research because these specific experiences have led me to ask questions about the causes, scale and solutions to various kinds of inequality presented as inevitable, familiar, unremarkable in our day to day lives, and the kinds of inequality and privilege often reproduced through certain forms of artistic expression. How certain voices shape societal and cultural norms, values, aspirations, and how these ideas and values are shaped and produced through artistic production and endorsement. Specifically, I ask how and where multi ethnic working class voices are researched, acknowledged, included and listened to within the field of socially engaged art.

The question of class, inclusion, voice, giving an account of oneself and listening methods runs through all practice based projects included as part of this thesis. These works are detailed in chapter one, but include *Discord* (2016), *Home* (2017), *A Life, A Presence Like the Air* (2017) and *The Convivial Listening Protocol* (2017).

Figure 10. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Discord installation build* [screenshot collage].

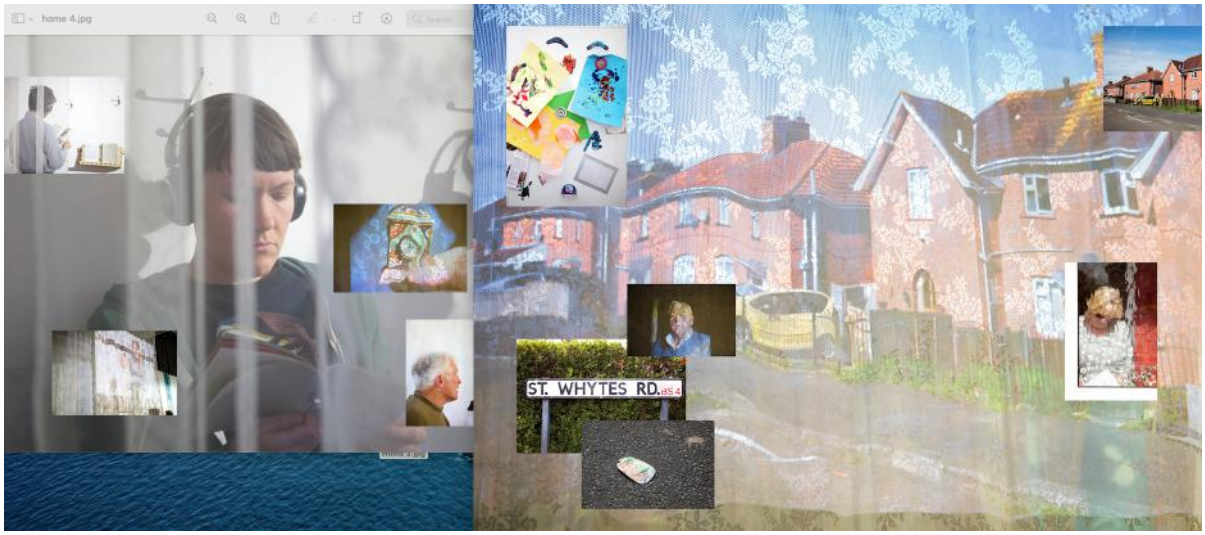


Figure 11. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Home* [screenshot collage].

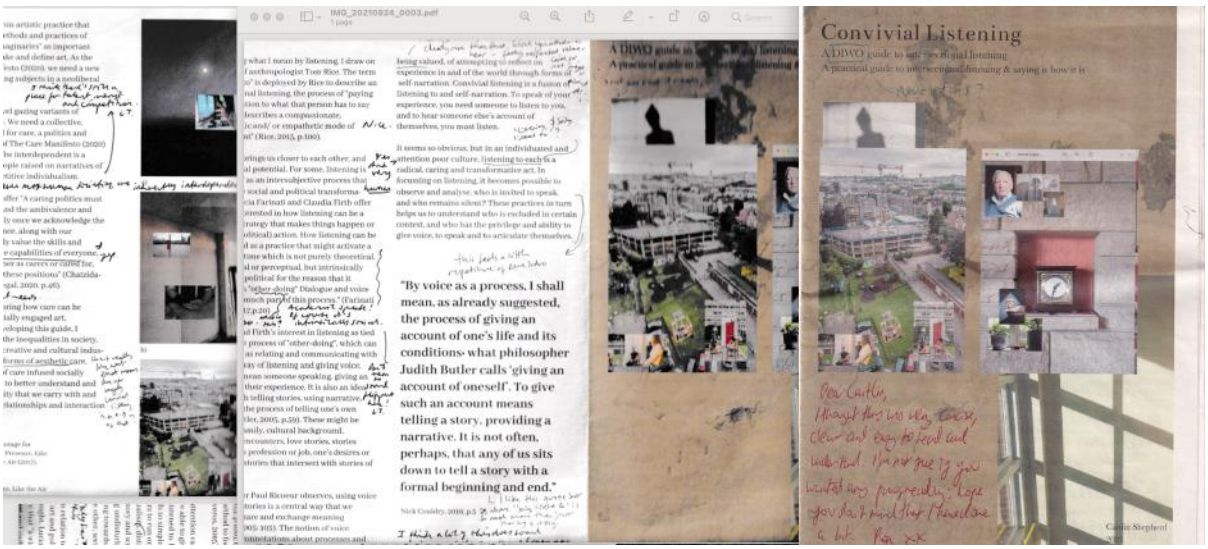


Figure 12 & 13. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Documents of ALAPLA* and *The Convivial Listening Protocol* [screenshot collage].

Drawing on the ideas of Haraway and Fournier, I now locate myself amongst people I think with (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Artistically, I situate myself within the field of socially engaged art. This type of artwork is expressed through a range of mediums: conversations, large-scale listening events, dinners, radical pedagogies, structure and place building, experience design and participatory and collective artistic production. Socially engaged art practice often incorporates criticism, new media, technology, care and design, experimentation, and production of new ways of relating – new and experimental forms of social encounter.

Artists who practice in this area, with whom I identify, who incorporate various aspects of socially engaged art practice into their work include Suzanne Lacey, Adrianne Piper, Stephan Willats, Alberta Whittle, Cassie Thornton, Joanna Hedva and Magdalena Jadwiga Hartelova. Galleries and art projects that I situate my praxis in relation to include The Grand Union Gallery, The Showroom, Furtherfield Gallery, Hypericum: A Code of Practice, The Pirate Care Syllabus, A Blade of Grass Magazine, Onassis AiR and Mask Magazine.

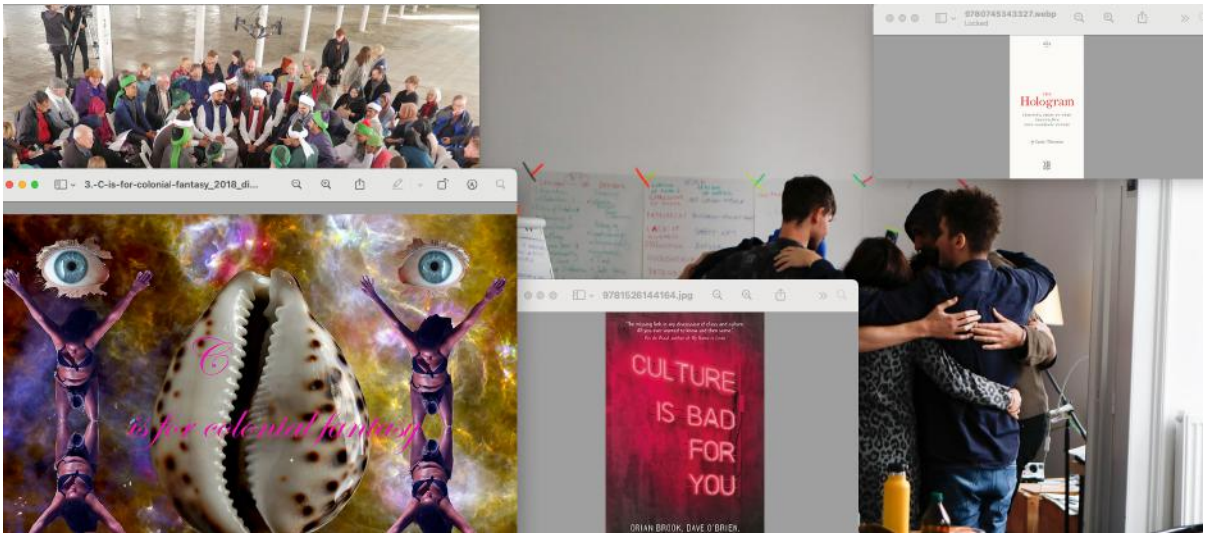


Figure 14. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) Artists who I'm thinking with [screenshot collage].

Theorists and artists important to my work come from four main camps. Firstly, scholars who examine inequality, art-washing and working conditions in the UK creative and cultural industries. These include Dave O'Brien, Mark Taylor, Orian Brook, Eleonora Belfiore, Leigh Claire La Berge, Sophie Hope, Stephen Pritchard, Mark Fisher, Amanda Ravetz and Lucy

Wright.

Secondly, I am influenced by scholars and practitioners who work with intersectionality, situated knowledge, and feminist ethics of care approaches to research and being in the world. These thinkers and facilitators include Joan Tronto, Bernice Fisher, Joanna Hedva, Cassie Thornton, Sara Ahmed, Kimberlee Crenshaw, bell hooks, Lauren Fournier, Donna Haraway and Maria de la Bellacasa. Authors who work with auto-theory and auto-biography have also taught me new methods and forms of writing about my own lived experiences. Writers who have influenced my methods and thinking towards autotheory and inclusion of my own lived experience include Maggie Nelson, Carmen Maria Machado, and Chris Kraus.

Figure 15. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Theorists who I'm thinking with* [screenshot collage].

Thirdly, I draw on theorists and artists who explore what it means to listen in the context of artistic production and encounter, specifically, with a focus on how methods of listening play out within the context of making and doing socially engaged art practice. Thinkers and artists whose work I think with and through include Claudia Firth and Lucia Farinati, Christoph Cox, Tom Rice, Micheal Bull and Les Back and Pauline Oliveros.

Fourthly, I draw on debates and discourses taking place within the field of socially engaged art. This closely relates to my interest in exclusion in the arts, as inequality and working conditions of this field have not yet been fully interrogated. In exploring and thinking through the history and currency of socially engaged art practices, I draw on a range of thinkers,

including Tom Finkelpearl, Grant Kester, Claire Bishop, Eleonora Belfiore, Sophie Hope, and Pablo Helguera. This list is not exhaustive, but these practitioners and thinkers are people who indirectly, I have spent significant time with.

These people have given me new vocabulary, new ideas, new tools with which to navigate the world with through the technology of writing, and through the poesies of artistic expression. As María Puig de la Bellacasa reminds us, one way to care in and through academic labour, is to acknowledge who you think with (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

In addition to thinking with others, we can summon ways of being in the world that merges theory with the body, with feeling, sensation, mess, flows, tears, gobbled utterances, spit, emotion, unpredictability. This is what Sara Ahmed calls bringing theory back to life (Ahmed, 2017).

Figure 16. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Who I'm thinking with* [Illustration].

It feels important here to bring my body into proximity; the sensuality and haptic experiences of my body, and of other people's bodies are woven into this thesis. I do not see my body, its

breath, its sweat, its digestion, its sickness, its pain, its sleep, its warm, soft, smooth, hard, dry skin as separate from my praxis. Instead, my body, and its ability to process, feel, fall apart, hurt, dance, resist, quiver, revolt and derive pleasure, is written into this work.

The sensuality and inclusion of the body, as a haptic epistemology, is discussed as a feature of socially engaged art that listens in chapter two. The acknowledgement of embodied states as an expression of care, intersubjectivity and as an epistemic alternative to detached vision is discussed in chapter three. Attention to touch, and what it means to touch and receive touch, enables a more depth awareness and understanding of the visceral, haptic and bodiliness of perception, communication, thought and affect (Ahmed & Stacey, 2001; Ahmed, 2017). My body is not secondary, it is primary. It is very much a tool and a state that I work within the writing and making of my work.

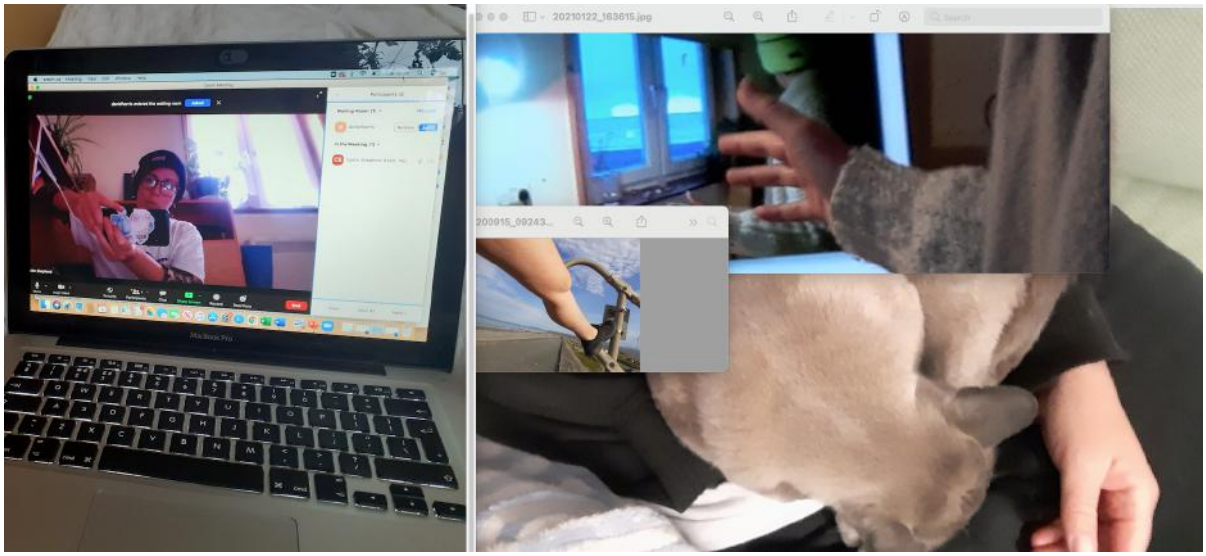


Figure 17. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *The presence of my body in my praxis* [screenshot collage].

I have used this PhD as a time-space to deep dive and explore aspects of my own lived experience and examine other people's experiences along themes of class, listening, inequality and socially engaged art practices. It seems impossible here to trace and explain the significance of all the encounters I have had in the world (human and otherwise) over the last six years. However, deploying some of the tactics of situated knowledge and autotheory, I wanted to offer you, the reader, some sense of my context in terms of my familial background, my artistic and theoretical kinship structure, educational and professional location; the place from which I speak.

Introduction

"Interdependency is not a contract, nor a moral ideal—it is a condition."

María Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p.70

This thesis and the artwork woven into it, has been through many iterations, adjustments, and overhauls. It feels important to open this thesis with a brief summary of the thought processes undertaken to get here.

My PhD started out in 2015 as a project interested in the affective agency of site-specific sound art installations and listening. Quite quickly, a year or so in, I carved my focus into an interest in gathering oral accounts, first person stories of everyday lived experiences of home and housing. I was interested in exploring how and if audio recording, editing and narrowcasting these sorts of stories enabled or hindered empathy and political action on systemic and interpersonal socio-economic inequality. I situated this enquiry within the field of relational aesthetics, but later ended up locating myself in socially engaged art practices.

At the start of this thesis, I felt somehow unable to focus on working-class experience explicitly. This was down to my own shame around my own complex, classed experiences. Concurrently, my aversion to taking ownership of working-class experiences as a central research theme was compounded by various push backs from colleague's, collaborators and people in relative positions of power, telling me that class wasn't an issue, that it didn't exist, that it wasn't important. I later realised these responses were sometimes (but not always) code for a resistance to acknowledge and therefore act on the very material and cultural realities of intersectional socio-economic inequality.

Because of these entwined lived and social experiences of class erasure, I reframed my interest through the lens of housing; a less controversial framing device. However, I later

realised that this wasn't what I was interested in. I returned to what I previously couldn't give name to. I reset my attention on researching and analysing experiences of class inequality within the production and consumption of socially engaged arts.

While more in-line with my lived experience, intellectual and political interests, this frame was still too broad. I was still looking at gathering and understanding experiences of multi-ethnic working-class experiences amongst three groups: audiences, artists *and* collaborators. I am genuinely interested in understanding how class shapes interest, access, and confidence to consume, produce and collaborate in the context of socially engaged art practices. But this focus was too diffuse to garner new insights, new knowledge.

Subsequently I decided to focus on how multi-ethnic class origin shapes access to opportunities to be involved with artistic production. Specifically, socially engaged art practices. This remains the focus of my thesis, as you will discover.

I outline the reasons for prioritising this focus over earlier research aims later in this chapter. What is important to accentuate here, is that this research focus has been crafted, refined, and interrogated over may iterations of thought and artistic enquiry. The process of getting here has been emergent, messy, unstable. As is evident, this iterative process is part of my praxis, part of the learning journey stitched into this thesis.

The aim of *Caring to Listen* is to better understand experiences of socio-economic inequality amongst workers in the field of socially engaged art in the UK. My focus on economic inequality and the lack of people from working-class backgrounds making it into producer, artist, commissioner, and curator roles is motivated by my own lived experience as someone coming from a low-income single-parent family, engaging in various forms of labour to support myself and my family while working as an artist. The question guiding my research is: *Can listening practices help understand how class background shapes creative ideas, and experiences of success, when working as a socially engaged artist?*

I have many reasons for undertaking this research. Firstly, it is vitally important to remain critical of the pervasiveness of Eurocentric patriarchal capitalism. This is important because this system normalises banal and extreme forms of violence, forms of socio-economic

discipline and notions of success contingent on the systemic exploitation of people, social values, and ecosystems. The same system rewards normative gender, sexuality and economic choices and punishes and disciplines anyone not playing the heteronormative, hyper-productive, individualistic game.

Secondly, Eurocentric patriarchal capitalist values are flagrantly reproduced in the UK creative and cultural industries. We see competitive individualism, the production and consumption of artistic artefacts as status symbols and speculative financial assets for the global elite, and a profoundly un-diverse workforce.

Thirdly, the conditions of labour within the creative and cultural industries have been exposed to be precarious, coming with significant hidden costs and validation gaps. Because of these barriers, the creative and cultural industries remain inaccessible to people without a surplus of creative, social, and economic capital. More specifically, to date, there has been a lack of research undertaken into understanding the working conditions and workforce diversity found within UK based socially engaged art practices.

The questions I ask through this thesis are motivated by my interest in understanding how the creative and cultural industries reproduce (and challenge) socio-economic values and aspirations endemic to Eurocentric patriarchal capitalism, and the ways in which these ideas and cultural practices might be challenged through the double articulation of academic research *and* artistic practice.

In constructing this thesis, I depend on some key ideas to define what I mean when I talk about socially engaged art, listening, class, and inequality. Here, I briefly introduce key terms that are important to understand when engaging with my work.

Eurocentric patriarchal capitalism is a term I use throughout this thesis. It defines Eurocentric knowledge; a form of knowledge rooted in rationalism, male dominance, and a fragmentary, divisive, and polarising world view (Salami, 2020; Haraway, 1988, 2016; Braidotti 2019b). It is a term that defines a capitalist ontology as one that treats everything as a marketised experience - from housing, to work, to the production and consumption of food. This pervasive business ontology is fiercely exploitative, ableist, hyper-productive, sleep-deprived,

and individualistic (Federici 2020; Fisher, 2009; Cray, 2013).

My use of the term capitalism describes a society organised around an economic system that advocates the accumulation of capital, private property, and the assimilation of profit at the expense of workers who do not own the means of production; women, sick and disobedient bodies, our psyches, the environment, atmosphere, sub-rock strata, and anything else that can be exploited for profit. The accumulation of capital is extracted from the face of the earth, and from human bodies, dripping in blood (Marx, 1988, p. 843; Federcici, 2004). At times, I refer to capitalist realism; an idea advanced by the late Mark Fisher, which describes a political and social state defined by, "a pervasive atmosphere, conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action" (Fisher, 2009, p. 16).

The patriarchy is a term that recognises that certain privileges are endowed to men at the expense of women. We see this in the gender pay gap, domestic labour normalised as female, caring roles such as nurses, childcare practitioners, and palliative care nurses being predominantly women, and in sexual violence against women still at large within everyday life (Chatzidakis, Hakim, Litter, & Rottenberg, 2020). Eurocentric patriarchal capitalism is a term that recognises that the capitalist project of modernity is rooted in the systematic primitive accumulation of women's bodies and non-white bodies. This brutal history is founded on the extortion of female and non-white bodies. It is through these exploitative tactics that capitalist modernity was realised (Federici, 2004). Eurocentric patriarchal capitalism is a term I use deliberately to name and critique colonial and capitalist mindsets and patriarchal social and cultural values.

Eurocentric patriarchal capitalism is closely bound to classed experiences, such as experiences of profound difference in access to material, economic, cultural, and social capital, employment and social support systems. Over the past fifteen years, there has been a revival in academic interest in the research, analysis and understanding of class inequality in the UK and beyond. This is in part motivated by evidence of increasing social inequalities; specifically around job security, income, and access to affordable housing, but also around significant differences between social determinants of health, such as educational attainment, housing security, inequality in a range of sectoral workforces, access to leisure time, and the

reproduction of wealth and poverty through family structures (Savage et al, 2013; Hills, 2010; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2008).

In this thesis, I refer repeatedly to class and working-class experience. In developing my definition of class, I draw on Bourdieu's (2010) conception of cultural, social, and economic capital to better understand barriers, inequalities, and power relations present in the UK creative and cultural industries. In defining what I mean by working class experience, I draw on findings from *The Great British Class Survey* (GBCS) (Savage et al, 2013). This large-scale national research project set out to measure social, cultural, and economic capital and capture a vignette of contemporary British Society.

The GBCS identified seven new schemata of class, accounting for an extremely unequal distribution of wealth at opposite ends of the spectrum, but in the middle a more blended body of individuals earning different amounts, and having diverse means of accessing social and cultural capital. In summary, the seven strata are 1) The Elite 2) The Established Middle Classes 3) Technical Middle Class 4) The New Affluent Worker 5) The Traditional Working Class 6) Emergent Service Workers 7) Precariat (Savage, 2015, p. 169). These schemata have been developed based on analysis of how social, cultural, and economic capital play out differently in people's everyday lives, and how these different theories of capital help to define a more complex picture of classed experience.

In my own work, I remain interested in the experiences of people coming from working class and emergent sector groups; essentially people who have to work for a wage to survive, get by, pay their rent, afford food, and, perhaps, have something left for leisure and or a rainy day - or not. When I use the term working class, I refer to people from emergent service workers, the traditional working class and precarious categories outlined in the GBCS.

To clarify what these terms mean, I draw on definitions outlined in the GBCS. Emergent services workers have a mean household income of £21k, frequently rent and have limited savings. This group tends to have diverse social contacts and consume and engage with high volumes of cultural capital. Emergent service workers are "marginal class in terms of its economic capital, but its social and cultural capital is high" (Savage et al, 2013, p. 240).

The traditional working class is a poorer wage-earning group compared with emergent service workers, with people in this category having a mean household income of £13k. Members of this group tend to own their homes, with an average house price of £127k, but have only small savings. "This class therefore scores low on nearly every measure of capital, though is not completely deprived" (Savage et al, 2013, p. 240).

While my research acknowledges the precariat, it is important to note that the precariat are in a class of their own, with people in this group struggling to get by. This group is the poorest class, with mean household incomes of £8k, none or very low savings, and, more often than not, renting their housing. They have limited social and cultural capital. While this group is the most deprived group, it is a large group, comprising 15% of the British population (Savage et al, 2013, p. 243).

To be interested in the experiences of people from working class, emergent sector, and precariat workers is to be interested in unequal distributions of power, agency, and cultural, social, and economic capital. From here on in, when I use the term "working class", I reference individuals belonging to groups identified through the GBCS who have lower incomes, lower forms of social and cultural capital, fewer savings, are often renting, and, in some cases, in precarious, unreliable employment. Specifically, I refer to people coming from emergent service workers, traditional working class, and precarious social groups (Savage, 2015).

Problematically, in the UK, there is still a pitting of white working-class experience as in conflict with the aims of wider anti-racist, social justice ambitions. Most recently, this was expressed through news stories that declared a cultural deficit of understanding of struggles specific to white working-class experiences (Weale, 2020). In and around public reporting on working class status deficits, academics warned of the feeling of neglect experienced by white working-class communities (Weale, 2020). It was suggested that feelings of white working-class neglect were compounded by a perceived prioritisation of other social justice projects including race and gender imperatives.

What I stress in my discussion of class inequality in socially engaged arts is that race, gender, and class must be discussed together, as forces that shape experiences of inclusion and

exclusion, opportunity, and barriers to success. In *Caring to Listen,* I am not simply foregrounding and focusing on the experiences of white working-class artists. I recognise that class, gender, and race lines intersect and create specific, different experiences for different people, depending on intersectional and shifting identities.

In this thesis, I refer to the multi-ethnic working-class experience. Using this term, I describe class experience that is not limited to white experience. Informing my use of this term is the idea and practice of intersectionality. Intersectionality is a concept and analysis method developed by scholar and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). It is an idea that recognises that people's lives and the organisation of power are not shaped by a single axis of social inequality, but many axes that compound, creating complex and different experiences of inequality. As Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge note "Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 12).

Caring to Listen's focus is the study of experiences of multi-ethnic class inequality amongst people working in the field of socially engaged art. I define workers here on in as people working as artists and/or creative producers in this field. In defining inequality, I refer to the reality of unequal and unjust distribution of social, economic, and cultural capital, and the unequal distribution of opportunities amongst members of society.

Socially engaged art (SEA) and artists working in this field are the focus of my research, and, indeed, SEA is the term I use to define my own artistic work. SEA is defined here on in as collaborative projects that take place in the public and private sphere, motivated by a socio-political concern or interest. Frequently, but not always, these forms of artistic expression are non-material, taking the form of exchanges, meetings, and encounters. I discuss SEA practices in more detail in chapter two.

In this thesis, I refer to my practice-research as praxis. This is a concept that understands that research and thought happen through iterative processes of academic *and* artistic research, analysis, interpretation, and articulation (Nelson, 2013, p. 32).

Other terms are central to this thesis. These include caring about, caring for, caregiving,

feminist ethics of care, listening and convivial listening. I introduce and define these terms in chapters two and three.

It is well evidenced that there are multiple and compounded forms of exclusion at play within the UK creative and cultural industries. It seems the arts are not somehow suspended or different from wider society. In fact, the arts and creative industries often produce ideas and narratives that simply nudge, rather than critique, the neoliberal status quo. Contra to this, there are many critical art and design practices, including socially engaged art practices, that set out to dismantle the neoliberal status quo, imagining and building alternatives to the haunted states of capitalist realism.

Through the double articulation of doing theory and artistic practice (Bolt, 2006; Barret & Bolt, 2007), I ask questions about how the socially engaged art economy enacts (and neglects) practices of autotheoretical listening and care for those working on socially engaged art projects, specifically for people coming from multi-ethnic working-class backgrounds. I question what research is currently being done into understanding how class experiences shape the working experiences for artists coming from working class backgrounds, families, and cultures.

In interrogating what care is, what it is not, and how it shows up in socially engaged art practices, I detail more specific acts of care-doing and expressions of care evidenced and present in contemporary artistic practice. I do this in chapter one and two.

At the same time, care is not easy. To care is an act open to being exploited, abused and misused. It seems, if we are interested in care, we must not romanticise its potential, but, instead, examine ways in which different modes of care are deployed to beneficial and detrimental effect, acknowledging, and addressing the ways in which the promise of support, love, help and shared forms of labour and responsibility can be misused and abused. In outlining care as a praxis framework, in chapter two, three and four I draw on the ideas of care scholars Maria Puig de la Bellacasa and Joan Tronto and artists Cassie Thornton, Johanna Hedva, and Magdalena Jadwiga Härtelova, amongst others.

Listening is another frame I use to contain, explore, and expand my work. I position

connective and collective practices of listening as a potential act and process of care. A method of communicating that shifts perception, knowledge, and relationally back into the listening-feeling body, away from the cold, distanced objectivity of the eye. In chapter two, I situate my listening practice in relation to thinkers and makers, including Pauline Oliveros, Christoph Cox, and Tom Rice.

The final and most central framework, giving structure to my praxis, is the reproduction of inequality within the creative and cultural industries, with a specific focus on dematerialised socially engaged art practices. I have conducted extensive research into inequality within the UK creative and cultural industries and the UK field of socially engaged art. Insights from this research are presented in chapter two and four.

To undertake this praxis, I use a practice as research (PaR) methodology, specifically *the dynamic praxis system,* outlined in chapter three. The PaR methodology is best thought of as a complex system, with many processes and activities happening concurrently (Nelson, 2013, p. 37). I conduct qualitative primary and secondary research into listening, socially engaged art practices, care and socio-economic inequality in the field of socially engaged art practice and the creative and cultural industries at large. I conceptualise, test, develop and tease out new artistic works. Over the period of this project, significant works have included *Discord* (2016), *A Life A Presence Like the Air* (2017), *Home* (2017) and *The Listening Protocol* (2021). In making my artistic work, I spend time developing ideas, testing them, writing funding applications, recording, and editing audio, building artistic partnerships, and collaborating with other artists to explore and realise these works.

This thesis takes the form of four chapters. Chapter one describes and documents three major and supporting artworks produced as part of this research. Chapter two is dedicated to an in-depth context review of literature and artistic practice that help to define, situate, demonstrate, and critique socially engaged art practices. Chapter three is split into two parts. The first part focuses on detailing and discussing my practice as research methodology. The second part details the methodology I have designed and developed for this project; *the dynamic praxis system*. Chapter four presents key findings from my praxis, encompassing theoretical and artistic findings. I close the thesis with a conclusion where I emphasise the value and significance of my praxis, outlining proposals for future creative and academic

work arising from the process of making this PhD.

I have organised the chapters in this way to introduce and foreground my artistic praxis and then detail, discuss and critique the context that it sits within socially engaged art practice. I follow with an in introduction and discussion of my methodology, offering the reader a clear summary of the dynamic praxis system. I close the thesis with clear presentation and discussion of findings, stating the value and significance of my research. The structure of this thesis is carefully considered to allow for clear reading, infused with autotheoretical documents and accounts of my day-to-day life. The banal and quotidian has inevitably woven itself into this body of work. Into my body. Into my work.

Chapter One ~ Artistic Praxis

"The double articulation between theory and practice, whereby theory emerges from a reflexive practice at the same time that practice is informed by theory."

Barbara Bolt, 2007, p. 29

Introduction

In making a range of socially engaged art projects, I have put to practice various configurations of the method-flows that make up *the dynamic praxis system,* detailed in chapter three. All works included in this thesis respond in different ways to the central question driving this research: *Can listening practices help understand how class background shapes creative ideas, and experiences of success, when working as a socially engaged artist?* As I outline in detail in chapter three, this question is motivated by a desire to better understand artists' experience of class inequality, including my own, when working in the field of socially engaged art.

However, this focus has not always been clear, nor the central thrust of my praxis. Six years ago, at the start of *Caring to Listen,* I was interested in studying the emotive and phenomenological effects of sound and listening. A year or so into my praxis, I became interested in documenting lived experiences of home and housing and narrowcasting these stories out to small audiences in specific locations. I wanted to find out if situated interpersonal listening enabled or hindered political action on socio-economic inequality. Later in the thesis, the thrust of my praxis became focused on exploring how and if multi-ethnic working-class inequality shaped the working conditions of socially engaged arts practice, alongside the UK creative and cultural industries at large.

As I went through these iterations, my artistic methods changed form. I moved from doing audio-documentary interviews with people on the topic of home, family, work and housing, to participatory listening activities and workshop methods. I shifted my main artistic mediums for a few reasons. Firstly, I felt the topic of class was of more interest and potential impact in terms of working towards social justice in the field of socially engaged arts, than the topic home and housing, although the two are closely related. Secondly, I felt that audio documentaries, interviewing, recording and editing voices of others, came with ethical concerns and complexities. This format didn't allow ongoing intersubjective encounters between people, working through and reflecting on their experiences of privilege and inequality. I didn't want to make work that invited people to listen to select and edited stories of other people. I wanted to make work that invited participants and audiences to reflect on, speak of and give voice to their own lived experiences, with and amongst others.

I think artistic praxis is meant to change through a learning journey as demanding as a PhD research project. As Robin Nelson attests, artistic knowledge is fluid, takes many forms, and is realised through multiple attempts, multiple iterations. He states, "artworks are often complex, multi-layered and resonant" (Nelson, 2013, p. 27). Through various iterations, my artistic praxis has become focused on developing and experimenting with specific pedagogic tools and processes, namely forms of critique, encounter and listening to intersectional accounts of everyday life.

This shift of direction, which I consider a refinement of artistic and academic thought, is differentiated in the ways in which I organise and present the artwork submitted as part of this thesis. I group my artistic outputs into primary and secondary practice.

Primary outputs refer to the socially engaged projects I consider as most relevant to my research question, projects that have helped me to experiment, make sense of and develop situated, meeting-listening practices that set out to engage with lived and complex experiences of class identity. Secondary practices refer to projects undertaken as part of *Caring to Listen*, but that ultimately were not as central or significant in terms of practice-based enquiry and findings.

Primary Practice

1.1 A Life, A Presence, Like the Air (2017)

A Life, A Presence, Like the Air (ALAPLA) was a collaborative project, and I worked with producer Rosie Strang, technical artist Esther Tew, set designer and engineer Dan Halahan, and set builder Kit Jones. The project was funded by Arts Council England and the tour of the installation took place in three Bristol locations between 28th August and the 9th of September 2017. The project toured the following sites: Waring House: 29th – 31st August, The Vestibules, College Green 1st – 2nd September, The Park Community Centre, Knowle West, 6 – 9th September. The event could be booked online and experienced by anyone who wanted, using a walk-up and book format.

In this work, I set out to interview and listen to people living in certain areas of Bristol and Stoke on Trent. In making this project, I remained interested in seeking out and documenting everyday experiences of people from low-income areas.

My motivation was simple. I felt, and still feel, that self-narrated accounts of precarity and low-income are not widely audible or present within socially engaged artworks.

This work responded to my research question, focusing in on meeting-listening, observing, and spending time listening to people give voice to their experiences of living and working in working class neighbourhoods. I spent time interviewing people's accounts of everyday life in Stoke on Trent and Knowle West, Bristol.

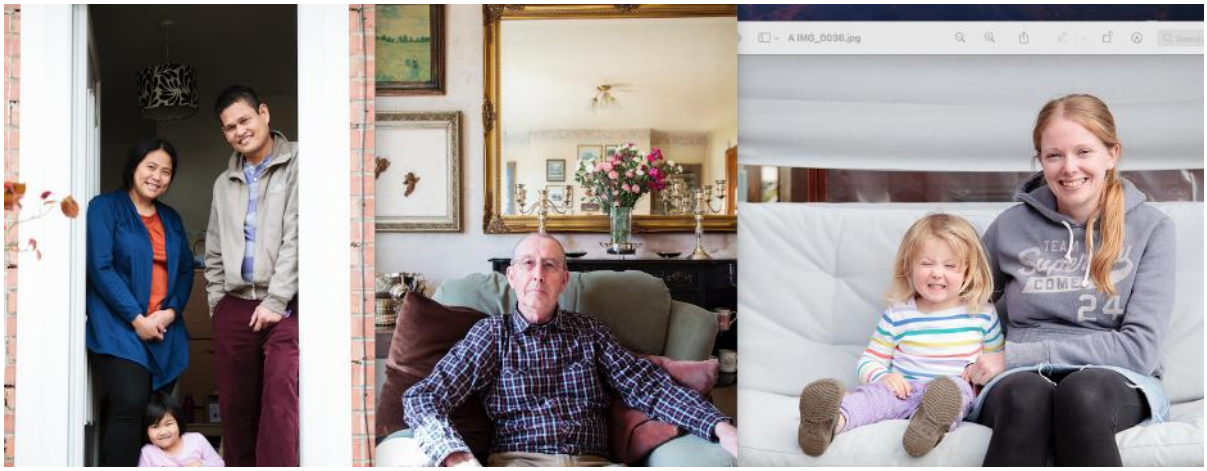


Figure 18. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *Some of the people I interviewed as part of Home and ALAPLA.* [Printed publication].

Through making this work, I developed listening practices and theories that informed methods and activities later developed in the *Convivial Listening Protocol* (2021). Further, I responded to my own criticisms of earlier work, specifically *Discord* (2016) and *Home* (2017) being exhibited in gallery spaces, interfacing with institutional rigidity and values that I'm keen to explore and critique, not simply slot into. Subsequently, I decided to make a work that would be situated in the locations where I had done some of the interviews.

ALAPLA directly built on the relationships and encounters I had experienced in Knowle West during my time working on *Home*. The process of making this work was formative for the direction of *Reframing the Class Divide*. This work allowed me to experiment with site-specificity, locating the installation in the same places where some of the conversations, meeting-listening and exchanges had taken place.

However, at this point of making, I still had not figured out that my praxis focus was on class exclusion amongst artist-makers, and I was focusing on gathering, editing, and archiving non-artist, citizen accounts of intersectional socio-economic difference. Following this, I realised that my praxis was focused on better understanding experiences of classed experience and inequality, articulated by people working in the field of socially engaged art, including collaborators; people who contribute to my work, not a mix of audiences and artists.

ALAPLA was comprised of four main artistic mediums; the structure, the audio, the location and print-based information such as booklets and leaflets, for people to pick up. The physical space comprised of a living room where the walls were half open to the world. The audio ran

on a surround sound set up, through mini rigs off a 12-volt battery and inverter system. The location was one of three places. On the green in the centre of the quad of flats comprising Waring House in Redcliffe, later in the middle of the courtyard at The Park Community Centre, Knowle West, and later at a conversational event at The Vestibules, at Bristol City Hall. The print work was a risograph leaflet with information about my practice and the work itself.

Figure 19. Caitlin Shepherd (2017) *A Life, A Presence, Like the Air.* [Site Specific installation]. Bristol. Photograph by Paul Blakemore.

Figure 20. Caitlin Shepherd (2017) *A Life, A Presence, Like the Air.* [Site Specific installation]. Bristol. Photograph by Paul Blakemore.

The set was open house during the day, with the audio running on a loop. This meant that whoever was interested in the work in passing could come and experience it whenever they liked. In the evening, the audio ran as a complete experience from beginning to end, and audiences had to book a listening slot in advance.

The listening took place within the room, but also outside it. This was down to the structure, having part covered walls and no roof so the sound would bleed out into the site. The experience was for five people at a time and the audio lasted for forty minutes. The listening experience ran twice every evening it was in situ, with the first slot happening between 5 – 6.15pm, and the second slot happening between 7.30 – 8.45pm.

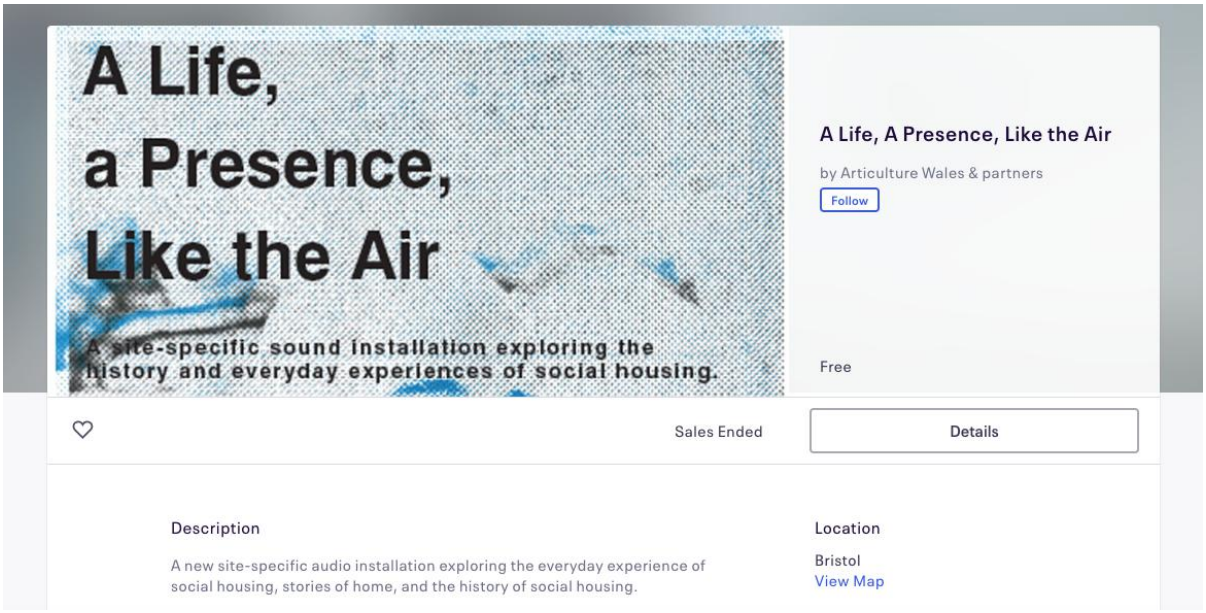


Figure 21. Caitlin Shepherd (2017) *A Life, A Presence, Like the Air event listing.* [Screenshot].

The process of making the audio work followed a similar format to *Discord* (2016) and *Home* (2017). I already had most of the interviews from residents living in Knowle West from interviews conducted during *Discord* (2016) and *Home* (2017). Building on this corpus of work, I spent some time interviewing people in Stoke-on-Trent, where I worked on a project with artist Alice Cunningham.

Having already collected a lot of audio content that I wanted to work in more detail with, I spent most of the time making the audio aspect of *A Life, A Presence, Like the Air* in my studio. This involved writing a poetic script outlining the history of social housing in the UK, and discussing working class identity, creating a musical score, and interweaving the voices of residents into the work. This ended up with a final audio work of thirty-eight minutes long; the main audio content for the site-specific work.

The other process of making the work was quite different from *Discord* (2016) and H*ome* (2017) as I was making a set for multiple locations, outside of the cultural and pragmatic infrastructure of a gallery space. In order to design and build a structure that could be installed in various locations, I spent time working with Dan Halahan and Esther Tew, designing and building the set. The practical design requirements for this project were that it had to be easy to transport and quick to install, due to the site-specific and mobile nature of the work.

1.2 Home (2017)

Home was a project that came from my time working as artist in residence at Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) in January 2017. The residency ran between January – May 2017.

The project was part of the citizen-led housing project *We Can Make*; a multi-stakeholder project between KWMC and artists, academics, designers, architects, Bristol City Council staff and policy-makers to develop and experiment with new ideas for sustainable, affordable housing in Bristol. The project involved spending a lot of time in the South Bristol neighbourhood of Knowle West, on St Whyte's Road.

The aim of this project was to spend time interviewing, listening to and gathering audio archives of lived experience of home, work, transport, family, and well-being from residents living on St Whytes Road in Knowle West.

Again, this work was made in the middle of my PhD, and, at the time, I was intent on listening to, collecting, and compiling everyday accounts of citizen working class lived experience in audio format. This was motivated by my observation that the topic of class was still not really being addressed, talked about, or acknowledged in a lot of socially engaged art practice. These listening practices paved the way for ideas later developed in *The Convivial Listening Protocol*.

During the realisation of this work, I developed and evaluated interview techniques, audio recording techniques and listening practices. In this way, I used this project to think through how inviting people to give an account of themselves and working with other people's voices

and stories was one way of exploring and better understanding the impact, effect and presence of class inequalities in the arts.

Figure 22. Caitlin Shepherd (2017) *Home. Projection experiments.* Bristol.

Over the three months of my artist residency, I interviewed ten residents of St Whytes Road about their experience of home, housing, and everyday life in Knowle West. The project culminated in an exhibition in May 2017 at KWMC, where I presented a printed publication and a thirty-five-minute audio work, both entitled *Home*. Over the duration of the project, I worked closely with Bristol-based artist Charlotte Biszewski, who was the other artist in residence and Ibolya Feher, the photographer working on the project.

Figure 23. Caitlin Shepherd (2017) *Home. Interviews with residents of St Whytes Road.* Bristol. Photograph by Ibolya Feher.

The final audio work ran for just under thirty minutes. Audiences were invited to listen to it in the context of the larger exhibition, *We Can Make* (2017), exploring what affordable small build housing might look like if developed in the area. Audiences were invited to listen to the audio on wireless headphones and interact with a projected photo installation and a small book.

Figure 24. Caitlin Shepherd (2017) *Home.* [Installation]. We Can Make Exhibition. Bristol. Photograph by Ibolya Feher.

1.3 Convivial Listening Protocol (2021)

The Convivial Listening Protocol is a printed document aimed at a general audience, intended to be picked up and used as a how-to guide to listening with others. I have developed the protocol as a do it with others (DIWO) guide. It is a small, printed document, inviting people to work together to reflect on and map their lived experiences of privilege and inequality, and at the same time try out various listening practices and activities.

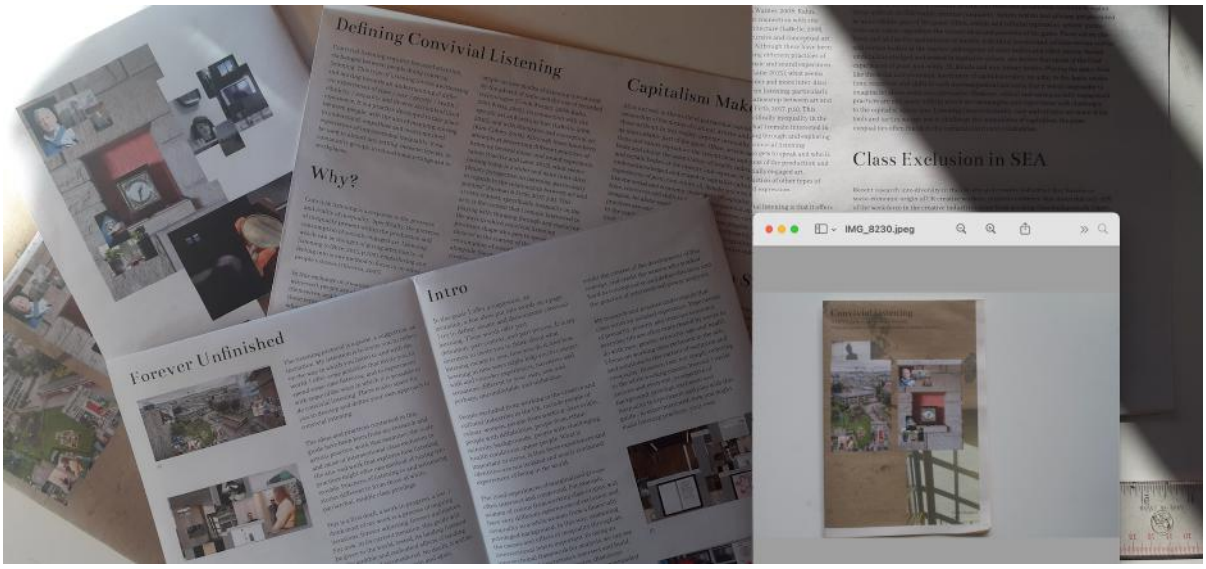


Figure 25. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *The Convivial Listening Protocol.* [Printed publication].

I came up with this idea with the aim of defining my thinking on care, socially engaged art, and listening, and at once putting into practice my ideas of convivial listening. This work is significant in that it is a project that defines and disseminates practical convivial listening exercises that I have developed in thinking about how I might define and invite collaborators to experiment with methods of convivial listening.

This project builds on meeting-listening, audio recording and dialogic practices running through *Discord* (2016), *Home* (2017) and *ALAPLA* (2017). The activities and information presented in this document reflect on experiences of meeting-listening. Building on the success and failures of previous listening methods, I have developed specific listening activities to do with others, mapping, exploring, and discussing first-person, lived experiences of privilege and inequality.

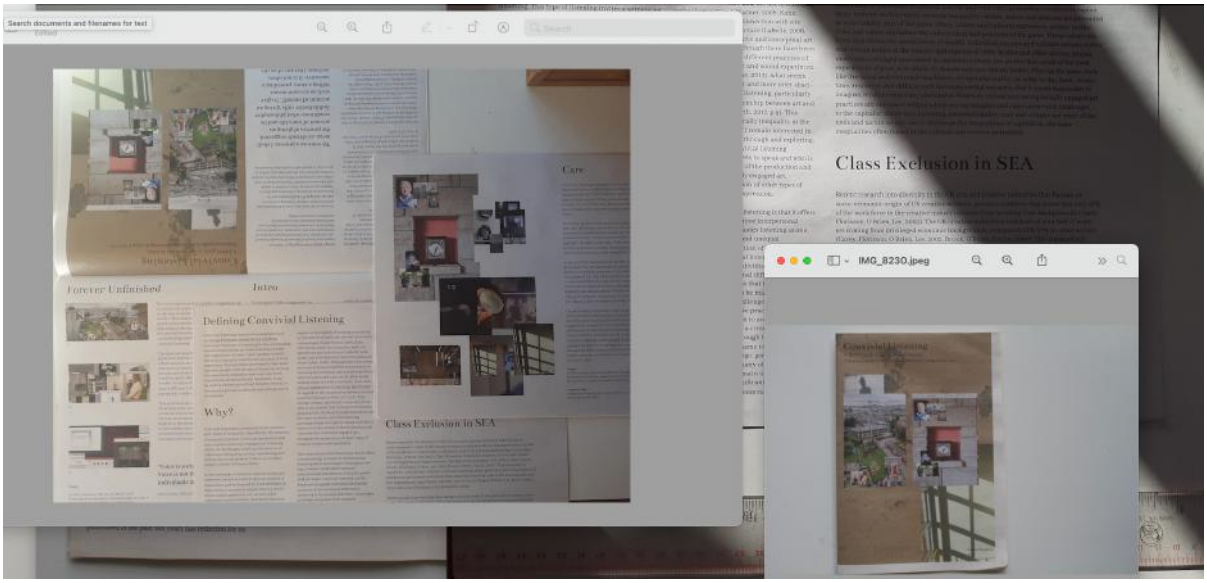


Figure 26. Caitlin Shepherd (2021) *The Convivial Listening Protocol.* [Printed publication].

This project is self-funded and is motivated by a desire to communicate and test out ideas around convivial listening developed through the research and writing of *Caring to Listen*. I have shared the protocol with six colleagues / friends, all of whom have given feedback and commented on the work. It is currently a work in progress.

Secondary Practice

1.4 Still Alive! (2019)

Still Alive! Dispatches from Everyday Life and Academia is a PDF and print publication I made while I was in Madrid, June 2019. I had a few days in intense heat before I presented my praxis at the *Internoise* conference.

The aim and purpose of designing and compiling this publication was to try to coalesce the multiple, messy, and mutable praxes I'd been working through over the previous three years. It was a stop and pause and gather form of artistic practice. I wanted to try to consolidate and give shape to my praxis, because to date it had felt extremely slippery, amorphous and kept changing shape.

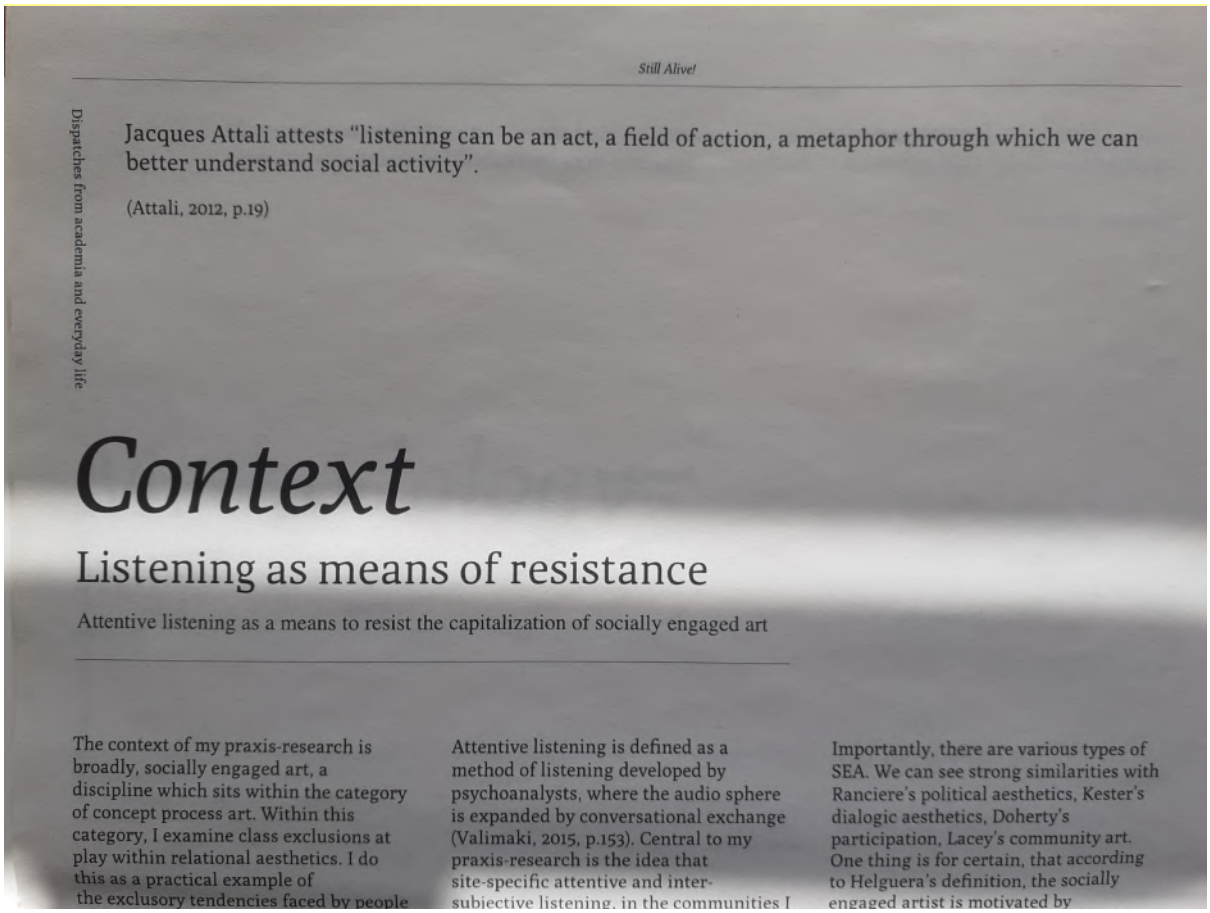
Still Alive! Dispatches from Everyday Life and Academia is very much a work in progress but goes some way in documenting and communicating the emergent ideas, emotions and artistic

works that have taken place as part of *Caring to Listen*. I have made two versions. The first version, and a more up to date version, reflecting the ideas of my final thesis.

Figure 27. Caitlin Shepherd (2019) *Still Alive.* [Printed publication].

In making this work, I was able to better define many aspects of *Caring to Listen*. Specifically, my methodology and the theoretical frames I now use to contain and locate my work; those of socially engaged art, listening, care and inequality in the creative and cultural industries.

The process of compiling this publication gave shape to the structure and praxis frameworks I use in this thesis. I think this is a useful document to include as part of my practice-based outputs as it offers an in-depth snapshot into my praxis two-thirds of the way (2019) into the PhD, and it also offers documentation of my praxis processes, thought processes, and provides evidence how my work has changed over the last two years (2021).



Still Alive!

Dispatches from academia and everyday life

Jacques Attali attests "listening can be an act, a field of action, a metaphor through which we can better understand social activity".

(Attali, 2012, p.19)

Context

Listening as means of resistance

Attentive listening as a means to resist the capitalization of socially engaged art

The context of my praxis-research is broadly, socially engaged art, a discipline which sits within the category of concept process art. Within this category, I examine class exclusions at play within relational aesthetics. I do this as a practical example of the exclusory tendencies faced by people

Attentive listening is defined as a method of listening developed by psychoanalysts, where the audio sphere is expanded by conversational exchange (Valimaki, 2015, p.153). Central to my praxis-research is the idea that site-specific attentive and inter-subjective listening, in the communities I

Importantly, there are various types of SEA. We can see strong similarities with Ranciere's political aesthetics, Kester's dialogic aesthetics, Doherty's participation, Lacey's community art. One thing is for certain, that according to Helguera's definition, the socially engaged artist is motivated by

Figure 28. Caitlin Shepherd (2019) *Still Alive.* [Printed publication].

1.5 Discord (2016)

Discord (2016), was commissioned by Somerset House and Kings Cultural Institute, part of *Pathways to Utopia*, a London-wide project, marking the 500-year anniversary of Thomas Moore's *Utopia* (1516). *Discord* was an immersive sound installation, running every day between the 20th of August and 2nd October 2016.

Discord was experienced by over 400 people. The project set out to examine the dystopian functions of capitalism, expressed through the contemporary housing market. The project was funded by Arts Council England, Kings Cultural Institute and Sound and Music, and sponsored by Sanderson and Co, Mini Rig and The Natural Flooring Company.

The aim of this project was to explore experiences of socio-economic inequality through the lens of different access to, and experience, of home and housing, including mortgage finance or lack of it. I interviewed several people from different socio-economic backgrounds, with a

focus on inviting them to reflect on and talk about their own housing experiences. These interviews were then archived, and some of them were used in the development of the audio part of this work.

Figure 29. Jeremy Dellar (2015) *Utopia Now Flag at Somerset House.* Unknown photographer. [Photograph]. London.

Discord was the biggest and most demanding piece of work I have ever made. It was a challenging way to start the PhD. Following the production of the work, I decided I did not ever want to make work on this scale again. The clarity of this decision was borne of many factors. These included a shoestring budget for the scale of the project, a tight and demanding lead-in time, the physical restrictions of the gallery, and the material footprint of a short term, temporary project.

While I feel I learnt a lot through this process; how to design and build a large set, how to convene a large team, how to secure multiple funding and sponsorship streams, I also learnt that working under time and financial pressure strips the pleasure, joy, space, and contemplation from my creative practice. Further, it puts strains and pressure on all involved, which, while exhilarating, ultimately hinders the presence and enactment of listening and

care practices.

The commission was contingent on an academic / artistic collaboration, and I worked with PhD researcher James Wood, from Kings Cultural Institute, whose PhD examined the disciplinary economics of mortgage finance. Together, we developed the concept, and I continued to work closely with the core production team comprised of architect Tabitha Pope, set designer and engineer Dan Halahan, technologist, Tarim, sound producer and DJ Luke Harney, aka Typesun.

The final installation was built into an exhibition space at Somerset House and consisted of a large-scale set (approximately 10m x 5m) that audiences experienced as they walked through it. The final work had three main aesthetic components; the set, the script, and the audio.

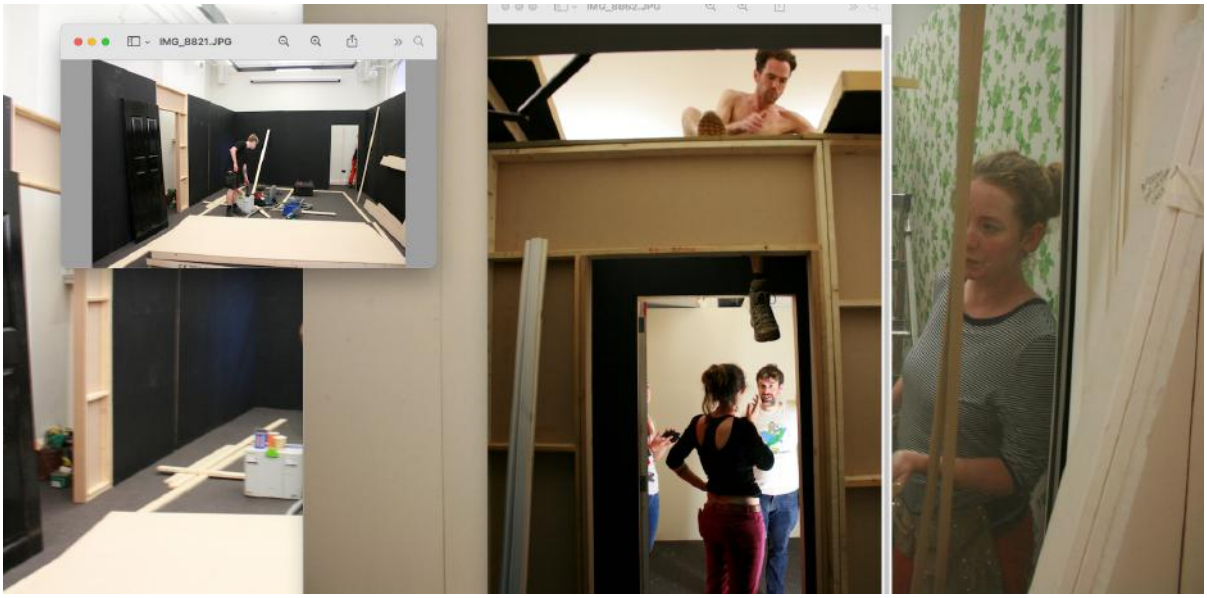


Figure 30. Caitlin Shepherd (2015) *Discord.* [Installation]. Somerset House. London.

The set comprised of an entrance porch and front door, three living rooms, mimicking the interiors from three houses representing a social housing flat, a Victorian terrace and a Fritzrovian townhouse, an auction room, and a very narrow dark corridor that audiences had to navigate to access the rooms.

Figure 31. Caitlin Shepherd (2015) *Discord.* [Installation]. Somerset House. London.

The experience was set up as a dystopian property viewing, where people had to follow a pre-set viewing schedule, which directed them to visit properties at set times. The audio part also had scripted directions, with the voice assuming the role of an estate agent. The audio part had many different sections. The first section was a welcoming voice of the estate agent, outlining the property viewing to audiences. The second section transmitted the directive and instructional voice of the estate agent, interspersed with electronic music, synth tones and drones to unsettle and agitate the audience as they made their way through the dark corridor to the various properties. The second section played in the dark corridor communicated the disciplinary nature of mortgage finance, and the unaffordability of housing for many.

There were three documentary parts to the audio, with a voice matching each room. These audio parts were played through headsets that had a trigger to play when the headsets were lifted from the stand. The final audio part was the audio section belonging to the auction room. At the end of the experience, all three audiences arrived in the auction room together and had to bid for the property of their choice. This bidding process was outlined and narrated by the acousmatic voice of the estate agent.

Figure 32. Caitlin Shepherd (2015) *Discord.* Property Viewing Brochure. [Design]. Somerset House. London.

Chapter Two ~ Socially Engaged Art: The Aesthetics of Almost Intimacy

"Theory can do more the closer it gets to the skin."

Sara Ahmed, 2017, p. 10

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an artistic framework for thinking through multi-ethnic class exclusions in the field of socially engaged art, in the context of the UK. I am interested in the class exclusions present in both audiences *and* producers of socially engaged art but focus my research on class exclusions occurring in the workforce; people working as socially engaged art practitioners.

The purpose of this chapter is to situate my praxis within the histories, discourses, and practices of socially engaged art, focusing on contemporary socially engaged practices that deploy different forms of care and listening practices.

The secondary aim of this chapter is to summarise problems found in the field. To do this, I outline and evidence the exclusory tendencies of socially engaged art; both in terms of who gets to make such work and how much research has been done into multi-ethnic class experiences of exclusion in the production of socially engaged art to date. I examine how socially engaged art is sometimes used as a pawn in neoliberal practices, including as a foot soldier of the creativity fix. In doing so, the radical and remedial potential of socially engaged art practices are scrutinised.

2.1 Defining socially engaged art

With the denigration of classical and relatively modern concepts of art and aesthetics, driven in large by the ideas of the avant-garde, conceptual process art and more recently, politically, and socially motivated art, has arrived a relatively new genre of art: the social turn. This term was coined in 2006 by Claire Bishop (Bishop, 2006), and encompasses conceptual, embodied, community, social, relational, and dematerialised process art (Bourriaud 2002; Kwon 2002; Kester 2004; Doherty 2004, 2015; Helguera, 2011; Bishop 2012; Birchall, 2017).

In simple terms, socially engaged art can be understood as collaborative projects that take place in the public and private sphere, frequently driven by socio-economic and political concerns. Before the social turn came into existence many names had been given to the genre of artistic work that put participation, collaboration and collective decision making at the centre of artistic method.

Other terms used to describe artworks expressed through social interactions, dematerialised processes, relationships, and intersubjective encounters, include new genre public art (Lacy, 1995), dialogic art (Kester, 2004), relational aesthetics (Bourriard, 2002), littoral and participatory art (Bishop, 2012, p. 179) and community art (Birchall, 2017). Closely related methods of practice and criticism include tactical media and institutional critique; art practices that focus on critique and reimagining alternatives to inequalities, injustices, and problems at play within art institutions and society at large.

These monikers describe slightly different features and methods of artistic practices that privilege ideas and relationships as material, and value the processes of creating, locating, and collaborating above commodified, object-led artwork. Characteristics of the social aesthetic include eating together (Rirkjit Tirvanja, 1992), unionizing sex workers (Petra Bauer, 2019), and advocating the employment rights of prisoners (Cameron Rowlands, 2016), and art that does things in and to the world. As artist-activist Tania Bruguera states, ‘I don’t want art that points to a thing. I want art that is the thing’ (Bruguera, 2012).

Artist and art critic Pablo Helguera views socially engaged artists as sociological,

ethnographic, care worker hybrids. He expounds, “the artist as social practitioner must also make peace with the common accusation that he or she is not an artist but an “amateur” anthropologist, sociologist, etc” (Helguera, 2011, p. 5). Socially engaged praxis has relationality at its core. Often, but not always, the focus is not on the individual artist as tortured genius and hero, but on a group of people, interested in trying to work together on a social and / or political art project.

In defining the kind of socially engaged art practice that I work with in this thesis, and to contextualise my own practice, I draw on the praxis of Helguera, Lacy, Thornton and Hedva. I do so because these artist-thinkers describe socially engaged art practices as hyper hybrid dematerialised philosopher-practitioners. I draw on thinker-makers who define socially engaged art as attenuated with banality, yet contingent on a range of complex and sometimes antagonistic skills; anthropologist, sociologist, care worker, social worker, designer-maker, event producer, listener and artist. As someone working with socially engaged art processes, I view myself as a type of widely skilled shape shifter. I change shape, approach and skill-set depending on the social context I find myself occupying, working within.

There are other artists and theorists I could have bought more closely into view when defining socially engaged art, to contextualise and discuss the histories, practices and strengths and weaknesses of this mode of artistic production. Nicolas Bourriard and Tom Finkelpearl are obvious contributors to this field, yet stay in the background of this thesis. This is because I’ve found more entangled, messy and antagonistic discussions and enactments of socially engaged art elsewhere. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, I’ve chosen to discuss the characteristics of socially engaged art as defined and theorised by Helguera, Bishop, Birchall, Lacy and Kester, because I feel these thinkers name the complex, hybrid, fluid and at times antagonistic process, skills and methods used by artists working in this area. Bishop, Birchall, Kester and Helguera problematise and critique the field, as well as bringing the unique features of socially engaged art processes and techniques into view. I focus in on discussing contemporary examples of socially engaged art that put into practice processes of care, listening and critique as artistic practice. This is particularly clear in the work of Cassie Thornton, Johanna Hedva, Magdalena Jadwiga Hartelova and Obsidian Coast as discussed later in this chapter.

Aesthetics in the context of socially engaged art refers not to the form, composition or sublimity of an image as seen through the eye that beholds it, but to the relationships, expressions and forms of interpersonal communication and relationality that occurs, as part of the socially engaged art encounter. In this chapter I examine the claims made of socially engaged art against the reality of the practice, scrutinising if and how socially engaged art offers the restorative, de-commodified relationally and intimacy it frequently purports to enable. In the context of this chapter, almost intimacy refers to attempts made by socially engaged artists to foster new, inclusive, supportive, dematerialised ways of being in the world. The term almost intimacy acknowledges that this is not always possible, or successful.

Examples of socially engaged practices include *The Pirate Care Syllabus (*2021), a pedagogic project concerned with supporting mutual non monetised and critical care practices, the refurbishing of the hostel Mændenes Hjem in Copenhagen by Kenneth Balfelt (2002 – 2009), Assembles' *Granby Four Streets* (2013-), and Suzanne Lacy's *Code 33: Emergency Clear the Air!* (1997-1999) where 220 young African Americans co-produced a performance exploring and challenging police violence and racial stereotyping in Oakland, San Francisco.

Figure 33. Suzanne Lacy (1997-1999) *Code 33: Emergency Clear the Air!* [Site specific installation]. Oakland City Center West Garage.

2.2 History of socially engaged art

Viewed through a Western lens and a relatively recent chronology, the development of socially engaged art can be located in the land-art, feminist performance and concept process art of the 1960s and 1970s, and the institutional critique of artists working in the 1980s.

Conceptual, performance and site-specific art helped shift perceptive from the eye to the body, leave the gallery, and locate work in the natural world, the water's edge, the street, the bedroom, the nightclub and the front steps and facades of museums and galleries.

From the 1950s onwards (with aesthetic lineage in the avant-garde movements of the early 20th century), art was no longer an object or image to be commodified and experienced in a white, minimally furnished, austere vacuum. Many artists were situating their work in the everyday, with critical, conceptual, and relational artwork becoming part of the complexity and dynamism of everyday life. While its roots are in the early and mid-twentieth century, socially motivated art practices only started to be defined and studied as such from the 1990s onwards (Bishop, 2006; Kwon, 2002).

In *One Place After Another* (2002), art historian Miwon Kwon proposes that one of the reasons socially engaged work was so readily accepted by the Western art world in the 1990s was that a lot of the work of situating art outside of the petri dish of the white cube and using site as a tool of contextual critique had already been done by artists in the decades before. Examples of seminal, socially engaged, site-specific praxis that Kwon details *in One Place After Another* include the *Culture in Action* (1993) programme, produced by Chicago Sculpture programme and curator Mary Jane Jacob. Instead of commissioning physical sculptures, Jacob invited a range of artists to collaborate and explore and work on issues of importance to Chicago communities, generated by and with people within the community. This resulted in the creation of installations, workshops, events and convene political marches (Kwon, 2002, p. 28–29).

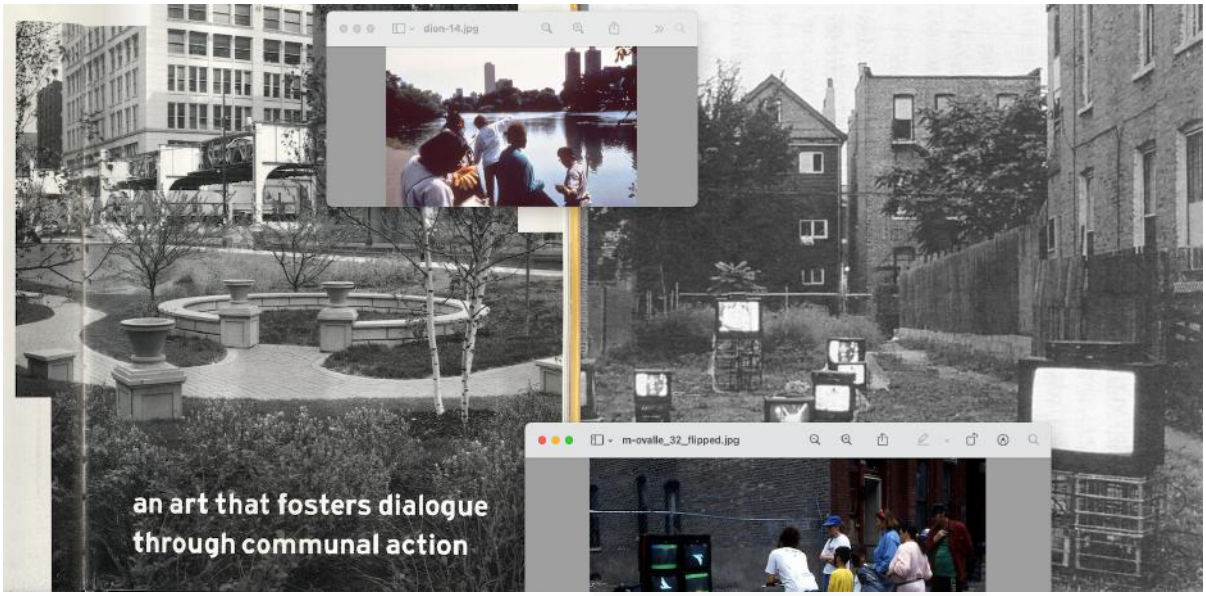


Figure 34. Mary Jane Jacob (1993). *Culture in Action*. [Site specific installations]. Chicago.

What Kwon points out about site-specific work belonging to the 1990s onwards is that artists used sites outside the gallery that were explicitly non-artistic. This approach makes this kind of artwork discursive; a term that describes artworks that make non-material artwork with and in places, realised through social, economic, and political processes (Kwon, 2002). For Kwon, site-specific art managed to expose and reimagine the limitations and exclusions of the white cube, and directly engage with questions about how art might contribute to wider political efforts and debates (Kwon, 2002, p. 26).

Associate professor of contemporary art history, Jason Gaiger, views the historical progression of socially engaged art through a slightly different lens. Gaiger argues that the significance Kwon gives to site and place in the analyses of post-object art, institutional critique and the project-led work of the social turn is too vague (Gaiger, 2009, p. 49). Gaiger argues that if the definition of site is discursive, using political, economic and immaterial processes, then many artists practicing before the 1960s could be seen to be making site-specific work (Gaiger, 2009, p. 49). Gaiger's challenge is that if seen as "discursive" by Kwon's definition, then site-specify as defined by Kwon is not a particularly new concept through which to trace the development of socially motivated site-specific artworks.

Gaiger takes issue with Kwon's focus on examples of discursive site-specific art, illustrated by nomadic project artists who attempt to unify communities virtually and physically, but are

not embedded within the community culturally, geographically, or site for any duration of time. Gaiger's problem with this is that Kwon's analysis assumes that the role of the discursive artist is positive and unifying; that without artistic intervention people cannot otherwise gather, organise, and interact (Gaiger, 2009, p. 50). Because Gaiger views Kwon's notion of site and social artwork as potentially patronising to existing communities, and theoretically too vague, he proposes another arc of aesthetic history to explain the development of site-specific and socially engaged art.

The framework Gaiger proposes as an antidote to Kwon's discursive theory is the relinquishment of artistic autonomy (Gaiger 2009, p. 52). Gaiger argues, that since the 1960s the normative power given to the artist as emotional sage, poet and self-validating creative has declined. In his paper, *Dismantling the Frame: Site-Specific Art and Aesthetic* (2009), he states, "I argue that the orientation of recent art practice towards what has come to be termed 'site-specificity' is best understood as a progressive relinquishment of the principle of aesthetic autonomy" (Gaiger, 2009, p. 43).

The idea that art and the artist are intrinsically valuable and should not be evaluated against external assessment criteria has slowly been re-worked in the context of Western art practice and criticism. The erosion of such normative conceptions of artistic value has opened space for artistic practices that explore how art might intersect and overlap with on the ground through community work, activism and regional, national, and, sometimes, international methods of political critique, care, disruption, and resistance.

Many socially engaged art projects are done with the aim of affecting positive social and political change, not becoming the celebrity artist, or simply indulging in solipsistic creative impulses (although sometimes the artist's ego and reputation are tied up in the realisation of socially engaged projects). Gaiger argues that from the 1960s onwards advanced art practices were no longer assessed through an inherited intrinsic art for art's sake lens, but increasingly through an interest in collective engagement and impact with broader social, cultural and political issues.

Both Gaiger and Kwon offer important discussions about recent praxis progressions that help to make sense of the conceptual and artistic history of site-specific socially engaged art. I

focus on the work of Gaiger and Kwon here, because they outline ideas that show up repeatedly in discourse around socially engaged art: that discursive site-specific art practices of the 1960's onwards helped to pave the way for the art world to incorporate the relational dematerialised practice of socially engaged art, and that socially engaged art should be assessed against aesthetic criteria more detailed and critical than the concept of artistic autonomy and art for art's sake.

These theories are useful when charting the recent history of socially engaged art because site-specific art is often inherently social, utilising dematerialised social, economic, and political processes and interventions. Further, site-specific art belonging to the 1960-1970s onwards acted as an important predecessor, offering ideas and theorisations of art that made it easier for socially engaged art to arrive as a new aesthetic.

Key ideas to bear in mind when situating socially engaged art in a recent historical landscape is that getting art outside of the white cube, away from art institutions and into social geographies raises questions about how to account for and interpret art that directly relates to, and is informed, by the mess and complexity of the real world; by situated, social, material, ecological and economic specifics of economy, social relations, cultural identities, and place.

With the creeping redundancy of artistic autonomy and arts for art's sake, site-specific, socially engaged art and other relational, dematerialised art practices have been scrutinised in terms of their wider social, cultural, and political impact. What we can see in a relatively recent view of socially engaged art practices is evidence of a cultural and artistic desire to engage and involve diverse groups of people in dialogue, debates, and activities that bring people together. This shifts artistic production away from artistic artefacts, and into social encounters. Socially engaged art practices have built on the performative, gestural and relational work of the feminist and conceptual artist predecessors of the 1950s onwards, and developed aesthetic processes that take relationships, encounters and locations as their material and form.

However, on closer inspection, as we will see later in this chapter, the working conditions and methods of engagement are not always able to evidence how they are good for the artist and the communities, individuals, and groups the projects work with. The assessment of socially

engaged arts ability to be critical and advocate more equal and inclusive forms of social behaviour has not been extended to the working conditions of the artists, as well as evaluation of the social impact and effect of the work the socially engaged artist ends up making.

2.3 Socially engaged art now

To shift the focus of socially engaged art into the present, I focus on two contemporary case studies. Firstly, I discuss the artist Cassie Thornton and *The Hologram* project. Secondly, I discuss the project *Hypericum: A Code of Practice*, a research project based at various locations across the UK. These two case studies are not meant to define the entire contemporary field of socially engaged art, nor can they. Instead *Hypericum* and *The Hologram* offer two touchstones that illustrate projects working with care, listening, criticism and participation in ways that evidence the shape of socially engaged art today.

Cassie Thornton describes herself as a feminist economist, "a title that frames her work as that of a social scientist actively preparing for the economics of a future society that produces health and life without the tools that reproduce oppression— like money, police or prisons" (Pluto Press, 2021). Thornton is an established artist and activist. She is the founder of an art project and network called *The Feminist Economics Department,* and is currently the co-director of the *Re-Imagining Value Action Lab* in Thunder Bay, an art and social centre at Lakehead University in Ontario, Canada (Furtherfield, 2021).

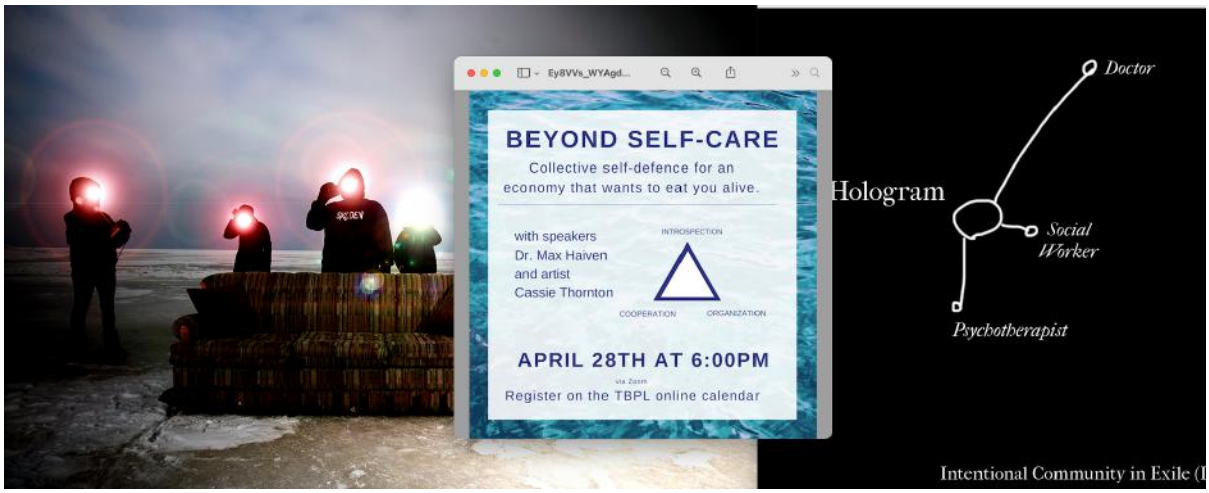


Figure 35. Cassie Thornton (2017). *Secret Chakra (workshop view)*. Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Project Space, New York. Photo: Meghana Karnik.

Here, I focus on her book and socially engaged art project *The Hologram*. Through the process and support system of *The Hologram*, Thornton and her collaborators advocate a brave new proposal for revolutionary care; a viral, long-term, peer-to-peer feminist health network. In short, *The Hologram* is a set of instructions and prompts for a group of three people to follow and enact, working as a group to take care of each other in ways absent in wider society. *The Hologram* was made by precarious artists for precarious people. I completed *The Hologram* training in spring 2022.

The Hologram is based on radical peer to peer support models developed in the Greek solidarity clinics over the last decade. *The Hologram* can be thought of a care protocol, a socially engaged art project that develops skills, processes, and literacy in practices of peer-to-peer care, amongst those who participate in the processes outlined by *The Hologram*.

Thornton describes *The Hologram* as social practice and details the care-based potential of the work. She explains that, "[a]fter years of watching the pain and denial around debt grow for individuals and entire societies, I was so excited to fall into a social practice project, that has the capacity to discuss and heal some of this capitalist induced sickness through mending broken trust and finding lost solidarity. This project is called the Hologram" (Thornton, 2020, p. 84).

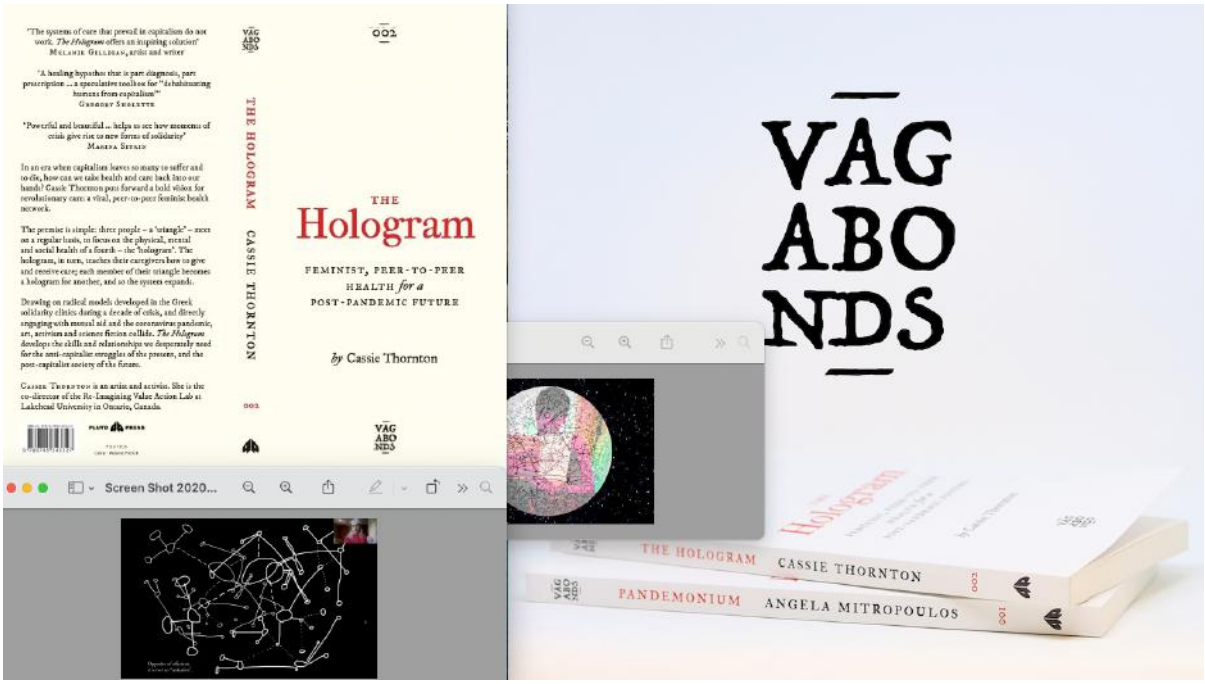


Figure 36. Cassie Thornton (2019). *The Hologram. [Mutual aid, care art]*. Available https://twitter.com/creatureseu/status/

1336028719568351232.

What is significant about this project is that Thornton uses autotheory as one way to explain the inspiration and rationale for the project. She describes herself as a precarious, working class artist who has, "experienced housing insecurity, inconsistent healthcare and massive debt, forced to scrounge and scam for care in between gigs" (Furtherfield, 2021). Alongside acknowledging this lived experience, Thornton envisions one of the functions of artistic practice as space to develop social technologies, ways of up-skilling people to care for each other in a sick, capitalist society. If she had not reflected on, given voice to, and been moved by her lived experience of economic precarity, she may not have been motivated to conceptualise and realise *The Hologram*.

The Hologram is part curriculum, part workshop, part relationship, part technology, specifically aimed at people who identify as being part of "intentional community in exile" people excluded and punished by Eurocentric, patriarchal capitalism. "The central thesis of the Hologram is that all our crises are connected, and we are all a little sick" (Thornton, 2020, p. xvi). *The Hologram* attempts to address some of the causes of such sickness; competitive individualism, 24/7 productivity, personal and societal debt, lack of secure housing and inadequate or non-existent health care provisions.

To do this, Thornton has developed tools to listen to, exchange attention and support people engaged in the practice of doing *The Hologram*. Thornton explains that through participating in the processes of *The Hologram,* "we are asking each other questions about what hurts and where and taking notes. What are we doing? We are interviewing each other about the conditions of our health, our lives, what it's like to be us" (Thornton, 2020, p. 80).

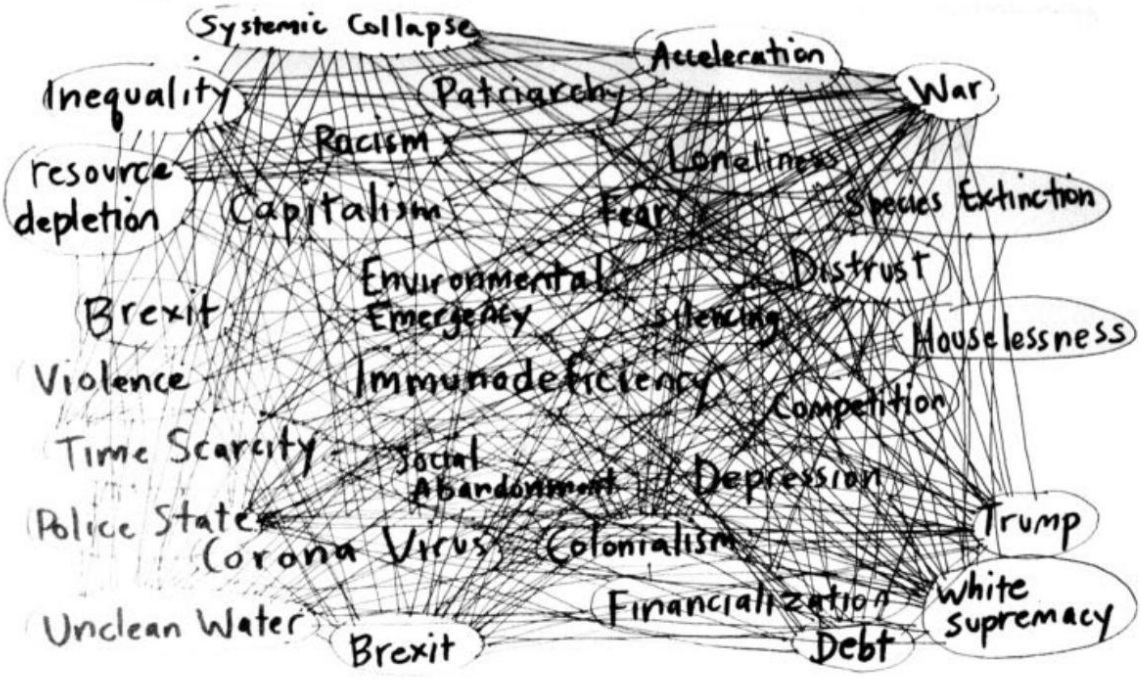


Figure 37. Cassie Thornton (2019). All our crises are interconnected. [Illustration]. Available https://www.hekler.org/mission.

The Hologram demonstrates criticality, autotheory, care, class and race conscious mutual aid, and new ways of relating as features of socially engaged art practices. In this project, we can see how Thornton occupies multiple and blended identities at once, part activist, part economist, part caretaker and healer, part critic, part capitalist subject and part artist. This plurality of skills and fluidity of roles, recalls Helguera's comment that artists are hybrid care workers, often taking on roles such as anthropologist, sociologist, and artist at once (Helguera, 2011, p. 5).

A hybrid fluidity speaks of the messiness and slippage of the artist as researcher engaged in a situated knowledge approach, whether Thornton calls it that or not. Situated knowledge acknowledges the specific, complex, relational, and messy location from which the artist / researcher operates (Haraway 1988, Braidotti, 2019a). In situating oneself, entanglements with place, people and self are teased out, accounted for, as are the researcher's conscious and unconscious biases.

Here, we can also see the critical edge of socially engaged art practices. *The Hologram* developed out of artistic need, out of the fact that artists, activists, and social workers,

including Thornton, found themselves unsupported by the state, in huge debt, and living in precarious work and housing set-ups. It was through these lived intersectional, precarious classed experiences that demand for something like *The Hologram* was identified. *The Hologram* was a practical response to socio-economic inequalities at play within and through everyday life.

The second example of contemporary socially engaged art practice I will discuss is *Hypericum: A Code of Practice*. The project is funded by Arts Council England and is, "a research project developing a collectively produced, ever-evolving code of practice for feminist, antiracist, anticolonial and environmentally sustainable arts organising" (hypericum, 2021). The project is led by a newly formed working group of UK based arts workers and small-scale organisations: Angela Chan, Divya Osbon, Anjali Prashar-Savoie, Jamila Prowse, La Sala and Obsidian Coast.

Hypericum: A Code of Practice is motivated by a desire for arts organisations and artists to work together to contribute to counter-hegemonic art practices that work to re-imagine the socio-political conditions of everyday day life *and* artistic working practices. Specifically, the project sets out to disrupt the value systems of hetero / cis-sexist patriarchy, individualism, white supremacy, ableism and hyper productivism.

The project website states that, "*[h]ypericum* is an attempt to envision what it would mean to place care, generosity and solidarity in the crux of all arts organising, and to share these imaginings as an evolving open-source code for practice" (hypericum, 2021). *Hypericum,* and those involved with it, advocate decolonial, intersectional feminist practice that refuse generalisations, and are rooted in specific, situated contexts. Like Thornton's work, *Hypericum* aims to generate a care-based network and develop and disseminate a new code of artistic practice. This new code is in opposition to increasingly precarious creative professions, and sets out to centre care, situated and unique embodied lived experience, generosity, and solidarity at the crux of art organising.

Figure 38. *Hypericum: A Code of Practice* (2021). [screenshot collage] Available https://hypericum.obsidiancoast.art/.

The Hologram and *Hypericum* recognise and critique the precarious working conditions endemic in the arts in the UK and globally. In addition to naming the insecure employment conditions and limited opportunity for career progression in the arts, both projects are clearly critical of the inequalities perpetuated by Eurocentric patriarchal capitalism. Social bonds and expectations of mutuality and non-commodified care have been eroded by decades of neo-liberal policy. The pathologising of individuals sick under the long shadow of capitalism have been normalised. If you are sick, it is your fault and your individual responsibility (Fisher, 2009). Members of *Hypericum* challenge this view, specifically in relation to the arts, calling in, "proposals for support structures to enforce collectively within an increasingly precarious professional field" (Hypericum, 2021).

Both Thornton's work and *Hypericum* share values, approaches, and methods. But do they differ? While united through creative, queer, artistic, anti-capitalist pedagogies and care practices, the projects set out to achieve different goals. *The Hologram* sets out to develop and model new forms of social trust and togetherness that may well be one way to, "fight for our lives in the years to come to save the world from capitalism" (Thornton, 2021, p. 19). Some of the interpersonal skills that encourage this, as outlined in *The Hologram* include "deep attention, problem solving and vengeful empathy" (Thornton, 2021, p. 21).

The Hologram is about building networked, interpersonal relations to make everyday survival for people, specifically artists experiencing poverty and precarity under the haunting of capitalism more likely. *Hypericum,* at present, is a research group, tasked with coming up

with a decolonial, feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, and sustainable practice of arts research and organising. *Hypericum* sets out to generate new ways of working, codes, and artistic protocols to encourage an alternative to precarity and Eurocentric patriarchal capitalism. In this way, I think of this project as a mixture of research and protocol development, like *The Hologram*, but different in that the project is committed to a research phase, which will later inform the development of a more inclusive code of artistic practice.

Both works centre the body, documenting the lived, affective, and visceral experience of being a woman, being poor, being queer, being non-white, being sick. *Hypericum* and *The Hologram* evidence contemporary art practices that put classed experience, economic inequality and precarity at the centre of their artistic purpose. What we see in these case studies is an unapologetic articulation of classed experience in contemporary socially engaged art practices. These are projects that recognise political, structural, and cultural experiences come home to roost in the body. For artists like myself, Thornton, and the convenors of *Hypericum,* the multi-ethnic classed body becomes the source for creative ideation, expression, resistance, critique, and support.

Introducing and discussing the work undertaken by *The Hologram* and *Hypericum,* it seems they have more in common than they are different. The unifying thread is that both projects use methods of socially engaged art to name and critique the toxic and alienating individualism, 24/7 productivity, racism, poverty, and heteronormativity normalised under patriarchal, capitalist society.

Additionally, both projects recognise that inequality and capitalist values are pervasive and dominant within the creative and cultural industries, be that at the level of the conditions of labour for artists and activists, or the presence of precarity, racism, classism, and sexism present within the arts in the UK. Practices of listening show up repeatedly in both works. *Hypericum* uses world building practices, listening to, archiving, and responding to structural inequality present in UK arts organising. *The Hologram* uses active and deep listening amongst three people who constitute each other's hologram. Each person in this support structure is asked to articulate what hurts, where, how and why. The other hologram participants bear witness and offer support in the form of giving attention and care to the person describing their pain, their wounding, their struggle.

It seems that many artists, art producers, organisations and educational institutions have already woken up, and are re-imagining generous, care infused and inclusive ways of working to directly challenge the inequalities present within the socially engaged arts, and the creative and cultural industries at large. While this is a good start, these critical discourses and practices are not yet pervasive nor the norm within socially engaged art practices in the UK, as we shall see later in this chapter.

2.4 Socially engaged art and care

Through a mixture of dissent, critique, autotheorisation, intervention, and care, some socially engaged art practices are motivated by the desire to dig beneath accepted social norms and work to create worlds beneath worlds; alternative realities to the imaginary and care-based deficits of capitalist realism.

These world-making practices seek alternative ways of relating, acting and being together, at odds with norms perpetuated by neoliberal ideology.

There are many socially engaged artists working to enact practices and theories of care through artistic process. Current practitioner-thinkers include Dena Al-Adeeb, an Iraqi born transnational artist, scholar, educator, cultural worker, and a mother, and neurologist and artist Sonja Blum. Both women are co organisers of the online project *HEKLER: Infrastructures of Care*. Other collectives and artists based in the UK working to enact practices of care include *Black Obsidian Sound System* (B.O.S.S). B.O.S.S was established in the summer of 2018, bringing together a community of queer, trans and non-binary black and people of colour involved in art, sound, and radical activism. The project is rooted in legacies of sound system culture, and the collective aim to build and sustain a resource for collective struggles.

Another notable care infused socially engaged art project, which along with B.O.S.S was a nominee for the 2021 Turner Prize is *Gentle Radical*. The collective is based in Wales, and they use socially engaged art and practices of care to connect community, politics, spirituality, social justice to speculate and build new futures. Members of *Gentle Radical*

acknowledge the interwoven struggles and stories of "class, language, race, ethnicity, culture, rurality, urbanity and migration" (Gentleradical.org, 2022). The project like many other critical contemporary art practices puts care and critique front and centre.

There are many artists who have paved the way for practices of critique and care in contemporary socially engaged art. My creative roots are indebted and entwined with the practices of artists including Adrian Piper, Jenny Holzer, Martha Rosler, Suzanne Lacy and Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Here, I discuss and analyse the work of two contemporary artists who work in this way; Magdalena Jadwiga Hartelova and Johanna Hedva. I analyse their work through the idea of homines curans (Tronto, 2017) and five modes of care developed by Joan Tronto (Tronto, 2015). In doing so, I examine how practices of care are enacted through contemporary socially engaged art practices.

In formulating the term homines curans (caring people), scholar Joan Tronto proposes that a fairer distribution of care work is one way of advancing values alternative to the patriarchal neoliberal paradigm. Tronto advances a democratic form of care, which calls for care to be privileged over competitive and exploitative economic growth (Tronto, 2017). In neoliberal societies, access to care is only available through certain resource hierarchies; access to a well-resourced family, access to surplus money, access to cultural and social capital.

Where care work is offered and made available through the family, private market, and the state, caring provisions are often gendered, raced, and classed (Glenn, 2010; Duffy, 2011; Duffy et al, 2013). Caring jobs, such as nannying, nursing, midwifery and palliative care nursing, activists, and critical and caring artists are predominantly done by women, ethnic-minority people, and people with lower-level education qualifications (Chatzidakis, Hakim, Litter & Rottenberg, 2020). Further, in the constellations of the heterosexual nuclear family, caring duties are frequently enacted by women, the wife, the mother, which lock caregiving practices to female experience, both for the mothers and daughters in this constellation (Gilligan 1982; Tronto, 2017).

Practices of care are important because they can open space to value, take care of and live with non-productive, sick, tired, and ill bodies. However, this work needs to be decoupled from female and ethnic minority labour, and enacted by everyone. In the climate of capitalist

realism, many bodies, sick and well, struggle to extract any surplus wealth from the grind of wage labour. Ironically, the grinding bodies struggling to live from their wage, are often the people doing the brunt of conventional care work, outsourced from the family to an unequal and exploitative labour economy.

The value of caring with and for others and, but not only self, is that the consummate image of corporeality; the white, male, adult, middle-class and fully-abled body is disrupted, decentred, and replaced with other forms of embodied, lived experiences. To care for and with difference, and at once critique the values and systems of capitalism, is one way of working towards an outlook that prioritises caring democracies that work for all sorts of bodies, not just white, male, individuated, hyper-productive ones.

In developing the idea for caring democracy, Tronto argues that caregiving needs to be decoupled from exploitative class, gender and race relations, and that caring practices be valued above and over economic growth and primitive accumulation; practices that underpin free market competition and economic growth on steroids. I refer to the theory of Tronto's homines curans because it is a useful framework with which to explore the democratic caring and disruptive potential of the artists whose work I analyse in this section.

To delineate different types of care that take place in everyday life, Tronto offers five dimensions of care. These are caring about; someone notices unmet caring needs. Caring for; with needs identified, someone takes responsibility to make sure these needs are met. Caregiving; the act of doing caregiving work. Care receiving; the person, thing, or lifeforms in receipt of care. Caring with; a group of people (from family to state) relying upon a cycle of care to have their caring needs met (Tronto, 2017, pp. 31-32). These modes are not fixed, and caring is a slippery process that takes many forms. Instead, I view these modes of care as useful terms to explore the different ways in which care is given and taken. These modes provide useful frameworks to tease out the different ways artistic practices can and do enact care. I use them to interpret the caring potential of the work of Magdalena Jadwiga Hartelova and Johanna Hedva.

Magdalena Jadwiga Hartelova is an artist based between Berlin, Prague and San Francisco. She states that her, "practice focusses on care and its ethics in action through exhibition and

art making, writing, social practice projects and community organising" (Hartelova, 2021). Defining her practice as social art, she makes work that "steps out of the capitalist quid-pro-quo exchange, that challenge the insider-outsider hierarchies, and support biographical, experience-based, and emotional knowledge making." Two projects I analyse in terms of socially engaged art projects that care are *There is A Place in My Body* (2019) and *Mother Tongue* (ongoing).

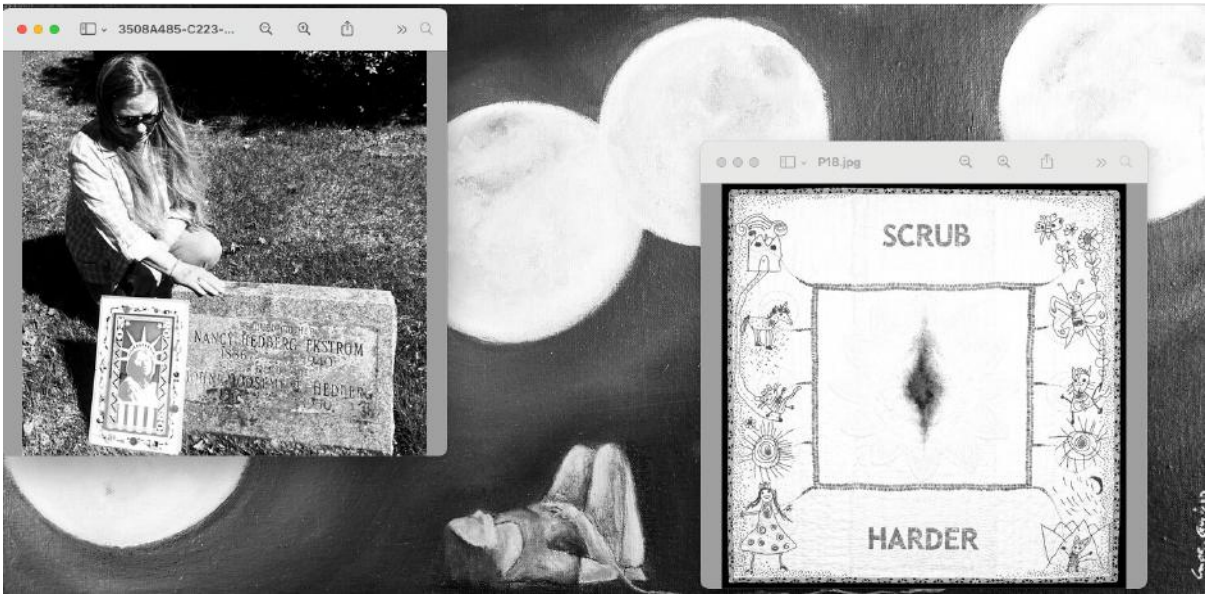


Figure 39. Magdalena Jadwiga Hartelova (2019). *There is A Place in My Body.* [Socially engaged art project]. Available https://www.mjhartelova.com/there-is-a-place-in-my-body.

In the case of *There is A Place in My Body* physical experiences often ignored or over sanitised are explored collectively; menstruation, birth, menopause, and other aspects of the female body. The *Mother Tongue* Project constitutes, "a loose series of public interactive performances encouraging participants to communicate in their own mother tongue(s). It aims to promote alternative ways of communication, to question the notions of *foreigner* and *belonging*, and to release the creative potential of speaking in one's mother tongue (s)" (Hartelova, 2021). Practices of speaking together in *Mother Tongue* include sharing and singing songs in a mother tongue with members of an expanding and contracting group of mother tongue speakers and seekers. Participants share personal experiences of how their mother tongue came to be and how it came to be secondary for the people who switch between linguistic tongues, forms, and cultures.

Hartelova's work invites caring about and caregiving (Tronto, 2015, pp. 5-7) because the

artist opens space for people, and, in these projects, women, to speak of and self-narrate their own experiences of their bodies. Hartelova notices a deficit of space-time to speak of female embodied experiences and uses socially engaged art practices to respond to this dearth of discourse. In inviting people to speak in and with their mother tongue, Hartelova recognises the dominance of an anglophile tongue; a language that homogenises, excludes, and silences non-English expression. Again, caring about in the context of *Mother Tongue* happens because Hartelova notices a need; the need to speak with and in the primary language learnt by people from non-anglophile cultures.

Caregiving, a form of doing and taking care, happens through Hartelova taking a clear role as facilitator-artist. She sets out to invite women to give an account of their experiences, and their bodies, and takes responsibility for enabling this kind of care-infused dialogue-focused socially engaged artwork. Hartelova does this by inviting women to give an autotheoretical account of their own bodies and to perform accounts of their embodied experiences in the world. *Mother Tongue* creates an intervention where individuals join, speak freely, give and share attention, listen and engage in a social encounter of caring for voices and languages often marginalised, overlooked and rendered inaudible because of the dominance of the English language.

While these works evidence modes of caring as outlined by Tronto, I am not entirely sure that they evidence aspects of homines curans or the democratisation of care work. Hartelova is certainly aware of the embodied aspects of the female experience, basing *There is A Place in My Body* around the lived experiences of women that are often erased, dismissed, and deemed revolting or too bodily. However, these projects do not explicitly interrogate which bodies do the care enacted through their praxis, nor do the projects explicitly comment on and explore how gender intersects with the distribution of artistic care, and to what effect.

Hartelova states that she seeks to step out of "the capitalist quid-pro-quo exchange" through her socially engaged artwork. This is well and good, but in terms of thinking through how, and if, her work can be thought of as an expression of homines curans, it would be good to see Hartelova elaborate on how her emotive, affective and socially engaged art practice attempt to democratise care enacted by underpaid and often exploited marginalised groups and women, so normalised in capitalist society.

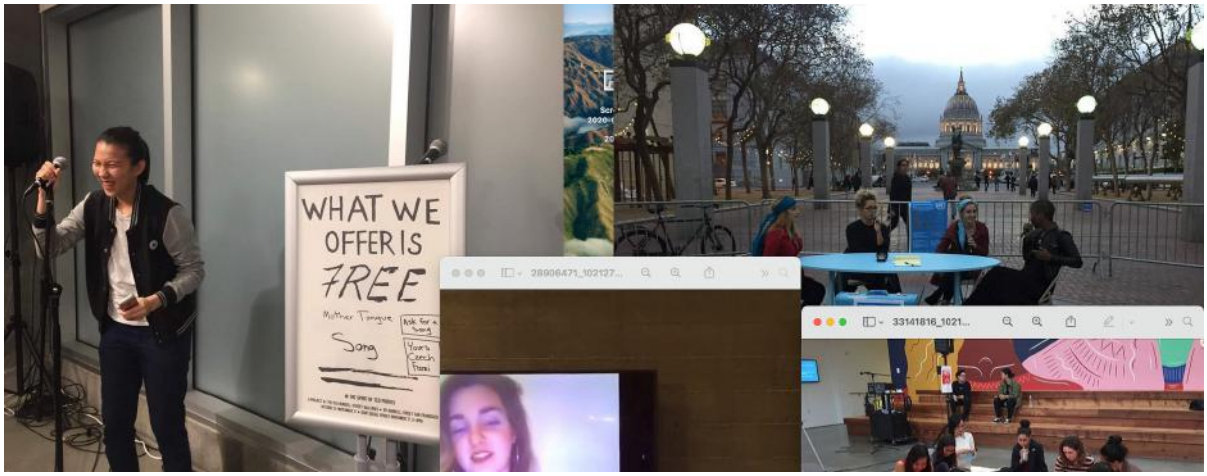


Figure 40. Magdalena Jadwiga Hartelova (2016 -). *Mother Tongue*. [socially engaged art project]. Available https://www.mjhartelova.com/projects#/mother-tongue-project/.

Johanna Hedva is a Korean-American writer, artist, musician, and astrologer, based between LA and Berlin. Hedva's artwork and writing draws on their lived experience as a queer person coming from a low-income background, living with chronic illness, and, consequently, someone who experiences various forms of socio-economic exclusion, discipline, and punishment because of their sick, tired and, at times, economically unproductive body.

Hedva describes their work as being focused on the body. Here, we see here an artist who incorporates viscerality into their artistic practice and explains, "[t]here is always the body — its radical permeability, dependency, and consociation — but the task is how to eclipse it, how to nebulize it, and how to cope when this inevitably fails" (Hedva, 2021).

Hedva's work is not what I would call a perfect example of socially engaged art. However, what is relevant about their work is that Hedva explicitly states that practices of kinship and care are some of the ways in which the brutal ideal of the productive capitalist subject can be destabilised. They communicate these proposals through artistic and literary expression. The work I will discuss here is *Sick Woman Theory*, which was born from a lecture Hedva delivered at the Women's Center for Creative Work titled *My Body Is a Prison of Pain so I Want to Leave It Like a Mystic But I Also Love It & Want it to Matter Politically* (2015).

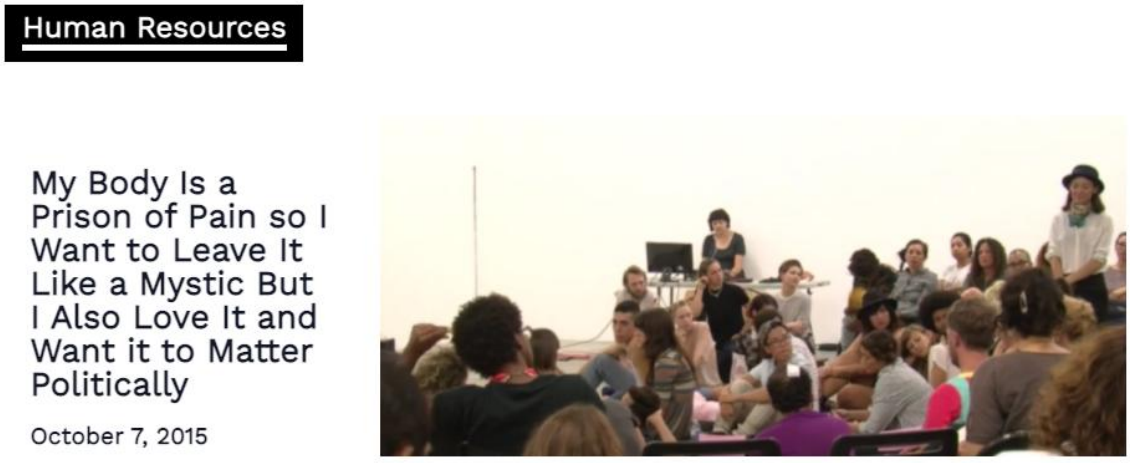


Figure 41. Johanna Hedva (2015). *My Body Is a Prison of Pain so I Want to Leave It Like a Mystic But I Also Love It & Want it to Matter Politically.* [Artist's talk] Available https://vimeo.com/144782433.

According to Hedva (2016), *Sick Woman Theory* puts the body at the centre of inquiry and understands that there are many ways bodies can be named and lived in as sick. The naming of bodies as sick is used to achieve various ends; sometimes bodies are called sick to punish them, other times to control them, sometimes to heal them. Throughout European history, female bodies, impoverished and homeless bodies have been named as sick, and institutionalised (Foucault, 2001). Sick and poor female bodies have been deliberately and systematically brutalised; as seen in the ear cutting of female vagabonds in medieval Europe (Federici, 2020), and, more recently, the lack of medical scrutiny given to women's experiences of ill health (Cumberlege, 2020). For others, including Hedva, calling a body sick is an act of resistance, the refusal of untenable and impossible capitalist ideals of social status, wealth, health, and productivity.

Hedva's definition of sick women, include a range of bodies. In their essay *Sick Woman Theory,* they define sick women as, "all of the dysfunctional, dangerous and in danger, badly behaved, crazy incurable, traumatized, disordered, diseased, chronic, uninsurable, wretched, undesirable and altogether dysfunctional bodies belonging to women, people of colour, poor, ill, neuro-atypical, differently abled, queer, trans, and genderfluid people, who have been historically pathologized, hospitalized, institutionalized, brutalized, rendered unmanageable, and therefore made culturally illegitimate and politically invisible" (Hedva, 2020).

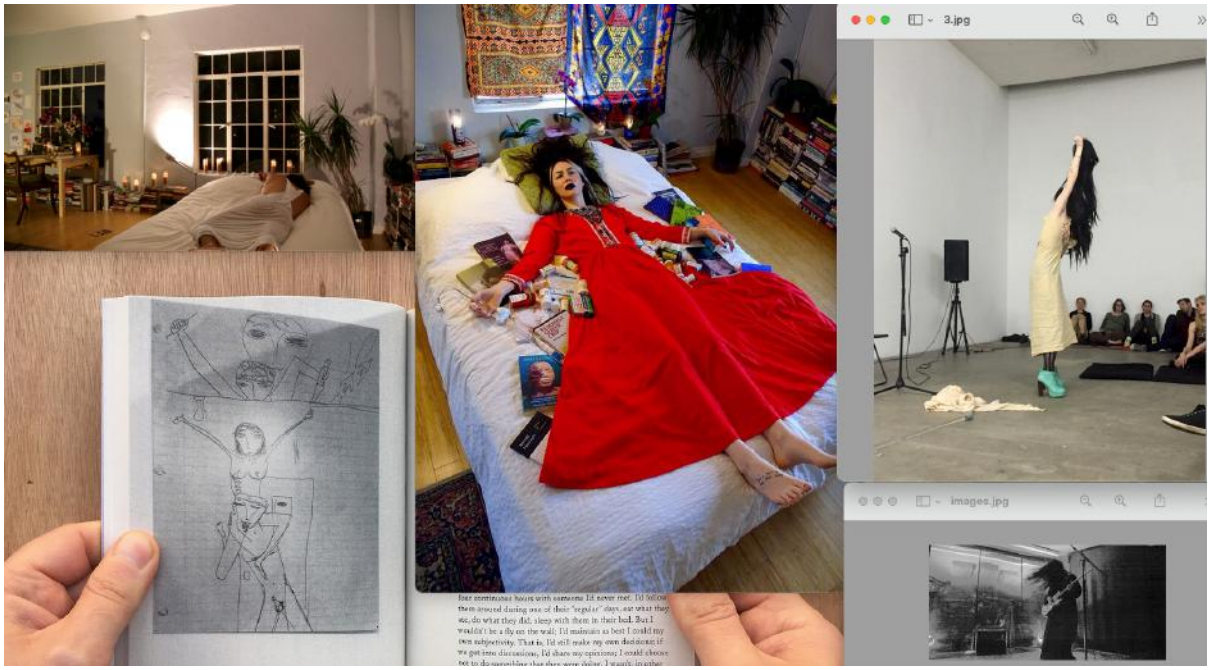


Figure 42. Johanna Hedva (2015). *Unknown title.* [Screenshot collage]. Photos by Pamilla Payne. Available https://eastbayexpress.com/sick-fest-a-lesson-in-sick-woman-theory-2-1/.

The ways in which Hedva puts to practice some of Joan Tronto's modes of care in their artistic practice are many. Here, I focus on exploring the ways in which they care about (recognising a need), and care receive (being the recipient of various forms of care). Incorporating care into their artistic method, they challenge and rebuild the "unliveable conditions of neoliberal, imperialist, white-supremacist, capitalist cis-hetero-patriarchy" (Women's Center for Creative Work at Human Resources, 2015). The idea of being well enough to go to work as a measure of wellness and sickness is a problem Hedva names as endemic to capitalist ideology. Moving to a care-based economy over a productive, work-based one, would see the incorporation of, "sick bodies", such as Hedva's, rather than an exclusion of them. Hedva offers that, "[t]he most anti-capitalist protest is to care for another and to care for yourself. To take on the historically feminized and therefore invisible practice of nursing, nurturing, caring. To take seriously each other's vulnerability and fragility and precarity, and to support it, honour it, empower it. To protect each other, to enact and practice community. A radical kinship, an interdependent sociality, a politics of care" (Hedva, 2016).

Hedva cares about, by framing the exclusions, struggles and experiences of sick, queer, and disobedient bodies. Their work literally foregrounds their own embodied and emotive experience of queerness and sickness, linking their experience to political critique and anti-

capitalist struggle. They demand that sick bodies and different bodies need care, and they also need increased legitimacy and visibility, new ways of being defined, witnessed, and supported outside and beyond the competitive, sleep deprived, hyper-productive capitalist culture. In care receiving, Hedva performs, demands, and shares the vicissitudes of their immune compromised body. In doing so, they share and communicate the ways in which they receive care; from friends, allies, drugs, their bed, staying at home, resting, walking with a stick. In and through works such as *My Body Is a Prison of Pain so I Want to Leave It Like a Mystic But I Also Love It & Want it to Matter Politically* (2015) and *Minerva the Miscarriage of the Brain* (2021), Hedva incorporates their experience of receiving (and at times being excluded) from care receiving.

It seems that in the examples cited here, more work needs to be done into thinking through the social hierarchy of caring work. How do artists involved with incorporating care into socially engaged art practices address ossified tendencies for care to be enacted by women and multi-ethnic working-class people? While the works discussed in this section certainly evidence homines curans in action, further attention should be paid to the practical steps that could be taken through socially engaged art practice to democratise and redistribute caring work, taking it away from women, people of colour and poor people. Further, it is imperative that caring democracies and care practices do not become normalised as individual responsibility. Artists working in this area need to call for policy level investment in care, not simply individual advocacy of caring and critical artistic practices.

In doing so, caring practices and the skills required to do such work, would be situated as paramount to everyday life, instead of being invisible and undesirable. It seems to me that artists interested in framing socially engaged practices as a form of care, and artists actively critiquing the sickness of capitalism are women, BIPOC, queer and sick people. Again, those cut the deepest by the sickness of capitalist modernity have less to lose, when calling the norm broken, redundant. What I propose is that the project of critique, care, listening and social justice in the context of artistic production is pursued by those with privilege, as well as by those subjected to different forms of oppression because of their bodies, health, ideas, and desires. Further, caring democracies need to be pursued at a structural and governmental level as well as at an individual level.

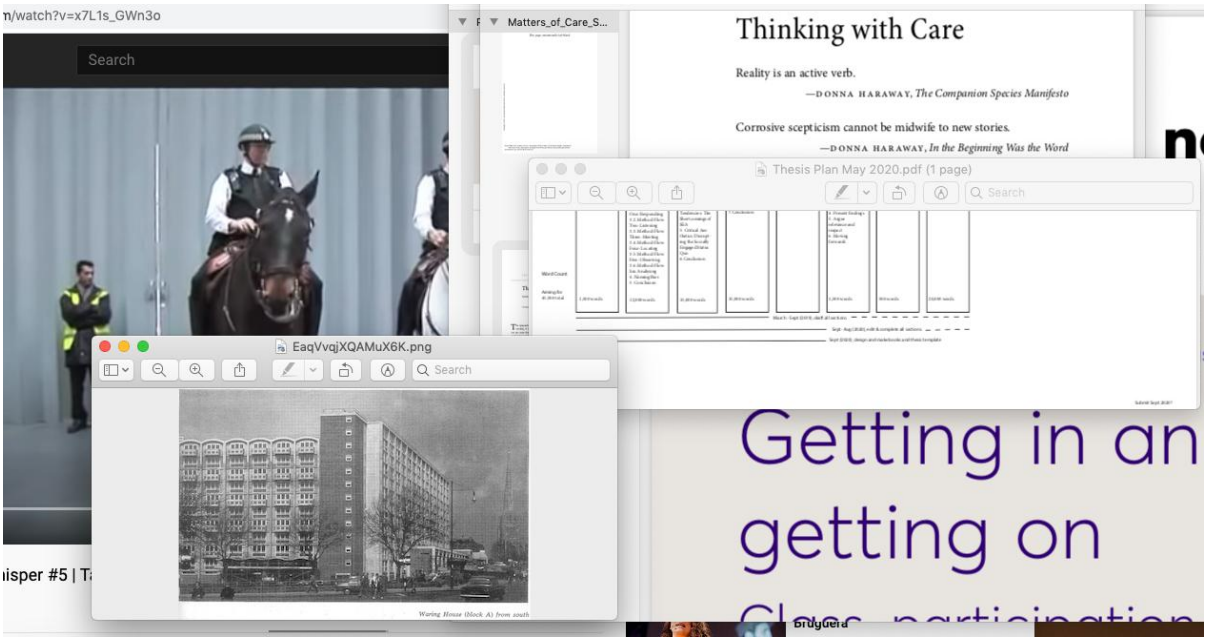


Figure 43. Caitlin Shepherd (2020). *Thinking with care* [Screenshot collage].

While socially engaged art practices can clearly care about, care for, care with and care together (Tronto, 2015, pp. 3-4), this alone is not sufficient to render socially engaged art as emancipatory, inclusive, and democratically caring.

Just because care-based art practices exist, does not mean that the field of socially engaged art is synonymous with forms of care that enable inclusion, intersectional justice, and equality. As we will see later in this chapter, socially engaged art practices, in the context of the UK, still have some way to go in terms of caring about and caring with people from non-white, female and working-class backgrounds, especially in terms of who gets the opportunity to make such work, and in terms of better understanding the hidden costs of working in socially engaged art economies.

2.5 Socially engaged art and listening

In the paper *Tomb, Temple, Machine and Self: The Social Construction of the Body*, academic Anthony Synnott argues that human history can be seen as a shift from olfactory to oral-aural to vision (Synnott, 1992, p. 621). In this sensory account of the ancient through to modern history, the ways in which reality was perceived and experienced differ wildly, depending on which senses were most used to function in, reflect on and act in the world. In contemporary

Western culture, occularcentricity reigns supreme.

However, as sensory study researchers and sound artists and theorists will attest, ways of listening are equally important as ways of seeing in coming to better understand how we communicate, interpret and act in the world. The world is not just seen with and through the eye. It is also heard, listened to, and encountered through the ear and the vibrating, sensing, sensual, listening body.

In teasing out a definition of listening, I draw on the ideas and practices of artist, educator and composer Pauline Oliveros, philosopher, art critic, and curator Christoph Cox, and feminist artist scholar Lauren Fournier.

Unlike the eye, the ear and the listening body do not distance us from the world. Instead, auditory perception puts us within the sound, within complex worlds. We do not perceive the other, we physically and sonically enmesh with it through the physical and auditory perception of sonic frequencies.

As Michael Bull and Les Back outline in *Auditory Culture Reader* (2016), "[o]f the five senses, vision is the most distancing one. In vision subject and object appear as transparent. Implied in the objectification of the world is the control of that world" (Bull and Back, 2016, p. 3). One way to counter the distancing consequences of the act of looking, the act of viewing the world as distant, separate from self, or out there, is to tune into the multi-directional sounds and sonic embodied sensualities of the world.

Listening practices, when engaged with various groups of people who have been looked upon, looked down upon, objectified, erased and othered offers the possibility of affective connection. There is the possibility of the speaking subject giving an account of themselves, participating in autotheorisation of self and being met with attention and acknowledgement by the listening subject. While this is a less than straightforward exchange, wrought with potential problematic power dynamics, in certain cases, listening practices can offer a connecting and convivial social encounter.

Autotheory as a method and approach of giving an account of oneself is central in my

approach to convivial listening. It is important because it focuses attention on the ways in which self emerges, shuttles in and out of view through processes of relational exchange, being in and with the world (Fournier, 2021, p. 32).

First-hand experiences of the world, felt in and through the body-mind, are useful sources of knowledge; ones that can be triangulated with theory, philosophy, art, and linguistics. These experiences found through our own bodies can be part of the puzzle that helps us to make sense of and act in the world.

In putting forwards in interest in mutual listening practices as a form of socially engaged art practice, I extend an invitation to people to think about, reflect on and give voice to their lived experience. Because my praxis is concerned with better understanding multi-ethnic working-class experience, specifically, I invite autotheoretical forms of listening to be put to practice by people interested in exploring their own classed identity and experiences.

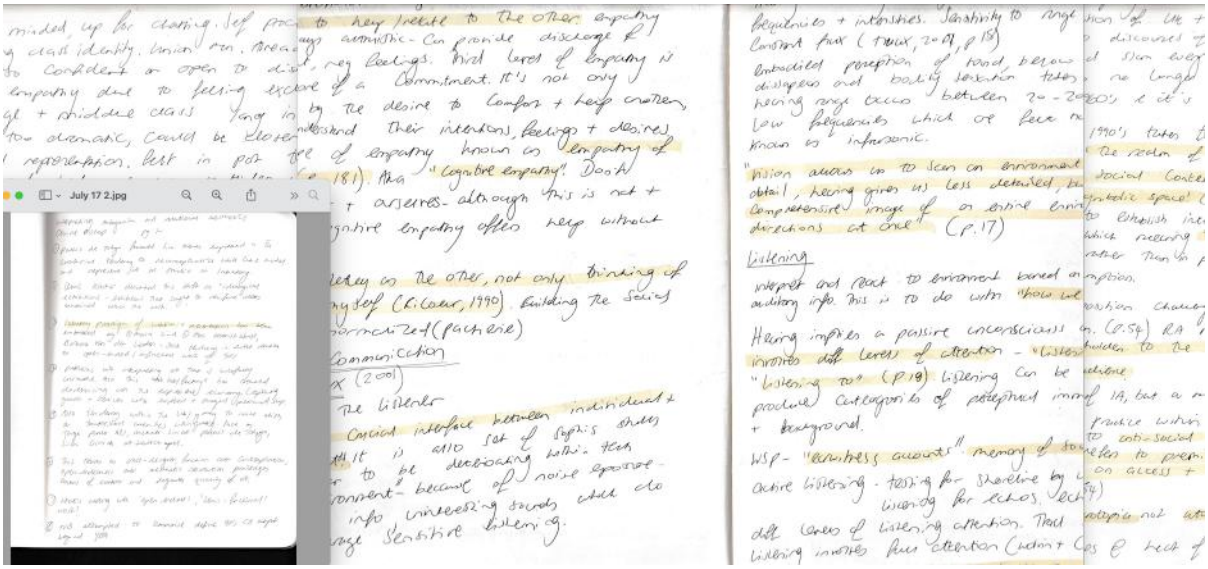


Figure 44. Caitlin Shepherd (2020). *Documents of notebooks* [Screenshot collage].

Drilling down into the value and significance of listening as a form of focussed attention and attempted togetherness, I draw on Pauline Oliveros's practice of deep listening, which she outlines in the book *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (2005). She explains that, "[d]eep coupled with listening or deep listening for me is learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space time continuum of sound - encountering the vastness and

complexities as much as possible. [...] Such expansion means that one is connected to the whole of the environment and beyond" (Oliveros, 2005, p. xxiii). At its heart, deep listening is about foregrounding auditory perception and trying to tune into and perceive the most detailed sonic encounters as is possible, in a range of social and ecological contexts (Oliveros, 2005, p. 15).

Oliveros maintains that to listen is to commit oneself to paying close attention to the other, be that human or otherwise. To listen is to make space for polyphony, human to human, non-human to human or any other type of articulation of shared lived experience. Oliveros makes clear distinctions between hearing and listening. She explains that, "hearing represents the primary sensory perception – hearing happen involuntarily. Listening, on the other hand, is a voluntary process that produces culture through training and experience" (Oliveros, 2005, p. 73).

In simple terms, deep listening can be defined as radical attentiveness. In more detailed terms, deep listening is the deployment of auditory attention that allows a global and local auditory focus, often occurring simultaneously. Oliveros's definition of listening describes the processes of giving and sharing voice, of speaking (verbally and non-verbally), and of being witnessed in a speaking-listening exchange. For Oliveros, listening is equated to porousness, to being open, to being attuned. With being open, it can be hard to endure certain types of sounds, feelings, stories, histories.

There is a contradiction in being open; you can feel and sense more, but that you also become aware of, and feel the damage done through certain gestures, sounds, actions, narratives. I draw on Oliveros's idea of deep listening because it recognises that listening is a skilled practice, one that needs to be developed as a perceptive skill, through ongoing practice.

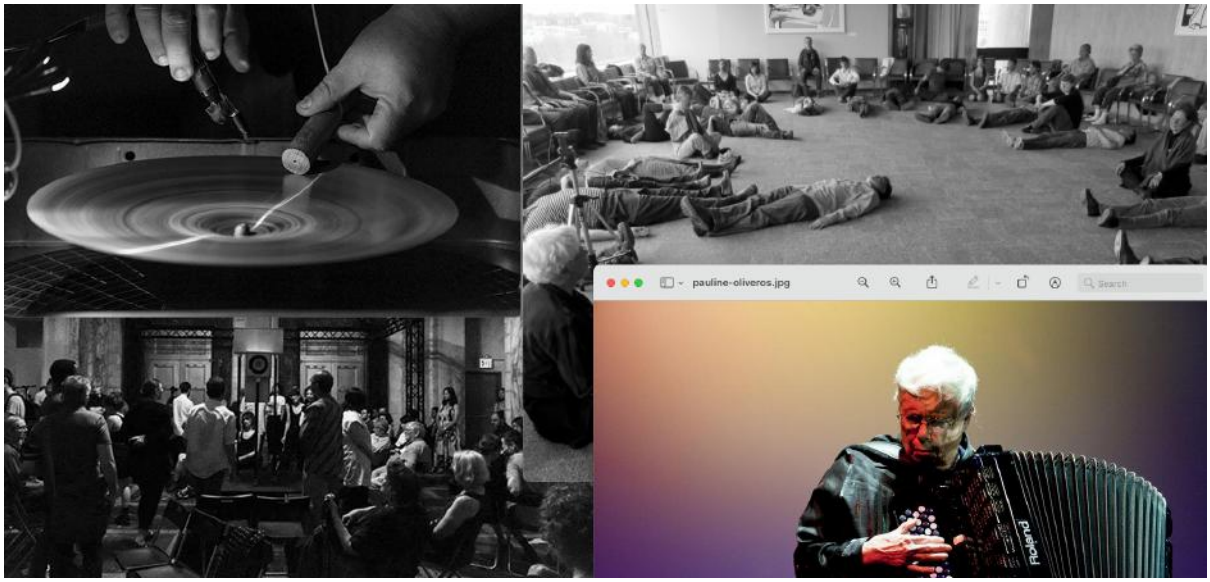


Figure 45. (n.d). *Pauline Oliveros doing deep listening.* [Screenshot collage]. Available https://www.vocalconstructivists.com/.

Philosopher, art critic and curator Christoph Cox equates practices of listening as synonymous with acts and processes of interpreting the world. He defines interpretation as a process of meeting and filtering information, be that through the receipt and interpretation of words, images, sounds, textures, information, and so on. In developing this idea, Cox draws on Nietzsche's use of the term interpretation. In his essay *Listening as Agon in the Society of Control* (2016), Cox scaffolds his theory of listening onto Nietzsche's ideas of interpretation as the act of selecting and filtering information. Cox outlines that, "[f]or Nietzsche, "to interpret" is to be confronted with a flow (of words, sounds, images, information, whatever) and to filter it in some way according to some set of interests or constraints" (Cox, 2016, p. 22).

For Cox, listening to the world is one way that we gather, process, interpret, and apply information. In this way, listening processes allow us to assimilate and filter information, but also to act. Cox argues that the interpretive potential of listening is what makes it political; to listen is to interpret, and this is what enables us to act in the world, or what Nietzsche calls the "will to power" (Cox, 1999, pp. 3-4). Listening is interpretive and this is what makes it a political act. He states that, "[l]istening is interpretation, which is necessarily political insofar as it involves a constant struggle and negotiation among entities" (Cox, 2016, p. 22).

I draw on this idea because it is a theory of listening that understands that listening is a

conscious act that allows for the filtering, organising, and making sense of the world enacted through various communicative exchanges. In this way, listening is not something that just happens and it is not the same as hearing. Instead, listening is informed, shaped, and coloured by the places, people, contexts, and environments we find ourselves in, we find ourselves attempting to interpret, to make sense of, to filter, to respond to the world and each other.

2.6 Exclusory tendencies: criticisms of socially engaged art

Capitalism is not the background to class experience and inequality in the arts. It is part of the social machine that maintains it. The late Mark Fisher proclaimed it easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Fisher describes late capitalism as a fragmented, ad-hoc, disposable, and individuated ideology, deeply engrained in contemporary life (Fisher, 2009, p. 36). Fisher contends capitalism is evidenced by the naturalisation of a business ontology; the idea that everything, from food growing to healthcare, from romance to art, should be run as a profitable business (Fisher, 2009, p. 21).

Monetising all transactions and exchanges depletes society of non-commodified notions and experiences of value, pleasure, and meaning. As Fisher observes, "[c]apital is an abstract parasite, an insatiable vampire and zombie- maker; but the living flesh it converts into dead labour is ours, and the zombies it makes are us" (Fisher, 2009, p. 19). In re-imagining the failed futures and cruel optimism of society built under capitalist ideology, we may yet escape our zombie destiny.

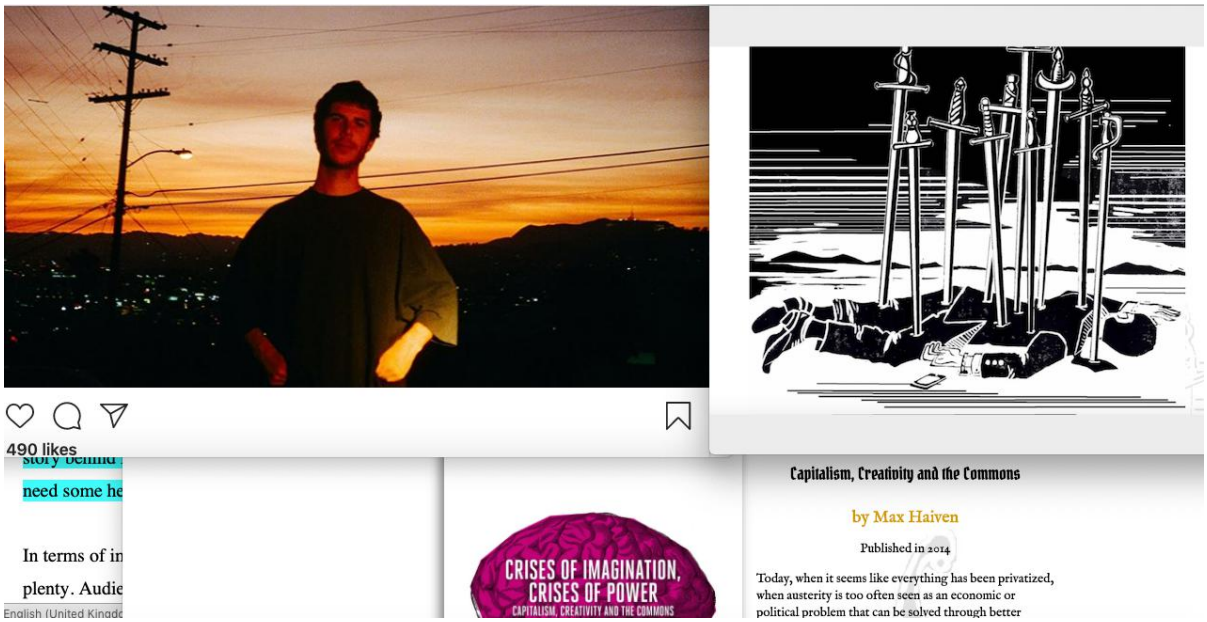


Figure 46. Caitlin Shepherd (2020). *Crisies of capitalism* [Screenshot collage].

With the role of imagination held in such high esteem within the artistic discipline, artists seem well equipped to disprove Fisher's claim that we are living in a time of imaginary deficit, a deficit which enables exclusory and exploitative socio-economic values to become naturalised and presented as normal.

But the odds are stacked against such anti-zombie artists, because the imagination of the art world is an image and culture of aspiration, social mobility, and emancipation as defined by people hailing from predominantly, white, male, middle class backgrounds, occupying a relatively privileged position in society (Brook, Brien & Taylor, 2018; Pinoncely & Washington-Ihieme, 2019; Carey, Florisson, O Brien & Lee, 2020).

In this section, I present three criticisms of socially engaged art that must be addressed if artists are to extract themselves from the inequalities and failed futures of zombie land, often reproduced through creative and cultural production.

Firstly, I present evidence that suggests, to date, that there has been a lack of research looking at how class origin shapes opportunity and validation when working in the socially engaged arts sector.

Secondly, I examine evidence that suggests that socially engaged arts practices come with hidden costs. These hidden costs can render the sector inaccessible and too costly to work in for people coming from working class backgrounds.

Thirdly, I present concerns about how socially engaged art is instrumentalised in maintaining the neoliberal status quo, specifically how socially engaged artists are being used to roll out aspects of the neoliberal creativity fix under the guise of community art-washing.

2.7 Socially engaged art; who makes it?

Socially engaged art practices have become synonymous with claims of positive social impact, inclusion, cohesion, and accessibility. Lecturer in anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London, Christopher Wright outlines socially engaged arts proximity with claims of positive social change. He explains that, "[t]he "social turn" of contemporary art is not just concerned with an interest in drawing from social reality or using it as a kind of raw material in artworks; it presumes that art can intervene directly in the social and alter it positively" (Wright, 2018).

Conversely, other scholars and art critics caution against the idea that socially engaged art will save us, remaining cynical that socially engaged art practice has the potential to bring around socio-political change, be that interpersonally, institutionally, or socio-politically.

Art historian and cultural critic Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen (2017) offers an important critique of socially engaged art practice as an area of artistic production concerned with modest proposals – aesthetic proposals that more often than not maintain the capitalist hegemony. Rasmussen argues that a lot of socially engaged art has become a vehicle to communicate and celebrate small scale adjustments that essentially get in the way of structural critique and fundamental change.

In this way, socially engaged art risks becoming a mechanism for small-scale adjustments to labour conditions, community, care, local and national policies, and imaginaries of near and alternative futures, that simply "continue the slow structural violence that is an essential part

of the capitalist mode of production" (Rasmussen, 2017).

The workforce within the contemporary art world, extending to socially engaged art, at present, is not diverse. The opportunity to secure a steady job within the creative industries is a privilege available to only a few. The Western art world is currently dominated by white, middle-class men (Brook, Brien & Taylor, 2018, 2020; Pinoncely & Washington-Ihieme, 2019).

Recent research into diversity in the UK arts and creative industries that focuses on socio-economic origin of UK creative workers, presents evidence that states that only 16% of the work force in the creative industries come from working class backgrounds (Carey, Florisson, O Brien & Lee, 2020). Further, the creative industries comprise of over half of workers coming from privileged economic backgrounds, compared with 37% in other sectors (Brook, O'Brien & Taylor, 2000; Carey, Florisson, O Brien & Lee, 2020).

Figure 47. Caitlin Shepherd (2020). *Inequality in the creative and cultural industries* [Screenshot collage].

Where people from working-class backgrounds do make it into paid, secure employment in the UK creative industries, there are barriers to career progression. Obstacles include pay gaps, cultural matching, and, until recently, a lack of research done into the socio-economic origin of people working in the creative and cultural industries, and the specific barriers that face people from low-income backgrounds, who often face compounded inequalities (Oakley & O'Brien, 2015. p. 30).

While there is an established body of research looking into inequality the creative and cultural industry workforce (Brook, O'Brien & Taylor, 2018, 2000; Pinoncely & Washington-Ihieme , 2019; Carey, Florisson, O Brien & Lee, 2020), to date there is a lack of research looking into multi-ethnic class inequality amongst artists and producers working in the field of socially engaged arts. Emerging research has been done into better understanding the hidden costs of working in this socially engaged arts (Belfiore, 2020), as well as research into validation and professional support for socially engaged artists (Ravetz & Wright, 2020).

Other relevant research includes examining how cultural democracy might be one way to challenge and disrupt commissioning and funding practices central to UK socially engaged art practices (Hope, 2011). However, there is a lack of research interrogating how socio-economic background shapes thinking and making expressed through socially engaged art practices. One of the possible reasons for this lack of research could be caused by the erasure of socially engaged arts from definitions of artistic practice listed under the creative and cultural industries.

Until the late 1990s, the term "creative industries" was not used. It was only after the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) released its first creative industry document (1998) that the term became popularised. Prior to "creative industries", the term "cultural industries" was used to describe a similar field of economic and policy activity (Garnham, 2005; O'Connor, 2007).

Presently, the two terms are merged into the relatively recent neologism, the creative and cultural industries (CCI). As of 2015, the creative and cultural industries have been defined as comprising of the following nine sectors: "Advertising and marketing; Architecture; Crafts; Design; Film, TV, video, radio, and photography; IT, software, and computer services; Publishing; Museums, galleries and libraries; Music, performing and visual arts" (O'Brien et al, 2016, p. 118).

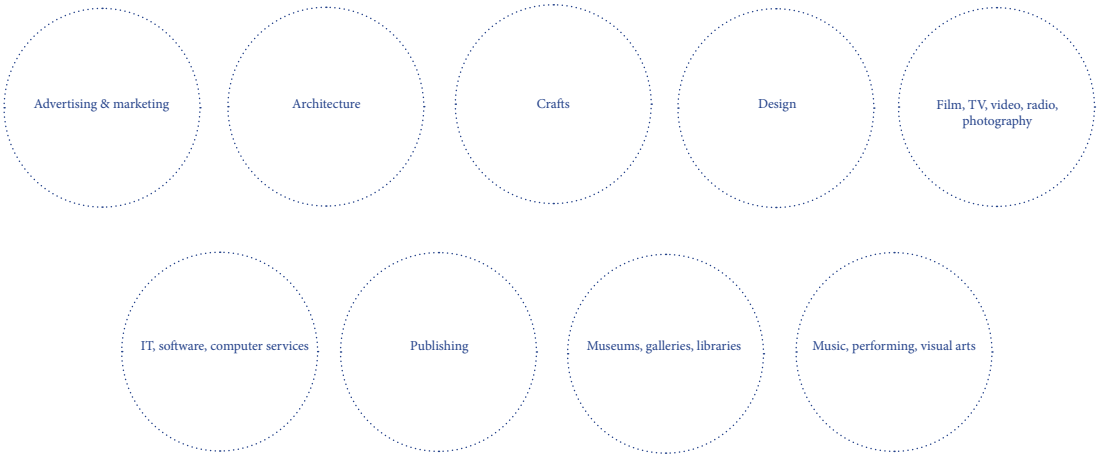


Figure 48. Caitlin Shepherd (2021). *The nine sectors comprising UK creative and cultural industries.* [Illustration].

In current definitions of sectors constituting the CCIs, the sector has been defined as "music, performing and visual arts", but does not list or provide insight into diverse and emergent practices, including socially engaged art practices. In popular definitions of the creative and cultural industries, dematerialised, participatory, and socially engaged art practices quite simply, do not exist.

Socially engaged art is a field of artistic practice that is only loosely linked to the canon, conventions, and practices of visual and performing art. It seems that a more detailed breakdown of experimental, emergent, and non-commercial art practices belonging to the sector of music, performing, and visual arts is needed.

A detailed and revised map of the intricacies of the music, performing and visual arts sector would help to better define and describe the diversity and breadth of artistic practice taking place in the UK today. With a more detailed map of artistic practices, a more empirical understanding into the class origin of people working in these areas would be secured.

Without research and analysis into how socio-economic origin shapes the ability to get in and

on within the UK creative and cultural industries, specifically as a socially engaged artist, the field risks being unable to evidence how it has paid due attention to socio-economic and cultural privilege reproduced through socially engaged roles, such as artists, commissioners, curators, critics, and educators. Without this information, the positive, inclusive, and remedial claims made of socially engaged art remain only partly realised, and the field risks continuing and reproducing "the slow structural violence that is an essential part of the capitalist mode of production" (Rasmussen, 2017).

If socially engaged art is to help stop the slow violence of capitalist structures of oppression, the field needs to pay attention to who gets to make this potentially radical and transformative work, and who does not. To do this, more research is needed and, simultaneously, the sector needs to be acknowledged and included in current definitions of the creative and cultural industries.

2.8 The hidden costs of SEA; unpaid labour, lack of training, validation, and care

The hidden costs of socially engaged art can be thought of as externalised and devalued practices of care; acts that frequently remain invisible and under recognised in the field. The superficial narratives of inclusive, remedial, and equitable potential of socially engaged art are revealed as soon as working conditions of socially engaged artists are interrogated, appearing anything but equitable, equal, and accessible.

The hidden costs of jobs such as unpaid organising and provisions of emotional, psychological, and social care that often arise through socially engaged art practices may be untenable and unaffordable for artists and producers already engaged with holding multiple jobs, partaking in relational, economic, and emotional caring duties within family constellations, or simply enduring the chronic stresses of precarity and economic instability.

In the article *Who cares? At what price? The hidden costs of socially engaged arts labour and the moral failure of cultural policy* (2020), Professor Eleonora Belfiore states that the working conditions of socially engaged artists have been under researched. Through interviewing and analysing feedback from 12 artist and cultural education professionals in

2014, Belfiore outlines some concerning insights into the working conditions of artists working in socially engaged art.

Two important findings from this research, are that current funding mechanisms that bankroll socially engaged art practices in the context of the UK are frequently systemically exploitative of the artists they commission. These processes fail to ensure adequate funding for the emotional, psychological, and aesthetic work involved with socially engaged arts practice. Secondly, funding and commissioning bodies repeatedly fail to demonstrate duties of care towards both artists and participating individuals and communities.

Belfiore argues that socially engaged artists are underfunded and overworked, a not dissimilar state to other creative workers (Siebert and Wilson, 2013; La Berge, 2019). However, while socially engaged artists are underpaid and precariously employed, many of these artists risk shouldering hidden or extra costs, which add to their deficit.

Essentially, this research evidences the often precarious, care-less, and exploitative conditions of work as a socially engaged artist, and calls for new and critical enquiries into the moral economy of the subsidised socially engaged arts sector. Belfiore's research is important as it provides evidence and insight into the problematic working conditions of socially engaged art and calls for more research to be done into this area of the UK creative and cultural industry.

The demanding, precarious, and stressful working conditions of doing socially engaged art (Hope, 2017; Belfiore, 2020, p. 3), alongside the lack of adequate support, training, and validation (Ravetz & Wright, 2020. p. 17), mean that these occupational stresses are likely to be too much to bear for people already dealing with day-to-day precarity. If someone is already juggling low income with the costs of living, rent, food, and transport, as well as other issues that often arise with poverty and low-income, it becomes increasingly unlikely that these working conditions are tenable or desirable.

What is key to stress here, is that the hidden costs of the types of labour undertaken by socially engaged artists are problematic in their own right *and* present another barrier to individuals interested in imagining and making socially engaged art, coming from working class backgrounds. To date, there is a paucity of research into the working conditions of the

field of socially engaged art, and how this affects those working in this field. More research is needed to build on the research done by Belfiore, Hope and Ravetz and Wright.

2.9 Socially engaged art: the foot soldier of the creativity fix

The idea underpinning the creativity fix is that economic regeneration and improvement is enabled through the proliferation of the creative class. The argument goes that a city or town will see marked improvements in economic prospects if it can attract the creative class. The creative class, as outlined by Richard Florida, author of the bestselling and problematic *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2004), are university educated young people who embody the three T's of creativity: tolerance, technology and talent (Florida, 2004).

If these people and their big Ts can be clustered into metropolitan locations, economic growth, and wellbeing will, apparently, flourish. While Richard Florida and his work accelerated urban policy makers uptake of various forms of the creativity fix, the global city creativity makeover was well underway at the turn of the millennium. Urban development strategies attempting to attract the creative class, along with their ability to engender the urban and peri-urban creativity fix, has been widely deployed to varying success.

Criticisms of this notion of progress are that this idea of a better city benefits the already rich, mostly white Bourgeoise. The creativity fix comes at a cost; it is realised through mechanisms of gentrification. Clearance of social housing and older housing provision, replacing established and connected working-class communities with out of reach properties fit for the desired denizens; the already privileged creative class.

In the case of *The Rise of The Creative Class* (Florida, 2004) the term "class" seems a loose naming device, with little discussion of the history, categories and complexities surrounding the term. As professor of cultural economy, Andy Pratt observes in his paper *Creative cities; the cultural industries and the creative class* (2008), "Florida's occupational list is eclectic to

say the least; this is further betrayed by the insertion of a 'super-creative class' within the category. To deploy an income and occupation classification and to read off causality is deterministic" (Pratt, 2008, p. 8).

The creativity fix script advocates a creative and economic imaginary that blends "cultural libertarianism and contemporary urban-design motifs with neoliberal economic imperatives" (Peck, 2007, p. 5). It essentially advocates for aggressive forms of creative individualism, endorsing images of clean, minimal efficient living (clean living equates to ease of movement), and celebrating 24/7 productivity, plug in and work anywhere bars and cafes.

The creative subject is not everyone, nor is the choice to become creative open to everyone. The ideal creative subject is highly educated, geographically mobile, agile, clad in fishermen smocks and can work any hours of each day. With increased focus on the creative class, governance and urban policies focus on the needs of techno-bohemian bourgeoise.

The creativity fix does not examine the problems of unequal opportunities and structural inequality. Instead, flexible, and insecure employment terms are taken as given. Those who can hustle in these terms do, and those who cannot, are priced out of the creative city, and the creative neighbourhood. The aspirations of the creativity fix "enforce soft- disciplinary modes of creative governmentality based on mandatory individualism, relentless innovation, and 24/7 productivity" (Peck, 2007, p. 9).

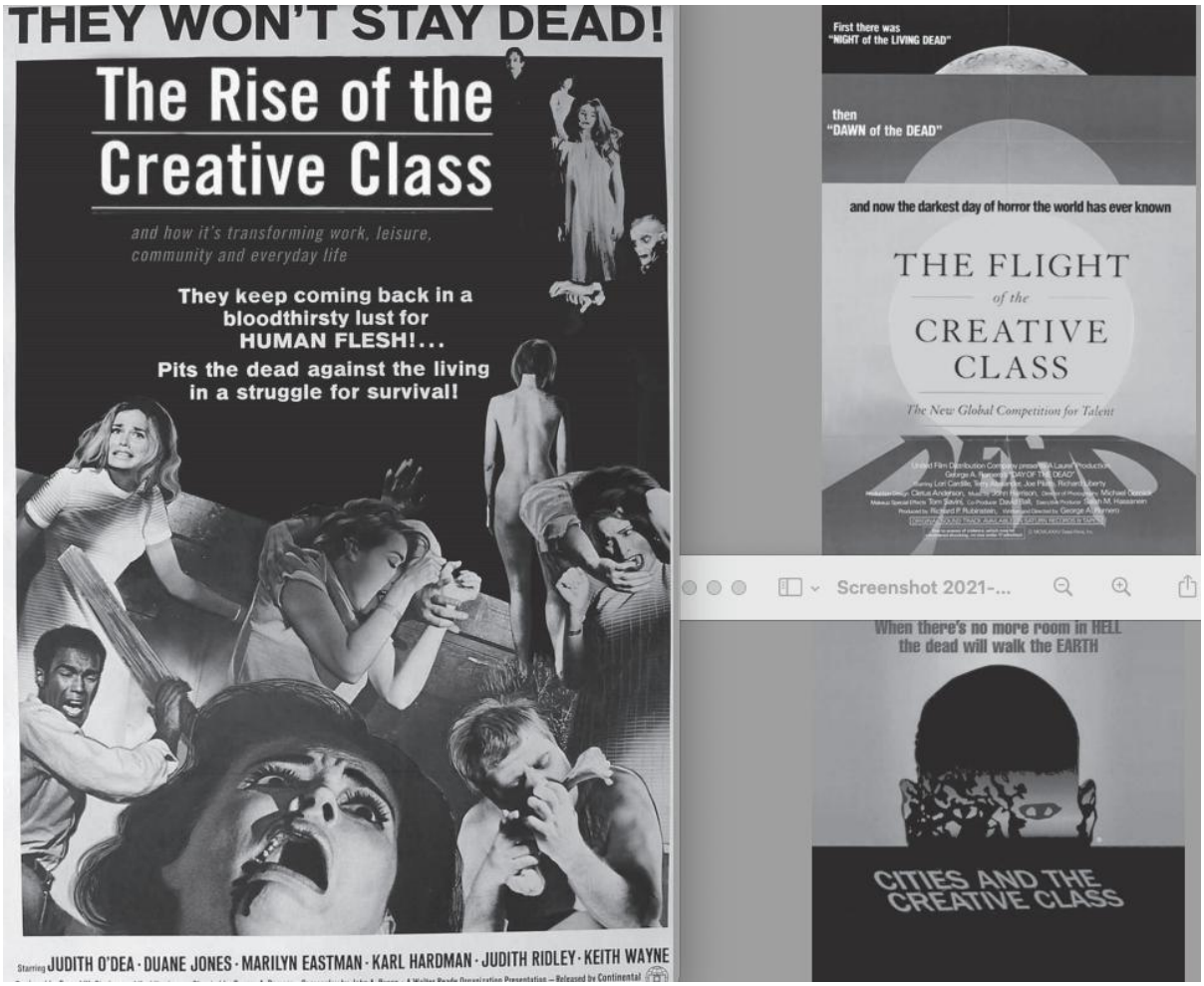


Fig 49. Caitlin Shepherd (2021). *The Creative Class* [Screenshot collage].

You may now be wondering how socially engaged art relates to the problem of the creativity fix. The relationship is simple. Artists involved with working with people, who make relationships instead of material artefacts, and view social relations as important aesthetic and moral material have been seen as, and employed as, ideal foot soldiers of the creativity fix.

This is not to say that all socially engaged artists are liable to become pawns in service of the creativity fix. More that creative regeneration strategies often call for socially engaged artists to assist with the delivery of better places; economic regeneration, social diversity, connection and so on. This is where socially engaged artists become at risk of becoming the foot soldiers of capitalism, employed to make small-scale adjustments rather than wholesale critiques of all that is wrong with capitalist society.

This is what artist and academic Stephen Pritchard describes as art-washing; the practice of

using socially engaged art to drive forward various shades of neoliberal development. In a recent talk at Kings College (2017), Pritchard argues that socially engaged art practice is often used to perform what he calls "community art-washing" and explains that, "[s]ocially engaged art has become a catch-all banner for state and corporate instrumentalism, embracing the rhetoric of inclusion, wellbeing, social impact and social capital in so doing" (Pritchard, 2017).

As Pritchard proffers, "[c]ultural policies around the globe are being honed to embed art and culture as a way of supporting and delivering the agendas of almost every government department and non-government organisation" (Pritchard, 2018). What socially engaged artists need to do in and through their practice is be clear about what kind of world-building they want to engage with. Importantly, in the case of interrogating the motives of socially engaged practice, artists, commissioners, and critics must ask whose futures are being ushered in, what are the moral aspirations, what are the values, and what are their consequences?

Pritchard offers some frames to assist socially engaged artists in reflecting on the type of work they undertake, and the ways in which they work. He offers three modalities of socially engaged art, with the aim of revealing and challenging privilege, saviourism and neoliberal instrumentalism. These types of socially engaged artists are what he calls missionaries, mercenaries, and mediators.

Socially engaged missionary artists preach the "Western European, white, middle-class, male, able-bodied gospel of the neoliberal creative industries and Creative Class", while the mercenaries socially engaged artists respond to briefs and commissions working to support "disadvantaged" people and people in "difficult" places and communities somehow deemed to be in some way lacking in culture, for the sole reason that we [the artist] need to make a living, a career, to make money." The mediator socially engaged artists are "capable of listening to people who are not listened to – who are ignored – with the sole purpose of helping amplify their frustrations, their anger, their fears, their hopes, their ideas, their demands for rights" (Pritchard, 2018).

These three frames are simply a starting point. They are useful in that they offer an analytical

frame through which to better understand how and if socially engaged artists advocate and practice problematic visions of socio-political futures, code for neo-liberal values, structural violence, and techno-fix futurism.

Some socially engaged art practices deploy various methods of the creativity fix that help maintain capitalist values; market deregulation, exponential economic growth, dressing up capitalist values as cool forms of local consumerism and cultural expression. These values are most pernicious when presented in disguise, dressed up as something connective, creative, participatory. At the same time, socially engaged art can, and has evidenced, critical and disruptive practice. Socially engaged art can be more than a redundant project pedalling mercenary and missionary aspirations. However, as many critics warn, socially engaged art practice has been used to do the dirty work of community art-washing and creativity fix developments.

Notions of progress grouped into visions of the future that idolise consumerist versions of creative urban development are forms of progress that make minor adjustments to the status quo at best, and, at worst, simply distract attention from the ushering in of gentrification, hyper productivity, and capitalist conceptions of social progress. Socially engaged artists who wish to distance themselves from capitalism lite, the creativity fix, and community art-washing must, therefore, choose very carefully who they work for, what funding they receive and interrogate the purposes of well-paid gigs that engage local communities in regeneration, development, or cool and creative city projects.

Conclusion

Dematerialised and situated socially engaged artwork has been made and theorised for over seventy years. However, the social turn in artistic practice was only defined in the 1990s. Socially engaged practices today are numerous and take many forms. Shared artistic processes include community organising, practices of care, listening practices, autotheorisation, event facilitation, group conversations, consciousness raising and world building.

While socially engaged art projects often try to work towards positive social ends, Gaiger cautions that discursive and dialogic practice must not erase conflict, strife, pain, and difficulty. When working with mixed communities, especially on topics to do with struggle, oppression, exclusion and pain, antagonism, mess, emotional expression, affective states, and difference must be anticipated, acknowledged, and worked through. One tactic of facilitating messy togetherness is to deploy a ethics of care approach, which is an approach that seeks to listen to, understand, and do least harm possible to all parties involved with the production of a given project.

In addition to working with a ethics of care approach to making practice, socially engaged artists need to think very carefully about whose agendas they (and we) are furthering when making new work through public and private funding grants and commissions. Without careful thought, socially engaged artists (including me) risk becoming foot soldiers, mercenaries, and missionaries of capitalist aspirations, dressed up as well-meaning socially engaged artists.

Zooming into criticisms of the field, it becomes clear that the benevolent and transformative efforts of socially engaged art practices can be misused and abused. Analysing recent literature on inequality in the creative and cultural industries in the UK shows that, at present, there is a fundamental lack of research into a) workforce diversity and experience in dematerialised and social art forms and b) significant hidden costs involved with producing socially engaged artworks c) socially engaged artists need to specific how they are not doing the work of neo-liberal development projects, serving the exclusive and problematic interests of the creative class through various forms of community art-washing.

Socially engaged arts practices has its roots in feminist performance art, conceptual and community art of the 1950s onwards. It is a way of making art that has radical roots and disruptive potential. However, it is also a field that risks being co-opted and misused by capitalist aspirations and naive conceptions of engagement and togetherness.

The field has potential to disrupt and reimagine the capitalist status quo, deploying caring imaginaries that propose theories and practices of value that exist outside the realities and

decay of zombie capitalism. However, to better understand how to do this work, artists working in the area need to practice ongoing intersectional analyses of the social and cultural value and impact of their own work. Secondly, artist-researchers interested in causes, scale, and solutions to inequality in the creative and cultural industries need to turn their focus to better understand how class shapes what kind of work gets made, by whom, to what degrees of impact and success.

Chapter Three ~ Methodology

"By starting from the premise that caring, compassion and relational concerns are an ontological basis of life and that the Other forms the basis for action, including economic action, the ethics of care approach conceives of caring as the existential element of all work in which actors necessarily "reach out to something other than the self"

Joan Tronto, 1993, p. 104

Introduction

This chapter is split into two parts. In section one, I present my research question and define and discuss the practice as research (PaR) methodology; the approach I deploy in undertaking my praxis. I introduce and discuss ideas belonging to Robin Nelson's multi-mode epistemological model for *Practice as Research* (Nelson, 2013), practices of autotheory outlined by Lauren Fournier (2021), and ideas taken from bell hook's praxis of engaged pedagogy, outlined in *Teaching to Transgress* (hooks, 1994).

I provide a discussion of my specific practice as research (PaR) approach, followed by a rationale for deploying this methodology. I detail the ways in which I work with ethics of care in my praxis, summarising the value of such an approach.

In section two, I introduce the *dynamic praxis system,* outlining the sextet method-flows that comprise my artistic praxis, giving practical examples of how these method-flows materialise through my art projects made as part of this praxis.

3.1 Research question

Can listening practices help understand how class background shapes creative ideas, and experiences of success, when working as a socially engaged artist?

I have already given definitions of class, listening and socially engaged art. For clarity, this question defines creative ideas as the ability, desire, and agency for individuals to engage with the creative process, with creative ideation.

Success refers to individuals securing fair, secure paid employment, having access to career progression routes, feeling able to make the kind of artwork they want to make, and having access to validation, skills-development, care, and support within the field of socially engaged art.

Part one: practice as research

3.2 PaR: a rationale

In working up my own variant of practice as research methodology, I draw on aspects of Nelson's multi-mode epistemological model for PaR *Practice as Research* (2013, p. 37) and pedagogic methods outlined in *Teaching to Transgress* by academic and activist bell hooks (1994).

Nelson's theory of PaR is of value because it offers an approach that incorporates three complex layers and definitions of makerly thought; know-what, know-that and know-how, viewing theory and practice as imbricated and inseparable (Nelson, 2013, pp. 20 -30). Broadly, these epistemological frames view cognition, embodied and artistic praxis as entwined and inseparable. These processes constitute a network of praxis, offering an antidote to research methods that advocate objectivity, isolation of variables and reductionism in pursuit of epistemological grand narratives.

Weaving these forms of markerly knowledge together, knotting and connecting theory *and* practice, I incorporate my own lived experience into my research methodology. I do this using an autotheoretical method. This is best thought of as the self-reflective integration of self with theory, philosophy, and artistic practice (Fournier, 2021, p. 13).

I do autotheory by incorporating and reflecting on the material conditions of my day-to-day life; my housing set ups, my places of work, the movement between these places, my relationships, and familial ties. I reflect on how these experiences inform and shape the questions examined through this thesis. The questions I ask of the world, through my praxis, are directly shaped by my socio-economic lived experience.

Specifically, I focus in on classed aspects of these experiences; feeling into embodied and emotive states summoned through simply being in and responding to the realities of a patriarchal capitalist society. The focus on my personal experiences offer direct reflections of systemic inequalities endemic to day to day life. These experiences feed into my intellectual and artistic enquiry. I convey these experiences across mediums, through words, voices, soundtracks, scripts, and a selection of sketchbook and notebook entries. Additionally, I focus on audience and collaborator accounts of multi-ethnic class experience. I do this through the format of semi-structured interviews, activities that fall under the listening, meeting and observing method flows.

These PaR methods, borrowed from hooks, Nelson and Fournier allow me to ask questions about structural inequality, affect, care and situated knowledge in thinking through the inclusive and disruptive potential of my listening praxes. Nelson's PaR approach identifies and gives attention to tacit and embodied experiences, conceptual and intellectual experience, and practitioner action-based processes as interconnected sites of knowledge production (Nelson, 2013, pp. 37 - 41).

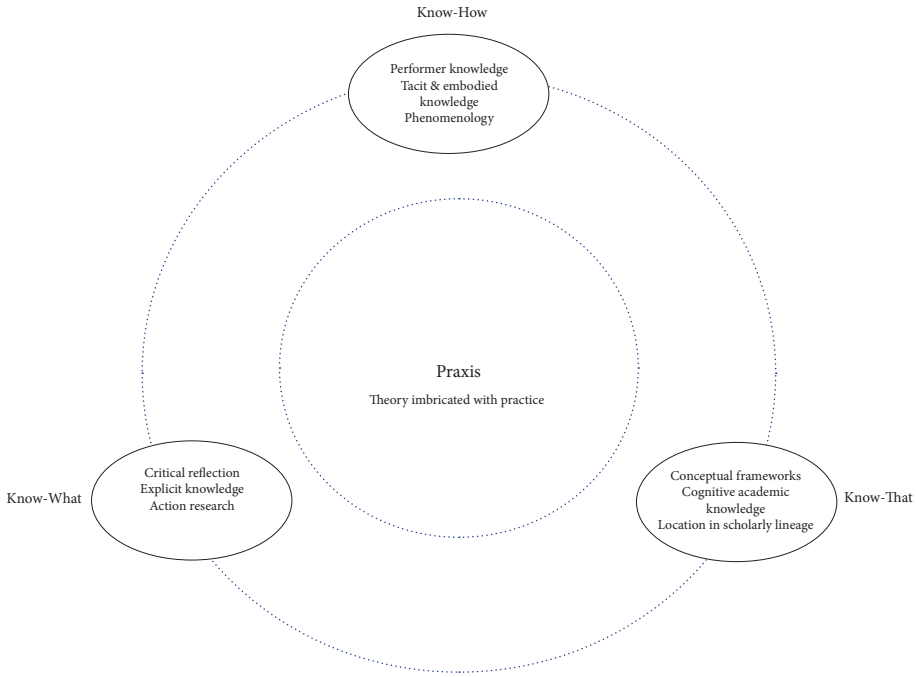


Figure 50. Caitlin Shepherd (2021), *My illustration of Nelson's Modes of knowing: multi-mode epistemological model for PaR* [Illustration].

I draw on the engaged pedagogy of bell hooks (1994). hook's ideas put into practice approaches to learning that give permission to the expression and analysis of emotive, embodied lived experience as valuable information to be worked with in the academy. Importantly, hooks acknowledges the presence of suffering and inequality in the academy (and wider society) as legitimate sources of knowledge generation and action in the world. While she argues that many experiences of exclusion and oppression are unacceptable and to be resisted, hooks theorises that experiences of suffering can give rise to the "passion of experience" – specific types of knowledge that arise from suffering (hooks, 1994, p. 91, p. 59).

That is to say, lived experiences of oppression, pain, and hurt can be the source of new knowledge. This argument is not a justification of inequality and structural oppression. We should not legitimise suffering because it can lead to new knowledge. Instead, hook's idea is one that refuses to ignore, gloss over and erase lived experiences of inequality, anxiety, precarity, racism, ableism, and other types of oppression.

The passion of experience is a way of giving voice to, and resisting, the causes of lived experiences of inequality, recognising these experiences qualify as valuable forms of knowledge. The passion of experience is like autotheoretical research methods in that it incorporates, and values lived experience as the site of knowledge generation, and experience worthy of study and creative ideation.

hooks offers pragmatic methods of care that I incorporate into my methodology; specifically, the interrogation of the location from where I speak as an academic-artist (hooks, 1994, p. 77), and the advocacy of drawing on lived experiences as knowledge, and starting points for further research (hooks, 1994, p. 84). hook's interest in locational politics, and lived experience, draws on other feminist scholars who equate knowledge production with specific forms of situated experience (Haraway, 1988; Braidotti, 2019a; Fournier, 2021). hook's interest in the passion of experience and everyday life legitimises the act of listening to my own and other people's accounts of their everyday lives, alongside acts of naming and challenging structural and systemic inequality within the context of academic, artistic, and cultural institutions.

A central idea borrowed from Nelson, key to the development of my methodology, is the term praxis. Praxis is a concept that explains how theoretical knowing is embedded within the material, time-based, and embodied practices of making artwork (Nelson, 2013, p. 29).

Nelson's PaR model describes praxis as comprising of "know-how", an insider, close up type of knowledge to do with tacit and embodied knowledge specific to artistic practice; "know-that", which he attributes to outsider knowledge, for example an art work interpreted through a particular theoretical frame by a spectator; and "know-what", which he describes as knowledge gained through self-reflexivity concerning making processes and an understanding of effect and impact of any given artwork (Nelson, 2013, p. 37). These taxonomies of artistic and academic knowledge are useful frames that I use to delineate the different method-flows that come to define my artistic praxis.

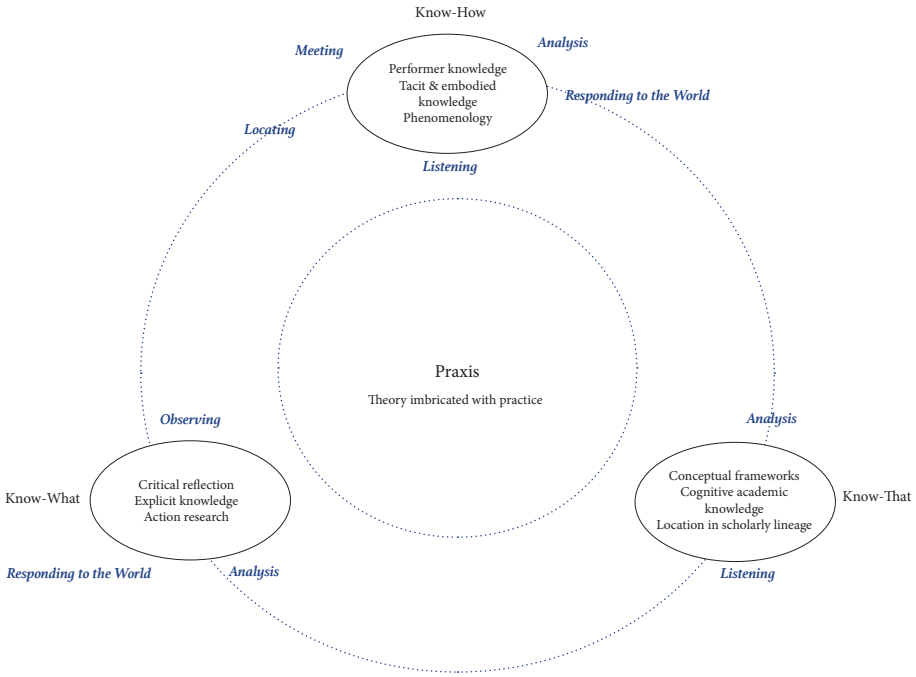


Figure 51. Caitlin Shepherd (2021). *Mapping my praxis onto Nelson's PaR Model* [Illustration].

Incorporating praxis as a method of thought and enquiry that views theory imbricated with practice, in the development of my *dynamic praxis-research system*, I go further in describing theory and praxis as terminally ensnared, drawing on Davey's distinction between theoria (contemplation) and theoros (participation) and poieses (making) (Davey, 2006, p. 21).

Incorporating theoria and theoros into the production of my praxis, I am able to view theory as contemplative *and* participatory. This conception adds detail to the often-shunned notion of theory as irreconcilable with artistic praxis and challenges criticisms that PaR methodologies fail to demonstrate academic rigour (Nelson, 2013, p. 55).

In articulating the enmeshment of theoria, theoros and poieses as central to praxis as research, the complex systems of enquiry and synthesis taking place through theoretical, material, emotional, processual, symbolic, and, at times, seemingly random artistic methods of enquiry are better described and defined. Further, theory is unpacked and defined as participatory *and* contemplative, offering a finer grain of definition of theory than just "theory imbricated with praxis" (Nelson, 2013, p. 20).

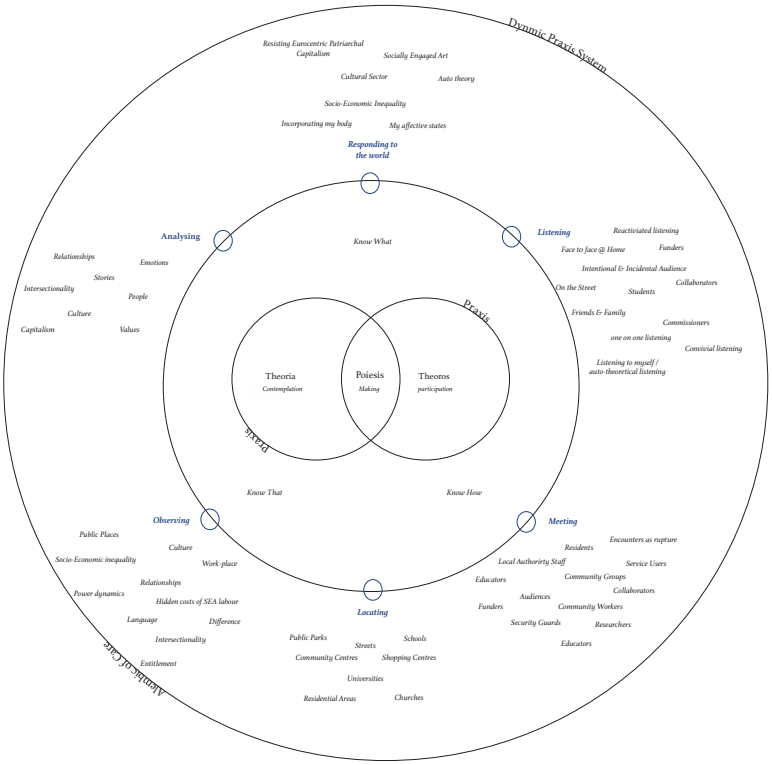


Figure 52. Caitlin Shepherd (2021). *Dynamic Praxis Model*. [Illustration].

3.3 Doing ethics and care

The ethics of care approach prioritises the study of "systematic understanding of the nature, quality and dynamics of relationships of care" (Alacovsk & Bissonnette, 2021, p. 138). Care in the context of an ethics of care approach comes to describe individuals (extending to researchers and participants) engaged in a web of relationality, where individuals "reach out to something other than the self" (Tronto, 1993, p. 104).

The value of praxis that deploys an ethics of care approach, is that it includes the artist-researcher in the web of relations playing out through the research process, viewing research and praxis as unique acts of social exchange and interaction. As Tronto proffers, "care is always *contextual* and, as a result, non-essentialist. While it is true that all humans have the same basic needs, no two people, groups, cultures, or nations realize and meet caring needs in the same way. As a result, focusing on care requires much attention to the precise details of the situation" (Tronto, 2017, p. 32). Ethics of care is a research approach that sets out to do

the least harm possible within research, aiming to understand the motives and needs of all involved (Wiles, 2012). Through the planning and doing of my praxis, I conduct myself in a way that centres care, compassion, and attention as ethical guidelines for a caring artistic research practice.

I incorporate ongoing ethical reflection into my praxis. Practically speaking, some of the processes I work to when deploying and ethics of care approach to undertake my praxis include informing all participants about the aim, purpose, and methods of my praxis, and asking collaborators and participants if they have any questions or concerns. Following that, inviting all participants, collaborators, and audiences to sign consent forms, as well as giving them the option to opt out of the project at any time. I anonymise all audience feedback, in the naming of audio files and the treatment of transcripts and give all collaborators who share their story with me the chance to have their voice distorted to protect identity. I use an ethics of care approach to maintain my own wellbeing as well as the wellbeing of my collaborators and participants.

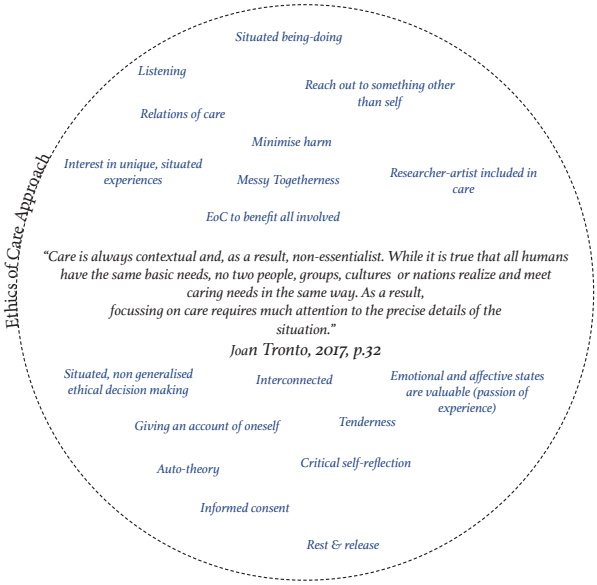


Figure 53. Caitlin Shepherd (2021). *My ethics of Care Approach*. [Illustration].

Part Two: the dynamic praxis system

3.4 Introducing the dynamic praxis system

The dynamic praxis system is a methodology I've developed to encapsulate and define my praxis. It defines a set of method-flows that I use in various configurations to research and respond to my main research question: *Can listening practices help understand how class background shapes creative ideas, and experiences of success, when working as a socially engaged artist?*

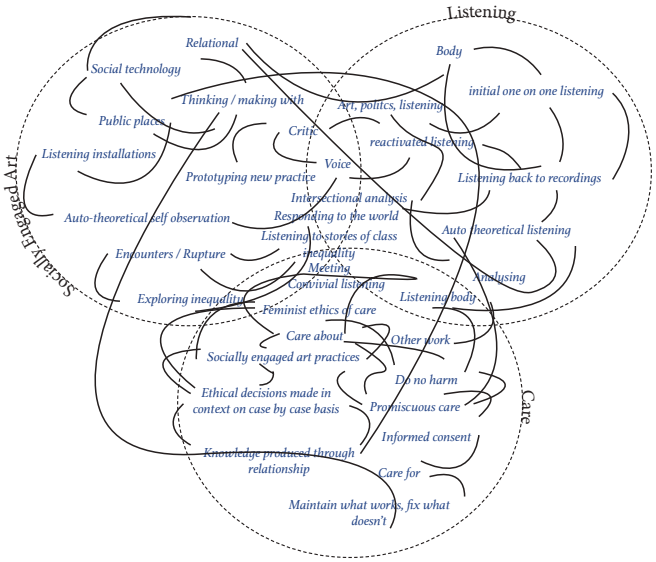


Figure 54. Caitlin Shepherd (2021). *Interconnected practice as research methods*. [Illustration].

It is a practice as research system that gives definition to my techne *and* intellectual practice. In attempting to define the pulses, movements and relationships between these different epistemes and creative, pragmatic processes, I borrow the term flow from Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983), specifically the section on desiring machines.

The desiring machine is a term used to describe desire as a force in the world. Deleuze and Guattari conceptualise a multi-functional universe composed of desire machines in symbiotic relationship with each other. In this sense, we are all desiring machines, and our lived textures, relationships and movements are realised through our productive-desire flows, with and through others (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.9).

Deleuze and Guattari offer that, "[t]here are no desiring-machines that exist outside the social machines that they form on a large scale; and no social machines without the desiring machines that inhabit them on a small scale" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 340). Within this conceptual landscape, Deleuze and Guattari describe the desiring-process of production as a series of disruptions, interruptions, connections, and flows (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 28).

The flow is a form of expression that is always in flux, disrupted, and interrupted by connections with other life forms, linked, contaminated, unstable, and entangled. In this way, the mess of the flow resonates with ideas of the interconnectedness of all life forms, advocated by feminist theorists who do research using an ethics of care approach. The state of confluent, cross-contaminated flows, well describes the ways in which I go about conducting my praxis and the ways in which I think knowledge is produced, exchanged, and contested.

The concept of the flow is useful because it describes interconnected expressions of desire as a force in the world, resulting in flows of matter, material and immaterial, symbolic, and actual, bodily, and conceptual. The conception of the flow as a form of desire, momentum and relationality describes the mess and complexity of intersubjectivity, and of realising self through and with the other.

The flow is a state I work with while conducting my praxis. We can think and feel the world, and ourselves, differently. We can think and do in and through flows, semi-directed and at times spontaneous and pre-conscious desire drives (the motivations that operate the desire machine) that change shape as we meet with, encounter, and respond to the other. In making and thinking with flows, we cross-contaminate, disrupt, and slime over and into each other.

Embedded in each flow, and the dynamic praxis system at large, are entangled processes of

theoria, theoros and poises; a processual confluence of contemplative and participatory theorization *and* practical acts of gathering, recording, editing, building, running, and interpreting site-specific listening encounters. All desirous production flows in their own right.

Here, I define each method-flow that pulse, eddy, and slip in and out of *the dynamic praxis system*, summarising the methods belonging to each flow. I use a combination of these flows in different contexts and configurations to help me explore and answer my research question. These flows link and connect the main practices I undertake to realise my praxis; socially engaged art, listening and care.

The flows of praxis that constitute the dynamic praxis system fall into six categories. I map these sextet method-flows onto the three types of knowledge that come to define Nelson's multi-mode epistemological model for *Practice as Research*. I do this to demonstrate how these flows fit into and illustrate pre-existing theories of PaR epistemologies, offering a practical case study of know-what, know-how, and know-that in action.

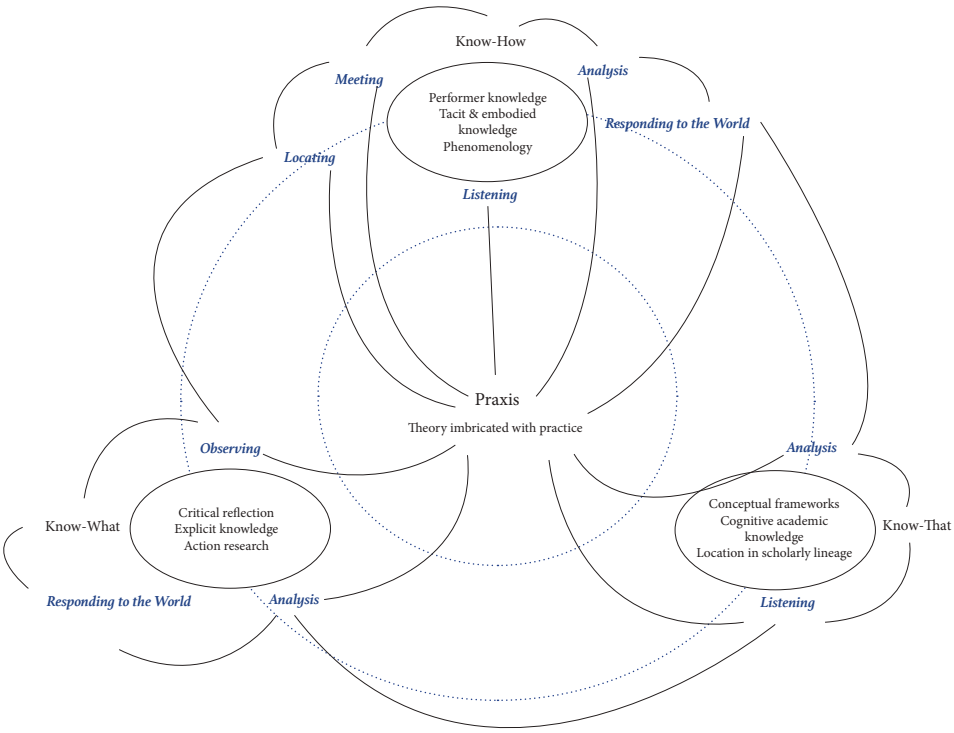


Figure 55. Caitlin Shepherd (2021). *Dynamic Praxis Research System*. [Illustration].

3.5 The method flow system

Method-flow one: responding to the world

I make artwork that acknowledges the reality and violence of structural inequality. I am interested in creating and documenting emotional rawness, affective states that reflect and disrupt the oppressive structures of neoliberalism. These are states that articulate disillusionment with the faux narratives of cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011), abundantly engineered and mass produced by late capitalism. My work focuses on voice, on the process of articulation, both through the act of speech and utterance, but also by using language as a system of representation.

Using emotional rawness as a critique of the cultural conditions of capitalist society, I use my praxis as a conduit to listen to and articulate my, and others, lived experience of roughness, rawness and hurt (Pritchard, Rocha, Snelting & Benitez Valero, 2020; Hedva, 2020; Thornton, 2020; Fournier, 2021). I acknowledge that there are many stories of struggle and oppression experienced under the regime of capitalism, and that my work cannot possibly understand or address all of these. However, I perceive these intersecting experiences of oppression, and hope to open space for differing journeys of struggle to be named, self-narrated, given voice to.

In doing so, the flow of responding to the world puts into practice Nelson's "know what" (critical self-reflection and practitioner knowledge) and know how (tacit knowledge). The responding to the world flow puts into practice hook's advocacy of the process of speaking openly of personal lived experiences as a process of coming to know myself in and with the world.

Responding to the world, is a way of working where I get to really interrogate my motives, and tune into the emotional process of coming up with ideas in a way that is critical (to explore and address the problem of class exclusion and inequality), but also entirely tacit, emotive, and embodied (to create an emotional world, an affective realm, a mood, a feeling). This method describes the act of creative expression as a way of building worlds under

worlds, as a way of responding to the world.

Method-flow two: listening

There are four main listening cycles endemic to the listening flow. These are: initial one on one meeting-listening encounters between myself and collaborator. Reactivated listening; listening back to the recording conversation, the process of listening while editing the audio. The process of convivial listening that takes place between people as they try to listen to stories and accounts of difference, and the process and practice of spending time, and autotheorising; listening to, and making sense of myself.

These cycles put into practice Nelson's concept of "know how" (tacit and embodied knowledge) and "know that" (external knowledge, theoretical and audience knowledge) (Nelson, 2013, p. 44 – 49). In defining my general approach to these four modes of listening, I build on Pauline Oliveros's idea of deep listening (Oliveros 2005); the act of giving radical and sustained attention to other life forms (including humans) attempting to self-articulate and paying attention to that process of expression. Listening is something that is practiced and cultivated.

In doing one-on-one listening, I draw on the work of anthropologist of auditory culture, Tom Rice. In his chapter, *Listening* (2015), included in the book *Keywords in Sound* (Novak & Sakakeeny, 2015), Rice offers two modes of listening that help me to organise my modes of listening into two distinct taxonomies. He offers "listening for" and "listening to".

Listening for describes someone alert to a particular sound, straining and attempting to listen to the specific qualities of a sound. In listening for, a focus of effort and a focus of auditory attention are foregrounded (Rice, 2015, p. 100). The term listening to is deployed by Rice to describe an interpersonal listening, the process of "paying close attention to what that person has to say and often describes a compassionate, sympathetic and/ or empathetic mode of engagement" (Rice, 2015, p. 100).

In my listening praxis, I use both listening for and listening to. I spend time listening to the

qualities of voice, ambient sounds captured as I record certain environments, including the locations where I situate my work and the homes and cafés where I used to meet people. I listen to, paying close attention to what someone is sharing with me when we meet to do an interview, as well as listening back to these conversations repeatedly as I re-listen, code, transcribe, and edit these audio artefacts.

Reactivated listening is the practice of listening to digital sound recordings outside of the environment and context in which they were recorded. Re-listening to the audio document of people, place, and sound is enabled with clarity and focus through the reactivated listening to the audio artefact (Waldock, 2016, p. 157). I use this listening practice in both the editing and analysis of my interviews with collaborators. I use reactivated listening to play back, timestamp, dissect, edit and re-work various parts of conversations arising from audio interviews with collaborators. Further, I use reactivated listening in the analysis and transcription of audio interviews from audio file to text.

Convivial listening is rooted in Ivan Illich's (1973) conception of conviviality. This idea invites a way of being together as an alternative to industrial productivity and alienating working conditions. Illich's theory of conviviality is a concept that calls for autonomous and creative intercourse between people, their environment and each other. In this context, creativity is a destabilising and connecting process, one at odds with the gambits and aspirations of capitalism (Illich, 1973, p. 12). Convivial listening in terms of my own praxis sets out to invite and witness different experiences of class / race / gender / health / ethnicity / sexuality and diverse accounts of lived experience. It is a practice developed to take place between people, with the aim of mapping, moving to understand, empathise, and overcome lived experiences of intersectional inequality. In terms of my praxis, it happens through site-specific meeting-listening encounters as well as through listening practices outlined in the convivial listening protocol. It can be used in almost any setting: in art institutions, between friends, in community groups, in educational settings, and in workplaces.

The ways in which I listen to and make sense of myself are multiple, but I focus in on the ideas of Oliveros and Fournier, two feminist artist-scholars who outline ways of doing deep listening and methods of autotheory as ways to expand perception of self and the world. I

draw on Oliveros's methods of doing deep listening, outlined in her book *Deep Listening; A Composers Sound Practice* (2005). These include sonic meditations, physical attunement exercises and a foregrounded focus on tuning into the listening-feeling body. I use the methods outlined in *Deep Listening* on a routine basis, especially as a way to tune into my immediate and internal auditory soundscape.

Fournier develops a method of praxis that centres first person lived experience as equally important to theoretical knowledge and understanding, proposing that theoretical accounts of socio-economic experience is better understood by incorporating accounts of first person lived experience (Fournier, 2020). I use the autotheory method as a framework to tune in, listen to, and give voice to some intricacies of my own experience as a valid line of experience giving shape to my praxis. I do this through writing, reflecting, and incorporating aspects of my own lived experiences into my artwork.

The listening method flow is of central importance to my praxis. It a processual tool that I use to make my work *and* gather data. Through various methods of listening, I gather primary data through conversational exchange, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups, with collaborators and audiences. Through the flows of listening, I am able to elicit and record accounts of messy quotidian life, and, later, insert them into an art-world only starting to come to terms with prejudice and exclusion (which in my mind translates to the silencing) of people from multi-ethnic working-class backgrounds.

Method-flow three: meeting

Meeting is a process that describes organising and taking part in a whole host of different types of social encounters that come to give shape to my praxis. I use the term "encounter" to define an experience with the world that demands thought and encourages rupture with what we know. Simon O Sullivan defines the encounter as a moment where "our typical ways of being in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted. We are forced to thought. The encounter then operates as a rupture in our habitual modes of being and thus our habitual subjectivities" (O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 1).

In my own praxis, the encounter is rooted in poiesis. The process of meeting people describes

a relational form of creative production and exchange. I believe that meeting is a form of practice in the world. We can think about, experiment with, and reflect on how we go about meeting others. My meetings with others range from meeting housing officers, economists, academics, to working mums, single parent families, lorry drivers and teachers (amongst many others). Often, I meet my collaborators in their houses (before the Covid-19 pandemic), sometimes in cafes, at their place of work, or in community centres.

These initial meetings represent the first wave of listening to. They also speak of a tacit and embodied knowledge (Nelson, 2013, p. 41) that runs between two people as they spend time figuring each other out, sensing the space and feeling between, and relating to each other. Nelson reminds us that "[k]now-how is sometimes termed 'procedural knowledge' in contrast with the 'propositional knowledge' of know-that" (Nelson, 2013, p. 41).

Engaging in various meetings with a host of different people is one of the aspects of my praxis that necessitates a clear ethical position and process in relation to taking and doing care within the context of these encounters. I have a duty of care when initiating and facilitating these meetings. My duty is as someone who has the intention to document and amplify the stories that people tell me. My practice of care is to quite literally to listen to, give my attention, and respect the person that is sharing their story with me. When facilitating meetings with collaborators, I use an ethics of care approach, ensuring that everyone understands the purpose of my work, how the data will be used, and stored, and that I understand and listen to the motives and needs of people interested in contributing to my work.

In encouraging this, I put into practice hook's advocacy of listening to multiple voices share their version of experience – share their authority (and autotheory) of experience. I advocate hook's practice of inviting everyone, from a range of social contexts to speak, to create a plurality and diversity of voices, working to overcome exclusory and oppressive social and institutional structures (hooks, 1994, p. 84).

Meeting with and encountering others is a central part of my praxis. It requires ongoing ethical reflection, and ethical decision making on a case-by-case basis. Meetings with and between different people require different approaches and provisions. However, what is

needed at a base level is informed, and negotiated consent from all collaborators, and the provision of care, interest, and attention towards people who for whatever reason choose to share their experiences and stories with me.

Method-flow four: locating

Locating is the first step of realising my site-specific meeting-listening encounters. The second step is the design and build of the physical structures I use to house my meeting-listening encounters. This process is also of use when researching and thinking through where to host and facilitate experiences of convivial listening.

When choosing locations within which to host my sonic-social spaces, I relate the audio to the place within which it is heard. In attempting to realise this through my work, I design and build structures that enable sound bleed from within and without. The audio bleeds out into the wider world, and the wider world bleeds into the audio.

I use various methods of praxis when identifying suitable locations to use in my work. These include the derive; the process of rapid passage through places and geographical ambiance, responding to emotions experienced in certain places (Debord, 1958). Importantly, I use place not space when discussing the locational aspects of my work. The distinction is that place comes with specific social, economic, relational, and geographic traces. Space suggests something neutral, an empty box, a location without the mess and spontaneity of life. As artist Johanna Hedva offers, "I don't like the term "space" because it implies something empty, neutral, and ahistoric – I don't think such a thing exists. I prefer the word "place". Place comes with an address, a neighbourhood, furniture, the cost of rent, rules, previous owners, street noise, creaks in the wall, ghosts" (Hedva, 2020 p. 4).

In exploring and sensing place, I spend time walking around neighbourhoods, environments and areas, simply observing, taking in and reflecting on the mood, the tone, ambiance, and materiality of site. This is a slow, sensuous process. Following initial, often incidental encounters with place, I will often (pre-covid), strike up conversations with people and get a sense of what it is like to live / work / be in certain places.

These conversations are very informal and are part of what I consider an initial sensing into place. In deploying the locating method-flow, I draw on Nelson's mode of knowing "know-how"; the insider, tactic close up knowing of practice. In sensing, choosing, and locating a place within which to situate my work in public space, I feel into and observe the social dynamics, ambiance, and effect of the particular location. I listen into the aural geographies, and observe what happens in this space. I also choose a space for its proximity to the people I am collaborating with, and at the same time for its mood, its ambiance and its symbolic potential.

Method-flow five: observing

In this section, I outline four main methods of observation that I deploy in my praxis. These are observation at point of listening, observation of audiences, observation of transcription and analysis process and ongoing deployment of critical reflection, the process of critically observing myself.

Observation at the point of listening is the process of incorporating self-reflexivity into the conversation that takes place between myself and collaborator, and / or audience member. While attempting to suspend judgement and figure out ways of meeting the other where they are, I observe the dynamic between myself and collaborator, change my approach / behaviour accordingly (which is often a total hustle), and take notes immediately after the conversation has taken place.

In the observation of how audiences interact with my meeting-listening installations, I employ a variety of methods. These include sitting and watching audience behaviour when they enter the set, and the listening experience. This process includes making notes and attempting to spot trends in audience behaviour. This method is employed in the attempt to interpret audience behaviour and give further insight into my interpretation of audience experience of my work.

The observation of transcript is a process that requires intense concentration and employs cycles of attentive and reactivated listening practices. Once I have interviewed audiences who have encountered my work in some way, I use the software *Otter ai*, where I listen to and

transcribe audio interviews done with audiences. Through this process an in-depth auditory and verbal observation occurs, listening, speaking out, writing, reading, and then interpreting transcripts of audience response.

Critical self-observation (Nelson, 2013, p. 60) is a process of observation that puts into praxis Nelson's concept of critical reflection (Nelson, 2013, p. 58). He reminds us that, "knowing is a continuing process of negotiation between the various modes (know-how, know-what, know-that)" (Nelson, 2013, p. 58). What this type of observation translates to in praxis is regular sit and pause, slow down, chew down, digest, feel, and evaluate the ways in which I am working. I do it alone and with others. I do it through making work, lying down, listening to music, writing, talking, thinking, and walking.

Observation fits into Nelson's epistemological mode of "know-what". This mode describes that which is tacit, made explicit through critical observation and analysis. It is a form of knowing that understands method and impact of praxis. It helps to delineate what is unique and distinctive about specific artworks and creative processes. Through observation and analysis, I am able to observe and articulate the impact of my work on the location within which it sits, people that experience it, and indeed the impact of making the work on my own sense of wellbeing, identity, agency, and praxis.

Method-flow six: analysis

Analysis happens in many guises throughout movement between "know-how" (tacit, artistic knowledge), "know-what" (modes of knowing and knowledge specific to praxis) and "know-that" (conventional academic knowledge articulated in words and numbers).

In terms of methods of analysis that I use in enacting know-that variants of knowledge, there are many. I use textual and comparative analysis when analysing secondary sources, belonging to existing artists and scholars. I relate examples of praxis back to my own methodology, asking how this work might inform and influence my own praxis, technically, conceptually, or aesthetically.

In terms of working with primary source material, I spend time reading, listening, annotating,

coding and categorising themes that emerge from primary data. Of specific relevance to *Caring to Listen* is the close analysis of an emergent body of literature that sets out to study empirical data that evidences a deficit of creative workers from multi-ethnic working-class backgrounds, working within the context of creative industry and arts jobs in the UK. I conduct this secondary source analysis in chapters two and four.

When analysing the "know-what" part of my praxis, conducing in depth autotheoretical, critical self-analysis (Fournier, 2021; Nelson, 2013), I deploy methods that allow me to engage in ongoing critical reflection. This kind of critical self-reflection takes the form of note writing, listening praxes, sketchbooks and photographs taken through the development and execution of my praxis.

This flow uses the framework of "know-how", "know-what" and "know-that" to break down the various types of analysis I do throughout my praxis (Nelson, 2013, pp. 40 – 45). This flow places attention on the embodied, situated specifics of the authority of multi-ethnic classed experience in socially engaged art practices (hooks, 1994), both my own experience, and the experience of others.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined my PaR approach, detailing my specific variant of practice-based research - *the dynamic praxis system*. I have explained how a sextet system of method-flows shapes my research, and analysis of a range of primary, secondary, and practice-based sources, and how these method-flows shape the production of my artistic work. I put these method-flows to use in the making of my artistic praxis, and in the research and writing of this thesis.

In developing *the dynamic praxis system,* I add to Nelson's definition of PaR Davey's concepts of theoria and theoros. *The dynamic praxis system* incorporates three different types of knowledge specific to PaR practice, "know-what", "know-that", and "know-how". Further, I incorporate ideas of theory and theoros, viewing theory as *both* contemplative and participatory. I deploy this methodology to better understand multi-ethnic working-class experiences, including aspects of my own experience, when trying to explore activities,

working conditions and experiences of success of people involved with making socially engaged work.

I propose that in doing practice as research using an ethics of care approach, the researcher, artist, audience, and participants are inter-connected. In doing this research, I do not study others objectively, instead, I become enmeshed with them, and they with me. Further, there is no essentialist panacea for ethical best practice. Instead, ethical decisions are made in context, in relation to the needs and desires of particular people, involved with specific research aims and processes.

In using an ethics of care approach to undertake the dynamic praxis system, I acknowledge, draw on and theorise my own lived experience, as well as the experiences and ideas of others. In this way, I continue to think with other theorists, artists, and critics. It is worth noting the design and development of *the dynamic praxis system* offers new ways of doing and conceptualising practice as research.

Chapter Four ~ Findings

"We are asking each other questions about what hurts and where and taking notes. What are we doing? We are interviewing each other about the conditions of our health, our lives, what it's like to be us."

Cassie Thornton, 2020, p. 80

Introduction

In this chapter, I present key findings arising from my praxis, grouping them into three categories; findings from secondary research, findings from practice, and findings from primary research.

Secondary research has taken the form of reading and analysing research into inequality in socially engaged art and the creative and cultural industries in the UK. This work was undertaken to allow me to better understand the current state of research, in terms of understanding the cause and scale of inequality at play within socially engaged artistic production. To undertake this research, I draw on responding to the world, analysis and observation method flows outlined in *the dynamic praxis-system*.

Practice based research has been undertaken through designing, making, and reflecting on three main artworks; *Home, ALAPLA* and *the Convivial Listening Protocol*. Through artistic praxis, these works examine ways of inviting convivial listening, situated meeting-listening encounters, and how these works affect those who experience them.

These artworks explore, and acknowledge, inequality, classed experience, and work with autotheory, allowing me to experiment with ways of acknowledging, and inviting myself and

others to give voice to lived experiences of varying access to different types of social, cultural, and economic capital. To make my work, I draw on all flows outlined in *the dynamic praxis-system*.

Primary research has taken the form of interviewing, transcribing and analysing feedback from 30 audience members who experienced *ALAPLA*. This process focused on gathering and analysing qualitative data to better understand the affect of convivial listening in specific locations on audiences who experienced the work. To do this work, I put into practice responding to the world, listening, observing, and analysing method-flows belonging to *the dynamic praxis-system*.

I map these findings onto Robin Nelson's practice as research (PaR) multi-modes of knowing (Nelson, 2013). I do this to demonstrate how these epistemological modes take shape in and through my praxis.

Findings arising from my research and analysis into secondary sources, specifically sources looking into inequality in the field of socially engaged art, and the creative and cultural industries are grouped under Nelson's concept of "know that"; an outsider distant type of knowledge, knowledge based on cognitive analysis, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and thinking with other people working in the field of socially engaged art and inequality.

Practice based findings are grouped under new insights and ideas that fit into the mode of "know-how"; an insider close-up form of knowledge that comes from experiential, relational and haptic experience.

Findings arising from primary research are grouped under Nelson's concept of "know what"; a form of knowledge arising from close knowledge and experience of practice made explicit through ongoing critical reflection.

In compiling this chapter, I have utilised various method-flows belonging to *the dynamic praxis system*. I have drawn on the listening method-flow, taking time to listen to myself, interrogate and reflect on my praxis, my findings, my interpretations of my work, and the responses of people who have experienced it.

Through the process of creating new artworks, I have deployed the responding to the world, meeting and listening method-flows. These have been incorporated into my praxis-based work. These three flows feature in *The Convivial Listening Protocol, ALAPLA, Home* and my supporting praxis.

In gathering, analysing, and applying data gathered through my primary and secondary research, I have put into practice the observation and analysis method-flows. I have observed, transcribed, coded, interpreted audience feedback from *ALAPLA*. I have researched, read, evaluated, and analysed and thought with various texts.

In the following sections, I present findings grouped under know-that, know-how and know-what. I start with secondary research findings, because these findings help contextualise the findings developed through my artistic praxis.

4.1 Know that findings

In this section, I detail findings from my secondary research. I present these findings as a form of know-that knowledge. This can be thought of traditional academic knowledge, expressed through text, statistical and theoretical and cognitive frameworks (Nelson, 2013, p. 45). Nelson reminds us that in his multi-mode epistemological model for PaR, know-that can be gained through experiencing and doing practices and processes intrinsic to artistic research (Nelson, 2013, p. 45).

At present, experiences of working conditions and inequality among socially engaged artists practicing in the UK are poorly understood. There is a paucity of research focusing on listening to and inviting artists from multi-ethnic working-class backgrounds to voice their experiences to give an account of their experience of being a socially engaged artist.

In attempt to better understand how class origin of socially engaged artists shapes success when working as a socially engaged artist, I have conducted research into existing literature

that focuses on the cause, scale and experiences of inequality and working conditions of people involved with the production of socially engaged art and other creative occupations in the UK.

Here, I present three main secondary research findings arising from this research. Firstly, while there is established research into workforce inequality in the creative and cultural industries, there is a paucity of research on a specific sub sector of the UK arts and creative industries; socially engaged art. Secondly, one of the reasons socially engaged art (SEA) practice is relatively under researched in terms of class barriers and working conditions is because it remains invisible in current definitions of the creative and cultural industries. Thirdly, there remains a lack of research into experiences, causes, and the scale of class inequality in SEA practices. This is starting to change, but more research is needed.

4.1.1 Significant inequality in the UK creative and cultural industries – what about socially engaged art?

Since starting *Caring to Listen* in 2015, there has been a steady increase in research that attempts to measure, problematize, and address workforce inequality in the UK cultural and creative industries (CCIs) (O'Brien et al, 2016; Brook, O'Brien & Taylor, 2018; Pinoncely & Washington-Ihieme , 2019; Carey, Florisson, O Brien, & Lee, 2020; Boyce, 2020).

This body of work can be seen in publications such as *Panic!* (2018), *Culture Club* (2019), *Getting in and getting on: Class, participation, and job quality in the UK's Creative Industries (*2020), *Who cares? At what price? The hidden costs of socially engaged arts labour and the moral failure of cultural policy* (Belfiore, 2020) and *Culture is Bad For You* (2020). This research belongs to the fields of sociology and cultural studies, specifically sociological research that focuses on how class, culture, race, and gender intersect with the production of British art and culture.

When reflecting on the question, who is valued, and who gets to make contemporary culture, the answer is, problematically, not everyone. Women, those from minority ethnic groups, people experiencing mental and physical health problems, and people from working class backgrounds, are excluded from and under-represented in jobs that constitute the UK cultural

and creative industries (Oakley et al, 2017; Create London, 2018; Giles et al, 2020).

Without diverse voices present in cultural and artistic production, white, Eurocentric patriarchal capitalist privileges are reproduced. Those without such privileges are often excluded from participating in creative expression and occupations. This is of concern to social well-being and diversity when assessed from a creative and social justice perspective (Banks, 2017).

Where people from working-class backgrounds do make it into paid, secure employment in the creative industries, there are barriers to getting on within their chosen profession. Obstacles include pay gaps, lack of career progression, cultural matching, and, until recently, a lack of research done into the socio-economic origin of people working in the creative and cultural industries, and the specific barriers that face people from low-income backgrounds, often facing compounded inequalities (O'Brien et al, 2016; Brook, O'Brien & Taylor, 2018; Brook, O'Brien & Taylor, 2020).

To date, there has been limited research into the working conditions of socially engaged art practitioners in the UK. Over the last five years, this has started to change. Recent research shows that socially engaged artists are infrequently professionally validated (Ravetz & Wright, 2020). This can lead to a lack of career progression, support and care in the demanding ethical, social, and artistic practices that comprise socially engaged art works. Issues present in the field include unrealistic expectations from project partners and commissioners (Belfiore, 2020), lack of ethical, emotional, and financial support for socially engaged art projects and the pervasiveness of a validation gap when compared to other forms of artistic production (Ravetz & Wright, 2020, p. 16).

The work of Dr Sophie Hope (2011) interrogates the commissioning, funding, and working practices endemic to socially engaged arts. In her doctoral thesis, Hope examines how practice and theory of cultural democracy offers socially engaged artists tools and practices with which to map and disrupt the power relations frequently reproduced through socially engaged art's funding and commissioning culture. Hope propounds, "cultural democracy can offer a space for drawing attention to the inherent problems of an industry that constructs scenarios of empowered participation through 'consensual collaboration' but often leaves

power-relations intact" (Hope, 2011, p. 9).

Hope's work examines how cultural democracy practices might equip socially engaged art practitioners with methods to critique and challenge problematic and exclusive commissioning and funding practices. This research is relevant to my own in that it problematises some of the ways of working endemic to socially engaged art; specifically funding cycles and how these cycles lead to depoliticization and/or neutralisation of socially engaged art practices. Hope's research opens of conversation on how power dynamics between roles such as commissioner, funder, artist(s), participant(s), collaborator (s) and curator(s), shape access to artistic opportunities, and ultimately, success (Hope, 2011).

While this work does not focus on the power relations of how class background shapes these intersubjective, work-based negotiations, what it does, is open up analysis and discussion on how working conditions in the field of socially engaged arts do and do not challenge and critique capitalist power relations and values. In interrogating and analysing capitalist power relations, socio-economic difference, and inequality must be acknowledged, and discussed.

Further, Hope advocates for critical and political socially engaged art practices. These two missions resonate with my own interrogation into how socio-economic inequalities are reproduced and challenged in socially engaged art practices. This research is part of the emerging body of work being done to better understand the working conditions, cost, and power relations at play within the production of socially engaged art and is important to mention.

The work of Belfiore, Hope and Ravetz and Wright signal contemporary scholarly interest in the working conditions of the field of socially engaged art. What is needed now, is specific, focused research into how class origin and experiences shape the desire and success of artists working in the field. Existing research evidence widespread class, race, gender, and ablest inequality at play within the creative and cultural industries. Similar research projects examining workforce diversity, and barriers to entry in socially engaged art practices for people from non-white, female, working-class backgrounds need to be undertaken.

4.1.2 Definitions of creativity currently exclude socially engaged art practices from view

Presently, the UK creative and cultural industries (CCI) are united by definitions of creativity. The nine occupational clusters that currently define the CCIs share one main feature; they are all creative. But what does this term mean? And what kinds of artistic and creative practices are included and excluded from dominant conceptions of the creative and cultural industries?

Definitions of the creative C included in the CCIs refer to conceptions of creativity as wealth generation activities that enhance products and intellectual property. Current definitions of creativity include, "[t]hose industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (Parrish, no date) and creativity as, "a role within the creative process that brings cognitive skills to bear to bring about a differentiation to yield either novel, or significantly enhanced products whose final form is not fully specified in advance" (Bakshi, Freeman, & Higgs, 2013, p. 24).

What is problematic about these definitions of creativity is that they define creative thought and activity as methods for maintaining the capitalist status quo. Creativity becomes an economic practice, activities of knowledge generation thought of as ways to enhance economic growth, products, and experiences. This is a very different notion of creativity to thinkers who see creativity as a site of dissensus, antagonism, disruption, dissent, and critique.

Wealth and intellectual property generating notions of creativity are the uniting feature of the nine creative sectors that currently constitute the UK cultural and creative industries (O'Brien et al, 2016, p. 118). Not only are these definitions of creativity homogenising to diverse fields of artistic practice, but they prop up the capitalist norm; economic growth, profit, entrepreneurialism, innovation, and competitive individualism presented as collaborative co-working (Rambaussen, 2017; Mould, 2018), conflating creativity as a process and method that upholds the capitalist and consumerist status quo.

The problem with bundling diverse sectors together under a relatively simple (and problematic) notion of creativity is that deploying simplistic categories of creative sectors makes it harder to study the complex ways in which specific creative economies work in the

real world (Campbell, 2014; O'Brien et al, 2016, p. 128).

Upholding notions of creativity as synonymous with economic growth risks turning creativity into a way of being and working that bolsters the inequalities of capitalist society, instead of offering ways of being in the world that offer critical and transformative proposals for change.

If diverse and very different creative sectors are united under a headline banner of creative and cultural occupations, it becomes difficult to conduct detailed empirical research into the webs of practice that comprise one or more of these sectors, and the intersectional exclusions present within these sectors. Further, more obscure, and emerging creative fields, such as socially engaged art, that could nest under the music, performing and visual art sector, but at present are unlisted, and risk being erased from view.

What is needed is an expansion of current definitions of creative and cultural sectors to include creative practices, such as socially engaged art. This would help acknowledge and validate this form of artistic labour, and simultaneously locate socially engaged art practices as part of the creative and cultural industries. These revised definitions could challenge the trend of coupling creativity with economic growth, productivity, and competitive individualism.

Socially engaged arts, community arts, institutional critique, activist-art, adversarial design, critical media are all modes of making artistic expression that foreground dissent, critique, and alternative visions of near futures. As Oli Mould puts forwards in his book *Against Creativity,* we need to revise dominant conceptions of creativity, a term that has been co-opted by aspirations of commercialism and consumerism (Mould, 2018, p. 81).

We need to destabilise and contest dominant and pervasive conceptions of creativity, especially in relation to how the term is defined in current definitions of the creative and cultural industries. Reimagining and expanding notions of creativity could result in increased visibility of socially engaged art practices, and a better understanding of how inequality is experienced by people making this kind of work.

4.1.3 Lack of research into the hidden costs of SEA practices

Research into the cultural and working conditions of labour in the creative and cultural industries shows that class, race, age, and health stratifies, and enables / blocks access to careers in the creative and cultural industries (Banks, 2017).

While there is an established body of research into how class background shapes success and engagement as a worker in the creative and cultural industries, research into inequality, labour conditions and working cultures taking place in socially engaged art practices is only starting to emerge (Hope, 2011; Ravetz & Wright, 2020; Belfiore, 2021).

Evidence arising from this research reveals precarious contracts, demands for agile working, and unpredictable workflows that come at emotional, psychological and financial costs (Lee, 2019; Belfiore, 2021). These hidden costs become impossible to bear for people without certain forms of cultural, social, and economic capital, specifically people coming from multi-ethnic working-class backgrounds.

The hidden costs shouldered by artists are not the only barrier to entry. There is an evidenced validation gap at play within socially engaged art practices. What this means, is that professional support and validation are more piecemeal in this field, compared with other fields of artistic practice. Further, the field lacks internal skills development and capacity building (Ravetz & Wright, 2020).

Socially engaged artists routinely lack access to sector specific training, discussion, and peer to peer support groups. While the authors of the report make sensible recommendations to address these problems (Ravetz and Wright, 2020, p. 19), many of these suggestions are still to be actioned. Without clear career progression routes, professional training, and social and professional validation, working as a socially engaged artists seems unattractive and undesirable when seen through the lens of job security, career progression, and professional validation.

While there is still a lack of in-depth research into the hidden costs and true working conditions of socially engaged artists, this is starting to change. In the last five years in the

UK, artist and researcher events have been set up to facilitate practitioner discussion about the state of socially engaged art in the UK. These events include *The Social Art Summit* (2018) organised by artist support organisation Axis, and the set-up of *The Social Arts Library*, convened by Axis and The Social Art Network.

More recently, in 2018, the first artist-led journal of social art was launched by both organisations and the second edition of *Social Works?* was published in September 2021. The emergence of these events signals a field of artistic practice that is starting to reflect, interrogate, and collectively discuss the opportunities, problems, and complexities of the field. While artists and arts organising are making inroads into problematising the field, emerging research reveals enough problems to be getting on with.

Socially engaged art practices are chronically underfunded, with socially engaged artists routinely working more hours than they are paid for (Hope, 2015). Alongside a loss of earnings, socially engaged artists frequently shoulder personal, psychological, and ethical costs (Belfiore, 2021). A dilemma arising from the reality that many socially engaged artists are used to facilitate short-term, often underfunded, social support and creativity fix projects (Pritchard, 2017, 2018).

These hidden costs are significant burdens to bear. It is my contention that these hidden costs, compounded with complex emotional, psychological, and economic demands, add another barrier to creative participation and production for artists coming from working class backgrounds.

The emergence of events and publications dedicated to discussing the specifics of socially engaged art practices in the UK are timely and needed. Ongoing commitment to discussing, and challenging how socio-economic inequality is reproduced in and through socially engaged artistic production is a topic in need of interrogation and address.

While events such as *The Social Art Summit* and the establishment of *Social Works?* show willing to discuss, and debate issues in the field of socially engaged art, there is not enough research done into workforce class origin, examining how class origin intersects with socially engaged art economies and working cultures. I propose that more research be undertaken

with the aim of better understanding how first-person lived experiences of multi-ethnic class inequalities shape motivation and success when working as a socially engaged artist.

4.2 Know how findings

"Know-how" according to Nelson, is a type of procedural knowledge, gained incrementally, through repetition, through learning to horse-ride, for example (Nelson, 2013, p. 41). It is at odds with propositional knowledge, because it is not expressed through a plausible proposition.

Often procedural knowledge is pre-conscious, for example we enact know-how skills and knowledge without thinking about how we do them (Nelson, 2013, p. 42). This type of knowledge is what artists, dancers, musicians, animators know how to do. They have learnt techniques, skills, and know-how knowledge because of years of repetition, years of practice.

Here, I present three findings rooted in my experience of doing and making my socially engaged artistic practice. Firstly, I propose that theories and practices of care are an approach and method to help better understand the experience class inequality amongst artists working in UK based socially engaged art practices.

Secondly, I define a new method of doing socially engaged art that enables people to sit and listen, together, to personal stories of everyday life. I introduce the convivial listening protocol and explain the significance of this method of praxis.

Thirdly, I explain how incorporating an autotheoretical approach into my praxis has allowed me to conduct my praxis in a way that encourages me to give voice to and acknowledge aspects of my personal, lived experiences, that I have previously struggled to articulate.

Through various artistic iterations, I have come into possession of a voice with which I use to speak of my experiences of privilege, inequality, and, simply, the state of being me. This is of value because in giving voice to my experience, I acknowledge, reflect on, and theorise my own lived experience has shaped my socially engaged art know-how.

4.2.1 Socially engaged art that cares about and for inequality

Interrogating the drive behind my sustained interest in structural and cultural causes of multi-ethnic class inequality, I am motivated by my own experience of unease. This unease takes the form of a metaphorical multi-headed long shadow lingering around all of us. For some, the shadow casts a longer trace, for others, they are ceaselessly stalked by a relentless wedge of darkness.

In exploring the source of these shadows, I come face to face with the selfish, extractive, sleepless and hyper-productive violence of what Mark Fisher calls capitalist realism. This state is expressed through, "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to imagine a coherent alternative to it" (Fisher, 2009, p. 2).

I am motivated to make artwork that aims to build alternatives to the brutalities and failed futures of capitalist realism. My impulse is driven by a desire for a more equitable, anti-racist, non-patriarchal society. Responding to the world through this critical anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal lens, I use my artistic praxis to imagine, experiment with, and build alternative worlds; alternatives to exploitative work, unaffordable and shit housing, racist and sexist ideas and the patholigisation and punishment of unproductive, sick, disobedient, and exhausted bodies. In undertaking this work, I draw on theories of care to help me articulate how I go about disrupting capitalist realism through and with my artistic praxis.

In doing my socially engaged art praxis, I enact a form of caring about; a form of caring that notices unmet caring needs (Tronto, 2017, pp.31-32). I give sustained attention and recognise that there is a need to take more care, to act on cultural, structural, and social inequalities normalised in the creative and cultural industries and society at large.

Further, I attempt to care for; the practice of identifying where there is a need for care, and someone taking responsibility to try to meet these needs (Tronto, 2017, pp.31-32). In and through my artistic praxis, I care for and about the lack of understanding and attention paid to artistic experience of people coming from multi-ethnic working-class backgrounds; how this

experience literally shapes individual's ability and desire to participate in the production of socially engaged art practices.

In conducting this work, I take some responsibility for meeting the need of better understanding and challenging the lack of workforce diversity in SEA, specifically the lack of understanding around how class intersects with artistic ambition success. Additionally, I take some responsibility for refusing capitalist ideology, proposing new ways of relating, listening, and attempting to be together.

Artist and academic Stephen Pritchard (2018) warns that many socially engaged art practices can be positioned within four categories of practice; missionary, mediator, mercenary, or mobiliser.

In defining these terms, Pritchard develops a taxonomy of practice that identifies and gives name to some of the more problematic aspects of socially engaged art. These include patronising vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, enacting forms of privileged saviourism (missionary), and advocating ideas advanced by European, white, middle-class, male, able-bodied neoliberal thinker-makers belonging to the creative and cultural industries (mercenary).

Considering these problematic tendencies, and reflecting on my own artistic praxis, and where it fits into these frameworks, I propose my praxis deploys mediator methods of working (Pritchard, 2018). This way of working is defined by Pritchard as an artist "capable of listening to people who are not listened to – who are ignored – with the sole purpose of helping amplify their frustrations, their anger, their fears, their hopes, their ideas, their demands for rights?" (Pritchard, 2018).

This framework is useful, as it is a theory of socially engaged art that, in part, articulates Tronto's (2017) theories of caring about and caring for. The mediator socially engaged artist tries to identify who has not been listened to, whose voices are erased from artistic and cultural expression, and, in turn, tries to care for through witnessing, recording, and amplifying the lived experiences specific to certain groups of people.

My mediator and caring tendencies are expressed in who I work with and how. Over the last few years, I have experimented with different forms of listening; one-on-one listening, reactivated listening, and site-specific listening, expressed through works including *Home, ALAPLA* and *Discord*. More recently, I have evaluated and refined my listening practices, developing the convivial listening protocol; a method that uses particular listening methods to facilitate difficult conversations with others, exploring first-person accounts of lived experiences of precocity and privilege, charted through an intersectional lens.

In caring for and about, as well as working as an artist-mediator, a key know-how finding, is that I labour artistically and intellectually to better critique and challenge the current lack of research done into understanding how socio-economic inequality shapes success when working as a socially engaged artist. This is in of itself important, but also helps to chip away at the imaginary crises of capitalist realism, so conspicuous in today's society.

4.2.2. The convivial listening protocol

The term and practice of convivial listening is an idea that has been teased out from the making and reflecting on key artistic outputs; *Discord, Home and ALAPLA*.

In reflecting on the impact and presence of meeting-listening, inviting small audiences to listen to various audio artefacts, scripts, and narratives, I realised that I wanted to develop and refine a more focused practice; one that invites people to articulate first person lived experiences of privilege and inequality, and, at the same time, uses listening practices to chart, map and manage difference and to try to understand each other.

While *Discord, Home and ALAPLA* all invited and enabled meeting-listening in different ways, I felt that I could develop an artist process blueprint that better defines, outlines and conveys practical ways to go about facilitating listening together.

I use the term "conviviality" to describe the inter-relations central to my art praxis, specifically various types of meeting-listening that I facilitate in and through my artwork. One of the key findings of this research is the development of the term and practice of "convivial listening".

Ivan Illich's (1973) conception of conviviality, as outlined in his book *Tools for Conviviality,* describes a way of being in the world that is the antithesis to the alienating social experiences of industrial productivity and technocratic elitism; two features still defining contemporary life. Illich's theory of conviviality is a concept that calls for autonomous and creative intercourse between people, their environment, and each other. In this context, creativity is a destabilising and connecting process, one at odds with the gambits and aspirations of capitalism (Illich, 1973, p. 12).

While a key finding of my praxis is the development of this term and process, convivial listening is rooted in previous praxis. It is not new, instead it has stemmed from and been developed through experimenting with works, such as *Discord, Home and ALAPLA*.

Examples of convivial listening in earlier praxis can be seen in one-on-one meeting-listening encounters I have with collaborators. Convivial listening can also be seen in the listening experiences of *Discord* and *ALAPLA*, where the audio work was broadcast and played over a multi-channel sound system to small audiences.

The protocol is rooted in earlier practice, but it is also distinct from it. I developed the protocol as a way to invite group participation in articulating experiences of inequality and privilege. In earlier works I focussed on one-on-one listening exchanges between myself and interviewee, captured in digital audio recordings, and later edited and played these back to audiences. Through this process I felt that these accounts were not always easy or comfortable for audiences to relate to, because they didn't know who was speaking, editing and facilitating the audio document. It was hard for audiences to trust the accuracy and authenticity of the edit and the interlocutor. Subsequently, I became interested in developing pedagogic and workshop tools that prioritised interpersonal deep listening in real-time contexts. The protocol invites real time discourse, cutting some of the disquiet and uncertainty around the intentions, ethical actions and responsibilities of the invisible editor, so present in documentary formats.

In the last year, I have reflected on my unease with audio documentary formats as a vehicle of storytelling, and subsequently have developed *The Convivial Listening Protocol* (2021). It is

best described as an activity guide for two or more people to help facilitate convivial listening, specifically as a tool and method to assist with privilege and inequality mapping and giving voice to the specificities of this experience as lived through by each individual involved in the activity. These activities include reflecting on and discussing individual, and different, experiences of privilege, inequality, and difference.

The value of *The Convivial Listening Protocol* is the provision of a method that invites the sharing of first-person lived experience of complexity, situatedness, privilege, and precarity. The aim of this protocol is to assist those that use it to attempt to understand and listen to other people's different experiences in and of the world. In developing the protocol, I explicitly drew on ideas of intersubjectivity, methods of minimising harm, and interconnectedness, outlined and upheld by feminist ethics of care practitioners (Tronto, 1993, 2015, 2017; Gilligan, 1982; Bellacasa, 2017).

The significance of this practice based, know-how finding, is that I offer a new terminology with which to detail and define the process of taking time to meet, to listen, to give voice to lived experience. Concomitantly, this socially engaged art protocol is more than a new terminology. It is a methodology for inviting ways to listen to autotheoretical accounts of lived experiences of inequality lived out under the grind of capitalist realism.

4.2.3 Autotheorising myself

A significant know-how finding is that I have discovered how to deploy autotheory as a method of reflecting on, theorising, and speaking of my lived experience as part of my artistic praxis.

This is a secondary finding, but a significant one. For most of my artistic praxis, since graduating in 2006, I have made socially engaged art and activist projects focused on listening to other people. I recognise that the process of focusing on recording and working with other people's stories are in part a way of telling my own story. I have spent time interviewing single mothers, older people, and people with experience of work and housing insecurity and illness. However, for most of my praxis, I have seemed unable to actually articulate and tell my story. This has been down to a complicated mix of shame, fearing the

vulnerability of honest disclosure.

In researching pedagogic, literary, and artistic practices that deploy autotheory, I have found autotheoretical and situated knowledge research approaches that tell me that my lived experience is relevant and valuable, to be acknowledged and drawn on in the process of knowledge production (Ahmed, 2017; Fournier, 2021; hooks, 1994; Haraway, 1988). The intricacies of my lived experience are important, because when reflected on, in relation to wider sociological theory and artistic enquiry, they become bodies of evidence. Additionally, these personal experiences help me generate new ideas, new ways of imbricating my lived experience into my artistic praxis.

In deploying an autotheoretical approach in the making of my praxis, I draw on a history of feminist artists and writers. Works that have taught me methods and processes of auto-theory include Chris Kraus's *I Love Dick* (1995), Maggie Nelson's *Bluets* (2009) and *The Argonauts* (2015), Johanna Hedva's *Minerva the Miscarriage of the Brain* (2020) and *Sick Woman Theory* (2015), alongside artworks such as Marther Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) and Adrian Piper's *Food for the Spirit* (1971).

As understood by those mentioned above, the realities of my lived experience are materials to reflect on, think and feel through. They are the experiences that locate me in socio-economic and artistic contexts, in knowledge economies, in gendered, classed, cultural locations. In giving voice to my own experience, I am able to locate myself, but also use my lived experiences as information, as artistic and auto-theoretical material that helps me theorise and make sense of my specific socio-economic and cultural experiences in the world.

Autotheory is transmedial. It takes shape and plays out across mediums and forms. It is an approach that can and has been incorporated into "the personal essay, new journalism, creative nonfiction to the expanded field of art writing and criticism, confessional feminist memes and performance for the camera, and film and television" (Fournier, 2012, p. 10).

Autotheoretical methods are present in the writing of my thesis, and in the way I introduce myself, my location, my lived experiences, when I introduce and talk about my praxis. Making space to articulate my own experience as an artist coming from a family without

much money, and the impacts of my classed experience on my ability to work, as well as the themes and ideas I explore in my artwork has occurred through the process of doing autotheoretical writing.

Deploying this approach in my writing and artistic work helps me to ground my praxis in first-person lived experience; linking the purpose of my research as stemming from questions arising from my own lived experience. Further, my first-person experiences are evidence of certain privileges, certain inequalities, and certain cultural values. In naming them, I am able to reflect on how my own lived experiences are consequences of unfair socio-economic systems and sick ideas around work, success and social status as defined by the slow seep of capitalist realism.

In using this method, I am better able to define the specific materials, environments and relationships that quite literally shape the way I think, the artwork I make and the questions I ask; processes that drive *Caring to Listen*. Further, coming to work with this method has legitimised my experiences, and has enabled me to find and use my own voice, incorporating my own story and lived experiences into the questions I ask, and think through in undertaking this praxis.

4.3 Know what findings

In this section, I present findings arising from analysis of my primary research, which I map onto Nelson's theory of know-what. Know-what, defines knowledge acquired through the process of artistic making *and* more traditional academic research. Nelson explains that, "[k]now-what, unlike know-how and know-that, is not an established mode but, as I construct it in the model, it covers what can be gleaned through an informed reflexivity about the processes of making and its modes of knowing " (Nelson, 2013. p. 44). Know-what types of knowledge are realised through ongoing practice of stepping back and conducting close, critical analysis and reflection on the work being interpreted and analysed.

In this section, I focus on presenting findings arising from close analysis of and critical reflection on primary data gathered through semi-structured interviews with *ALAPLA* audience members. As detailed in chapter one, I have made several sound installations as part

of *Caring to Listen*. I focus on *ALAPLA* over art works such as *Discord* and *Home,* because it was the work I made that most effectively incorporated location, listening, care and class consciousness. I interviewed *Discord* and *Home* audience members but have decided not to analyse and interpret this data, as I was more interested in the audience experience of *ALAPLA*, a work that united the essential strands of my praxis. In the process of pausing, reflecting, coding, and analysing primary data arising from interviews with audiences who experienced *ALAPLA,* I enact phases of reflexivity, reflecting on the experiences and responses of those who have experienced my work.

The findings presented in this section reveal information that detail how audiences experience, respond to, and interpret the convivial listening and site-specific, situated characteristics of my work. These findings are useful as they delineate affects of my artistic praxis on those who experience it. In analysing qualitative data, I gain insight into how my own interpretation of my work relates to and differs from audiences who encounter it.

While my praxis has moved beyond site-specific audio installations, findings arising from audience interviews are still useful to me, in that they give detail and information into how different people interpret the materiality of location, physically, relationally and sonically. Further, I'm able to get insight into how people respond to and take meaning from engaging with group listening activities. These insights are still relevant to my current praxis interests and activities.

When working with primary qualitative data, I draw on the listening, observation, and analysis method-flows, outlined in the d*ynamic praxis system*. My method of primary data analysis follows the process of close observation, listening, transcribing, listening, note-taking, coding, and analysis of these codes.

I have collected and analysed responses from 30 audience members, interviewed immediately after they experienced the installation. All *ALAPLA* audience groups were interviewed using a standardised semi-structured questionnaire. Audiences were not asked to explicitly disclose ethnicity and class, though these experiences were frequently referenced and alluded to during the process of participating in the post installation interviews.

Questions asked to all *ALAPLA* audience groups were "Can you describe what you have just experienced?", "Does listening enable empathy?", "How does listening relate to political action?" and "Is there anything you'd like to comment on in terms of location and site?" The interviews covered a range of topics outside of these questions, and the topics of conversation were, in part, determined by the interests and experiences of each unique combination of audience members.

In order to code and interpret primary data collected through the semi-structured interview format, I first had to transcribe audio to text. To do this I used online software *Otter ai*. Working through multiple reactivated listening cycles, I then coded the transcripts, resulting in the identification of themes and sub themes.

All transcripts and the coding spreadsheet can be found in the Appendices. I have anonymised all research participants, allocating a numeric identifier to each person who took part in the interview. In this section, I reference the interview using in-text citations. As these are unpublished interviews, I reference the interview transcripts by referencing the Appendices section each interview transcript can be found in.

I present four key findings arising from my analysis of audience interviews. These are that situated convivial listening was for many people new and unusual; that listening can prompt self-consciousness and self-reflection; that listening can be a form of care; and that listening in situ creates listening experiences enmeshed with and shaped by specific aural and physical geographies.

4.3.1 I've not done anything like this before

Many audiences describing their experience of *ALAPLA*, called the experience unusual, different, or strange. For many audience members, situated convivial listening resulted in experience of a new type of listening, with few equivalent experiences to compare the experience to.

Participant two (P2) from interview group four (I4) stressed the uniqueness of the experience

of sitting and listening with other people in a public place. P2: I'll be quite honest. I've never been to anything like it before. I've enjoyed going to the theatre when you're going to see bands play on stage and I just like doing different things. It's completely different to anything I've ever done before. Which is good (P2, 2017, App. 2, I4, p.2).

Participant one (P1) and participant two (P2) in interview group seven (I7) reflected on not knowing what to do or how to behave in a collective listening context. P2: I don't know about everyone else, but I was very much conscious of what everyone else is, how everyone else is interpreting it, as I was right. So, like, it was just me sat here I'd interpret the whole thing and kind of thing like that. That was that. But like, I was, because obviously like looking around all the household objects. I'd see other people's eyes, I was, I was always thinking are people interpreting this the same way as me? Yeah. That's very unique to collective listening. Because otherwise you just listen to it. Yeah. Otherwise, you just go by your own interpretation. And that's it. Interviewer: Yeah. P1: I think sometimes you kind of catch someone's eye in certain bits. And you think, Oh, yeah, but then, other times, you're probably trying to avoid people's eyes, because you're trying to listen, instead of kind of, Yeah, I suppose you think Is the purpose to listen collectively? Or to take it in yourself? (P1, P2, 2017, App. 2, I7, p.7).

Participant two and three (P3) from interview group four (I4) spoke of the intimate and challenging nature of listening to personal accounts of day-to-day life in close proximity with others. P3: The thing that like, struck me because I've had sort of bits of it before, but just coming in here and like having the whole experience, was that they just felt like the story suddenly felt much more personal. Like the sort of, I don't know maybe there's also something about the fact that we're like sat round here as a group, and we don't know each other. But just like facing one another and then also listening to this, listening to these very personal stories, there's something actually slightly uncomfortable about that feeling, of like, being in that quite, intimate space with people you don't know and listening to these stories, but that's quite like an interesting like, challenging experience. (P3, 2017, App.2 I4, p.2).

4.3.2 Listening and self-consciousness

The second overarching theme that came up through my analysis of audience feedback, was the frequency at which audience members spoke of their self-consciousness when reflecting on their experience of collective, site-specific listening. In articulating this state, audience members spoke of feeling watched and self-conscious.

Participant two (P2) in interview group three (I3) articulated feeling like they felt parachuted into the residential area. P2: I was gunna say, I felt a little self-conscious and a little, oh the people like us, what are they doing out there, feels we look kind of weird and strange. And like, these people parachuting into their world and their environment, probably I should have said, but I do work in social housing. I can see that, and I can imagine people like, what the hell they building that there for? (P2, 2017, App. 2, I3, p.8).

Participant two (P2) in interview group four (I4) felt opposite, thinking they would feel distracted by people walking around, but that actually they felt as if it worked well in line with the theme of the work. P2: I wondered if I might find it distracting, you know, people walking past, but it's a house, you know, buys nature the houses on the street. So you'll have people walking past your house won't you? Yeah. So, it's pretty realistic, really, I think, you know, to put it here (P2, 2017, App. 2, I4, p.11).

Participant three (P3) from interview group five (I5) expressed feeling aware that other people could hear what they were hearing, and unsure about how they would be perceived by others. P3: And then I had a kind of realisation of my context. And was like, I don't know who this person is. They are making judgments about me. And they're hearing me hear this, and be like, I'm just trying to get on the cross trainer. And then I guess hearing a bit about the, like, people call me racist, but I'm not. Then like a pang of like, who's listening? Do they think that I'm listening to someone I really like hold their values really in high esteem (P3, 2017, App. 2, I5, p.6).

4.3.3 Listening and self-reflection

When participating in the semi-structured group interviews, some audience members commented on how listening to the work prompted memories of their childhood. Amongst those interviewed, the act of sitting and listening to *ALAPLA* repeatedly prompted memory

and self-reflection on individual experience and story.

Participant three (P3) from interview group four (I4) shared how sitting and listening to *ALAPLA* prompted them to reflect and evaluate their own position. P3: So partly, my response was not really political. It just prompted me to thinking about my personal circumstances and like, whether I can earn enough money this month and next month, and like, you know, that sort of stuff (P3, 2017, App. 2, I4, p.16).

Participant one (P3) from interview group three (I3), articulated childhood memories invoked through the listening process. P3 linked their own memory of listening as a child, to their interest in listening to stories of domestic interiority. P3: I remember living in a house. It was right next to a railway line when I was a child to begin with, you hear the railway, but I didn't then you didn't hear it. It was steam train in here. And I was struck by when I was pondering because listening to some of the conversations and the extracts you used were within the family within the building (P3, 2017, App. 2, I3, p.2).

Meanwhile, participant six (P6) from interview group two (I2) reflected on their own experience of poverty in their childhood, in relation to some of the themes running through the work P6: It's interesting for me because I grew up in a poor rural area. So, it's a massive contrast for me because we weren't exactly social houses built but those, but I just remember feeling very poor as a child. But now just even listening to that, I feel was incredibly wealthy in a lot of ways because we had beautiful fields to run through, grew our own food, yet neighbours and close family connections. And yet our primary school was supported, you know, the government sent food to our school. So, it's just interesting for me as contrast for growing up in a sort of poor environment to an Urban sort of social. Interviewer: is that based on observations of this being here, like this? P6: Yeah, because, I mean, obviously I live in I live in a city now where there's a massive crisis, but it's, it's really nice to hear personal stories and you know, just people just put you know, cats and dogs, just being really personal. (P6, 2017, App. 2, I2, p.14).

4.3.4 Listening as care

Listening as care broadly encompasses two sub-themes identified through analysis of interview data: listening as an inherently valuable form of communication and listening as a form of awareness raising. In the excerpts below, I present audience comments that illustrate for some, listening enables empathy and relatability. For others listening is a state that pays attention to the world, cares about and notices the states and intricacies of other people's experiences in and of the world.

Participant two (P2) from interview group three (I3) articulated an interest in how listening practice can enable research that takes interest in storytelling as method. P1: I already have my, my, mind made up when it comes to listening. So, I'm already like a massive advocate of storytelling basically as method. And, and I actually don't think it's necessarily like what I would call a conversation. And I think that's the difference is that like, you can initially think, as you said, Caitlin, that you need to, that by listening to these women's stories here last night, getting to know some of the people here on this estate or listening to those stories, that you therefore need to somehow have some sort of tangible, positive outcome for those people that you've taken, but I found in my work, is that actually listening is in and of itself, something and often enough, you know, the responsibility to change the system isn't on you, because you've heard someone's story, but you like listening is not a conversation, but it almost always invariably needs to have had someone tell their story. And that, in itself is usually a positive thing for that person. And it's about taking time and giving time and giving, like, that you don't need to have an answer, you don't need to have that kind of solution. I think that I mean, that's something that I've also come to myself a lot with my work (P2, 2017, App. 2, I3, p.10).

Participant three (P3) from interview group seven (I7) observed that the process of listening can be and is complicated. It is a process that can raise assumptions and judgements in the listener. It is not always an easy process. P3: Yeah, I mean, it's an interesting. I mean, I sort of I trained as a therapist and I, it's kind of the nature of listening, I've learnt to listen. So, I'm listening to certain things and or, but you can have some, everybody has assumptions. So you've just got to be it's, it's, in many ways, quite complicated thing and I coming back to the actual musical nature of what was created here. For me, I really enjoyed the musicality and

the sounds, which felt quite emotive as well as the, I guess, because I like music a lot. The content, I need to some of its, some of it created judgement and assumptions and feelings about myself, and what is my class? So, it just feels very complicated (P3, App. 2, 2017, I7, p.6).

Importantly, for some, listening as a caring and empathetic exchange is not easy to get to as a form of interpersonal exchange. As observed by participant four (P4) in interview group eight (I8), it takes a long time to build trust between the interviewer and interviewed. Without this, the person listening into the recorded conversation can find it hard to trust the dialogue or understand the context and means by which the conversation was had, and recorded. P4: What you're hearing in the Listening Project, is something that feels incredibly honest, because it's between two people who are already very intimate, have got a close relationship, and they've come to talk about something that really matters to them and have a conversation about it. And there's something about the way you trust what's going on in that situation, because it's what came to for us because it's, it's between two people and maybe something about what you're saying, is that business that was an unheard interlocutor or interviewer, you're not quite sure of the ground you're on (P4, App. 2, 2017, I8, p.27).

4.3.5 Listening to site

Audience listening experiences were shaped by the locations of the work. This theme presented itself through comments on how the location influenced what was being heard in terms of sound bleed, the presence and awareness of other people doing different things in the site, and comments on how the content seemed to relate or jar with the immediate physical and social reality of the installation locations.

Participant four (P4) from interview group two (I2) commented on how the built environment provided an extra layer of sonic detail. P4: I was amazed by how well the environment integrated in between, you know, kind of thinking about it as a musician, just the whole sound and the environment, sounded like a layer of music like it's supposed to be there. But it fits what's going on in the rest of the sound. And then, on top of that, you know, you see, like, documentaries or clips on YouTube and things of people being interviewed about their

circumstances, that has one effect, one layer removed, obviously. But this, it really felt like this was like experiencing that same thing, but one level closer (AP4, 2017, App. 2, I2, p.5).

Participant three (P3) from interview group four (I4) felt that the installation in the The Park Community centre was received with interest by other people working in and using the space. P3: I'm, I'm really enjoying being here. Like, it feels like a really sort of busy space right in the middle of it all. And it feels like people are open to finding out about it or like, a lot of people that I speak to, as I said that they would like, they were chatting to their colleagues about it and they didn't know what it was or like and so they would come and like, ask about it (P3, 2017, App. 2, I4, p.12).

Participant one (P1) from interview group three (I3) spoke of the material significance of listening to stories of everyday life, describing the space as a medium, as part of the form of the story. P1: I think, for me, like, I know that I have a lot of like, shared interest in this in this sort of approach and these things, but it's about like, telling like, life stories through through like, the space using a space, like what we're actually sitting in right now. As as, like, the kind of material medium with which talk about like this, like, everyone's life story is amazing (P1, 2017, App. 2, I3, p.5).

Participant three (P3) from interview group seven (I7) observed that the structure was like a portal, and that it reminded them of childhood play and den building. P3: I just find it really intriguing walking by and and seeing this split like sort of a Tardis it's somewhere that it's a bit it's just landed, and it sort of, kind of it'll take you to another place sort of thing, you walk through, and it’s got a door. And that was that was I really liked it actually that pulled me in but also, for me, it just struck a chord. It's like It's like a bit of synchronicity and like, Oh, yeah, this is that's not so much about space, but the actual whole thing. It's sort of been really interesting and good timing, for me, but it's sort of, but it really reminds me of being little as well and making things outside and making your home outside with bits and bobs, and imagining and then wanting to be, it's just that urge to make a little space sometimes (P3, 2017, App. 2, I7, p.11).

In this chapter, I have outlined my main primary, secondary and artistic findings. I discuss the significance and future application of these findings in the following the chapter.

Conclusion

The aim of *Caring to Listen* has been to better understand the causes, scale, and experience of socio-economic inequality amongst people working in the field of socially engaged art. The question I have used to frame and shape my praxis is: *Can listening practices help understand how class background shapes creative ideas, and experiences of success, when working as a socially engaged artist?*

In undertaking this work, I have been on a fairly epic journey of praxis. Because I'm aware of how my work has expanded and contracted, shape-shifted, taken on different forms while the skeleton remained stable, I feel it is useful to remind you, the reader, the key movements comprising my praxis story arc.

September 2015. I started the PhD with a practice as research proposal that outlined research into how listening practices shaped emotional and affective states in amongst audiences and artists involved site-specific listening installations. I was interested in studying listening as a communicative encounter, and how it related to different levels of emotional and political engagement. I remained interested in making site-specific audio work; gathering spoken stories of everyday life to explore and document lived experiences of social housing, later, narrowcasting these audio artefacts in particular public locations.

In 2017, this focus shifted into a research question that explored how public sound installations and listening to stories of everyday accounts of housing, shaped audience and collaborator experience and behaviour during and after their engagement with my work. These two iterations of my research took place between 2015 – 2018. Both versions were concerned with asking questions about behavioural and emotional affects of site-specific sound documentary installations that explored stories of home and housing, on audiences and project collaborators who encountered them.

Through this period, I was still occupied with thinking about class identity and socio-economic inequality present within the arts and society at large. The way I explored this topic, was somewhat veiled. I explored classed experiences to do with access to money, work, social and cultural capital through the lens of home and housing. In 2018, I decided that I wanted my praxis to focus explicitly on how socio-economic origin shapes socially engaged art practices, and how listening methods and processes might be one method amongst many, to help understand how class shapes who gets to make what artwork, to what social affect.

I made this decision because I found increasing amounts of literature and artist led commentary talking about the lack of diversity within the creative and cultural industries in the UK (Brook, O'Brien & Taylor, 2018, 2020; Pinoncely & Washington-Ihieme, 2019; Carey, Florisson, O Brien, & Lee, 2020; Boyce, 2020). I resonated with these critiques on a personal level and felt compelled to contribute to this field of work because I'm invested in using my art praxist to work towards socio-economic justice. From this moment onwards (2018), my praxis focus concentrated on the scale of working-class inequality in the field of socially engaged arts.

In conducting research into how class background shapes the day-to-day experiences of working as a socially engaged artist, including my own, asking how and if listening practices might be one way to get more detailed understanding into socio-economic inequality in the field, I have reached many conclusions.

Important findings arising from desk-based research are that the UK creative and cultural industries are not a bastion of equality. What we see is a profound concentration and reproduction of certain types of privilege. This is problematic because it leads to a furthering of creative and socio-economic injustice.

Lack of diversity in the arts is not just problematic as a labour issue. Certain types of values, lived experiences, and outlooks are reproduced, validated, and upheld through creative expression. These are the processes that cultivate and give shape to cultural content, thought and dominant norms and values.

Cultural and creative expression is not a benign commodity to consume at leisure. Culture and creativity shape values, outlooks, behaviours, knowledge, and political aspirations and actions. It is vitally important that the inclusive and critical potential of socially engaged art is not diluted by the reproduction of neoliberal ideologies, and privileged accounts of reality.

To date, there has not been enough research into how the class origin of socially engaged practitioners determines who gets to make what kind of artistic practice, and to what degree of success in socially engaged art. Trends at play in the wider creative and cultural industries, suggest that workforce inequality and lack of class, racial and gender diversity is endemic in the arts and creative industries.

However, I cannot be confident that this trend extends to socially engaged art practices, because there simply has not been enough research done into the class origin of the workers who comprise socially engaged arts in the UK to date. This finding reveals a knowledge gap warranting future research into the drivers and scale of class origin of artists making socially engaged art in the UK today.

Problematically, definitions of creativity currently exclude socially engaged art practices from view. Socially engaged art practices might feature under the sector of music, performing and visual arts. However, in literature exploring diversity in the sector of music, performing and visual arts, I have found infrequent mention of socially engaged art practices, dematerialised practices, and participatory artworks. This may be because it is an emerging field of practice, but this needs revision.

If the field of socially engaged art is unlisted in current definitions of the creative industries, then the sector is forgotten and overlooked from research examining workforce diversity in the creative and cultural economies. We see socially engaged art practices erased from view, and not validated in the same way as other forms of artistic practice, such as visual arts, new media arts, and photography. This erasure of socially engaged arts practice from current definitions of creative and cultural industries, in part, helps to explain the lack of research done into workforce diversity in this area of artistic expression.

To date, there is dearth of research into first-person lived experiences of class inequality

amongst people working in socially engaged art practices. Research in this area is starting to emerge, with scholars looking into the working conditions of the field, cultural democracy in commissioning and funding cultures, the validation gap, and hidden costs of specific types of work associated with undertaking socially engaged practices.

Findings arising from making and reflecting on my artistic praxis are articulated through artistic methods that respond to the lack of knowledge into how class background shapes artistic expression and success. Specifically, I explore how autotheory, listening and care equip my own socially engaged art practice with tools to listen to first-person lived experiences of privilege and inequality.

Incorporating these tools into my praxis, I invite self-articulation of first-person lived experiences of class, race, gender, health, sexuality, and many other facets shaping the lives we live. While my artistic praxis is continuously changing, morphing and in motion, I have managed to carve out three main practice, or "know-how" findings. These findings speak directly to the three main findings arising from my desk-based, secondary research. In this way, I define these findings as pragmatic artistic interventions that can be used to do future praxis with the aim of understanding how class shapes who gets to make what kind of socially engaged art, and to what effect.

These three practice-based findings are that my artistic practice is one that cares-for and cares-about to better understand and challenge the causes of inequality amongst socially engaged artists. Joan Tronto defines "caring about" as recognising a need for care and "caring for" as taking responsibility to meet that need. I enact care through deploying a mediator approach to my praxis, which is an approach to socially engaged art that sets out to listen, amplify, and work with others towards challenging various practical issues, often playing out in and through everyday life.

I have developed two specific mechanisms that I use to work towards creative and social justice in the field. These processes have been developed following reflection and analysis of *Home* (2017) and *A Life, A Presence Like the Air* (2017). These praxis findings are expressed through the realisation of *The Convivial Listening Protocol (*2021) and the development of a new way of working, listening with others, and myself, using an autotheoretical

methodology.

The Convivial Listening Protocol is both a metaphor and a pragmatic artistic process. It is a term that describes a series of listening activities, and intersectional privilege, and inequality mapping processes. More generally, it describes listening encounters that put meeting-listening with others as central. The convivial aspect of the protocol defines aspirations that critique and depart from competitive individualism, alienating working and social conditions, and the business ontology endemic to capitalist realism.

Autotheory is an approach stewed in the development of auto biography, auto-ethnography, feminist, and conceptual performance art, belonging to the 1960s onwards. It is an approach that aims to describe and analyse personal lived experience in order to better understand and intervene with cultural and political experiences. It is an approach that advocates forms of self-listening in the form of careful, ongoing reflection, writing, and action on first-person lived experiences. Incorporating autotheory into my artistic method, I write poetry, diary entries and notebooks reflecting on and articulating, giving form to the specifics of my own experiences.

I use autotheory in the development of new works such as *The Convivial Listening Protocol*. However, perhaps more importantly, incorporating an autotheoretical approach into my critical and reflective writing has legitimised, and attributed use-value to my own lived experience as a woman coming from a single-parent, low-income family, and view the stresses and strains of this experience as theoretically, artistically useful, and legitimate. In learning about, and utilising, autotheory, I have found my own autotheoretical voice. I am able to theorise, make sense of, and situate my lived experience within wider social, artistic, and philosophical theory. I plan to continue exploring how to incorporate and use my auto-theoretical voice into future artistic projects and practices.

Lastly, findings that fall under the know-what category of knowledge arise through ongoing and critical analysis of audience feedback. These insights are useful in that they help provide me with an understanding into how other people experience the situated and meeting-listening aspects of my work.

My primary research was conducted in 2017. It is important to note that the form of my artistic praxis has become more focussed on interpersonal, convivial listening practices. These know-what insights arising from research done in 2017 are still useful to me. They provide valuable insight into the impact of my work on others, even though some of the questions asked are not as relevant to the methods and processes I deploy in my current work. These insights are not used to theorise grand narratives of listening as a process of inviting inclusive socially engaged art practices. Instead, they reveal how aspects of my work invite people to have new and unusual listening experiences, together, in situ, with others.

Analysis of audience feedback suggests that sitting and listening to acousmatic, musical audio works in situ, for a sustained duration of time represents an unusual form of creative and artistic experience. Beyond the strangeness of the work described by some audience members, there were key themes arising from the affect of convivial listening on those that participated in this encounter.

These included the feeling of self-reflection as people reflected on their own everyday lives, their work, families, and homes. The increase of self-consciousness, due to the location of the work, resulted in some audiences feeling watched, parachuted in, aware of other people listening in on their own listening experience.

Many audience members commented on the experience of sitting and listening as an empathetic experience, an experience that made them warm to the acoustic voice. Experiences that encouraged audiences to reflect on and think about the relational impact and value of listening to others. For some, this was expressed through listening being equated with care, respect, and empathy. In this way, listening can be thought of as a form of caring for and caring about.

Other know-what findings conveyed how the location of site-specific listening installations added sonic and symbolic layers of meaning to the work. For others the public aspect was distracting, interesting and new. The location of the work played a significant part in many audience's interpretation and physical, emotional experience of *ALAPLA*.

Finally, the last finding arising from my praxis is methodological. In undertaking this praxis, I

have developed a revised model of practice as research. *The dynamic praxis system* is a practice as research methodology I have designed and developed to simultaneously encapsulate and define my praxis. The system is comprised of six interconnecting flows that define and explain my praxis processes and methods.

The dynamic praxis system gives definition to my articulation of techne *and* intellectual practice. It is distinct from other models of practice as research in that it incorporates three modes of knowledge at its heart. In articulating the enmeshment of theoria, theoros and poieses as central to *the dynamic praxis system*, theory and poieses are unpacked, and defined as participatory *and* contemplative, offering a finer grain of definition of theory than just "theory imbricated with praxis" (Nelson, 2013, p. 20). I hope this methodology may be of use to other artist-researchers undertaking practice as research projects.

Socially engaged arts, and the creative and cultural industries at large, are not accessible or equal to all. Some people will be better resourced, structurally advantaged, and better able to dream of being, let alone start working as, an artist, than others. If we are to see different stories played out in the world, ones that acknowledge and take aim at the inequalities and suffering endemic to capitalist ideologies, then we must make significant changes to the ways in which we organise, train, and support creative industry workers, including those working in socially engaged art practices.

Through my praxis, I have developed, tested, and reviewed new modes of writing, working, and new ways of relating. Specifically, I offer convivial listening processes as one tactic amongst many to explore, give voice to, witness and understand how different distribution of cultural, social, and economic capital shape our lives, and to what affect.

These different and unfair wealth distributions shape the materiality, working rhythms, opportunities and relationships that come to texture our everyday lives. Unequal wealth distribution determines who gets to tell what stories, in what mediums. These stories in turn adjust, maintain, or potentially challenge values and ideas that prop up capitalist realism.

Responsibility to challenge these creative and socio-economic justice inequalities are not the sole responsibility of the individual. They are the responsibility of policy makers, educational

institutions, public funding bodies, commissioners, curators, and the responsibility of all of us who work in and with the arts. We all need to care for and care about challenging the long, cruel shadow of capitalist values, aspiration, policies, and social structures.

Bearing these findings and reflections in mind, I return to the question that has motivated this praxis journey: *Can listening practices help understand how class background shapes creative ideas, and experiences of success, when working as a socially engaged artist?*

The answer is yes. Convivial listening practices across a range of applications, from site-specific to small scale listening installations, to DIWO workshop activities, offer methods amongst many to better describe and understand lived experiences of multi-ethnic class inequality.

In developing this protocol and terminology, first-person voices, and their articulation are prioritised. So too are a range of practices that quite literally invite people to reflect on and share their own sense of privilege and inequality. What a convivial listening approach can do is carve open brave spaces to acknowledge, talk about, and act on the presence of inequality.

The Convivial Listening Protocol shares similarities with established practices of psychotherapeutic listening techniques. Active listening, deep listening, co-counselling, and reflective listening are all techniques that support the reflection and articulation of the client's experience in therapeutic settings. While I don't draw explicitly on these practices in the design and development of *The Convivial Listening Protocol*, it's important to acknowledge that there is wealth of research and knowledge on therapeutic and psychoanalytic listening that can be drawn on to contextualise *The Convivial Listening Protocol* beyond socially engaged art praxis and the cultural and creative industries.

In facilitating various applications of convivial listening, multi-ethnic working-class voices are not only given an invitation to be heard, but they are also invited to speak of the intricacies, and complexities, of their experiences. Talking is not enough, but in finding voice, giving an account of oneself, lived experiences can be named, reflected on, and, ultimately, acted upon. These kinds of practices offer one artistic method, one amongst many, to critique and challenge the norms and narratives of Eurocentric patriarchal capitalist thought.

The value of care-infused, listening-led, socially engaged art practices are significant. They help to open up brave spaces where people can give an account of themselves, in a culture that still struggles to come to terms with accounts of racist, classist, gendered, and ablest violence and exclusion. This is not easy or without antagonism.

In developing a socially engaged art practice that sets out to make space to work with, and listen to excluded voices (including my own), it becomes possible to a) challenge the crisis of participation; socially engaged arts and much of the creative and cultural industries are cut from the white, Bourgeoise, male, heterosexual fabric, b) challenge the crisis of knowledge; socially engaged art as a field is still poorly researched and understood in terms of recognising how the working cultures and practices enable or prohibit people from multi-ethnic working-class backgrounds to get in, and on, in this sector, c) challenge the crisis of criticism; the UK based socially engaged art sector still has not been adequately scrutinised in terms of how it does or does not reproduce the privileges endemic to capitalism, the same privileges we see reproduced in much of the creative and cultural industries.

Overall, my work's purpose is to use artistic production and intellectual labour to work towards imagining and realising a more equal society, one that slowly inches towards becoming free from violent, racist, patriarchal, capitalist ideas, histories, and ways of being in the world. I see emancipation from the tyranny of Eurocentric patriarchal capitalism as a collective and ongoing struggle, one that is part assisted through critical artistic practice and expression. It is not easy, nor will we ever get there, but we can use artistic enquiry and the aspiration of caring democracies to eek towards relational and ideological alternatives.

I propose that part of the collective struggle can be realised through artistic praxis that cares to listen to and with others, to and with difference. In doing so, we may understand that our struggles are different, but in holding space for diversity and difference it is possible to explore ways of challenging the status quo, build worlds beneath worlds, tell and make new stories, co-create new relationships, new forms of artistic expression, and messy togetherness. In building worlds under worlds, we forge alternatives to the failed futures playing out around us. In doing so, we may yet escape our zombie destiny.

Next Steps

In terms of disseminating findings arising from *Caring to Listen,* I plan to translate my findings into shorter journal articles for publication. I will submit articles to *FIELD,* a journal of socially engaged art criticism, and *Social Works*? the UK's only journal dedicated to socially engaged art practice. Further, I will submit articles to the following academic journals: *Critical Arts, The European Journal of Culture Studies* and *Third Text*.

I will share my findings at a range of relevant conferences and events taking place in 2022. Conferences I will submit proposals to include *The Arts in Society*, *The ECREA 9th Communication Conference, Internoise*, *The Association for Art History Annual Conference, and the AOMO Art and Activism Conference*.

Additionally, I will develop a social media communication strategy to disseminate key findings arising from this PhD. To further the reach of my social media comms strategy, I hope to work in collaboration with Tate Exchange, Social Practices Art Network (SPAN), and the Social Art Network.

To explore opportunities to undertake postdoctoral research, I plan to approach Leeds University Centre for Cultural Studies, Manchester School of Art, specifically Professor Amanda Ravetz who recently led the research project from *Network to Meshwork* (2020). Other research groups that may be interested in supporting this work include CAMEO Research Institute for Cultural and Media Economies at the University of Leicester, The Centre for Research in Communication and Culture at Loughborough University, and The Cultural Value Initiative, co-directed by Eleonora Belfiore.

I will survey future academic and research fellowships. These opportunities offer one - three years to focus on conducting in depth research and publishing findings arising from research. Fellowships of interest include The Leverhulme Trust early career researcher fellowships, The British Academy three-year Postdoctoral Fellowships, Arts Fellowships at The Helsinki

Collegium for Advanced Studies, part of the University of Helsinki and the Wheatley Fine Art Fellowship, offered by Birmingham School of Art and Eastside Projects.

Working in my current role at LCC, UAL, following submission of the PhD, I will secure Early Career Researcher status, and explore the possibility of applying for small UAL research grants. I see the pursuit of research within my teaching role as a form of professional development that builds on the research undertaken as part of this PhD.

In terms of artistic praxis, I have some short-term plans. I will continue to prototype, adjust, and refine *The Convivial Listening Protocol*. In February this year I was selected as Associate Artist at Oriel Davies Gallery, Newtown. Working with the curator Steffan Hughs, we have agreed to run workshops in October 2021 to explore *The Convivial Listening Protocol* in practice, working with small, mixed local community groups. Following prototyping, I will refine and further develop the protocol into a workshop guide, with supporting listening activities and tools. I will then test the workshop format with students in the context of LCC, UAL. I will consider marketing the protocol as an art facing creative justice toolkit, offering listening practices to map and act on intersectional inequality present within the creative and cultural industries.

Caring to Listen has enabled a deep dive into the issue of socio-economic inequality in the field of socially engaged arts. What is clear is that more research is needed to better understand how class origin and experience shapes who gets to make what kind of work, and to what effect and success. Further, more support is needed in the field, specifically in terms of opportunities for people coming from multi-ethnic, working class backgrounds, and in terms of professional development and validation provision for people already working in the field.

I have had the privilege of receiving a stipend to conduct this research; something not equally available to all. I hope to put these six years of praxis to work beyond the academy and share my findings with the creative and cultural industries, socially engaged art works, social justice campaigners, and the wider public.

I will continue work towards making the production of socially engaged art more accessible

and caring, and of use to people who do not fit the white, male, middle class, ablest mould. In doing so, I use my artistic praxis to challenge the imaginary, socio-political and material failings of capitalist realism.

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Appendices

1. Digital artistic artefacts

Documentation of artistic praxis to be found as supporting material in the UWE repository in a single zip folder entitled Appendices. I have grouped research outputs under artistic projects, listed below. Documentation of praxis can also be viewed online at www.caringtolisten.org.

Convivial Listening Protocol (2021)

(Files available in repository in artistic artefacts folder > *The Convivial Listening Protocol*)

This folder contains:

1: The convivial listening protocol (PDF)
2. Annotated convivial listening protocol (PDF & JPEG)

ALAPLA (2017)

(Files available in repository in artistic artefacts folder > *A Life A Presence Like the Air*)

This folder contains:

1. ALAPLA: Audio (MP3) - listen on stereo speakers
2. ALAPLA: Documentation photographs (JPEG)
3. ALAPLA: Booklet (PDF)
4. ALAPLA: Flyer (PDF)
5. ALAPLA: Documentation of audience participation (PDF)
6. ALAPLA: ACE funding application (PDF)

HOME (2017)

(Files available in repository in artistic artefacts folder > *Home*)

This folder contains:

1. Home: Audio (MP3) listen on stereo speakers
2. Home: Documentation photographs (JPEG)
3. Home: Booklet (PDF)

Still Alive! (2019)

(Files available in repository in artistic artefacts folder > *Still Alive!*)

This folder contains:

1. Still Alive (PDF) (2021)

Discord (2016)

(Files available in repository in artistic artefacts folder > *Discord*)

This folder contains:

1. Discord: Audio (MP3) - listen on stereo speakers
2. Discord: Documentation photographs (JPEG)
3. Discord: Documentation of build photographs (JPEG)
4. Discord: ACE funding application (PDF)
5. Discord: Audience feedback (spreadsheet & bidding cards) (excel spreadsheet and PNG)

2. ALAPLA transcripts

(Files available in repository in ALAPLA interview transcripts folder > *ALAPLA interview transcripts)*

This folder contains:

1. ALAPLA Interviewee consent forms (PDF)
2. ALAPLA Interview transcripts (PDF)
3. ALAPLA Interviewee ID list (Excel)
4. Interview Info sheet and consent form (PDF)
5. List of ALPLA attendees (PDF)

3. ALAPLA audience feedback analysis

(Files available in repository in ALAPLA audience feedback analysis folder > *ALAPLA interview findings*)

Important note: the findings write up chapter needs to be read referencing the word doc transcripts included in this folder. These transcripts were current at the time of writing (2019-20). I have since reformatted the transcripts using Otter. Ai transcribing software (2021).

This folder contains:

1. Summary of findings chapter (PDF)
2. Transcripts 2017-2020 (Word)
3. Transcript analysis spreadsheet (Excel)

4. Documentation of noteboks

(Files available in repository in documentation of notebooks folder > *Documentation of Notebooks*)

A selection of scans from 15 notebooks kept between 2015 - 2021. These notebooks contain notes, observations, reflections and autotheoretical writings.

This folder contains:

1. Dec 15 - March 16
2. March 16 - April 16
3. July 16 - Aug 16
4. Jan 17 - April 17
5. April 17 - July 17
6. July 17
7. Oct 17 - Feb 18
8. March 18 - Aug 18
9. Aug 18 - Jan 19
10. Jan 19 - Sept 19
11. Sept 19 - March 20
12. March 20 - Oct 20
13. Nov 20
14. Nov 20 - Sept 21
15. Sept 21

5. Documentation of sketch books

(Files available in repository in documentation of notebooks folder > *Documentation of Sketchbooks*)

A selection of scans from three sketchbooks kept between 2015 - 2021. These sketch books contain images, collages, photographs and autotheoretical writings.

This folder contains:

1. Sketchbook one
2. Sketchbook two
3. Sketchbook three

6. List of conferences

Selected to present praxis at Inquiring healing across screen cultures
Freie Universität Berlin / Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, June 2021.

Selected to present praxis at Remote Sensing, UAL, April 2021.

Selected to present praxis at 6th ECREA Radio Studies Conference Radio as Social Media University of Siena, 19-21 September 2019.

Invited to present praxis at Creativity, Knowledge, Cities (CKC) Conference, University of West of England and DCRC, Sept, 2019.

Selected to present praxis at Internoise, Madrid, Spain, June 2019.

Selected to present praxis at Approaching Estate at FurtherField Gallery, London. April 2019.

Selected to present praxis at Sonologia, an international conference on sound studies, Sao Paulo, Brazil, April 2019.

Selected to present at Another Land: an exhibition and events programme exploring experimental visualisations of place in art and design practice, curated by UAL and RCA. Jointly hosted by Kingston Museum and the Stanley Picker Gallery, April 2019.

Presented praxis at CRiSAP, UAL February 2019.

Creative Practice in the Age of Neoliberal Hopelessness, University of Bedfordshire
Presenting artistic practice and research, May 2018.

Presenting praxis at Sounding Out Conference, An International Conference on the Spatiality of Sound, Dublin School of Creative Arts and GradCAM, October 2017.

In conversation with Andrea Zimmerman, UnCommon Ground, Spike Island, May 2017.

Selected to present Sanctuary at Cambridge University, Sound Studies: Art, Experience, Politics, Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, July 2015.