

Landscape Aesthetics in Practice: A critical enquiry into the development and use of an arts practice as a constructive intervention within the context of landscape change and community action, Green Infrastructure Planning and delivery, and Landscape Character Assessment processes.

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Abstract

The research considers why aesthetics, the subjective ways in which we experience and value places, and nature's agency are not readily included in decision-making processes. This action research adopts a hopeful, participatory and auto-ethnographic inquiry into the potential for developing and applying a relational and environmental walking-art practice to overcome this disconnect; an approach which attempts to reconnect art and life, cultural and natural systems.

Metaphor is used as a method to reflect upon an emergent art practice. The research considers Felix Guattari's ideas of *transversality*, developing an *ethico-aesthetic paradigm* as a critical framework, taking into account the work of relevant practitioners and specifically Grant Kester's arguments concerning *reciprocal creative labour*. The framework is developed through a weaving metaphor and applied to three community-led land-use change case studies; a canal restoration project, caring for a community woodland and *Landscape Character Assessment*.

The weaving metaphor becomes both a process and an art work capable of revealing and helping to incorporate subjectivity into traditionally objective decision-making processes. As well as facilitating community-wide dialogue, the research has, in some cases, lead to action being taken alongside nature's agency.

The research evaluates the transformation of the art practice and its impact, which suggests the positive agency of art as a practical aesthetic in a social and environmental context.

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Introduction

Certain orders of experience enable us to perceive the world outside of a self interested, acquisitive, possessive model of knowing. They allow us to access the underlying operations of human cognition. When we cease looking at the world as a thing to be possessed and to be turned to our needs, we reflectively become aware of the fact that *that* way of knowing the world is something that we must all share.

(Kester & Lacy, 2007, p.6)

This practice led, qualitative research which is at the juncture of socially engaged arts practice, land use planning and community action, is largely situated in the Stroud Valleys¹ in Gloucestershire.

Its aim is to develop and test the potential of an emergent art practice to positively intervene in a variety of local land use change processes of varying complexity. These local interventions are undertaken as examples of re-balancing cultural and ecological systems, in support of ideas such as the one encapsulated in *The Harrison Studio's* quote that, "there is a simple equation afoot that sounds something like this, 'ecosystem well-being equals the probability of cultural well-being'" (Harrison Studio, n.d., unpaginated).

The central research question is, to what extent is it possible for a locally embedded art practice, which utilises, in very broad terms, walking and drawing, to be developed to form and perform socially and environmentally engaged art which can reconcile individual and group subjectivity with often objective, institutional processes. A supplementary question is to what extent such an art practice, which is understood as an aesthetic² practice, can offer, develop and facilitate processes in which nature's agency and human subjectivity are equally invested?

The imperative of the research is to develop an arts practice capable of facilitating deliberation and supporting action to care for places by facilitating transversality (Guattari 1995, 2000) between:

- individuals
- the other-than-human, such as natural processes inherent in land forms,

watercourses, species and habitats

- participants in groups, such as communities of place and interest
- statutory and other institutional processes, such as urban and rural land use planning system and the work of NGOs

In this way, the thesis shares, to paraphrase Paul Elliot, Felix Guattari's (1930-1992) life-long quest to wrestle with questions that he as being central to what it means to be human (Elliott, 2012). It shares his aim of changing systems that fail to enable 'transversality' across sectors, for as he wrote, "My professional activities in the field of psychotherapy³, like my political and cultural engagements, have led me increasingly to put the emphasis on subjectivity as the product of individuals, groups and institutions" (Guattari, 1995, p.1). The thesis understands human and other-than-human entities to be parts of nature and is consequently concerned with enabling transversality between human subjectivity and objectivity and nature's agency. This research explores the value of visual art as it helps reconcile different understandings and values invested in *landscape*⁴ and place, by revealing, to use Lucy Lippard's words, the "diversity of personal geography, lived experience grounded in nature, culture and history, forming landscape and place" (Lippard, 1997, p.5).

The research studies the emergence of a facilitative, participatory and relational practice, aimed at developing and applying processes which temper purely rational, objective and technical solutions to sustainability. Specifically it examines ways of using aesthetics in the planning context of Green Infrastructure Planning⁵ and its delivery, and Landscape Character Assessment⁶. Importantly, it aims to develop approaches that are inclusive. It focuses on three case studies; *The (Canal) Weave* – developing community involvement in a town-wide Heritage Lottery funded canal restoration project, *The River Map* - informing the rewriting of statutory landscape management guidance, and *Caring for Folly Wood* – the development of a group and its ownership and management of a woodland.

The case studies have taken place over a long time frame, commencing in 2010, and some are ongoing. Due to the complex interrelationships between people and locations, there is overlap between the case studies, and some relate to and



Wallbridge, circa 1790's, artist unknown, with kind permission of The Museum in the Park, Stroud. The painting shows cloth being stretched in Rodborough Fields



Recreation of the Racking Fields, July 2013. Part of a protest walk led by the author with Stuart Butler and Steve Roberts. Televised for the BBC's programme *Permission Impossible: Britains Planners*.

Figure1. Rodborough Fields. Visual art revealing understandings and values invested in *landscape* and place.

reflect upon earlier interventions by the artist as described in Appendix 1. Each works within a mosaic of residents, community based experts, enthusiasts, land owners, local government and other land use planning agencies. The practice is developed in different ways in response to the specific context, including the cultural and natural heritage of the various locations. Each case study however, shares the objectives of:

- revealing individual and group subjectivity about places
- facilitating deliberation and negotiating across disciplines and community and/or institutional organisations
- producing actionable knowledge
- supporting action

The case studies are grass routes led, and have much in common with community resilience, as championed by the Transition Towns movement (Hopkins, 2008, 2011), however the case studies have the additional intention of directly linking to and influencing established statutory systems so as to help reconnect and rebalance cultural and ecological systems. The core value in this research is not to replace 'reason' with 'aesthetics' in a hierarchy of understanding, rather to argue and demonstrate that all our faculties can be brought to bear on decision making and can in turn lead to action. As Massumi explains “activist philosophy refuses to recognise these divisions as fundamental, or to accept the hierarchy they propagate” (Massumi, 2011, p.12).

The research journey can be likened to both an exploration of Guattari's writings alluding to aesthetics and ethics (1995, 2000), specifically how art can play a role in revealing these complexities, and also as taking action to address the challenges that his quote below poses, albeit here limited to the specifics of facilitating engagement with and taking action within the context of land use change.

Of course, it's not at all clear how one can claim to hold creative singularity and potential social mutations together. And it has to be admitted that the contemporary Socius hardly lends itself to experimentation with this kind of aesthetic and ethico-political transversality. It nonetheless remains the case

that the immense crisis sweeping the planet [...] open[s] the field up to a different deployment of aesthetic components [...] it is the very productions of science, technology and social relations which will drift towards aesthetic paradigms.

(Guattari, 1995, p.132)

The thesis is structured into two distinct but interconnected sections: Part One and Part Two. The two are parts of developing the emergent practice and throughout both there is a constant toing and froing between practice and theory. As Sullivan writes:

When seen in relation to surrounding empiricist, interpretivist, and critical research traditions, different practices emerge as artistic inquiry twists and braids in response to purposes and possibilities. This dynamic process opens up several *relational* and *transformative* research practices that are found *within* and *across*, *between* and *around* the framework, as visual arts research proceeds from a stable state to a liquid form of understanding.

(Sullivan, 2010, p.102)

This ongoing, cyclic process of developing, applying and reflecting upon practice and theory is focused through an evolving critical framework. As theory and practice are developed, Guattari's ideas of a new ethico-aesthetic paradigm (1995, 2000) come to the fore, becoming the basis of the critical framework. A framework, or manifesto, capable of reconciling tensions between:

- body and mind, rational and aesthetic
- subjectivity and objectivity
- aesthetics, ethics and politics
- artists' autonomy and collaborative ventures
- cultural and ecological systems (at various scales)
- institutional strategy and community action

Part One, Mapping and Walking the Territory, chapters 1 to 3, is a contextualisation of the practical and theoretical considerations. It discusses environmental, personal, community, historical, practical and theoretical context. It uses metaphor to locate, develop, apply and reflect upon an ethico-aesthetic paradigm as a critical framework for the emergent practice.

Chapter 1 establishes the environmental, personal, community and governance context, exploring community participation in *landscape change* and *place making* processes. It makes links between these aspects of life and the potential of the visual arts to play a role in reconnecting people and nature, in particular addressing tensions between subjective and objective judgements, individual subjectivity and institutional systems that are a part of land use planning.

Chapter 2 uses a mapping metaphor, *Eastings and Northings*, to explore a historical and theoretical context that includes landscape, aesthetics, mimesis, metaphor, disinterest, universality, ethics and artist autonomy. From this it uses another locational metaphor – *Hummocks and Tall Grasses*, to develop a practical ethico-aesthetic paradigm, an outline critical framework for the emergent practice. It then 'back casts' this *Hummocks and Tall Grasses* framework as a filter through which to explore work made/performed prior to developing this research, reflecting on and analysing lessons for development.

Chapter 3 analyses the reflections from the previous chapter and uses this analysis to study the work of other artists, so as to further develop the critical framework. Socially engaged, relational and environmental practices are studied.

The research suggests that although many of the ideas and arguments have been conceptualised, and numerous artists have contributed greatly to putting aspects of these ideas into practice, it also finds that in order to satisfy the critical framework, there is scope to further develop a practice with the capability of reconciling individual and community subjectivity with institutional objectivity and nature's agency. Part One ends by setting out a weaving metaphor and a hypothesis.

Part Two comprises three chapters (4-6) which study the weaving metaphor in practice as the artist intervenes in three community initiatives and cross-references these with three long distance walks also undertaken during the period of study. These reflections are supplemented by reference to artists and scholars. In real time, the early parts of these case studies were happening as the hypothesis was being developed. Although too embryonic to be mentioned in Part

One, they generated only part formed reflections, shadows of immanence, that helped inform the hypothesis. Part Two is therefore a refinement and consolidation of these reflections. It uses a first person voice to reflect the auto-ethnographic approach taken.

Chapter 4 explores the development of a socially and environmentally engaged practice, using art-walking, drawing and animation to reveal a community narrative relating to the restoration of the Cotswolds Canals. It explores the development of the art practice in creating a town-wide process for increasing the number of people engaged in decision-making and in taking action. Throughout, the chapter studies the implications of applying the critical framework.

Chapter 5 uses the critical framework to explore the practice as the artist walks together with other artists along the River Frome. It describes how discussions stimulated by showing the artist's work - photographs, videos, writings and drawing, at ten community events, lead in some cases to making additional work. It demonstrates how the development and application of the critical framework results in both influencing the re-writing of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Landscape Character Assessment and also facilitating action to care for the River corridor.

Chapter 6 explores the development and application of the critical framework as the practice facilitates the preparation of a woodland management plan and supports the forming of a community group which has recently bought the woodland. It studies the practice as it encompasses and facilitates creative, social and scientific input from group members, deepening experience of the woodland's agency and affect. It demonstrates the role of the practice in co-creating place, as it co-ordinates the organisational development of the group alongside taking action to care for the wood.

The thesis then summarises the research findings relating to the initial critical framework and the reflects upon the use of the weaving metaphor that the research generated. It also refers to an installation, a woven manifestation of the weave, to analyse the symbiotic impact of the practice on the community initiatives

and on the practice itself.

The thesis concludes by consolidating the learning and looking to new questions and action.

Methodology

The research studies the emergent practice as it shares and puts into practice Rebecca Solnit's position that "While walking, the body and the mind can work together, so that thinking becomes almost a physical, rhythmic act – so much for the Cartesian mind/body divide" (Solnit, 2001, p. xv). This research follows a pragmatist approach in its theoretical underpinning and contends that it therefore enables *the body and the mind to work together* and, to continue the walking metaphor, steps into a world in which rationality and aesthetics explore and learn together. As Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth suggest, the mind/body dichotomy can be overcome if we see experience as a process, writing, "in practice then, affect and cognition are never fully separable – if for no other reason than that thought is itself a body, embodied" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p.2). Paraphrasing Brian Massumi (2002), they refer to his emphasis that "approaches to affect would feel a great deal less like a free fall if our most familiar modes of inquiry had begun with movement rather than stasis, with process always underway rather than position taken" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p.2).

Graeme Sullivan writes, "not only does the topic or subject of research undergo critical change, but the artist-researcher is also changed by the creative inquiry process" (Sullivan, 2010, p.104). In this sense, this research is auto-ethnographic. Its axiological stance therefore accepts that the researcher's values are a part of the research process and findings - in this case *hopefulness* in a participatory and co-created world. 'Hopefulness' is further studied in Chapter 1.

With reference to research paradigms as set out by Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (2005, pp.183-374), the research paradigm is participatory in that, ontologically, it reflects a belief in "participatory reality, subjective-objective reality, co-created by mind and given cosmos" (2005, p.195).

Epistemologically it reflects "critical subjectivity in participatory transaction with cosmos" with an "extended epistemology of experiential, propositional, and practical knowing; co-created findings" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.195).

The methodology applied is based on “political participation in collaborative action enquiry: primacy of the practical; use of language grounded in shared experiential context” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.195). As well as language, both verbal and written, the methodology includes walking and drawing with people, animation and photography. It also values *the little, the messy and the jerry-rigged* (Thrift, 2008), including activities that cross over with the everyday, such art interventions in community initiatives, project management, engagement with the planning system, tree planting, fire lighting, cooking, facilitating meetings, organisational development, seminars and conferences.

The inquiry is set in the 'real world' in as much as the outputs will have implications on the locality - people and other species - as well as on the studied practice. As Colin Robson writes, “Much real world research focuses on problems and issues of direct relevance to people's lives, to help find ways of dealing with the problem and better understanding the issue” (Robson, 2011, p.4). The methodology is aimed at facilitating action, particularly ideas of art as a process of *reciprocal creative labor* (Kester, 2011) and akin to Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury's ideas of Action Research (2001), with context and practice, not as background, but as integral parts of the research process. These ideas are shared in Margaret Riel's description of action research:

Action research provides a path of learning from and through one's practice by working through a series of reflective stages that facilitate the development of progressive problem solving (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993). Over time, action researchers develop a deep understanding of the ways in which a variety of social and environmental forces interact to create complex patterns. Since these forces are dynamic, action research is a process of living one's theory into practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010).
(Riel, 2010 - 2017, unpaginated)

In undertaking the research, the delineation between research and emergent practice has moved in and out of focus, reminiscent of Susan Finley's, “Who is an artist? Who is a researcher? These are questions that underscore the post-modern turn in sociological research” (Finley, 2005, p.693). Riel identifies this overlap and self reflection, writing:

I think of action research as a process of deep inquiry into one's practices in service of moving towards an envisioned future, aligned with values. Action

research, can be seen as a systematic, reflective study of one's actions, and the effects of these actions, in a workplace or organizational context. As such, it involves deep inquiry into one's professional practice.
(Riel, 2010-2017, unpaginated)

The research as far as it is in the 'real world' could perhaps be argued to be the role of the social sciences, or as “research through art”; one of Sir Christopher Frayling's definitions of artistic research based on Herbert Read's distinction about art education (Frayling, 1993/94); however, as the participatory aspects of the research are a key element of the arts practice, it follows that the research is, to use another of Frayling's definitions - “research for art”. It is worth saying here that it is research for *art as life*.

As mentioned above, an ethico-aesthetic paradigm is developed and reflected upon throughout as a critical framework for the research. Sullivan suggests that reflexive practice “has considerable appeal for visual arts researchers whose practice, in general, is investigative, multilayered, and inclusive of a diversity of theories and practices” (Sullivan, 2010, p. 110).

enable community participation in *landscape change* processes at different scales

incorporate subjective and objective views in decision making

bridge between individual, community, institutions and environment

open out into the broadest questions about the kind of society and culture that we espouse and wish to inhabit and promote

announce locally different forms of sociability, environmental interactivity and collective storytelling

support sustainable, community processes

lead to action

elucidate the value of creative arts practice and reveal new knowledge

Figure 2. Criteria for reflecting upon Research objectives.

The initial criteria for reflecting upon the research objectives within this study are shown in Figure 2. They are based on ideas from Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt's book about practice as research (Barrett & Bolt, 2007) and are used to develop the critical framework. These criteria are in keeping with the values expressed earlier and respond to the context. They help apply rigour to the thesis and transferability.

Another aspect of rigour was keeping an on-line blog⁷ as an aid to reflection and dissemination of information about the interventions. It gives an impression of how the process was 'messy', not linear nor sequential as perhaps suggested by reading the thesis. Similarly, the appendices enable the reader to make direct interpretations of the practice.

A central part of the methodology is the use of metaphor. In her history of walking, Solnit comments on its amateur and inclusive nature and, picking up on its transdisciplinary nature, she writes:

To use a walking metaphor, it trespasses through everybody else's field - through anatomy, anthropology, architecture, gardening, geography, political and cultural history, literature, sexuality, religious studies – and doesn't stop in any of them on its long route.

(Solnit, 2001, p.4)

The use of metaphor as a means of revealing and sustaining shared values, vision and agency is revisited throughout the thesis. Clive Cazeaux explores metaphor's facility to provide such ever richer understandings of life, resonating with Finley's description of qualitative research's role to *portray the multidimensionality of human life*, and adds that:

there has been a phenomenal growth of interest in metaphor as a subject of study in recent decades. While literature and the arts, as far back as Plato, have always recognized metaphor as a source of poetic meaning, this new interest in metaphor is part of a shift in thinking which asserts that the metaphorical creation of meaning holds significance for the way we understand the construction of knowledge and the world.

(Cazeaux, 2007, p.1)

Throughout, the thesis makes use of metaphor. Deleuze and Guattari's ideas

(1986) on the death of metaphor is considered and the idea of *active metaphor* is suggested. The transformational role of metaphor in revealing subjectivity and changing understandings of the relationship between culture and ecology, as manifested in our physical surroundings, and its propensity to bring about change, is a particular focus for the research.

- 1 The Stroud Valleys, also known as The Five Valleys, are cut into the west facing, limestone escarpment of the Cotswold Hills. These valleys are steep sided with fast running streams feeding the River Frome which runs out of the hills, across the Severn Vale and to the River Severn. The Frome is joined at Stroud, the districts largest urban settlement by the Nailsworth Brook. There is a string of (originally) water powered mills along water courses and a strong heritage of textiles. The mills are largely used now for light industry or housing, with a couple still involved with textiles. One of the largest, Ebley Mill, houses the local authority. The valley sides are mainly wooded, largely ancient semi natural woodland often with beech as the dominant species and in many cases are topped by unimproved limestone grassland, a number of which are commons. Pasture and grazing are the main agriculture of the valleys and the Vale, with arable on the tops. Much of the land in the valleys, as well as the grasslands and Severn Vale is protected and the Cotswolds Hills are an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 2 Clive Cazeau sets out three different meaning of aesthetics: (1) the ancient Greek *aisthesis*, or perception by means of the senses. (2) the modern (eighteenth- and nineteenth-century) sense of beautiful in art and nature; and (3) the critical dimension assigned to art, experience and the senses in the continental tradition of philosophy since Kant. (Cazeaux, 2011, p. XIV). Various interpretations of *aesthetics* are studied and developed throughout the thesis.
- 3 Guattari's concern was to find *transversal*, as opposed to institutionally led, solutions, in developing his psychoanalytical experimentation at *La Borde Clinic*.
- 4 One of the challenges with enabling transversality is language and terminology. A particular example that is relevant to the thesis is the term Landscape which is a contested term, with many meanings and uses, often being synonymous with scenery or view. This is important to recognise, especially as planning systems often use it to objectify places, rather than to develop or reflect people's intimacy with places or to express the interrelationship and interdependency between cultural and ecological systems.
- 5 Green Infrastructure, according to the Town and Country Planning Association's website (http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/TCPA_TWT_GI-Biodiversity-Guide.pdf) provides opportunities to protect and enhance the natural environment and is fundamental to strategic planning to safeguard the natural environment for future generations. GI adds tangible value to communities in economic, social and environmental terms. It creates places that are more resilient to climate change, that have distinct local character, and in which people want to live, work, and visit; places that promote well-being, productivity, educational benefits and crime reduction; and places where communities can actively engage with their local environment.
- 6 Landscape Character Assessment is defined as "The tool that is used to help us to understand, and articulate, the character of the landscape. It helps us identify the features that give a locality its 'sense of place' and pinpoints what makes it different from neighbouring areas." \ (Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland, The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002) <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/landscape/englands/character/assessment/>
- 7 The blog can be visited at <http://richardkeating.co.uk>.

PART ONE

MAPPING AND WALKING THE TERRITORY

Theory and Practice Context



Figure 3. *Crow One*. Digital Collage, the author, December 2014.

Suzi Gablik suggests that artists can play a role in dealing with the “immense crisis sweeping the planet” (Guattari, 1992, p.132), by “looking seriously into the realities of the times” (Volkman, 2007, p.272). Such realities include the evidence, albeit contested, that we have already contributed to changing the earth's climate irreversibly. *WWF's Living Planet Report*, suggests that biodiversity had declined globally by around 30% between 1970 and 2008 and by 60% in the tropics¹, largely due to human manipulation of habitats, depletion of natural resources and release of carbon and other pollutants into the atmosphere. Additionally, despite the increase in efficiency of resource extraction and usage, the consumption of resources by many of the people living in parts of the world such as the Stroud Valleys, have a disproportionately large impact on threatened landscapes, communities, cultures and species elsewhere². Globally, huge numbers of we humans continue to die from malnutrition partly brought about by natural and political processes, but also the depletion of resources, the over management and over consumption of land and a dislocation between people, the market and other natural processes. It is therefore with a large degree of humility and hope in the face of this global and local context, which is largely undertaken amongst the relatively affluent hills and valleys of England, that this research journey begins.

The context which is considered here relates to the development and application of an environmental and relational practice. From reflecting this context the research develops a critical framework for the emergent ethico-aesthetic practice and arrives at a hypothesis for further inquiry in Part Two.

Chapters here set out concerns relevant to developing a framework for a practice suited to involving people in decision-making processes about *landscape change* and *place making*. This includes environmental considerations, personal motivation, local land use planning issues, community governance, aesthetics and ethics. In particular socially engaged practice and eco-art are considered. The terms *landscape* and *aesthetics* are questioned in the ways they are used to address nature and art; both are seen to have developed a tendency towards objectification. Ideas of metaphor are explored and developed to help locate the practice and to reconcile subjectivity and objectivity.

Chapter one develops a dialogue between context and practice. It explores hopefulness and resilience. The *Transition Movement*³ (Hopkins, 2008) is put forward as an example, as Rob Hopkins, its founder, writes in what he calls “A Cheerful Disclaimer”:

We truly don't know if transition will work. It is a social experimentation of a grand scale. What we are convinced of is this:

- If we wait for governments, it'll be too little, too late.
- If we act as individuals, it will be too little.

But if we act as communities, it might just be enough, just in time.
(Hopkins, 2011, p.17)

Ideas of active hope are explored in the context of socially engaged practice. In addition, ideas of transversality are considered as an approach to linking community participation and governance, particularly as they apply to landscape and land use planning⁴.

Chapter two uses metaphor to explore the contested concepts and terms of *landscape* and *aesthetics*. It discusses contested ideas of *landscape* because these tensions come into play in the real world, particularly between strategic and objective uses of the term, particularly in planning process, where strategic and institutional meanings interface with individual and communities' often subjective readings of the same places. Similarly with *aesthetics*, which is closely linked with *landscape*, especially how both have become synonymous with the view and scenery – again, often leading to objective rather than subjective judgements. Ideas of disinterest and universality are placed in a post-postmodern context. Ideas of art as practical aesthetics are developed and mimesis and metaphor are discussed in terms of creating knowledge and understanding.

The chapter studies the relationship between ethics and aesthetics in socially engaged practice, and develops an approach to reconcile artistic autonomy and community participation. This research is used to create a critical framework, referred to as *Hummocks and Tall Grasses*, which is then used to reflect upon earlier practice. These reflections are analysed to create a filter for exploring the work of artists in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 studies a number of practices ranging across relational, socially engaged and various categories of environmental art, including the use metaphor. These include Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), John Fox (b.1938), Tim Collins, Reiko Gotto Collins, Hamish Fulton (b.1946), Suzi Gablik (b.1934), (Helen Mayer Harrison (b.1927) and Newton Harrison (b.1932), Patrick Keiller (b.1950) Suzanne Lacey (b.1945), David Nash (b.1947) and Tino Sehgal (b.1976). By studying these various practices 'through the filter' developed in Chapter 2, the research focuses on deepening the critical framework and arrives at a weaving metaphor, central to the hypothesis to be further investigated in Part Two.

Chapter 1

Personal, Land Use, Community Resilience and Governance Context

The relationships that human-nature interactions have to other components within interdependent systems at many different scales may be one critical source of resilience in disaster and related contexts, in other words, the affinity we humans have for the rest of nature, the process of remembering that attraction, and the urge to express it through creation of restorative environments, which may also restore or increase ecological function, may confer resilience across multiple scales.

(Tidball, 2014, p. 53)

Paul Selman notes a disconnect between human systems and ecological processes, writing, “it has often been suggested that the disruption of systems that make up physical landscape, and the erosion of bonds between people and place, might lie at the source of much environmental and social malaise” (Selman, 2012, p.5). These environmental and social challenges are complex issues that are beyond the scope of any single person, practice, organisation, discipline or nation to resolve. Perhaps consequently, for many people it is difficult to feel motivated to address them, maybe feeling it easier to become more and more disconnected. How then can *Socially Engaged Art*, a term coined by Pablo Helguera (Helguera, 2011), and Ecological Art that is “interested in an aesthetics of inter-connectedness, social responsibility and ecological attunement based on the notion of participation” play a role in these concerns and thereby enable art “to find relevance for itself in the face of the enormous global challenges ahead” (Lipton & Watts, 2004, p.94)?

A starting point for me is hope. I have come to understand that underpinning my practice is a resolute hopefulness. Not a shoulder shrugging “I hope it will work”, but a hopefulness that provides the impetus for bringing about change despite the many challenges. At the 2012 *Hope and Resilience Conference*, at the University of Leicester, Taiwo Afuape⁵ spoke about how hope is not something that one person achieves alone but is the responsibility of a community, saying that:

‘Resilience’ and ‘hope’ are not individual characteristics and feelings but relational processes and activities [that] when we listen out for the ways

people respond to their circumstances, and co-create a story of resistance, we engender hope.

(University of Leicester, 2012)

Hope is an easy target for cynicism by referring to it as 'false hope', 'jam for tomorrow', 'vain hope'. This is especially the case with post-modernism's sometime cynical tendencies. It is a matter for discussion whether post-modernity has come to an end, or even whether it exists or existed as an era rather than an approach. However, the emergent practice, with its hopeful axiology, resonates with what Seth Abramson refers to as the cultural philosophy of *metamodernism*, which he describes as:

reconstructing things that have been deconstructed with a view toward reestablishing hope and optimism in the midst of a period (the post-modern period) marked by irony, cynicism, and despair [...] metamodernism focuses instead on dialogue, collaboration, simultaneity, and “generative paradox” (this last being the idea that combining things which seem impossible to combine is an act of meaningful creation, not anarchic destruction).

(Abramson, 2017)

With an analysis of the situation clearly to the fore, hope can be a catalyst or source of energy for attempting to bring about change. Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone write about what they refer to as 'active hope':

It is this kind of hope that starts our journey — knowing what we hope for and what we'd like, or love, to take place. It is what we do with this hope that really makes the difference. Passive hope is about waiting for external agencies to bring about what we desire. Active hope is about becoming active participants in bringing about what we hope for.

(Macy & Johnstone, 2012, p.3)

In the context of community resilience, broadcaster Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's forward to *The Transition Companion* ends with:

It is a book that is unashamedly ambitious and far-reaching in its scope and vision. But, if we are to successfully navigate what's coming towards us, and hold on to our identity, community and our shared optimism for the future, that is exactly what we need.

(Hopkins, 2011, p.12)

However, Macy and Johnstone distinguish between active hope and optimism,

saying that active hope is “a practice [...] something we *do* rather than *have*” and can be applied “even to areas where we feel hopeless. The guiding impetus is intention; we choose what we aim to bring about, act for, or express.” This is similar to the creative process where the *doing* is *the finding out*, and as Macy and Johnstone go on to say: “Rather than weighing our chances and proceeding only when we feel hopeful, we focus on our intention and let it be our guide” (Macy & Johnstone, 2012, p.3).

This suggests the importance of hope, not simply applied to specific issues, but hope that hopefulness itself, an aspect of humanity, will be carried into the future.

Art critic and educator, Grant Kester has written similarly about the position of socially engaged art practice regarding its ability to bring about change, also accepting that it alone cannot be expected to “bring about a sudden and absolute revolution, or a single seismic, shift in political consciousness” (Kester, 2011, p.212). Whether this is desirable or not is another question, however, Kester's suggestion that such practice can contribute to “an emerging mosaic of oppositional practices that is both local in effect and international in scope” (2011, p.212), is very similar to Transition Towns' purpose of bringing about local change as a part of a wider, international network – sometimes referred to as *The Great Turning* (Hopkins 2012, Macy & Johnstone, 2012, Reason and Newman, 2013). Kester also asks what would such “political resistance look like when there are no guarantees?”(Kester, 2011, p.212). It is here that the idea of active hope resonates. Kester calls for a way of analysing whether such practices are collectively successful in bringing about “sustainable and extensive” change and suggests “a *cumulative* process of reciprocal testing that moves between practical experience and reflective insight”, saying:

For many [...] artists [...] this process begins with experiential knowledge generated through collective or collaborative practice and an increased sensitivity to the complex registers of repression and resistance, agency and instrumentalisation, which structure any given site or context. It also entails an ongoing commitment to the creation of new relationships and affiliations with other collectives, activist organisations, and NGOs in order to develop a more formal and coherent understanding of the specific insights generated through practice.

(Kester, 2011, pp. 212-13)

This wider collaborative framework is an additional criteria for the research to address - to enable more voices to be heard and to help take forward shared learning and hope – and as such makes the learning and its dissemination an integral part of the emergent practice.

As said, the context for the research is land use change in Gloucestershire's Stroud Valleys, however the research has a wider context, relevance and application. For example, as one of the world's most densely populated countries, and with high fertility, long life expectancy and net population increases from immigration above emigration, England's population is set to increase⁶ and the countryside, as well as towns and cities will consequently change, governed in part by statutory policy making.

Land Use planning and to a lesser extent delivery, are the role of national and local government, particularly through the designation of protected landscapes and more generally, the Town and Country Planning System. In terms of a local policy framework about *landscape change*, it is broadly provided by the District Council's Local Plan⁷ and The Cotswold Conservation Board's Management Plan⁸, along with the Gloucestershire County Council and various Town and Parish Councils' plans. This can be seen as channelling *institutional objectivity*. These policies seek to balance social and environmental considerations, market forces, technological possibilities, national and European legislation and local priorities. The District Council have also produced a Landscape Character Assessment (Stroud District Council, 2000) as Supplementary Planning Guidance⁹ and the Cotswolds Conservation Board have produced *Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change* (Cotswold AONB Partnership, 2003) and a Landscape Character Assessment (Cotswold AONB Partnership, 2004) for those parts of Stroud District that fall within the AONB. These policies attempt to balance ethics and aesthetics, the strategic and local and it is this interface in which the emergent practice has intervened.

A central issue is that planning processes find it difficult to take on board intimate, qualitative and subjective responses to places, whereas scientific and other quantifiable data is taken into account. This point was well made at the 2014 national Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) AGM, where their then

President, Sir Andrew Motion, quoted the Stroud District Council's Chief Planning Officer, referring to a planning application in the valley made famous by Laurie Lee (1914-1997): "the planning system tries to breed the emotion out of you. Heritage and culture is about the soul. If we fail the Slad Valley it's almost open season" (Motion, 2014).

Part of this is precisely because *landscape* is perceived as separate from people, rather than, as this thesis contests, being the land based interface between people and the rest of nature, or the relationship between cultural and natural systems. In part this is because the planning system needs to be objective, so it is easier to understand landscape as separate, as observed. The research addresses how to bridge this aesthetic/rational dichotomy. How to bridge the gap between everyday, subjective ways of valuing place and the strategic, institutional understandings of the same places. The fact that our systems struggle with incorporating this subjectivity can be seen to be a great irony; for example, many of the qualitative judgements about landscapes in the planning system tend to be delivered by experts, who are themselves often influenced by centuries old work of landscape painters, garden designers, poets and writers. Artists who were responding to now defunct social orders and different world views. This issue is revisited in Chapter 2.

Part of the issue regarding which voices are heard in decision-making relates to the nature of the conversations held. For example in the context of planning, conversations are technical and strategic, so people who want to make points that are deemed to be local and subjective may feel excluded. In his thinking on deliberative democracy, Jurgen Habermas adapts aspects of Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1908-1961) ideas on phenomenology. In particular the idea of *Lifeworld* (Habermas, 1987).¹⁰ Like Habermas, I understand this situation in terms of the separation of aesthetics from other aspects of life, which he suggests is a result of modernism's specialisation of science, art and morals. The research studies how a located, multi-faceted practice can be developed to reveal and assemble many of the values - values based on everyday experience of place - and integrate them with cultural and ecological systems. In discussing these everyday experiences as *landscape affect*, Christine Berberich *et al.* write: "What sets affect apart, particularly in the ways that it engages with

landscapes, is not its emphasis on the grand narratives [...] but its valuing the small scale, the ordinary, and the everyday” (Berberich *et al.*, 2013, p.316). They refer to Nigel Swift's use of “fugitive work” as “the little, the messy and the jerry-rigged as a part of politics and not just incidental to it” (Thrift, 2008, p. 197). It can be argued that counter to this, the tendency for policy makers to take a strategic overview sets up a tension with locally held and often passionate attachment to places. The negative use of the word 'nimbyism' seems to undervalue such passion.

However, The Council of Europe recognises the importance that *landscape* plays in shaping our lives and through the *European Landscape Convention (ELC)*¹¹, seeks to make the decision making process more democratic. They state that:

Landscape must become a mainstream political concern, since it plays an important role in the well-being of Europeans who are no longer willing to tolerate the alterations of their surroundings by technical and economic developments in which they have had no say. Landscape is the concern of all and lends itself to democratic treatment.

(Council of Europe, 2000, II, x23)

In commenting on the challenges facing the implementation of the *ELC*, Michel Prieur, expert to the Council of Europe, further emphasises and prioritises the need for community participation:

The fact that landscape involves a sensitive relationship to an area, without any ownership link between the beholder and the beheld, changes landscape into a genuine 'common resource' [...] Public participation in decision making is one of the fundamental principles of the European Landscape Convention [...] recognising the public as the principle actors in decision-making processes affecting their living environment and quality of life and it is clearly the area in which most progress must be made.

(Council of Europe, 2006, p.14)

This is an aspect of the *global commons* and is an ethical issue in terms of delivering public good. It is also an aesthetic issue. In his essay on *landscape ethics*, Massimo Venturi Ferriolo writes that the ELC:

expressly acknowledges citizens' roles in active decision-making. They can identify with areas in which they live and work, with the general sphere of life in the totality of its individual qualities, history, traditions and above all its

culture. Relationship to place creates personal identity, a sense of belonging and an awareness of regional identity.

(Venturi Ferriolo, 2004, p.16)

Natural England, who are charged with delivering the *ELC* in England, are also aware of the knowledge gap in delivering community participation and of the issues relating to what they refer to as their *Ecosystems Services*¹² approach. This is an example of an attempt to combine scientific and cultural values, and whilst they have a range of tools for quantifying the scientific values, the *cultural services* are more challenging. This is expressed in this personal correspondence from the then Principal Adviser Innovation in their Conservation Strategy and Innovation Team in support of the action research carried out and described in Part Two of the thesis:

The National Ecosystem Assessment team are aware of this challenge and there has been joint project work with natural and social scientists to try and gather data from people directly. But the methodology involved responses to images of locations around the study area, images generated by the researchers rather than by people themselves. In contrast, your research is generating first hand responses and doing so through arts practice.

(Stearn, 2014)

Philosopher Isis Brook addresses active citizenship and promotes *make, do and mend* as a strategy for learning “to demand more of ourselves rather than of the world” in order to “redeem non-places, create healthy relationships and a sustainable wider environment” (Brook, 2012, p.114). She refers to Stroud, along with Totnes, as places where people were quick to adopt the Transition agenda, saying that “neither had really made that initial transition into placelessness”. Her suggestion is that this would help to “Underline the placelessness thesis that would expect soulless towns to lack the human movers and shakers who would have the necessary aspiration to begin the process” (Brook, 2012, p.117).

While agreeing with the ideas around *make, do and mend* as a way of combating placelessness, my experience with initiating and participating in Stroud based projects is that the instigators are often what are referred to locally as incomers (myself included). This idea of two communities was certainly raised at the 2011 so called, diagnostic visit by the Academy of Urbanism¹³ cited in Chapter 4. The

distinction was softened however by the participation of some 'born and bred' residents and by input from a new generation of Stroud born and bred people, daughters and sons of 'incomers'. This was reinforced by a conversation at one of our exhibitions (described in Chapter 5) with a person who had recently moved back to the town, and revealed her memories of the town from childhood as “a miserable place to grow-up” and that her “mother wouldn’t have been able to believe the fuss people now make about Stroud – it really had been an awful and hard place to live” (anon, 2013). Meanwhile, *incomers* were being captivated by, and saw potential and opportunity in such things as the disused textile mills and the largely unmanaged woodlands. This emphasises that *senses of place* are as much social constructs as they are environmental ones.

There are many people in the Stroud Valleys actively engaged with transition type projects which will, in various ways co-create senses of place. The question of why and when such community initiatives come about is referred to by Guattari as 'the domain of social ecology', he writes; “there will be times of struggle in which everyone will feel impelled to decide on common objectives and to act 'like little soldiers'”(Guattari, 2000, p.34). Although this 'like little soldiers' analogy resonates with the history of Stroud's textile industry and in particular Stroud Scarlet¹⁴, replacing it with 'like a weaving community' would introduce a weaving metaphor equally appropriate to the Stroud Valleys. Recent examples include resisting road schemes, successfully resisting the demolition of much loved buildings, and, as studied in this research, the buying of Folly Wood. Such resilience is described as a type of responsiveness in another of Guattari's analogies when he relates the manner in which artists may alter their work “after the intrusion of some accidental detail, an event-incident” (2000, p.35). There are of course many *event-incidents* that local communities respond to – public sector cuts, flooding, housing shortages, disasters abroad and this research only addresses a limited number of these. Some of the *event-incidents* that people in Stroud are coming together around are outlined below in Figure 4.

People and organisations hoping to modify neoliberal globalisation by strengthening local relationships between cultural and ecological systems include Project Stroud¹⁵, *SITSelect*,¹⁶ Stroud Common Wealth¹⁷, *Stroud Community Agriculture*¹⁸, *Stroud*

Issue	Concerns
Climate change	– species moving from south to north, tree disease and effects of draught, wind damage from increasingly stormy weather patterns. Species loss.
Agriculture	– end of farm subsidies, hobby farming, diversification, extensive use of land, loss of habitat and species, loss of connectivity
Post oil energy needs	– no mention of fracking but some wind turbines, decommissioning of old and possible building of new power stations & power lines. Proposed Severn Barrage and destruction of internationally valuable habitat. Fuel poverty.
Urban development	- Housing pressures without proper infrastructure or relevance to community-landscape. Housing shortages.
Forestry	- Woodlands un-managed, despite fuel shortages & potential carbon offset loss of diversity, loss of connectivity, tree disease
Canal restoration	- increased housing, loss of amenity, green space, habitat and species, loss of connectivity.
Loss of local identity/character	- disconnection with past culture, loss of buildings and other cultural artefacts

Figure 4. Local concerns that the interventions address.

Civic Society, StroudCo Food Hub¹⁹, Stroud Community Land Trust²⁰, Stroud Nature²¹, Stroud Valleys Project²², Stroud Valleys Art Space²³, Stroudwater Textiles Trust²⁴, Transition Stroud²⁵, Stroud Woodland Cooperative²⁶ and Walking the Land. For me and for other participants in the interventions, this is the continuation of a process of taking direct action and facilitating community initiatives which can be traced back to the 1992 *United Nations Conference on Environment and*

*Development*²⁷ in Rio De Janeiro, where 179 countries signed up to an agenda for change. An outcome from this, '*The Rio Earth Summit*', was the acknowledgement that the role of local communities is vital to finding sustainable solutions. This became known as *Local Agenda 21*²⁸, which began to popularise the term 'sustainable development', for which *Vision 21*, Gloucestershire's *Local Agenda 21*, used the following working definition based on the Brundtland Report, "Our Common Future" (United Nations, 1987):

development that enhances the quality of life for all (especially the most disadvantaged), without damaging the environment, or the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

(Vision21, 1996, p.1)

However, LA21 has been criticised for omitting *culture* from its strategic approach to developing economic, environmental and social development. Nevertheless, it did highlight and put into practice participative democracy alongside representative democracy and increased the number of voices heard, and it has gradually taken on board a cultural dimension as discussed by Sacha Kagan (Kagan, 2011, p.p.11-16).

In considering the emergent practice in terms of combating placelessness, and despite nostalgia providing a fruitful starting point for artists, it is useful to heed Dorren Masey's (2005) warning against yearning for romanticised pasts, imagined harmonious communities or even that communities do feel a sense of place. The Stroud example could be understood as a succession of *incomers* engaging with the town and its surroundings over the centuries and sustaining threads of the area's rich cultural and natural heritage – for example weaving, the arts and crafts, non-conformism, innovative engineering, radical and green politics – all of which over-ride simultaneously present aspects of placelessness, of which there are also many corners - old, new, planned and threatened.

It is easy, and not uncommon, to imagine the seventeenth century weaving community in the Stroud Valleys as having lived a rural idyll, in harmony with nature, harnessing water power, harvesting wool from sheep grazing on the species rich, limestone grasslands that now, along with the industrial heritage, are valued and protected by legislation²⁹. Unsurprisingly however, there are accounts

of hardship and injustice from the time and the emergent practice is not a call for a return to this romanticised rural idyll and its inequality, as referred to in the writing of Stuart Butler in response to participating in April 2013's *First Friday Walk*³⁰:

The End of the 19th Century³¹

They called it 'The Golden Age of Farming':
The end of the Corn Laws, 1846,
Until Depression, 1873,
When foreign competition, the prairies,
Refrigeration and also steam ships,
Saw farm jobs drop by a third in our county,
With hardly a farm job left for a woman;
A 10 hour day with extra at harvest,
Shepherds and cowmen working the whole day,
Damp, cramped cottage for a home, no rights,
Children working long hours as well;
Some farm workers were content, I don't deny,
But our children lacked an education,
And we had no vote – it was degrading,
We were backward and poverty stricken,
That's why Joseph Arch's union spread here,
The National Agricultural Labourers' Union!
Imagine! A nine and a half hour day!
Thanks to William Yeats, the Stroud mechanic,
And Joseph Banks, the Slad Road chemist,
We had a lot of hot summer meetings
In Stroud and the Valley villages,
In 1872, I think it was,
With Mr Banks calling for an end to truck,
Calling for shorter hours and higher wages:
'In sterling money, not fat bacon or a couple of swedes,'
Is what I remember him eloquently saying
At the meeting in Stroud we all went to.
We went to another big meeting too,
All about emigration and empire,
Thomas Connolly, a London stonemason,
Talked about the wonders of Canada:
'Which could accept up to 100,000 people
Every year without causing a glut on the labour market.'
He said you could get three meals a day and good wages -
That's why I am so lonely; all my boys have gone,
And my daughter is about to emigrate, too.
The joy has gone from my life,
An occasional letter ends up wet with tears,
And I don't see how I can escape the workhouse,
Mr Hardy might write his novels about these things,
And the painters might paint their pictures,
But there is no romance in the story of my life.

If not to return to a romanticised past, then what is the purpose of the practice? It is to help create equitable, participatory, informed decision-making processes that reveal and lead to taking action towards creating environmentally resilient and socially just futures.

Whilst the study is not primarily focused on theories of democracy, it is nevertheless relevant to place a socially engaged practice within such theory; theory based on a participative practice. Indeed, the prevalent state of Western democracy cannot be ignored as it is also a context for the practice³². As Carole Pateman stated in her presidential address before the American Political Science Association in Seattle:

We are surrounded by democracy-talk. Yet in Western countries popular confidence in old-established institutions is fading, voters are disaffected, trust in government is declining and a very wide gap has opened up between citizens and governments and political elites more generally.

(Pateman, 2011, p.15)

Pateman identifies a distinction between the forms of participatory democracy initiated in the sixties and the burgeoning, deliberative democracy of later decades, which she sees as just one aspect of participation and warns against seeing it as its only manifestation. For example, she suggests that its evolution into deliberative democracy supports rather than questions the status quo in as much as it “does not disturb existing institutions” (Pateman, 2011, p.15). The potential for applying art's ability to 'disturb' and build bridges to inform decision makers will be examined in this thesis. This is urgent business, given the current rise in *popularist politics* around the world.

An important aspect of democratisation studied in this thesis is Guattari's concept of transversality, and Gary Genosko highlights the importance of not forgetting that “the concept of transversality had for Guattari practical tasks to perform”, and warns that the “postmodern appropriations without practical consequences [...] would not be in the spirit of Guattari's thought” (Genosko, 2002, p.67). This resonates with the spirit of this practice led research, in particular with Genosko's comment that: “the idea was to use it imaginatively in order to change, perhaps not

he entire world, but institutions as we know them” (p.67).

This kind of practice, dealing with complexity and research in the real world, is referred to by part of the scientific community as trans-disciplinary. Unlike inter-disciplinarity it looks to operate between disciplines, across disciplines, and beyond each individual discipline. It aims to understand the 'real world' by developing an overarching unity of knowledge. Quantum physicist Basarab Nicolescu writes:

The transdisciplinary ethic rejects any attitude that refuses dialogue and discussion, regardless of whether the origin of this attitude is ideological, scientific, religious, economic, political or philosophical. Shared knowledge should lead to a shared understanding based on an absolute *respect* for the collective and individual Otherness united by our common life on one and the same Earth.

(Nicolescu, 1994, unpaginated)

In the forward to *The Handbook of Transdisciplinary Research*, Jill Jäger, researcher at the *Sustainable Europe Research Institute*³³, suggests that “the uniqueness of the approach lies in the partnership between members of different disciplines and stakeholders” (Hadorn *et al.*, 2008, p.vii). Jäger is discussing partnership, an important aspect of the research projects studied here, pointing to the need for a partnership between researcher and other participants. A partnership which must avoid the risk of developing its own exclusive language, ways of working and fixed objectives. When philosopher Jacques Rancière was asked if his work was 'inter-disciplinary' or 'a-disciplinary' he answered :

Neither. It is 'indisciplinary'. It is not only a matter of going besides the disciplines but of breaking them. My problem has always been to escape the division between disciplines, because what interests me is the question of the distribution of territories, which is always a way of deciding who is qualified to speak about what.

(Rancière, 2008a, pp. 2 – 3)

Here he appears to share ground with Guattari's political motivation for transversality, the facilitation of political process rather than achieving a set of pre-conceived outcomes or ideals. This inclination to democratise political process is an ethical stance which postmodernism has fostered, in particular enabling voices to be heard from the margins. The role of aesthetics in this, and their relationship with ethics is discussed in Chapter 2. The relevance of transversality to the research is

that the emergent practice should not create a new discipline, rather to use an ethico-aesthetic practice to develop processes that make pervious the barriers between disciplines and stakeholders and thereby open the way for greater participation and learning. This can be seen as complementing and refining the *status quo*'s various methods of decision making, enriching those traditional consultation approaches which currently privilege expert views above local knowledge and privilege a rational overview above experiential engagement. Equally, it can be seen as disrupting and opening closed systems.

This chapter has set out a personal, land use, community resilience and governance context for the research, some of the threads that dynamically intertwine to co-create places and underpin the arts practice. In studying relationships between individual subjectivity, community activism, cultural systems and ecological systems, tensions can be recognised, such as between the imperative felt by many environmental activists to act now and the slower, consultative processes such as governments' strategic, long-term planning. Conversely, and relatively locally, it is sometimes environmentalists taking the longer view. For example, using tree planting to control water run-off to ameliorate flooding, versus urgent calls to resolve the flooding along the River Severn by re-digging drainage ditches. The intention then is for the research to address both strategic infrastructure and locally focused action. This is where it slightly parts company with *Transition Towns* sole focus on grass routes activity. Consequently, in order to support co-ordinated direct action, the research will study the emergent practice's ability to support community action through enabling deliberation across sectors, including a dialogue between activists and those exercising power invested in them through representative democracy. Promoting deliberation and delivery rather than merely enabling 'democracy-talk' or taking uncoordinated direct action – a model of participatory democracy which enhances representative democracy in decision-making about *landscape change* and *place making* by putting aesthetics at the forefront of the processes to balance cultural and ecological systems.

Chapter 2 uses a mapping metaphor to locate and consider the theoretical and historical context in order to further clarify terminology and to develop an appropriate ethical and aesthetic critical framework for an emerging practice. It reflects on the

usefulness of this framework by 'back casting' it on earlier practice, at the same time providing additional local context.

- 1 WWF Living Planet Report, 2012, "is the world's leading, science-based analysis on the health of our only planet and the impact of human activity."
http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/1_lpr_2012_online_full_size_single_pages_final_120516.pdf
- 2 Friends of the Earth report, *Overconsumption?*, 2009.
<http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/overconsumption.pdf>
- 3 The Transition Movement is a response to a post oil economy. Its role is to inspire, encourage, connect, support and train communities as they self-organise around the Transition model, creating initiatives that rebuild resilience and reduce CO2 emissions.
- 4 The term landscape is often used in a land use planning context. It is one of a number of terms used to refer to land where agriculture and forestry are the dominant land use, non urban space – others include countryside and white land, while the spaces closer to towns and cities are referred to as landscape setting, urban and rural fringe, peri-urban space and more recently green infrastructure, which is less spatially specific and can also be applied to urban spaces and green space. These are more or less listed in the order in which they have come into usage, and to some extent represent the planning system's shift away from Town and Country Planning to a more holistic approach to planning for urban development as well as urban pressures on the rural landscape, including the intensification of agriculture, habitat loss and recreational pressures. In tandem with this, since the early nineteen seventies, local authorities and others have adopted practical countryside and urban fringe management as approaches to retrospectively dealing with some of the unplanned implications of urban development and agricultural intensification. In some cases, more usually urban, community involvement in landscape change processes, managing change to the physical environment, are referred to as place making – often led by artists - or community planning. A specific registered process is *Planning for Real*.
- 5 Taiwo Afuapeis spoke at the conference in her role as the Principal Clinical Psychologist and Systemic Psychotherapist working at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust
- 6 Office of National Statistics 2010 www.ons.gov.uk/.../population.../population.../the-uk-population--how-...
- 7 Stroud District Local Plan. At the time of writing, the District Council has a draft Local Plan. Stage 1 of the examination hearings of the Plan took place on 1-3 April 2014. Following publication of the Inspector's Initial Conclusions on Stage 1 of the examination in June 2014, the Council agreed to suspend the examination in order to enable further work to be undertaken. On 9 December 2014, an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council was held; this considered the work undertaken during the period of suspension, agreed to adopt an overall housing provision figure of 11, 200 dwellings (2006-2031). The resumed Stage 1 hearings will now commence at 10.00 am on Tuesday 12th May 2015.
- 8 The Cotswolds Conservation Board is the organisation that exists to conserve and enhance the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk>
- 9 Supplementary planning guidance supports, clarifies and/or illustrates by example planning policy statements and plans. This can take the form of design guides such as the 'Creating Places' guide for residential development or guides prepared for Conservation Areas. It also includes a set of Development Control Advice Notes that explain the criteria and technical standards to be considered when dealing with specific categories or particular aspects of development. Where relevant to a particular development proposal, supplementary guidance will be taken into account as a material consideration in making decisions. (Source: http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/supplementary_guidance.htm)
- 10 Habermas' perspective on this aspect of democratic debate is that our *lifeworlds* – family life, personal desire, feelings and dreams – are *colonised* by systemic mechanisms that introduce us to a second type of world – a world of specialisation, clocking in, policies, corporate speak and media. Habermas contends that this steers us towards "a block of quasi-natural reality", saying that "within these media steered subsystems society congeals into a second nature" (Habermas, 1987, p.154).
- 11 The European Landscape Convention, or Florence Convention, promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. The convention was adopted on 20 October 2000 in Florence (Italy) and came into force on 1 March 2004 (Council of Europe Treaty Series no.176). Signed by the UK Government in February 2006, the ELC, is devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. It became binding in England from March 2007 and applies to all landscapes, towns and villages, as well as open countryside; the coast and inland areas; and ordinary or even degraded landscapes, as well as those that

are afforded protection. The Convention prioritises community participation and was reaffirmed as being part of the *Department of Food and Rural Affairs* delivery framework in England through the *Natural Environment White Paper* in June 2011. Of relevance to this research is Preamble, Article 5. Paragraphs a, b and d are of particular relevance:

- a. to recognise landscapes in law as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity;
- b. to establish and implement landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning through the adoption of the specific measures set out in Article 6;
- c. to establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies mentioned in paragraph b above;
- d. to integrate landscape into its regional and town planning policies and in its cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape. <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>

- 12 Natural England's Ecosystem Services approach seeks to identify the range of ways the natural environment provides benefits to society and to engage the beneficiaries in reaching decisions about the objectives and priorities for their environment. Evidence collecting is focused on identifying and mapping ecosystem services, understanding how they provide benefits and how they can be valued and considered in decisions about projects for, or affecting, the environment.
- 13 Academy of Urbanism's Diagnostic visits helps those involved in building and sustaining successful places – from streets to city quarters – understand the factors that underpin or undermine their success. The service provides a critical friend's assessment of local aspirations, responsibilities and actions. It focuses the expertise and experience from a pool of over 500 Academicians.
- 14 Stroud Scarlet is the popular terminology for the scarlet cloth woven and dyed in the Stroud Valleys for use as British army uniforms.
- 15 Project Stroud is a steering group arising from Stroud's involvement in the Market and Coastal Town's Initiative (see chapter 3)
- 16 SITSelect – runs Stroud International Textiles Festival.
- 17 Stroud Common Wealth exists to own and develop property for community benefit and to enable social enterprise development.
- 18 Stroud Community Agriculture Ltd (SCA) is a community-led enterprise, which is developing a local farming business to produce fresh organic/biodynamic produce for its members. Members pay an annual membership and a further payment in order to receive produce including vegetables, pork and beef, and diversifying into other produce. The farm is certified organic and is influenced by biodynamic methods. (Source: <http://www.stroudcommunityagriculture.org>)
- 19 Stroudco Food Hub is a not-for-profit grocer bringing together an ever-expanding and exclusive range of locally produced artisan food, drinks and much more. Orders can be collected at any time during the week from 2 points in Stroud or delivered to the door. (Source: <http://www.stroudco.org.uk>)
- 20 Stroud Community Land Trust is a registered charity set up in 2001 to protect and enhance green spaces for people and wildlife.
- 21 Stroud Nature: Stroud Nature runs The Festival of Nature which has grown since its inception in 2008 and attracted upwards of 4,000 visitors each year to its daylong event in Stratford Park. During 2013 there were, in addition to the 40 stalls concerned with the natural environment, marquees for local food, walking, arts and eco homes.
- 22 Stroud Valleys Project aims to protect and enhance the local environment by working with local communities to embrace sustainable development and biodiversity, and so to make Stroud and its surrounding area a better, healthier place in which to live for both present and future generations.
- 23 Stroud Valleys Artspace's (SVA) mission is to raise the profile of artists and their role in the community by supporting the production and presentation of their work, thereby increasing opportunities for access to and active participation in the arts for a diverse range of people.

- 24 Stroudwater Textile Trust tells the story of the Gloucestershire woollen industry. It restores and demonstrates historical textile machinery at two sites, Dunkirk Mill Centre and Gigg Mill, Nailsworth.
- 25 Transition Stroud is part of the Transition Towns movement, which started early in the 21st century. The movement aims to help communities become more resilient in the face of the twin challenges of Peak Oil and Climate Change, with a focus on the Stroud Valleys area. It is a non-profit company, with no affiliations to any government or political organisation.
- 26 Stroud Woodland Co-operative, owners of Folly Wood, aim to carry on business for the benefit of the community, including: to realise the environmental, biological, landscape, economic, social, cultural, educational and recreational value of woodland ecosystems in and around Stroud as a resource for a sustainable community; and to acquire, hold, steward, create, and manage woodland, land and property sustainably in trust for biodiversity, social enterprise, access and community benefit for present and future generations.
- 27 The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from June 2-14, 1992. It was held twenty years after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) took place in Stockholm, Sweden. Government officials from 178 countries and between 20,000 and 30,000 individuals from governments, non-governmental organizations, and the media participated in this event to discuss solutions for global problems such as poverty, war, and the growing gap between industrialized and developing countries. The central focus was the question of how to relieve the global environmental system through the introduction to the paradigm of sustainable development. This concept emphasizes that economic and social progress depend critically on the preservation of the natural resource base with effective measures to prevent environmental degradation. (Source: *The Encyclopedia of the Earth*, available at: <http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/156773/>)
- 28 Local Agenda 21: At the Rio earth Summit in 1992, the United Nations agreed that the best starting point for the achievement of sustainable development is at the local level. In fact, two thirds of the 2,500 action items of Agenda 21 relate to local councils. Each local authority has had to draw up its own Local Agenda 21 (LA21) strategy following discussion with its citizens about what they think is important for the area. The principle of sustainable development must form a central part of the strategy. LA21 regards sustainable development as a community issue, involving all sections of society. (Source: *Sustainable Environment*. Available at: http://www.sustainable-environment.org.uk/Action/Local_Agenda_21.php)
- 29 Sections of the Stroud Valleys were designated as an Industrial Heritage Conservation Area (IHCA), in 1987. Many of the surrounding woodlands and limestone grasslands are designated under the European Directive as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and are nationally designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Cotswold Commons and Beech Woods are a National Nature Reserve.
- 30 *First Friday Walks* were instigated in Gloucestershire by Walking the Land in 2004 and continue to attract artist, writers and photographers to explore and respond to the area.
- 31 Stuart Butler's piece was researched using 'Agricultural Trade Unionism in Gloucestershire 1872-1950' Moreby Nigel Scotland, 1991, published by the Centre for the Study of Religion, Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education, creating a first hand voice within a prose-poem historical narrative. Other work by Stuart can be accessed at <http://radicalstroud.blogspot.co.uk>
- 32 This appears to be evidenced at the time of writing by the journalistic commentary accompanying the last hundred days of the campaign to the 2015 UK General Election, such as the particular argument around increasing the number of voices heard on a series of TV debates by including a greater number of 'minority' parties. The value of this approach, the collusion of the media in making the event even more of a spectacle is another question, a question which the traditionally centralist labour party for example seems to share when, according to *The Guardian*, the Labour leader said "We will win this election, not by buying up thousands of poster sites, but by having millions of conversations. I am going to be leading those conversations in village halls, community centres, workplaces right across the country" (Wintour, 2015).
- 33 Sustainable Europe Research Institute (SERI) is a Pan European think tank exploring sustainable development options for European societies. It was set up in September 1999. (Source: <http://seri.at/en/about/#sthash.IVgZyL1a.dpuf>)

Chapter 2

Eastings and Northings, Hummocks and Tall Grasses: mapping a useable theoretical context.

The pressing existential issue that first drew me to philosophy and that first defined philosophy in ancient times: the question of how one should live. The idea of philosophy as an art of living aimed at realising beauty through creative intelligence and critical reflection (involving both aesthetic and ethical sensitivity).

(Shusterman, 2006, p.ix)

A place needs to be found in people's minds for a new kind of thinking, for a new understanding of what fundamentally determines our existence. In the long run, this alone offers protection from old ideologies, this alone makes us certain to take the right decisions in future, supported by the majority of citizens. Art is essential in this difficult process, as an inborn creative sphere for the development of new forms of social co-existence.

(Boberg, 2004, p.7)

In establishing a context for this research, Chapter 1 located it in terms of Personal, Land Use, Community Resilience and Governance considerations. This chapter develops the historical and theoretical contexts as they relate to the development of a socially and ecologically engaged art practice. A practice which aims to reveal beauty and truth, a 'beauty' and 'truth' that is co-created by different people and organisations in relation to ecological systems, thereby responding positively to Boberg's question of "What is an art to look like [...] that can revoke Hegel's statement that art, considered in its highest vocation, is a thing of the past" and instead develop art that can "open our eyes, make us aware, stimulate our love of truth" (Boberg, 2004, p.8).

The chapter begins this exploration by using an *Easting and Northings*¹ mapping metaphor and finishes by developing a *Hummocks and Tall Grasses* metaphor, which is then applied and developed by 'back casting' to previous practice. Writing together, Giles Deleuze and Guattari interpret metaphor as a transformative process rather than a fixed representation – a means of expressing transversality (Woodward & Jones, 2005). This chapter continues along Guattari's lines of

transversality, Nicolescu's *transdisciplinary ethics* and Rancière's idea of *indisciplinary practice*, seeking to clarify the practice's positioning at the juncture of a number of philosophical dichotomies and a number of opposing interpretations of concepts, rather than taking a reductive stance.

It explores underlying questions about *landscape*, ethics, politics and aesthetics, universality, body and mind, mimesis, metaphor and artistic autonomy. It maps a critical framework for an emergent practice with the potential for revealing truths and beauty, for building relationships between people, institutions and ecological systems. Rancière highlights a central tension addressed in this thesis when he writes about art and politics, arguing that they are “two fields inherently belonging to each other rather than being autonomous” (Berribi, 2008, p.1). Also, in *The Politics of Aesthetics* (Rancière, 2004), he develops the idea of *regimes* of art, defining art in a social and historical context - one regime he refers to as the *aesthetic regime*, through which he describes art as being constantly held in tension between being art and being life.

Eastings and Northings 1.

does the word landscape describe the mutual embeddedness and interconnectivity of self, body, knowledge and land – landscape as the world we live in, a constantly emergent perceptual and material milieu? Or is landscape better conceived in artistic and painterly terms as a specific cultural and historical genre, a set of visual strategies and devices for distancing and observing?

(John Wylie, 2007, pp.1-2)

As we have seen, the term *landscape* is complex as it can simultaneously refer to our relationship between an aesthetic experience of places and rational thought, and also privilege the visual senses above wider aesthetic appreciation.

Notwithstanding Gablik's perspective that, “vision is not defined by the disembodied eye, as we have been trained to believe. Vision is a social practice that is rooted in the whole of being” (Gablik, 1998), the emphasis on visual senses is very apparent in *landscape* theory and spacial planning, thereby making it difficult to separate concepts of *landscape* and aesthetics from ideas of a view or scenery, for example, the common usage of William Gilpin's (1724-1804) word,

picturesque. Similarly, the dictionary definition of the verb *to landscape*, is to: “improve the aesthetic appearance of (a piece of land) by changing its contours, planting trees and shrubs etc.”. This places the words 'aesthetic' and 'appearance' together, thereby ignoring the many other values of introducing trees and shrubs onto a piece of land, all of which have an aesthetic resonance – increased habitat, bird song, shade and shelter, scents and so on. Definitions such as these limit aesthetic appreciation to being concerned with 'appearance' rather than referring to aesthetics as connection through experiences based on all the senses.

Related to the critique of privileging a visual understanding and representation of places is its potential to be manipulated by a neoliberal political order, or Guattari's “Integrated World Capitalism” (Guattari, 1989). Nato Thompson suggests an awareness of this provides the motivation for the growth in socially engaged art over the last twenty years. He explains that Guy Debord (1931-1994) originated the term 'spectacle', “to refer to the process by which culture, expressions of a society's self-understanding, is produced within the capitalist machine” and adds that this is “Typified by the image of an audience at a cinema or passively watching television and film, the spectacle can be seen as shorthand for a world condition wherein images are made for the purpose of sales” (Thompson, 2012, p. 29). This is problematic for socially engaged artists who do not wish to add to this *spectacle*, who wish instead to resist it and the dominant forces driving it. Thompson writes “It is upon this stage of vast spectacle that we must attempt to create meaningful relationships and actions” (2012, p.31). Thompson calls this the “strategic turn”, saying that its “where we find works that are explicitly local, long-term, and community-based” (2012, p.31). This *strategic turn* provides another context for the emergent practice and will be studied in Chapter 3 and Part Two.

Paul Selman writes that many languages “lack a term that adequately translates landscape” (Selman, 2012, p.2) and suggests that the “visual qualities of landscape – delightful or dramatic scenery, generally combined with 'picture postcard' villages – have, in practice, dominated spacial planning and environmental management policy” (2012, p.2). 18th Century landscape paintings are an example of this and despite huge changes in societal and environmental context, their depiction of a rural idyll² remain for many people, potent symbols of an aspirational English countryside.

If planning systems are to reflect broader cultural values as part of the agenda to reconnect people and nature, then contemporary art which uses all the senses, art that is multicultural and carries an awareness of environmental issues would be better placed to inform the debate rather than ones which just use visual representation. However, some art creates an even greater sense of distance between the viewer (the subject), and the art object, such as by framing work, giving the art object its own being, identity, presence, meaning, significance and history - especially in a gallery, but also online. While it could be argued that the longevity of such art proves its value in connecting us with places, I would argue that this risks being a superficial connection – consider instead Selman's reference to other ways of reading landscape - such as holding “stories, nutrient cycles, carbon fluxes, customary laws, economic activity and manifold other mysteries” (Selman, 2012, p.2). This multi-sensory and multi-functional, or immersive approach to places, provides context for many contemporary artists. Such practice resonates with Arnold Berleant's ideas of *Engaged Aesthetics* (Berleant, n.d.).

Much of this work is referred to as place making rather than *landscape change*. Place making aims to be more subjective, although any distinction between place and landscape is not clear cut as shown by this quote from Lippard:

Denis Cosgrove defines landscape as “the external world mediated through human subjective experience.” I would define place that way. A lived-in landscape becomes a place, which implies intimacy.

(Lippard, 1997: pp. 7-8)

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) describes place making as follows:

Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

(PPS, n.d., unpaginated)

Whilst community participation and connection with place is a central concern of the emergent practice, PPS's definition can be read as anthropocentric, by not referring to nature's agency. An underlying aim of the emergent practice is to

reconnect people with nature, cultural systems with ecological systems. This is different from connection via a form of place making that ignores the ecological dimension of change processes, ignoring the reverse side of the equation, that changes to cultural attitudes and behaviours to nature and ecological systems are also needed. Heike Strelow comments on the work of certain art practices, writing:

These artists are throwing their weight behind a culture of connection and co-operation. They are entirely with Felix Guattari in including social relationships, cultural influences and economic conditions in their perception of ecology.

(Strelow, 2004, p.10)

For the practice studied here, which works with many people, an important point is to be aware of the various meanings either term has for specific participants. For this research, the aim is to develop a process which combines the subjectivity and intimacy that people feel for places with the use of the word *landscape*, which is in common usage with policy makers, and perhaps more than *place* recognises the agency of features such as river corridors, valleys and woodlands. People using either term need to be aware of the ecological impacts of their work, as a part of the range of impacts on people's lives.

Eastings and Northings 2.

Aesthetics has undergone a radical transformation in the last hundred years [...] Far from being a mere adjunct to every day perception, it is shown to be vital to an understanding of the relationship between human being and the world. The aesthetic, formerly exiled from mainstream attention, assumes centre-stage as a sensibility that is critical of the divisions exercised by modern thought, and the region to which we can now turn for new moral, political and cognitive possibilities.

(Cazeaux, 2011, p. X111)

In this section notions of aesthetics, as limited to the research focus, will be considered, leading to a reflection on socially engaged artists which is key to this research.

Historically there has been a separation between aesthetics and reason. For Alexander Baumgarten (1714- 62) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), aesthetics

was the judgement of beauty and art in nature. They opened an ongoing debate based on the ancient Greek meaning of *aisthesis* - knowledge obtained through the senses as separate and secondary to *eidos* – knowledge gained through thought and reason. Kant challenged the then prevalent Cartesian theories by proposing that empirical and rational approaches are complementary to each other (Kant,1790).

The debate is taken up by Malcolm Miles who refers to tensions between “sense impressions and intellectual ideas”, (Miles, 2014,p.57) and Massumi writes that the “dichotomy recurs as an opposition between 'fact-based' or 'common sense' approaches and 'experimental', 'idealistic', or 'utopian' approaches, with a clear implication of the superiority of the former” (Massumi, 2011, p.11-12).

Gablik, in reference to Thomas Moore's *The Reenchantment of Everyday Life* (1996), addresses the perceived need of “putting soul back into the picture” saying, “Reenchantment [...] signifies striking a balance between subjectivity and objectivity, masculine and feminine, discursive and intuitive modes of knowing” (Gablik, 2002, p.14). This argument for balancing subjective and objective ways of understanding the world appears to provide a solution to the philosophical dichotomy. Nevertheless, Miles is critical of Gablik's view of rationality and disenchantment on a number of grounds, suggesting that *reenchantment* implies a return to tradition, pre-industrial society, to “the blind forces of control (blind Fate)” and myth. He instead suggests that in the modern or post-modern world:

Myth is banished by reason but returns in various forms so that the task of theory is not regression to a prerational state but a continuing, never-completed revision of rationality from within.

(Miles, 2014, p.96)

I read Miles' reference to this contested issue as suggesting a process, not dissimilar to Dougald Hine of The Dark Mountain Project who writes: “if you start exploring the work of any of these writers (regular contributors at Dark Mountain Project) you will find that mythology is a recurring reference point, a deep element in how we make sense of things” (Hine, 2017). This is further explored in Chapter 6, through the *Caring for Folly Wood* case study.

Miles, who in exploring aesthetics as “a branch of modern rational philosophy”, also writes that:

Seeing the world as mere object implies its exploitation; seeing it, or feeling it, as a mirror of the self, which is more or less an ecological position, may imply a sense of caring and of living in relation to rather than exerting power over worlds.

(Miles, 2014, pp. 49-50).

This *in relation* points to both an individual's ecological relationship with her/his world as opposed to objectifying it, and also their relationship with other people, for, as Miles claims, there are multiple worlds “as many as beholders, each as real to the person seeing or imagining it - structured by concepts such as Beauty”. Here he reminds us that “Beauty is a construct, not a natural property” (p.49). These two ideas are important to mapping an appropriate critical framework- first a relational aesthetic that combines the ecological and social, and second, an aesthetic paradigm which helps question and reveal what *Beauty* is in a post post-modern world. This is especially pertinent as this research is largely carried out within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is of particular relevance to Chapter 5.

Kant's ideas in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790) continue to influence discussions about aesthetics and beauty. Hannah Ginsborg claims that “Kant's account of aesthetics [...] is ostensibly part of a broader discussion of the faculty or power of judgement” and that “The connection between aesthetic judgment and moral feeling is a persistent theme in the *Critique of Judgment*” (Ginsborg 2014). Kant's idea of *disinterest* as a means of judging beauty has initiated a dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity which also remains a focus for debate. Berleant writes that “the philosophical origins of disinterestedness lie, not in aesthetic experience or in the arts, but in eighteenth-century speculation on moral philosophy and the need to ensure impartial judgment by excluding any consideration of private interest” (Berleant, 2013, p.vii). A feminist criticism of disinterest is that it replicates disengagement. How then is this stepping back also engagement? In writing about process philosophy Brian Massumi refers to Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and the “principle of unrest” or “becoming” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 28), saying:

The principle of unrest eddies into some-thing we would be forgiven for suspecting is not unlike aesthetic appreciation: an enjoyment of creativity

[...] How is this “at no remove”? How is this immediate? Doesn’t it imply self-reflection? Doesn’t self-reflection imply luxury of the contemplative distance on the world?

(Massumi, 2011, p.2).

Massumi arrives at what he calls a duplicity which he refers to as “an artefact of immediacy”, writing, “It is simply that each occasion of experience comes into itself amid activities that are not its own, already going on” (Massumi, 2011, p.2). The linking of *self-reflection* and *artefacts of immediacy* could be a way of interpreting *disinterest* as a moment of reflection that is folded into ongoing experience and understanding, similar to certain types of drawing practice. A moment of encounter which is both subjective and objective.

This research into aesthetics is concerned with developing a critical framework for an arts practice aimed at facilitating people's engagement with nature. In emphasising that an inquiry into the encounter between person and world is focused on the experience of the encounter, psychologist Donald Polkinghorne provides another argument for why aesthetic appreciation is also engagement:

the phenomenological map refocuses inquiry, concentrating not on descriptions of worldly objects but on descriptions of experience [...] The form and continuity of experience are products of an intrinsic relationship between human beings and the world [...] Experience as it is directly given, occurs at the meeting of person and world.

(Polkinghorne, 1989, pp. 41-2).

Although this thesis argues for a relational aesthetic, one in which the agency of others is recognised as a part of the *intrinsic relationship*, Hans Rainer Sepp and Lester Embree's *The Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics* (Sepp & Embree, 2010), points to much overlap between the two branches of philosophy as they approach ideas of the *lifeworld*.

Returning to *disinterest* as a means of making judgements, Edward Wilson's notion of *biophilia* (1984) and Yi-FuTuan's notion of *topophilia* (1974) appear to make it hard to claim that there can be no self-interest when making judgements about nature and landscape (Stedman & Ingalls, 2014, p.130). And to ignore this relationship would surely be disengaging. Instead this thesis questions whether art can help us replace self-interest with a collective and shared interest, an interest

which also takes account of other people's and ecological interest? Can the emergent practice provide a reflective and participative process? A process where and when a variety of individual, community, institutional and non-human interests can be encountered and reflected upon. A process to reveal the *lifeworld* and counter Habermas's *block of quasi-natural reality*. In this sense the research studies the emergent practice's potential for revealing shared aesthetic moments, as opposed to anaesthetic ones, a means of facilitating aesthetic engagement, allowing participants to step back from our everyday processes, making space for human responses to life such as passion, spirituality and empathy.

Ronald Hepburn's 1966 article, *Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty*, helped to instigate an interest in environmental aesthetics.

Carlson suggests that Hepburn "observed that there is in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, as in the appreciation of art, a distinction between appreciation that is only trivial and superficial and that which is serious and deep" and goes on to illustrate Hepburn's influence on the debate, writing that:

serious appreciation might require new and different approaches that can accommodate not only nature's indeterminate and varying character, but also both our multi-sensory experience and our diverse understanding of it. By focusing attention on natural beauty, Hepburn demonstrated that there could be significant philosophical investigation of the aesthetic experience of the world beyond the art world. He thereby not only generated renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature, he also laid foundations for environmental aesthetics in general as well as for the aesthetics of everyday life.

(Carlson 2015, unpaginated)

This is an important distinction for the thesis, as Bruce Kapferer and Angela Hobart write, "aesthetics does not merely concern art but rather lies at the heart of the critical understanding of the human project as a whole" (Hobart & Kapferer, 2005, p.2).

Within environmental aesthetics, there is debate between people taking either a *cognitivist* or *noncognitivist* approach. Berleant and Carlson have been notable protagonists in this debate. Carlson summarises the cognitivist position as stressing "various kinds of emotional and feeling-related states and responses"

and the noncognitivist as contending that “appreciation must be guided by the nature of objects of appreciation and thus that knowledge about their origins, types and properties is necessary for serious, appropriate aesthetic appreciation” (Carlson, 1998/2011, unpaginated). From their initial, contradictory positions, Berleant and Carlson have more recently found common ground as outlined by Carlson:

recent work in environmental aesthetics, especially in the aesthetics of human environments and everyday life, demonstrates that although different in emphasis, they are not in direct conflict. When conjoined, they advocate bringing together feeling and knowing, which is the core of serious aesthetic experience.

(Carlson, 1998/2011, unpaginated)

Carlson's terminology may still suggest that 'feeling' is not a way of 'knowing'; nevertheless this softening of the interface between different ways of experiencing the world provides context for the emergent practice.

However aesthetics, often considered to be primarily concerned with appreciation of art, has not been considered useful in environmental debate, policy and action. Aesthetics have been dismissed as: trivial (Callicott, 1994), anthropocentric (Godlovitch, 1994), subjective (Thompson, 1995), scenery-obsessed (Saito, 1998), and/or morally vacuous (Andrews, 1998). This was reflected in a recent planning decision about an application to build on Rodborough Fields, where, although the ecology of the site gave the local authority grounds for refusal, the signatures of three thousand residents who also felt strongly about other values of the piece of land, its cultural significance for example, held no sway³. Certainly Thompson's 1995 criticism above, that aesthetics are *subjective*, can be seen as part of the challenge at the very heart of this research. Here though it is not seen as negative, more how to enable a positive reconnection.

The research is concerned with how an aesthetic practice can accommodate people's connection with their changing environment, thereby democratising decision making and increasing participation. Selman, being mindful of the risk of furthering disconnection, suggests how this might be done through “landscape quality objectives, supported by community participation and social learning opportunities” (Selman, 2012, pp. 91-117). He sees this as building resilience in

what he refers to as “regenerative social-ecological systems” (Selman, 2012, pp. 42-67). Similar community building would gain support from Nicole Lurie, a former professor of health policy, who had been President Obama’s assistant secretary for preparedness and response as cited by Eric Klinenberg, stating “There’s a lot of social-science research showing how much better people do in disasters, how much longer they live, when they have good social networks and connections” (Klinenberg, 2013). However, Selman adds a caveat that not all resilience is desirable; for example the resilience of systems that are inherently unjust would be undesirable in a liberal democracy. Consequently he suggest that “we need a socially endorsed touchstone to judge whether a system is showing the right kind of resilience” (Selman, 2012, p.63). He argues that because the concept of sustainability - although contested (Hopkins, 2008), has “been widely debated and endorsed by society and government”, it would provide a broad consensus for testing resilience, “including principles of social justice” (Selman, 2012, p.63).

Democratising systems raises ethical and aesthetic arguments about *universality*. Historically, universality has been associated with modernism’s rationalist quest for utopia yet it is problematic for a participatory and pluralistic practice. Baruch Spinoza (1632 – 1677) in his writing about ethics (1677) claimed that all ethical judgements are relative; relative to experience of lived situations. Merleau-Ponty’s ideas of phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), which, along with feminist ideas of embodiment and emotional geographies, bring into question normative approaches to understanding the world. As Pamela Richardson suggests: “We live our lives as embodied creatures; feeling, sensing, and thinking through the body. Our relationship to space, place and landscape is inescapably shaped by the kind of bodies we have” (Richardson, n.d.).

These perspectives require an interpretation of 'universal' that is synonymous with 'common' or 'inclusive'. Rather than being a reductive, pre-fixed bench mark or standard of beauty and truth for example, these qualities appear to be more about expanding understanding by recognising diversity. This suggests that we do not know universal beauty or universal truth, rather that life is a process of discovery and rediscovery. The research studies the emergent practice as it facilitates and reveals this common yet diverse experiencing of beauty.

This resonates with The New Zealand Council for Educational Research's Shifting

Thinking Project. Writing about Equality and Justice they compare the 'one size fits all' ideas of the enlightenment and modernism with the post-modernism. They cite the shift to ideas of the politics of difference and its “focus on process; on making difference visible, not so that it can be assimilated, but to allow it just to 'be', to express itself, not in relation to dominant norms, but on its own terms” (NZCER, n.d.). They mention a focus on 'third spaces', as summarised in Appendix 2.

An example of this is Barbara Bickel and colleagues collaborative community engaged arts practice in the City of Richgate, British Columbia, which Bickel describes as crossing “cultural, ethnic, geographic, institutional, public, private, and disciplinary boundaries, reflecting the ever-changing character of postmodern reality” (Bickel *et al.* 2011, p.87). Writing about A/r/tography⁴, they claim that such an approach “requires a relational practice that co-revises itself in/with community experiences” (2011, p.87). They quote Carol Becker's conception about the role of artist in the post-modern world:

In our collective Western consciousness, and probably our unconsciousness as well, we do not have images of artists as socially concerned citizens of the world, people who could serve as leaders and help society determine, through insights and wisdom, its desirable political course [...] In their role as spokespersons for multiple points of view and advocates for a healthy critique of society, certain artists should be understood as public intellectuals [...] these amateur intellectuals [are] forever inventing themselves and renegotiating their place on the border zones between disciplines, never stuck in any *one* of them (Becker, 2002, p.12).

(Bickell *et al.*, 2011, p.88)

What then is the aesthetic paradigm that guides and informs such an approach? Berleant's social aesthetic (2005), Bourriaud's relational aesthetic (2002), Gablik's connective aesthetic (1992), Kester's dialogic aesthetic (1999/2000), Strelow's ecological aesthetics (2004) and aesthetics of the everyday are referred to throughout this thesis as they provide helpful context. All of these are political in as much as they deal with relationships between people and the world. The idea of *Aesthetics of the Everyday*, a development from John Dewy's (1934) *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, has influenced thinking on *landscape affect*, as Ben Highmore writes, the “materialistic turn towards the immaterial, towards affect, towards thingyness, the senses and so on are necessarily determined by the social world that produced them” (in Berberich *et al.*, 2013, p.p. 323-336). These *pragmatist*

aesthetics inform the development of a critical framework. They are by their very nature practical – although theorised, they only exist through praxis.

In describing social aesthetics, Elizabeth Burns Coleman, Christopher Hartney and Zoe Alderton recognise their practical application, writing that as well as them promising “to become the site of a rich crossroads in disciplinary research” they are also “a rediscovery of aesthetics in the everyday, and in this there is an immediate political dimension...” (Alderton, Coleman & Hartney, 2013, p.4). Similarly, Rancière wrote “artistic radicality and political radicality 'is an 'alliance' that has “been undone [...] an alliance whose proper name is today's incriminated term of aesthetics” (Rancière, 2009a, p.p.21-22). Both of these statements reflect the political nature of being in relation. Bourriaud, influenced by Guattari (1992), used the term *relational aesthetics* (2002) to critique the work of some postmodern artists as having “a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (Bourriaud, 2002: p.113). He too contends that relational aesthetics are political, referring to micro utopia. However he is criticised by Bishop (2006a, p.180), for curating such works within a setting provided by the art institution, rather than in the setting of grass roots action, and similarly by Kester on grounds of them “retaining an essentially textual status in which social exchange is choreographed as an a priori event for the consumption of an audience “summoned” by the artist” (Kester, 2011: p.32-33). Kester has earlier developed this idea, writing, “The 'artist' occupies a socially constructed position of privileged subjectivity, reinforced by both institutional sponsorship and deeply imbedded cultural connotations” (Kester, 1999/2000, p7). This suggests that the emergent practice should instead be embedded in community, not outside looking in, but a working and reflecting part of it.

Hepburn identified the value of “investigation of the aesthetic experience of the world beyond the art world” and Berleant suggests that:

aesthetic community does in fact exist in more limited forms, imperfectly and impermanently [...] in small, intentional groups and communities. It may be that a modest scope is the precondition for an aesthetic social order, a necessary corrective to the overpowering magnitude of mass culture.
(Berleant 2005, p.36)

The Stroud Valleys, as referred to in Chapter 1, can be interpreted as such a place. One where John Wood's suggestions for micro-utopias (as opposed to a monolithic 'Utopia', as sought in Sir Thomas More's [1478-1535] 1515 novel) can be seen in practice. Wood identifies two challenges for a collaborative practice in such cases. Firstly writing that there is "a huge creative challenge that will require new methods and approaches. We are not used to a 'joined-up' society in which common sense is used to design the way things work" (Wood, 2007, p.12). Also, and resonating with ideas of 'active hope', Wood emphasises the need to dream and envisage the future that we want, and suggests that, by perceiving the unthinkable as thinkable, we begin to address some of the barriers that prevent us from dreaming of and achieving our desired futures. He goes on to say that the next step is to "co-imagine the dream in a more shareable form" and that this would mean "exchanging dreams and seeing how they can be conjoined to enhance one another" (Wood, 2007, p.13). This is explored throughout Part Two.

Micro-utopia resonates with objectives inherent in the Transition Movement and elsewhere, referred to as localism. Hopkins points out that some detractors to Transition argue "that a focus on localisation negates the potential of design and human brilliance to create low-carbon, high-tech new cities [...] that by promoting localisation, Transition wants society to return to the Middle Ages." (Hopkins, 2011, page 290). While this call to encourage human brilliance and creativity are most certainly a part of what the emergent practice aims to facilitate, the criticism appears to ignore the relational aspects, the community building and social equality motivation of those involved in Transition. It is the very processes and wider environmental implications of creating these cities and their imagined supporting technology which is in question. As Alderton *et al.* write, "we need to look at what drives our conceptions of the good and the beautiful not as mind to object, but as human to human and human to space" (Alderton, Coleman & Hartney, 2013, p.11). This suggests the application of a relational and environmental aesthetic which also encompasses ethics – Guattari's ethico-aesthetic paradigm.

Eastings and Northings 3.

The emancipatory enlargement of the aesthetic involves similarly

reconceiving art in more liberal terms, freeing it from its exalted cloister, where it is isolated from life and contrasted to more popular forms of cultural expression.

(Shusterman, 2000, p.xv)

A central question for socially and ecologically engaged practice relates to the relationship between aesthetics and ethics. Bishop aligns herself with Rancière's ideas regard art's political role has in *distribution of the sensible* (Rancière 2004, p.25). One of her main concerns however is the collapsing of the ethical into the aesthetic; arguing that it is the very separateness of art that gives it its transformative qualities (Bishop, 2012a, 2012b). This commentary seems to be at odds with ideas of integrating aesthetics and reason, unless we see such integration as a never ending, experiential and reflective process, similar to Miles' *never-completed revision of rationality from within*. One concern is that social practice leaves the artist “devising new models of social and political organisation” (Bishop, 2012b, p.284). She suggests this is because there is a political vacuum; no political cause to which such practice can be aligned. This is based on her presumption that “at a certain point art has to hand over to other institutions if social change is to be achieved: it is not enough to keep producing activist *art*” (Bishop, 2012b, p.283). This is a valid point and raises a number of questions about the nature of the collaboration. For example, it seems to suggest that the artists and other participants have not shared longer-term objectives when projects are initiated. This appears to contradict Thompson's discussion above about the *strategic turn* (Thompson, 2012, p.31), maybe pointing to art which uses communities to deliver the artist's project, rather than their own.

Kester too writes about a vacuum in organised political resistance and its relationship to the aesthetic. He traces this back to the view held, particularly by French philosophers and activists, that the May 1968 Paris student uprisings were unsuccessful. This he claims led to what he calls “a third way” (Kester, 2011, pp. 43-65) and proposes that it resulted in the “textualisation” of, and creation of a separate space for, resistance. A space uncontaminated by the realities of everyday life such as the commodification of revolution (the business of tee shirts brandishing images of Che Guevara [1928-1967] for example), and separate from involvement with failed and tainted political organisations of protest. He sees this as a marginalised space which claimed aesthetics as its own and where perhaps

disillusioned activists had chosen to exile themselves from the application of ethics – and from practical aesthetics. Of course it is equally possible to argue that this space was the last bastion of resistance, a space from which the phoenix would rise; as Kester described, “to develop covert, subversive 'interventions' in the cultural sphere, which will reproduce the contagion logic of street action at the level reader, viewer or student” (Kester, 2011, p. 46). The question remains the same; how to re-integrate art practice with life and its ethical concerns, yet retain the transformational qualities that Bishop suggests are the result of art's very separateness? These ideas of *art as life* are looked at further in Chapter 3 and studied in Part two through the three case studies.

Despite the differences between Bishop and Kester, many of the ideas that Bishop suggests in her conclusions to developing a critical framework for participative art, such as “Arts inventive forms of negation”, “art as an experimental activity overlapping with the world” and “the progressive transformation of existing institutions through the transversal encroachment of ideas” (Bishop, 2012b, p.284), do not seem that far removed from Kester saying that the “creation of new knowledge regarding political and social transformation, and the specific role that art can play in facilitating this transformation, requires a process of both learning and un-learning via practice” (Kester, 2011, p.226).

Does the transformation towards a practice that reveals individuals' subjectivities, community creativity and ecology's agency require an *un-learning* of individualism and artist autonomy, the idea that has been, to quote Gablik, “the overarching principle of Modernism”? She continues by saying that this “Liberation from rules and restraints, however, has proven itself to mean alienation from social discourse itself” (Gablik, 1984, p.23). Deleuze and Guattari address this dilemma, suggesting art as a means of communicating to future communities, putting it “in view, one hopes, of that still missing people” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p.76). In this way the artist can be understood as being both a part of and apart from community: participating yet reflecting, adding value, celebrating, transforming community activity so as to “extract new harmonies, new plastic or melodic landscapes, and new rhythmic characters that raise them to the height of the earth's song and the cry of humanity” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p.76). Rancière responds to this particular piece of writing as he discusses the intertwining of art into everyday life

and comments upon the relationship between artist and community:

What the artist does is to weave together a new sensory fabric by wresting percepts and affects from the perceptions and affections that make up the fabric of ordinary experience. Weaving this new fabric means creating a form of common expression or a form of expression of the community – namely, 'the earth's song and cry of humanity'.

(Rancière, 2008,b, unpaginated)

'The earth's song and cry of humanity' raises the question about relationships between cultural and ecological systems, whether humans are a part of or apart from nature. Wylie was quoted earlier writing about "the tension between eye and land" suggesting we "split landscapes in two [...] 'material' and 'mental' aspects, objective and subjective, science and art, nature and culture." (Wylie, 2007: p.8). He writes, "the issue of where to draw the line between the two becomes fraught with political, moral and ethical dilemmas" not least of which he recognises is the question of whether humans are a part of or apart from nature. Emily Brady and Pauline Phemister's *value-space*, a space in which they explore, through contributors' essays, "the possibility of transfers of values [...] not only from humans to their environments, but also in the opposite direction, from environments to humans" (Brady & Phemister, 2012, p.ix). They suggest that this has the potential to enable us to rethink the relationship between the self and environment, writing,

Working with the notion of a more situated self, the essays seek to uncover a certain fluidity in the hitherto set boundaries between self and nature and a degree of agency in the material world. It is through these ways of rethinking human-environment relations that we see this value-space as having transformative significance.

(Brady & Phemister, Eds., 2012, p.ix)

Whether or where we draw a line between human and other-than-human, if we are to heed Marina Michaelidou, Daniel J. Decker and James P. Lassoie's 'interdependency theory', which claims that community and environmental sustainability are interdependent (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2002), we need to find ways of including nature's agency in human decision making processes. Chapter 6 in particular studies this in practice.

Is this similar to Rancière's suggestion that a purpose of art is to "make that which

did not possess grounds to be seen, make a discourse heard where once there had been nothing but noise” (Rancière, 1995, p. 53). How can we *hear the voices* of other species, habitats and natural systems? In some cases we fall back on the judgements of experts. Metaphor is another way that a number of artists approach this. Metaphor is discussed below.

Eastings and Northings 4.

In place of the dualist ontology of classical metaphysics, the challenge is to construct an ontological monism, centred on the concept of difference [...] It is at the cost of such a transformation that aesthetics can twist free of mimesis and open onto a different sense of experience.

(Miguel de Beistegui, 2012, p.7)

Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary to metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the world.

(Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 22.)

In *The Republic* (around 380 BC), Plato (between 429 and 423 BC - 348/347 BC) wrote about art as mimesis, art as imitation of reality. Rather than seeing art as imitation, Jill Bennet instead sees it as “practical aesthetics” (Bennett, 2012: p.3), a means of revealing how we respond to life as we experience it through our senses. Bennett develops this possibility, writing that practical aesthetics is “the study of aesthetic perception at work in a social field” (Bennett, 2012: p.3), coinciding with relational aesthetics as discussed, but also suggesting practical application, “an endeavour in which art and exhibitions participate as they engage with and reflect on aesthetics-at-large. Art, in this sense, offers an exemplary instance of practical aesthetics” (Bennett, 2012: p.3). This provides an alternative role for art to that of mimesis, yet also a challenge if it is to reveal the multi-faceted and changing world the thesis has been discussing.

With reference to Marcel Proust (1871-1922), de Beistegui suggests that we understand metaphor “as the operation that reveals or opens up that space and time, hidden or folded in the space and time of ordinary perception and cognition” (de Beistegui, 2012, p.6). This idea of being an *operation* concurs with Deleuze

and Guattari's idea of seeing metaphor as a transitional process and replacing it with metamorphosis, writing: "It is no longer a question of a resemblance [...] Instead, it is now a question of a becoming that includes the maximum of differences" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 22).

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson approach metaphor from a neuroscience perspective, and suggest that it is central to our understanding of the world and although they accept that these ideas are contested, they suggest that we "don't have a choice as to whether to think metaphorically. Because metaphorical maps are part of our brains, we will think and speak metaphorically whether we want to or not" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.257). Certainly Deleuze and Guattari's writing is full of metaphor, despite them substituting the term with the more active *metamorphosis*. The thesis adopts the term *active metaphor* to distinguish it from creating static symbols or resemblance, and also to resonate with the earlier discussed idea of active hope and immanence generally.

Being objective about subjectivity, is central to this research. Clive Cazeaux writes about the role and popularity of metaphor as being a return to "the Kantian question of how one secures objectivity given that the task of organizing the world has been assigned to (subjective) consciousness" (Cazeaux, 2004, pp. 3-4). He adds that metaphor raises this as a possibility "since it produces meaning which is new yet insightful... an original, freshly minted trope". (Cazeaux, 2004, p.4). Metaphors' facility to be objective about subjectivity is clearly useful for qualitative research which is itself subjective. The thesis studies its usefulness in incorporating subjectivity into objective systems, such as the planning system. Research psychologist, Barbara Tversky describes some of the benefits of visual metaphor, in particular how they are at the heart of creating community identity:

they are cultural artefacts created in a community [...] fine-tuned by their users. They can provide a permanent, public record that can be pointed at or referred to. They externalize and clarify common ground. They can be understood, revised, and manipulated by a community [...] they allow human agility in visual-spatial processing and inference to be applied to visual-spatial information and to metaphorically spatially abstract information.

(Tversky, 2010, p.502)

Although other sensory perception beyond just the visual could be added,

Tversky's reference to the facility of metaphor to convey abstract information is important in its potential for increasing participation in meaning making. She writes:

These ways of communicating meanings may not provide definitions with the rigour of words, but rather provide suggestions for meanings and constraints on them, giving them greater flexibility than words. That flexibility means that many of the meanings thus conveyed need context and experience to fully grasp.

(Tversky, 2010, p.502)

Metaphors then, or the act of metamorphosis, appears to be a means of exchanging and assembling a multitude of contexts, experiences and ideas in a post post-modern world. Part Two will test this assumption.

This chapter has explored theories relating to *landscape* and *aesthetics*. It has explored the dualism between reason and aesthetics and in particular the separation of art from ethics, culture from nature and art from life. It has considered these in terms of the relationship between individuals and group and between cultural and ecological systems. It has considered this in relation to ideas of disinterest and universality, mimesis, metaphor and metamorphosis. These various lines of inquiry provide a theoretical and historical context for studying how to develop and apply an art practice capable of democratising and incorporating subjective and objective engagement with *landscape change* and *place making* processes.

Hummocks and Tall Grasses

The previous section and Chapter 1 have provided context for locating the emergent practice. Figure 2 (page 11), itself adapted from Barrett and Bolt's ideas on practice as research (2007), is further adapted here as a set of reference points to consolidate this. A different metaphor is used to compile the reference points as an outline critical framework; *Hummocks and Tall Grasses*, Figure 5 below. This locational metaphor is used to reflect a practical, "out walking the land" ethico-aesthetic, rather than the Cartesian methodology of *Eastings and Northings*. It sets out a relational, pragmatist approach, combining an aesthetic sensitivity to the world with ethical and environmental concerns.

enable community participation in landscape change processes at different scales

Hummocks and Tall Grasses 1

with reference to the mind/body dualism, the practice, in collaborating with people with varying approaches to *landscape change*, seeks to develop in such a way as to encompass these differences, and accepts that rational and embodied, local and strategic, cognitivist and non-cognitivist ways of knowing are complementary and non hierarchical.

incorporate subjective and objective views in decision making

Hummocks and Tall Grasses 2

with reference to mimesis, the emergent practice seeks instead to explore the role of aesthetics in revealing a multi-layered understanding of the world and to explore the appropriateness of metaphor as a means of being objective about subjectivity in the context of *landscape change* processes and place-making.

create a bridge between individual, community and institutional subjectivity and nature's agency

Hummocks and Tall Grasses 3

with reference to human/non-human relations, the emergent practice seeks to encourage the transfer of values between human and other-than-human, including at an individual, collective and institutional level, to reveal the relationship between cultural and ecological systems.

open out into the broadest questions about the kind of society and culture that we espouse and wish to inhabit and promote

Hummocks and Tall Grasses 4

with reference to ideas of universal beauty and truth and disinterest, the emergent practice seeks instead to develop democratic and inclusive processes for encountering and exchanging a multitude of values regards *landscape change*, with sustainability as a common touch stone.

announce locally different forms of sociability, environmental interactivity and collective storytelling

Hummocks and Tall Grasses 5

with reference to the shortfalls of a purely visual landscape

aesthetic, yet recognising the potential of art to create long-lived attachment to places, the emergent practice seeks to connect people with locality by facilitating direct experience; adopting a relational, dialogic and engaged aesthetic.

support sustainable, community processes

Hummocks and Tall Grasses 6

with reference to relational aesthetics, ethics and politics, the

emergent practice seeks to take part in community projects and help bridge between individual, community and institutional subjectivity by exploring the role of aesthetics in participatory democracy and collective decision making within the context of *landscape change* processes.

lead to action

Hummocks and Tall Grasses 7

with reference to the idea of practical aesthetics, the emergent practice seeks to encourage and facilitate actionable knowledge focused on *landscape change*.

elucidate the value of creative arts practice and reveal new connections

Hummocks and Tall Grasses 8

with reference to the synergy between artistic autonomy and cultural and environmental engagement, the research seeks to reflect with collaborators and other parties upon the impact of the emergent practice in the context of facilitating involvement in *landscape change* processes and decision making

Figure 5. *Hummocks and Tall Grasses*: an outline critical framework for the emergent practice.

To further develop this framework, it is used to 'back cast' and reflect upon earlier practice which has emerged from many years working collaboratively with a range

of people and disciplines (Appendix 1). This has included working with community and performance artists, video makers, town and country planners, landscape architects, ecologists, farmers, historians, countryside managers and educationalists as well as across the public, private and voluntary sectors and across national and local government; with other members of the local community, businesses and residents, neighbours and friends. The journey of the transversal practice can be traced back through working in woodland management, landscape design, urban fringe and countryside management,⁵ community forestry,⁶ urban wildlife gardening,⁷ organisational change, sustainability facilitation and socially engaged art.

These practices have had in common their concern with the relationship between individuals, communities, the statutory sector and the environment. Approaches they have in common are community participation, developing environmental and cultural appreciation of places, collectively envisioning future places and taking practical action on the ground.

This earlier practice has been divided into four distinct, yet mutating phases, upon which Figure 5 has been 'back cast' as a means of further manifesting the juncture between theory and practice, and further developing the relevance of both to this research. These reflections are summarised in Figure 6 below.

H & TG reference	Reflections	Course of Action
1	On occasion, the practice fell short of making sound collaborations with participants and stakeholders.	Improve initial negotiations. Link with existing community projects.
2	The use of metaphor had begun to create multi-layered understandings. However alone it did not lead to being objective about subjectivity in a way that would influence decision making.	Include Deleuze and Guattari's idea of "assemblage" as a project milestone.
3	The practice did appear to encourage transfer of values between non-human and human but not always at an institutional level	Better clarify projects' objective of influencing the relationship between cultural and ecological systems.

4	While the practice did explore ways of being inclusive and revealing values, the values were mainly aesthetic and not always connected to a sustainability agenda.	Increase exchange of values among a wider group of participants and link to sustainability agenda.
5	Walking appeared to be a good means of reconnecting people with nature but often fell short of celebrating place beyond those involved in the walks.	Increase the impact of walking by making it a central methodology of community projects and initiatives.
6	Whilst the practice had at times successfully bridged between individual, community and institutional subjectivity, it had often fallen short of contributing to envisioning sustainable landscapes.	Clarify this research aspect of the purpose of projects with all partners and design interventions accordingly.
7	Whilst environmental and social awareness had been raised and some direct action taken, little strategic action aimed at caring for the environment had been generated.	Adopt a methodology and process which will lead to revealing and sharing actionable knowledge.
8	The practice can be seen to have raised the research question.	Further consider how the arts practice is also research practice.

Figure 6. Summary of using the Hummocks and Tall Grasses reference points as a critical framework for the emergent practice

The 'back casting' of the *Hummocks and Tall Grasses* upon earlier practice demonstrates the evolutionary relationship between theory and practice. In doing so, the reflections have also demonstrated the practice in its local situation as it emerges to address the issues which concern this thesis and begun to identify how the practice needs to change to develop and deliver its ethico-aesthetic paradigm. This is further analysed in Chapter 3 and then reflected upon in response to other arts practices.

- 1 The term Easting and Northing are geographic Cartesian coordinates for a point. Easting refers to the eastward-measured distance, while Northing refers to the northward-measured distance.
- 2 Questions as how ideal were the landscapes, such those painted by Gainsborough, for the rural poor is contested. (Barrell, 1980; Jones, 2002; Sloman, 2011)
- 3 Rodborough Fields: These are the racking fields on the southern edge of Stroud referred to in the Introduction. An application to build 100 houses on them was refused in April 2013 based on the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's evidence. On the BBC TV's planning programme, the District Council's planning officer, explained how this was of material consideration whereas the signatures on the petition were not.
- 4 *A/r/tography*, according to the *A/r/tography Trail* website (<http://theartographictrail.com>), is a form of practice-based/art based research steeped in the arts and education. Alongside other arts-based, arts-informed and aesthetically defined methodologies, *a/r/tography* is one of many emerging forms of inquiry that refer to the arts as a way of re-searching the world to enhance understanding. *A/r/tography* does not seek to answer questions or offer linear procedures that end in finely extracted answers. Rather, it provides a form of living inquiry. These questions are generated by the evolution of the experiences surrounding and resulting from the relational realities and processes of one's active engagement in an ongoing search for deeper understanding. As a relational process, *a/r/tography* dwells within tensioned in/between spaces, seeking out and acknowledging discomfort as a vibrant place of becoming and learning.
- 5 From the 1970's, Urban Fringe and Countryside Management was a practice championed by the then Countryside Commission, aimed at managing areas on the edge of cities and access to them. These were often in partnership with local authorities and particularly addressed the issues at the interface of urban and rural.
- 6 In England, twelve Community Forests were established in the 1990's, along with the National Forest, by the then Countryside Agency and Forestry Commission in partnership with local authorities as a way of integrating urban and rural into Town and Country Planning and other public policy. These approaches have been integrated in Green Infrastructure Strategy and Social Forestry.
- 7 During the 1970's and 80's the work of environmentalists such as Dr. Chris Baines caught people's imagination and throughout the country people consciously gardened for wildlife, including working with local authorities, Wildlife Trusts and the then *The British Trust For Conservation Volunteers*, to manage public open space for wildlife.

Chapter 3

Art into Life: deepening the critical framework

Relational aesthetics rejects art's claim to self-sufficiency as much as it dreams of transforming life, but even so it reaffirms an essential idea of art as a way of occupying a place where relations between bodies, images, spaces and times are redistributed.

(Rancière, 2009a, p.22)

As art enters life, the question that will motivate people far more than What is art? is the much more metaphysically relevant and pressing What is life?

(Thompson, 2012, p.33)

Chapter 2 developed a *Hummocks and Tall Grasses* critical framework and used it to examine earlier projects. It discovered that for the emergent practice to be capable of delivering against its relational and environmental paradigm, a number of developments were needed. An analysis of this is set out in Figure 7 below.

1. Further developing an appropriate ethico-aesthetic paradigm
2. Strengthening collaboration and participation
3. Enabling encounter, especially through walking in nature
4. Exchanging responses in order to co-create vision across individual, community and public domains
5. Using metaphor as a methodology or process (metamorphosis) to assemble, review and reflect with partners to directly encourage/facilitate action to care for the environment and consolidate the research credentials of the practice

Figure 7. Deepening the critical framework: a focus for developing the practice

This chapter reflects in turn on each of the numbered points above by examining a selection of developments in arts expanded/ing field. In order to further consolidate the context for the emergent practice's critical framework, it considers various arts practices and theoretical underpinnings.

To keep a realistic boundary around the research, many artists have not been

included¹ – notably American artists Alan Sonfist (b.1946) and Merle Laderman Ukeles (b.1939), and artist collective *Platform* and *Littoral Arts Trust* in Britain, nor the collaborative work of the artists/designers/architects *Assemble* collective. The work of William Kentridge (b.1955) is referred to in some detail in Chapter 5. Likewise with the many place-making initiatives not recognised as art but which follow a similar trajectory. An additional criteria for the choices made is the existence of documentation.

Nato Thompson has claimed that his 'strategic turn' in the arts has seen a “veritable explosion of work” (Thompson, 2012, p.19), a claim that is verified by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded research into participatory arts in the UK, and the consequent ArtWorks Alliance, with its focus on strategic partnerships, strategic activities and influencing the arts and non-arts sectors (ArtWorks Alliance, 2016).

Similar growth is seen with environmentally engaged art. It is not simply a matter of numbers of artists, but also increased understanding of what constitutes artistic endeavour. In her book about, *To Life* (2012), Linda Weintraub uses 'Eco Art' as a catch-all category under which she analyses many different genres, strategies, issues and approaches as a means of describing a vast array of environmentally engaged artistic endeavour. She sets out the practice of 47 artists taken from an initial selection of three hundred. She writes

all forty-seven artists [...] augment humanity's prospects for attaining a sustainable future. By bolstering eco-art's status as the current era's definitive artistic movement, they are establishing an entirely new set of standards for measuring an artistic masterwork.

(Weintraub, 2012, p.xiv)

Weintraub suggests a commonality, claiming that these “creative individuals [...] jeopardise their status as artists” as, driven by “the desire to strengthen the planet's weakened defences”, they “venture beyond conventional art into uncharted territories” (Weintraub, 2012, p.xiv).

Lucy Neal's book *Playing for Time* (Neal, 2015), inspired by the Transition Movement, similarly includes 64 artists for whom environmental concerns set the

framework for their work. She introduces it by referring to it as joining “the dots between the 64 artists and activists who have crossed the threshold of action to reimagine what's possible for themselves, for their communities and for the world” (Neal, 2015, p.4). As such it too is about reimagining art, and of particular relevance here, combines an environmental concern with action.

The *dots* that this thesis joins have been chosen to develop a discourse that builds on the learning across various strands of visual art and its expanded/expanding field from the period between the nineteen fifties to the second decade of the second millennium. It studies the implications on art practice as these practitioners reclaim 'art as life' by engaging with prevalent context. It studies examples of practices which:

- have developed aesthetics from an appreciation of art object towards a lived and ethical relational experience of community and/or environment, including through participative processes
- have in their different ways engaged communities in dialogue about *landscape change* and *place making* at different scales, including within statutory systems
- have employed metaphor to help increase knowledge and understanding, including leading to action

The chapter begins by revisiting the development of an appropriate ethico-aesthetic paradigm.

1. Further developing an appropriate ethico-aesthetic paradigm.

The audience's engagement is no longer defined primarily through distanced visual contemplation, actualised by reading or de-coding an image or object, but through haptic experience actualised by immersion and participation in the process.

(Kester, 2005, p.20)

Much collaborative and participatory practice has turned away from the purely visual and the subject/object dichotomy in a desire to make art life rather than

represent life. Thompson suggests that this “call for art into life at this particular moment in history implies both an urgency to matter as well as a privileging of the lived experience” (Thompson, 2013, p. 21). John Fox, a self claimed “pathological optimist”, formerly of *Welfare State International*, sees this as a response to a void left “as dominions of economics, religion and art break down”. In order to bridge the void, Fox's practice includes cooking, gardening, building houses, telling stories, making music, seasonal festivals, thereby creating “a vernacular celebratory art that is integrated into our lives, which offers a creative outlet for the majority, where process comes before product and where participation is all” (Fox, 2012).

I see this not so much as *new*, but as a cyclic process of *renewing*; renewing art's capacity to be relevant by addressing the current environmental and social context. This cyclic process can be seen to have included such practices as *The Art and Crafts Movement*, itself responding to perceived threats of industrialisation by integrating the art object with everyday design. Similarly, conceptual artists from 1966 to 1975 responded to prevalent issues such as race, gender and environment. Weintraub writes about this period of “Counterculture” and refers to its artists as “progenitors of today's eco-art” (Weintraub, p.3, 2012). Lippard claims that they “set up a model that is flexible enough to be useful today”. Her prediction was both hopeful and accurate, when she wrote:

Perhaps most important, Conceptualists indicated that the most exciting “art” might still be buried in social energies not yet recognised as art. The process of extending the boundaries didn't stop with Conceptual art: These energies are still out there, waiting for artists to plug into them, potential fuel for the expansion of what “art” can mean. Art was recaptured and sent back to its white cell, but parole is always a possibility.

(Lippard, 1997a, p.xxii)

Thompson suggests, the last twenty years of socially engaged art has been “essentially shaking up foundations of art discourse, and sharing techniques and intentions with fields far beyond the arts” (Thompson, 2012. p.19). Similarly with land art, though not necessarily socially engaged. An example is the influence of woodland practices on David Nash's work, as can be read in his description of making *Ash Dome* (1977): “I cut out a series of V-shapes, bent them over, and

then wrapped them so the cambium layer could heal over” (Nash, 2010). Nash also comments on moving away from representational art, saying:

I think Andy Goldsworthy and I, and Richard Long, and most of the British artists’ collectives associated with Land Art would have been landscape painters a hundred years ago. But we don’t want to make portraits of the landscape. A landscape picture is a portrait. We don’t want that. We want to be in the land.

(Grande, 2004, p.13)

This being *in the land* can be seen as a performative practice, although for Nash, as with many land artists, the production of the art object is an essential aspect of the practice. Nevertheless, the genre has changed the nature of aesthetic experience and changed art galleries, such as by the introduction of The Yorkshire Sculpture Park or the Sculpture Trail in the Forest of Dean, enabling experience of natural materials in the land, becoming co-sculpted by artist and the elements. Nash says of his work that the, “land is absolutely fundamental and has to be in the front. I can’t stand sculpture that uses the land as a background. I find it offensive” (Grande, 2001, unpaginated). This suggests both aesthetic and ethical sensitivity.

Whatever the focus for these practices - my own is in response to an awareness of the interdependency and interconnectivity between our environment and our actions and in turn our experience of life - this “escape from the frame-and-pedestal syndrome” (Lippard, 1997a, viii) can be understood as a thread of art that continues to resist the separation of aesthetics from ethics and from other ways of being in the world. This applies to *eco art* as well as socially engaged practice, which, with reference to Kester’s *cyclical paradigm shift within the field of art*, “involves an increasing permeability between ‘art’ and other zones of symbolic production (urbanism, environmental activism, social work etc.)” (Kester, 2011, p.7). He argues that the growth in such practice requires the “development of a new critical framework and a new aesthetic paradigm”, partly because “there are aspects of Littoralist Practice that simply can’t be grasped as relevant (or in some cases identified at all) by conventional art critical methodologies” (Kester, 1999/2000, p.2). If the work, he asks, “is no longer centred on the physical object then what is the new locus of judgement?” and answers, “I would contend that it

can be found in the condition and character of dialogical exchange itself” (Kester, 1999/2000, p.5).

Bishop also recognises the challenge of critiquing participatory practice, pointing out that the development of a critical framework has been hindered by:

the standoff between [...] aesthetes who reject this work as marginal, misguided, and lacking artistic interest of any kind [...] and [...] the activists who reject aesthetic questions as synonymous with cultural hierarchy and the market.

(Bishop, 2006a, p.180)

In looking for a critical analysis Bishop helpfully identifies a common purpose; “Although the objective and outputs of these various artists and groups vary enormously, all are linked by a belief in the empowering creativity of collective action and shared ideas” (Bishop, 2006a, p.179). She also refers to “the ethical turn in art criticism”, writing that it focuses on “*how* a given collaboration is undertaken. In other words, artists are increasingly judged by their working process” (Bishop, 2006a, p.180). However, she does not appear to adopt Kester's enthusiasm for a *new aesthetic paradigm* focused on dialogue or process. In her critique of Turkish artist collective Oda Projesi she writes, “there is little to distinguish their projects from other socially engaged practices that revolve around the predictable formulas of workshops, discussions, meals, film screenings, and walks” (Bishop, 2006a, p.180). This seems to miss the point that it is the nature of the participants' experience that is of importance, and in many cases the collaborative outcomes of such participation. Bishop's concern is that there is a raft of artistic endeavour which has produced no art for future generations, other than photographs of the process. This concern could be interpreted as pulling away from *art as life*, back towards Lippard's *white cell*.

However, Bishop's ideas go deeper and she argues that an appropriate critique for would judge such works by the extent to which they address the “contradictory pull between autonomy and social intervention” (Bishop, 2006a, p.185). However, her mistrust of a critique based on artist's *working process* seems to be an attempt to seek out the autonomy of the artist in the work, rather than to critique its ability to facilitate community endeavour. While Bishop is supportive of political art in

principle, and calls for criteria against which to analyse such work, there appears to be a reluctance to recognise a coming together of the rational and sensual, ethical and aesthetic, instead seeing this as a drift towards political correctness and the banal. Indeed she quotes Charlotte Higgins' reference to Anthony Gormley's (b.1950) *One and Other* (2010) fourth plinth collaboration in Trafalgar Square as "twitter art" and suggests that Higgins "wasn't far off" (Bishop, 2012a). My interpretation of *One and Another* is that it was a successful piece of collaborative art by nature of its democratic intent, its placing of individual, everyday concerns amongst some of the country's iconic, cultural landmarks and, perhaps ironically, only just outside the *National Gallery*. Gormley has himself outlined a critique for such work, when he asks if it is:

possible to re-think art and take it from this finished-object status and make it into a verb, a participatory, open space, a place of transformation and exchange of ideas and reflection on our state and status? Can we use art as a way of investigating this perilous time?

(Gormley, 2010, p.15)

With regard to an art practice's role in democratic process, and in particular practices that attempt to integrate art and life, Habermas points to what he sees as the irony of the avant garde saying:

But all those attempts to level art and life, fiction and praxis, appearance and reality to one plane; attempts to remove the distinction between the artefact and object of use [...] the attempts to declare everything to be art and everyone to be an artist [...] have served to bring back to life, and to illuminate all the more glaringly, exactly those structures of art they were meant to dissolve.

(Habermas, 1987, p.302)

Habermas contends that "all these undertakings have proved themselves to be sort of nonsense experiments" (Habermas, 1987, p.302). This research instead reads such undertakings not as attempts to *level* art and life but as continually wanting/needing to re-vitalise life, to reveal the *lifeworld*. The ideas and work may in due course be adopted by the established art world, but by then the avant garde has moved on – beyond the sometimes conservative and market focused art world.

The question remains; can the development of a dialogic, relational and environmental aesthetics that also encompasses ethics provide a critical framework for such work?

An early example of an art practice sharing this agenda is Joseph Beuys' 'Social Sculpture'. Beuys clearly wanted to bring about change in the way lives would be lived in the future; an aim apparent through his interwoven political activity and art, ethics and aesthetics. In describing their approach, The Social Sculpture Research Unit at Oxford Brookes²(SSRU) could be seen as setting out a triple legacy of Beuys' work; 1. collaboration between a "great many people from different practices, disciplines and cultures", 2. "working towards a humane and sustainable way of inhabiting the world", 3. "new determination to transform the conditions and take our lives into our own hands" (SSRU, n.d.).

San Francisco curator Kim Cook refers to Shelley Sacks from the SSRU, saying that she "highlights the dual nature of social sculpture as both transforming society and challenging dated conceptions of art" (Cook, 2012). This is not understood here as a negative criticism of art, instead reinforcing her sentiment of art's capability to self reflect, to place "social and moral responsibility on the artist, who can also be considered a change agent" (Cook, 2012). Lippard refers to the benefits of such a role for artists engaged in land based initiatives and social change, writing:

The potential of an activist art practice that raises consciousness about land, history, culture, and place and is a catalyst for social change cannot be underestimated, even if though this promise has yet to be fulfilled. Artists can make the connections visible. They can guide us through sensuous kinaesthetic responses to topography, lead us from archaeology and land based social history into alternative relationships with place. They can expose the social agendas that have formed the land, bring out multiple readings of places that mean different things to different people at different times.

(Lippard, 1997b, p19)

An early example of raising environmental consciousness is Gablik's practice. In interview with Russ Volkmann, she refers to the conflicting nature of her despair about our affects on the environment:

I feel timorous that I sounded so bleak. You wouldn't know it, but I'm a

great lover of life and believer in life. It's very painful to watch it all going under and being systematically destroyed. I find myself like an alien member of the human race—how can people act like this? How did this happen?

(Volkmann, 2007, p.274)

Gablik's distress about environmental degradation was overlaid at the time of the interview with distress about the Iraq war and her fears about what the *West* had unleashed. War and environmental destruction are in many ways the antithesis to building partnership and collaboration, an approach Gablik shares with her friend Riane Eisler. When asked in the same interview about Eisler's book, *The Real Wealth of Nations* (Eisler 2007), Gablik said that Eisler had been influential in her own "early writing about art, to construct a notion of art that's built around relationship, participation, collaborative communities, and interaction with others" (Volkmann, 2007, p.272). The conflict for Gablik appears to be created at the interface between *the human race* in its systems and destructive behaviours, from which she is here feeling alienated, and the rest of life, the *lifeworld*, which she loves. Although in a different context, this seems similar to Debra Meyerson and Maureen Scully (1995) writing about organisational change, introducing the concept of the *Tempered Radical* (TR). They write that "Tempered Radicals' are individuals who identify with and are committed to their organisations, and also committed to a cause, community, or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with the dominant culture" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p.586).

Perhaps there is always a similar being *a part of* and *apart from*, a tension that underlies the discussion about the nature of activist art and its potential to create either disruption or conviviality. Simon O'Sullivan's writes that aesthetics "might in fact be a name... for the rupturing quality of art: its power to break our habitual ways of being and acting in the world" (O'Sullivan, 2010, p.197). Tim Collins approaches the question with reference to Donald Kuspit (in Raven, 1989) writing,

there is a creative tension between the idea of critical agitation (activism, or Kuspit's agitational model) which opposes dominant culture, and critical Intervention (Kuspit's integrative model) which works within dominant culture to create change [...] In sum, both are seeking a shift in the social and political realities of the time [...] These are simply interconnected discursive modalities, one keeps things honest and imbued with a certain amount of moral and ethical tension – even conflict, the other keeps things

productive, imbued with enough consensus and political manoeuvring to assure that the system evolves, or at the least, retains some sense of movement and flow.

(Collins, 2007, p.69)

Kester compares and contrasts ideas of rupture with ideas of *reciprocal creative labour* (Kester, 2011), whereby rather than art rupturing the everyday, the creation of conviviality instead challenges our everyday habits. As Iain Biggs writes:

people I meet are managing to continue to make 'convivial places' that serve to grow or support forms of community and mutual support – 'places' that exist solely through the coming together in good faith of people engaged in creative action. This form of 'making' seems to me one basis for what we might call another kind of politics and some of the most valuable creative work we can do.

(Biggs, 2013, unpaginated)

This problem of rupture and conviviality can also be seen in terms of transversality, especially where problems to be solved are within complex systems and beyond the control of any one participant, facilitating a transversal approach is seen as a means of bridging these systems. However by its very nature it challenges or disrupts existing power structures and hierarchies. Bradley Kaye writes of Guattari and his psychiatric work at *La Borde Clinic*:

Guattari evokes transversality as a common, perhaps revolutionary, quality among subject groups. It embodies a certain way in which the discourse produced by such groups creates an open flow of thoughts and expressions resulting in a creative self-discovery that can be therapeutic as well as revolutionary.

(Kaye, 2011a)

This suggests that a transversal practice can be both rupturing and convivial, challenging established power bases in relationships and enabling Kester's *reciprocal creative labour*.

In addition to the social context, is the environmental context; a sensitivity to a *lifeworld* which includes the other-than-human. My reflection about Gablik's "Art that is grounded in the realisation of our interconnectedness and intersubjectivity" (Gablik, 1992, p.4), is that it refers to a wider interspecies connectedness and interdependency and also, for me, a connectedness across time, a sensitivity that

is a manifestation of environmental as well as relational ethics and aesthetics.

This sensitivity, or ethico-aesthetic awareness, to the other-than-human is referred to by Collins writing :

Where much of the art (specifically the avant-garde art) of the past has focused on a critical relationship to culture, ecological and environmental art practices focus upon a critical responsibility for the reintegration of nature and culture.

(Collins, 2007, p.109)

Writing with Reiko Goto Collins (2012), Collins discusses “the move by artists towards nature as a context and subject for work that addresses ethical ideas and aesthetic opportunities in relationship to a changing environment” (Collins & Goto Collins, 2012, p.122). They propose empathy as a way of revealing this relationship, writing “Empathy is not based on self interest. It is reaching beyond self without losing or forgetting oneself” (Collins & Goto Collins, 2012, p.123). This resonates with ideas of *disinterest* and suggests empathy as a means of creating a reflective space. A space in which to reflect on “inter-relationship, interface and empathic exchange with plants and trees” (Collins & Goto Collins, 2012, p.132).

In similar vein, artist Samantha Clark discusses what she sees as the tangential debates about aesthetics in contemporary art and in environmental aesthetics, arguing that “these disciplines, having evolved separately in response to the limitations of traditional aesthetics, may now usefully inform each other” (Clark, 2010, p.351). She suggest that “Gablik's 'connective aesthetics', like Berleant's 'aesthetics of engagement', folds aesthetic experience into the social as a kind of environmental aesthetics” (Clark, 2010, p.351). I understand these, and Kester's dialogic or Bourriaud's relational aesthetics as the basis for a critical framework for socially engaged environmental art, an ethico-aesthetic paradigm.

The emergent practice then, is driven by a relational and environmental aesthetic, folded in with ethical appreciation of human to human and human/other-than-human relationships. The impact of adopting contemporary aesthetic such as this is outlined in Figure 8 below.

<i>Type of aesthetic experience</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Type of visual art response</i>
Traditional - predominantly visual	Subject/object dichotomy, separation of viewer and experience of nature, individual responses to and judgements of concepts such as universal beauty.	Gallery art – paintings, sculpture, photographs. Autonomous artist and audience.
Contemporary – relational, environmental, engaged, dialogic, connective, ethical	Immersive experience of place and community, ethical consideration, group relationships, being apart and together. Environmental awareness.	Land art, walking art, site specific work, community engagement, performance, installations, political action. Participatory art processes. Social engagement

Figure 8. Aesthetic Paradigms and Visual Art

Emily Brady quotes Cheryl Foster and suggests that her story “illustrates how aesthetic pleasure conflicts with a moral attitude towards environment” (Brady, 2003, p.246).

If I am witnessing a spectacularly-coloured sunset from my kitchen window and am taking great pleasure from its beauty, how shall I respond when a friend drops in and informs me that the reason for all that colour is the proliferation of sulphur dioxide in the air? [...] the result of a factory operating up river [...] with grave consequences for the creatures in the marsh downstream.

(Foster, 1992, p.212)

Foster refers to this hypothetical conflict between an aesthetic appreciation and an ethical valuing of environment as *aesthetic disillusionment*. However I would argue that there is not necessarily a conflict; the people at the kitchen window may feel conflicted and if so, as a result, may respond to overcome this feeling in any number of ways. For example by taking action to change the situation in support of the endangered marsh species by boycotting the goods from the factory, picketing deliveries etc. In other words, environmental aesthetics and ethics are totally compatible, if at times, or maybe constantly, uncomfortable. Indeed for me, the kind of insight that the deeper understanding of the situation engenders, also deepens my feelings about the aesthetic event – the sunset now represents a beautiful world under threat and such a reflection – a disinterested and passionate moment - demands engagement.

2. Strengthening collaboration and participation

My models [...] are those artists who strengthen the bonds between art, audience, and context. They tend to be interested in the narrative landscape, understanding place and history to include people, forming the grass routes of much interactive or so called “new genre” public art.
(Lippard, 1997b, p.20)

Collaboration and participation have developed as facets of art practice in line with moves away from the object as aesthetic focus, towards focussing on lived experience through the reconfiguration of artist/audience relationship. Describing the work of *Situationist International* (SI), Debord wrote that a *constructed situation* is “designed to be lived by its constructors” (Debord, 1957, p.110). The idea being that the “role played by a passive or merely bit-part playing 'public' must constantly diminish, while that played by those who can not be called actors, but rather, in a new sense of the term, 'livers', must steadily increase” (Debord, 1957, p.110). Such 'situations' were performed/enacted/lived outside of traditional art venues, transforming these sites. Such collaborations were choreographed by the artist.

A current example which from its name at least, is an extension of these constructed situations is *Situations* in Bristol. Rather than invite the audience though to become *livers*, *Situations* take non-gallery engagement in a subtly different direction, inviting the artist to respond to the local situation, contributing to *the lived experience of a place* as their website says:

Working beyond the boundaries of a gallery or museum context offers a rich and often challenging set of conditions. We begin from a more dynamic understanding of place than a physical site, inviting artists to contribute to the lived experience of a place. This consideration of situation (a set of conditions, locations, people, moments in time and circumstance) rather than location means that every newly commissioned project starts with a process of becoming locally embedded.

(Situations, n.d.)

Becoming locally embedded is an important aspect of what, for me, makes this approach a more meaningful collaboration than the *constructed situations*. Their juxtaposition shows an evolution in the relationship between artist and audience, towards more collaborative practice.

Collaborative practice questions artistic autonomy, as with *Tate Modern's* staging of Tino Sehgal's *These Associations*. In reviewing it, Bishop (2012) airs her concern regards the hi-jacking of some art by the then prevalent political ideology. She writes, “participatory art acquires a different resonance, more akin to the sacrifices of unpaid labour” (Bishop, 2012a), but suggests that Sehgal's relationship with his collaborators is different; a business arrangement. She claims that, “Seghal isn't particularly interested in empowering people; those who work for him are paid performers who serve his ends” (Bishop, 2012a). My reading of this is, that while Sehgal pays the performers in his piece, the work enables the visiting public to experience being a part of a group, a transformation not only of the Turbine Hall but of human relationships. Adrian Searle's experience of *These Associations* seems to suggest that this is the case, “There are no objects: we are the subject. It is about communality and intimacy, the self as social being, the group and the individual, belonging and separation. We're in the middle of things. It is marvellous” (Searle, 2012, p.9). Sehgal agrees, saying “It is about what it means to belong to a group, which is also quite a personal question for me” (Higgins, 2012). Comparing this collaboration with SI's pieces, the paid performers seem to act on behalf of the artist, making their own decisions, with the visitors as the “livers”. It seems more accurate to describe the “livers” as participants in the artist's design, while the performers are paid collaborators.

As has been said, art into life questions the traditional view of the artist as autonomous, often outside of the community, instead viewing them as facilitating collaborative ventures, including with the other-than-human, while the artist experiences the human condition of *being apart together*. Simon Read writes about his involvement with a coastal protection scheme for Sutton Saltmarsh, Suffolk, explaining how his role has evolved:

The original premise for my place in the project was quickly sublimated into the function of project manager, developing and bringing it to completion. My identity as an artist in projects like this is ambiguous. In any such partnership, the question of authorship is not really appropriate; neither should the status of the structure be an issue. It might be attractive to think of it as sculpture by default, but this is a conceit.

(Read, n.d)

Similar to Seghal having relinquished a degree of artistic autonomy in *These Associations*, Nash, in work such as *Wooden Boulder* (1976), can be seen to have done the same, with natural processes external to himself and beyond his control. If we conceive of nature's agency, it is possible to see this as a collaborative endeavour, reinforced by Nash saying of working with wood: "There's a profound wisdom there, stretching over millennia [...] I take my cue from what the material suggests to me [...] I am a researcher into the science and anthropology of trees and the wood they produce" (Nash, 2010). Nash sees himself as "a maker of objects that are motivated by an idea, an attitude of a healthy relationship with our outer skin, the environment" (Nash, 2010).

Not all land art shares these sensitivities or Gablik's *connective aesthetic*, with its shift away from "the myth of the hard-edged, autonomous individualist" (Gablik, 1992, p.2), whereby she argues that artists see themselves as "free agents pursuing their own ends" (Gablik, 1992, p.2). She refers to the work of Christo (b.1935), and by implication the work of Jeanne Claude (1935 – 2009), and says that even for an artist like Christo, "whose public projects [...] require the participation and cooperation of thousands of people. The feeling of being emotionally independent and inwardly free still dominates the psyche" (Gablik, 1992, p.2). She emphasises this point quoting Christo's own comments:

The work is irrational and perhaps irresponsible. Nobody needs it. The work is a huge individualistic gesture that is entirely decided by me [...] One of the greatest contributions of modern art is the notion of individualism.
(Christo, 1990, p.135)

Such statements reflect a neoliberal ethos of individualism, even to the exclusion of any mention of Jeanne Claude. As Gablik writes, "individualism and freedom were the great modernist buzzwords, but they are hardly the most creative response to the planet's immediate needs" (Gablik, 1992, p.4). This suggests an incompatibility between an aesthetic based on the artist's autonomy and environmental ethics.

However, for Kester "the aesthetic has an implicitly ethical dimension. It has precisely to do with how the individual and the social relate to each other; the one

and the many; the group and the singular individual” (Kester & Lacey, 2007, p.16). In this way, collaborative arts practice can be seen as experimental and practical, exploring and delivering a relational and environmental aesthetic. Whereby art is understood as the process for studying and revealing the relationship between individuals and other collaborators and the wider environment, what Collins calls interdisciplinary art, writing:

Consider the term interface as an analogy for art. Think of interface as a common boundary, the interconnection between systems, concepts, environment and people. Interface is the art, the physical manifestation of the creative relationship between humanity and the natural world.

(Collins, 2007, p.112)

Ethical aspects of collaborative practice need to be considered. In conversation with Kester about the *Oakland Projects* (1991 and 2011), Suzanne Lacy describes an aspect of this, saying “We were challenged by working with young people. Were we exploiting youth? [...] There were a complicated series of personal relationships” and she questions “Who has a right to speak for whom” (Kester & Lacey, 2007, pp.2-3). In the conversation Kester adds clarification, saying “The aesthetic really begins as a way to talk about a social exchange, a way of being together, that is rooted in the individual, rather than collapsed into external forms of religious or earthly authority” (Kester & Lacy, 2007, p.6).

Collins recognises the importance of being clear with potential collaborators in such work, pointing out that:

when we act with creative dialogic intent it is an essential ethical point to be clear to our potential collaborators or participants about the nature of the relationship we are seeking to have with them and the power we have together to make change. The moral intent of the relationship should be to seek benefit for all involved.

(Collins, 2007, p.63)

Collaborative practice manifests this folding of ethics into aesthetics as it collapses autonomy. Further to Debord saying, “in a new sense of the term, 'livers', must steadily increase”, so too should participants move towards becoming collaborators.

3. Encounter; revealing natures' agency.

I believe it is our function to reveal concepts and experiences that might otherwise be overlooked. As a result, one can define the practice as a creative process that results in interface between natural systems and human culture. It recognises the historic dialectic between nature and culture and works towards healing the human relationship to the natural world and its ecosystems.

(Collins, 2007, p.111)

Collaborative work at a strategic, bio-regional scale is exemplified by the work of Newton and Mayer Harrison. Their early works - living, dying bio entities, referred to collectively as "Survival Piece" - were exhibited as art processes. While, like Nash's *Boulder Piece*, these works can be read as collaborations with the other-than-human, they perhaps more starkly provide an encounter with nature. Later works, such as *Peninsula Europe 1*, 2000-4 aimed "to initiate collaborative dialogues to uncover ideas and solutions which support biodiversity and community development" (Harrison Studio, n.d.). This included forming relationships with representatives of the scientific and academic community and in this way, these collaborations enabled an informed encounter with nature's agency.

Wylie acknowledges that a "relational view of a world-always-in-the-making owes much of its derivation to actor-network theory". He references Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) and Donna Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (1991), in particular the idea of 'hybridity' - complex amalgams of human/animal/machine. Wylie refers to their concern to "disturb and unsettle the academic (and also commonplace) habit of dividing the world up into 'cultural' (or social) and 'natural' domains", and in turn credits them with querying ideas of "primacy of the individual, discrete subjects", and querying ideas of locating "agency, will, creativity and the capacity for action solely *within* the human subject" (Wylie, 2007, p.200). There is little doubt that Beuys would have been sensitive to similar, ethical concerns in his work which included an interface with animals and plants, which for him were a link to a natural, spiritual and self-healing world. One example being *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), his week long, caged performance with a coyote, itself an important symbol of indigenous North

Americans' spirituality. It is difficult to know what relationship had been developed between Beuys and the coyote, however, while the work in the gallery appeared to be co-created, in practice the coyote probably had no choice about being there. In this sense, rather like the early work of Situationist International, the coyote was not so much a participant in the work as an 'extra' - but then again, maybe Beuys had no choice about how to be with the coyote. However, an ethical question does arise and perhaps in this regard Beuys' piece, *A Party for Animals* (1969), in which he included his name on the list of invitees along with other species, was more successful, as audiences encountered the more-than-human and performed a 'complex amalgam', part animal part human. Nevertheless, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, unlike Beuys' actions, were not participatory, and involved an artist separate from the audience. In this way it was a mediated encounter, although the audience were enabled to witness directly a human encounter with nature.

Sullivan writes: "what is at stake with aesthetics is what Deleuze would call a genuine 'encounter'" (O'Sullivan, 2010, p.197). Direct aesthetic engagement with nature through walking is a central facet of the emergent practice, exploring its potential to reveal nature's agency and affect and the relationship between cultural and ecological systems. Pamela Banting writes about the 2003, five month research journey of biologist Karsten Heuer and filmmaker Leanne Allison as they follow on foot the migrating Porcupine Caribou. She claims that her article is about them in the "processes of being and becoming animal" (Banting, 2007, p.409). The nature and depth of this encounter is inspirational;

Knowledge is native, aboriginal. Knowledge walks the land on four legs and two. Knowledge ambles and pads, lopes and prances, skis and hikes, crawls and swims. Knowledge flocks across the sky in feathered guises. Knowledge moves you, carries you away, enraptures you, and alters your being in the world just as walking, moving, joining the herd, and stepping in tune with being are forms of knowledge. Knowledge is nomadic, migratory, and wild. Knowledge travels through and flows across landforms and beings in motion – individuals, herds, species, life-forms. Locomotion is a form of knowledge, and knowledge is that which is in local motion. Knowledge is alive, afoot and animal. Animality is a bundle of particular knowledges.

(Banting, 2007, p.429)

In everyday life, walking can also facilitate meaningful encounters between self and nature. Ingold writes, walking is “a highly intelligent activity”, noting that “This intelligence, however, is not located exclusively in the head but is distributed throughout the entire field of relations comprised by the presence of the human being in the inhabited world” (Ingold, 2004, p.332).

The depth of encounter was demonstrated in the Hamish Fulton facilitated slowwalk at the *AV Festival 12*³ in Newcastle where he led a group-walk in a disused car park at Spillers Wharf near the Tyne. Reading the blog of a participating poet, Linda France, provides an insight into the nature of the encounter:

It was both very mundane – simply being still, walking very slowly – and quite sublime [...] I was born in Newcastle and have a Geordie’s sentimental attachment to the city and its river. Being at that particular spot, I felt deeply connected with my roots.

(France, 2012)

Mark Robinson, another blogging participant (and trustee of the festival) gives a further insight into the walk experience. In describing it as “trying to keep my legs moving, shifting the movement up one leg and down the other, making sure I lifted my toes and heels, but only moved them a very little, tightening my stomach whilst keeping one foot off the floor, being very conscious of my body” (Robinson, 2012). He emphasises a type of *being in place*, a corporeal knowing. He also reflects Berleant’s engaged aesthetic when he describes the experience as “a visual one – playing games with the tarmac to determine where to move my feet next, piece by piece, trying not to go too fast – and an aural one, listening to the wind and the Quayside buses, the squalls of birds” (Robinson, 2012).

Carl Lavery describes walking as being able to “overwhelm us in the present, to provide us with actual experience, to make the world float in the here and now” (Lavery, 2009, p.45). He suggests that such performances display an “avant-garde heritage: its ultimate purpose is to replace vicarious experience (reading someone else’s account of space) with actual experience” (Lavery, 2009, p.45).

Walking then can be an embodied art practice, a practice which is about place, about being in the moment and co-produced by participants and nature. It can also be understood in the context of sustainability; in his *Mourning Walk* piece, Lavery

refers to it as a “mode of resistance against the acceleration of the world, a desire on the part of performance makers, to rehumanise space” (Lavery, 2009, p.46). He refers to walking’s “bodily beat of three miles per hour” as a particular aspect of walking that enables experience of environment at a “properly human pace”, resulting in walking being “conducive to a production of place, a perfect technique for merging landscape, memory and imagination in dynamic dialogue” (Lavery, 2009, p.49), and he goes on to say:

the contemporary walker is seeking ways to re-enchant existence and to find meaning in the world. In an age of impending ecological catastrophe, the enchanted sensibility of the walker is both ethical and political. It points forward to an alternative way of being in, and caring for, the world.
(Lavery, 2009, p.49)

Beuys pointed differently towards ways of *being in*, and caring for, the world. In writing about his posthumously completed large scale ecological action, *7000 Oaks* (1982-1986), Collins and Goto Collins ask whether we can “consider the tree-stone body as the final form or is the generative growth and the potential for natural reproduction an important factor in the aesthetic sensibility of the work” (Collins & Goto Collins, 2012, p.127)? Taking this longer view, the work is understood as being about revealing processes, creating an understanding of the relationship between cultural and ecological processes. Sue Clifford and Angela King describe the ethos for their *New Milestones* project in similar ways, writing:

Thousands of years of hard work in the land and cultural understanding of it are echoed in the landscape we have built. Every piece of land is unique [...] the investment it represents and receives; its ownership and the rights over it; the social relationships it encourages; the politics it sustains – all are apparent in the landscape [...] Like old documents, paintings, literature, buildings and dialect, the land holds many keys to an understanding of our past, our present and particularly the evolution of our common culture.
(Clifford & King, 1988, pp.15-16)

However, it is not just these cultural values apparent in the land that have agency, but nature itself. In the earlier mentioned, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, in which the coyote ripped-up and urinated on the daily copy of the *Wall Street Journal*, the encounter appears to be commenting on the relationship between two cultures, America’s indigenous past, a past and way of being co-created by animals and humans, and the current culture dominated by economics.

Beuys revealed and commented upon this uncomfortable relationship; the elimination of other species by our systems. In much of the Harrison Studio's work, they take this a step further and reveal nature's agency and its impact on us, such as with "Greenhouse Britain" (2007-2009) which mapped the effects of rising seas. They also go further by calling society to find ways of rebalancing the interface between ecological and cultural systems. There are parallels here with landscape scale management as promoted by *the rewilding* agenda and its initiatives. George Monbiot sees "rewilding as an enhanced opportunity for people to engage with and delight in the natural" (Monbiot, 2013, p.11), letting it and us go 'feral'. In response to this, the Wildlife Trusts say "this is also about the relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world. People need to understand that they are part of, not separate to, nature" (Wildlife Trusts, n.d.), and I would add that places are co-created by this interconnection and interdependency.

4. Co-creating Visions

The work of artists such as Beuys, The Harrison Studio and Collins includes envisioning a world co-created between human and nature's agency. Interwoven into much of this work there is also a strand of creating and revealing various individual subjectivity and institutional objectivity. This is a core value of socially engaged work that resonates with an ethico-aesthetic paradigm.

Lacy has said about collaboration in the *Oakland* projects, that the "'We' was a complicated coming-together". In further describing it she gives the picture of an evolving, unplanned, creative process; an activity of bringing people together. In this case a collection of:

artists, politicians, teachers, police people, health professionals and college students and youth. When I say 'we', I mean collectively a kind of difficult-to-identify, but very known-to-each other group of people. It is a very complicated 'we', but it is always a 'we.' never an 'I'.

(Kester & Lacy, 2007, p.3)

Initial stages of the project included facilitating community conversations to discuss needs and concerns. One recurring theme was the conflict between young people

and the police, leading to *Code 33; Emergency Clear the Air!* (1997-99) in which, initially, a dialogue was facilitated between the police and young people, and in turn led to a garage roof-top performance of the dialogues, which the wider community were able to view and participate in. The location of the performance, along with the use of helicopters, search lights, sirens and loud dance music, all added to the relevance of the work.

This created a vision of a relationship between young people and the police which hadn't previously existed in Oakland. The project could be seen to have created a long-term “relational situation”, which Berleant describes as “the abandonment of separateness for full integration [...] integration equally of the personal and the social, a goal as much social as it is aesthetic” (Berleant, 2005, p.31). A 'relational situation' in which others could participate.

Similarly, Collins' Nine Mile Run's (2007, pp. 156-198) bridged between a community agenda and wider, strategic responsibilities. Its “primary goal was to explore the potential for an issues-based public discussion that would produce a motivated and informed constituency prepared to participate in public decision-making about open space opportunities”. The context being the reclamation of post industrial land to an urban greenway. The artistic intent was “informed by evolving contemporary ideas of socially based art practice and [...] environmental art” (2007, p.160). Collins sees the initial interventions by artists as having expanded “the artists' traditional role of critique into the realm of shared creative inquiry” (2007, P.161). Similar to the Oakland project, Collins saw the artist's work as integrated with social change – in this case through collaboration with environmental professionals. He writes:

The process of restoration began with a walk – an intimate, sensual experience, seeing the site with the eyes of an artist, biologist, or engineer begins the cultural process of restoration.

(Collins, 2007, p.163)

After two years of community dialogue and evaluating the ecology of the site, a range of options were worked through with participants. Collins writes that

Ultimately, the discussions allowed each of us to work out our ideas in

relationship to one another and begin to see the range of knowledge [...] as we approached a final synthesis.

(Collins, 2007, p.169)

These, and projects like them, illustrate how collaborative and participative art, art which includes encounter within their processes, can create shared vision. In the Oakland case, a vision of a perhaps fleeting, newly created relationship, and in the case of *Nine Mille Run*, the creation of a complex relationship between individuals, institutions and ecological systems, expressed as a commitment to land reclamation.

5 Metaphor, assemblage, reflection and action

In its machinic productivity, existence is a *process* and aesthetics becomes an ethical practice of becoming with the overall “worldling” of existence [...] To reconsider social practice on the basis of existence requires an ethics and an aesthetics that are always subjective-objective across the boundaries of mental, social, and environmental ecologies.

(Brunner, Nigro & Raunig, nd, p.46)

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that “The diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p.157). This *process* view of art, the idea of creating a *new type of reality* between people and nature is transformative and can, at least temporarily, reveal various sensitivities and values and make apparent new possibilities. Michel de Beistegui writes:

the metaphor that weaves isn't the product of *fancy* [...] Rather, it's the figure of the real in its self-transposition or transfiguration. Metaphor believes in transubstantiation, in the conversion of matter into spirit, which it carries out, but only as an implicit dimension of itself, inscribed within it from the start.

(de Beistegui, 2013, p.3)

I contend that this is a good description of Beuys' *7000 Oak Trees*, which was an envisioning of the potential and an actual facet of regeneration in the context of the relationship between natural and cultural systems, and over time an actual element of this transformation, and still raising questions about transformation.

However, some artists see metaphor as a way of suppressing critical thinking, for example, Charles Gaines agrees with Liam Gillick's comment about the allied invasion of Iraq that: "the Bush administration's metaphor of 'desert storm' was an instrument to form an identifying figure that would locate the war as an act of patriotism" (Gaines, 2009, p. 48). Gaines widens the argument, saying:

this "suppression of thought" is a faculty in forms of art whose *raison d'être* is based on aesthetics [...] Further, that there is a historical evolution of ideas that reveals [...] how metaphor helped advance the Western idea of universal knowledge, the idea that there are totalizing concepts that preclude dissent or difference.

(Gaines, 2009, p. 48)

Gaines does acknowledge metaphor's value, writing "This is not to say metaphors do not produce ideas or that metaphor is not a type of thinking, for the metaphor is often responsible for the introduction of new ideas" (Gaines, 2009, p. 49).

Two examples of using metaphor to reveal new insights and add to our collective understanding are set out below; the work of Patrick Keiller and the Harrison Studio. Neither of which is socially engaged, but both of which are political and environmentally engaged.

In the *Tate Britain* commissioned exhibition, *The Robinson Institute* (27th March - 14th October, 2012), Keiller addressed the inter relationship between ecological and cultural systems. It was particularly pertinent given *BP's* sponsorship of *Tate Britain* at the time. The piece centred on revisiting his fictional, unseen scholar Robinson; taking the viewer on what can be seen as a metaphorical journey through a changing southern England, using places, names, historic events and landmarks to point to the growth of the UK economy, in particular its oil dependency, military alliance with the USA and the ecological effects of this. A part of the richness of the metaphor was created by the inclusion of artefacts from the *Tate Britain* collection, and images of Southern England, which for me were familiar and cherished childhood places. This familiarity and sense of intimacy was transformed into a sense of betrayal by what appeared as my own collusion with a neoliberalism which abused the very fabric of an ancient England. It worked on many levels, both as a metaphor for a number of ideas, and at the same time, a manifestation of the idea; Keiller explains that the work is based on the fictional

Robinson Institute's mission statement “to promote political and economic change by developing the transformative potential of images of landscape” (Tate Shots, 2012), which the exhibition itself achieves. He goes on to describe how “protagonist Robinson turns up at this disused cement quarry and he realises that he must [...] suggest that they should establish some sort of experimental centre in this quarry which is perhaps where the Robinson Institute is based” (Tate Shots, 2012). The exhibition itself becomes such an experimental centre, its construction using a simple metal racking, reminiscent of pre-digital science labs, and forces us to question our previous understanding of *landscape change* and *place making*.

Similarly, with the Harrison Studio, who by invitation from the University of California at Santa Cruz, developed the “Centre for the Study of the Force Majeure”. This followed from the Harrison's promoting the *Age of the Force Majeure* to replace the idea of the *Age of the Anthropocene*, about which they write “This definition is too un-acknowledging of the forces at work, too avoiding of the responsibility the human race carries for the release of these forces”. Unlike Robinson's fictitious institute, *The Force Majeure* has led to projects to combat the real effects of their metaphorical *two frontiers* of rising oceans and heat wave, about which they write,

two frontiers are emergent and evolving exponentially. The one is a wavefront of water, advancing on all edges of all continents that touch all oceans. The second frontier is a heatwave increasing (apparently slowly but in fact exponentially) covering, touching, and effecting the whole planet and all lives in it.

(Harrison Studio, nd, unpaginated)

There is a tension here with Gaines' criticism of metaphor as “suppression of thought”, and climate change deniers may agree that the *two frontiers* metaphor advances “the idea that there are totalizing concepts that preclude dissent or difference”. To me it provides the opportunity, especially as it becomes an actual project, to further question and answer these important issues.

Another environmentally engaged practice, which is also socially engaged and participative is Nine Mile Run. In addressing the question of its validation as art, Collins refers to Newton Harrison's idea of '*prima facia* evidence' of the creative act, and writes that Harrison's idea is simple: “if the work is going to gain the

attention of the art world, it demands a product“ (2007, p.187). However Collins goes on to claim that:

The work is ill suited to this kind of iconic, image-orientated critical engagement. The work is simply too complex in authorship, process and outcome [...] I would argue that we need to look to more than one discipline for the appropriate discourse.

(Collins, 2007, p.197)

This is in keeping with transversal practice and yet, it seems possible that if the role of the artist is to facilitate such transversality, then could she/he not also provide a product - an assemblage - around which the transversal practice is recognised, celebrated and used to develop ongoing relationships between various disciplines and stakeholders. This would be in keeping with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of assemblage⁴, or connections which produce new ways of knowing and further connections (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). It could be argued that the projects themselves do this, but I contend that the artist could provide a reflective, *disinterested* yet impassioned process by which collaborators could develop new, multiple understandings of their collective process and identify new connections and actions.

I suggest here that metaphor provides an appropriate mechanism for helping validate the artistic merit of the type of projects studied in Part Two of this thesis. And as with de Beistegui's quote, at the same time enables wider dialogue “as an implicit dimension of itself”, be it with collaborative ecological practice or more widely inclusive social practice. However, after Deleuze and Guattari, I understand metaphor to be a fleeting glimpse of ever changing new possibilities, and suggest using *active metaphor* as opposed to a fixed symbol.

Through the study of a number of artists involved with social practice and eco art, this chapter has revisited ideas of an ethico-aesthetic paradigm. It has questioned the critical framework by focusing on some of the implications and underpinning theories arising from the work of these other artists, such as collaboration, participation, autonomy, encounter, nature's agency, revealing shared vision and encouraging action by using *active metaphor*. The chapter concludes by locating the emergent practice at the juncture of a practical, relational and environmental

aesthetics and ethics, at the juncture of socially engaged and collaborative eco art. A collaborative practice that incorporates walking as a medium for exploring and revealing various understandings of places and for engaging people with nature. A practice which bridges between individual subjectivity, community initiatives, institutional policies and nature, and which uses *active metaphor* as a means of exploring these relationships and brings about real change in the relationship between cultural and ecological systems.

Summary to Part One

Part One has provided a context for the research, a context that is folded into theory and practice which itself becomes a part of the context. It has addressed the challenge of incorporating subjectivity into objective framing of places in decision making and of reconnecting art and life as an aspect of socially engaged practice and sustainability. It has explored the terms *landscape change* and *place making* in the context of the manifestation of the constantly changing relationship between cultural and ecological systems. It has mapped out the emergence of a socially and environmentally engaged art practice as a way of reconciling subjectivity and objectivity, by developing a critical framework based around an ethical, environmental, relational, dialogic, engaged, connective and practical aesthetic paradigm– influenced by Guattari's ethico-aesthetic paradigm (1995).

On further reflection the thesis suggests a research gap at the juncture of walking practice, social and environmental practice, grass routes action and land use policy and action, as well as between ongoing performative processes and '*prima facie* evidence' of the creative act. It suggests that creating *active metaphor*, by bridging between individual and community subjectivity and institutional objectivity and nature's agency, would appear to be an appropriate process and product for facilitating, reflecting upon and making positive contribution to co-creating places.

Part One concludes by also further reflecting upon Figure 7, and suggests the adoption and application of a weaving metaphor, in which *The Warp of the Practice* consists of four facets – *collaborating, encountering, exchanging and assembling*.

Facet	Activity
<i>Collaborating</i>	<i>negotiating terms of reference and shared futures</i>
<i>Encountering</i>	<i>Facilitating experience of landscape agency and affect</i>
<i>Exchanging</i>	<i>Revealing and sharing aspirations for and narratives about place</i>
<i>Assembling</i>	<i>reflecting with project partners, sustaining participatory landscape change processes</i>

Figure 9. *The Warp of the Practice*.

A hypothesis is put forward, to be examined in Part Two, which proposes that by

using *The Warp of the Practice* as a frame for weaving community initiatives - the weft of the practice – the practice can facilitate positive *community and land use change* by:

Revealing and acting upon our incremental experiences and understandings of, including agency in, the spaces where lives have been, are being and will be shared between people, with other generations and with other-than-human entities and their agency, such as plant and animal communities, geology and weather, in a multiplicity of ways; as individuals, friends and family, community groups, producers and organisations that are both public and commercial in nature.

This process is referred to here as *weaving a community-landscape*. This is to help emphasise that the practice is concerned with both developing relationships across sectors of the community and between people and the natural world. It is not intended to be a new term to be used outside the context of this thesis, rather to stress that for decisions about land use change to be understood as positive, they require changes to our relationships with each other as well as with the other-than-human.

- 1 Artists whose practices and/or writings are referred to include: Iain Biggs, Joseph Beuys, Samanth Clark, Guy Debord, John Fox, Christo and Jeanne Claude, Tim Collins, Reiko Gotto Collins, Linda France, Hamish Fulton, Suzi Gablik, Anthony Gormley, Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, Patrick Keiller, Suzanne Lacey, David Nash, Simon Read, Shelley Sacks, Tino Sehgal
- 2 The SSRU encourages and explores transdisciplinary creativity and vision towards the shaping of a humane and ecologically viable society. It engages with Beuys' thinking and work, as well as those before and after him – making available some of the insights, inquiries and explorations in this multidimensional field. <http://kenpa4i.com/ssru/>
- 3 See the AV Festival Website for more information. <http://www.avfestival.co.uk/programme/2012/events-and-exhibitions/hamish-fulton>
- 4 Some contend that the translation of the French word used by Deleuze and Guattari - *agencement*, is only partly replicated by the English word assemblage. See John Philips, in Theory Culture & Society 23(2-3):108-109, May 2006
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249725977_AgencementAssemblage

PART TWO

WEAVING A PRACTICAL, RELATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL AESTHETIC

Initiatives and Interventions

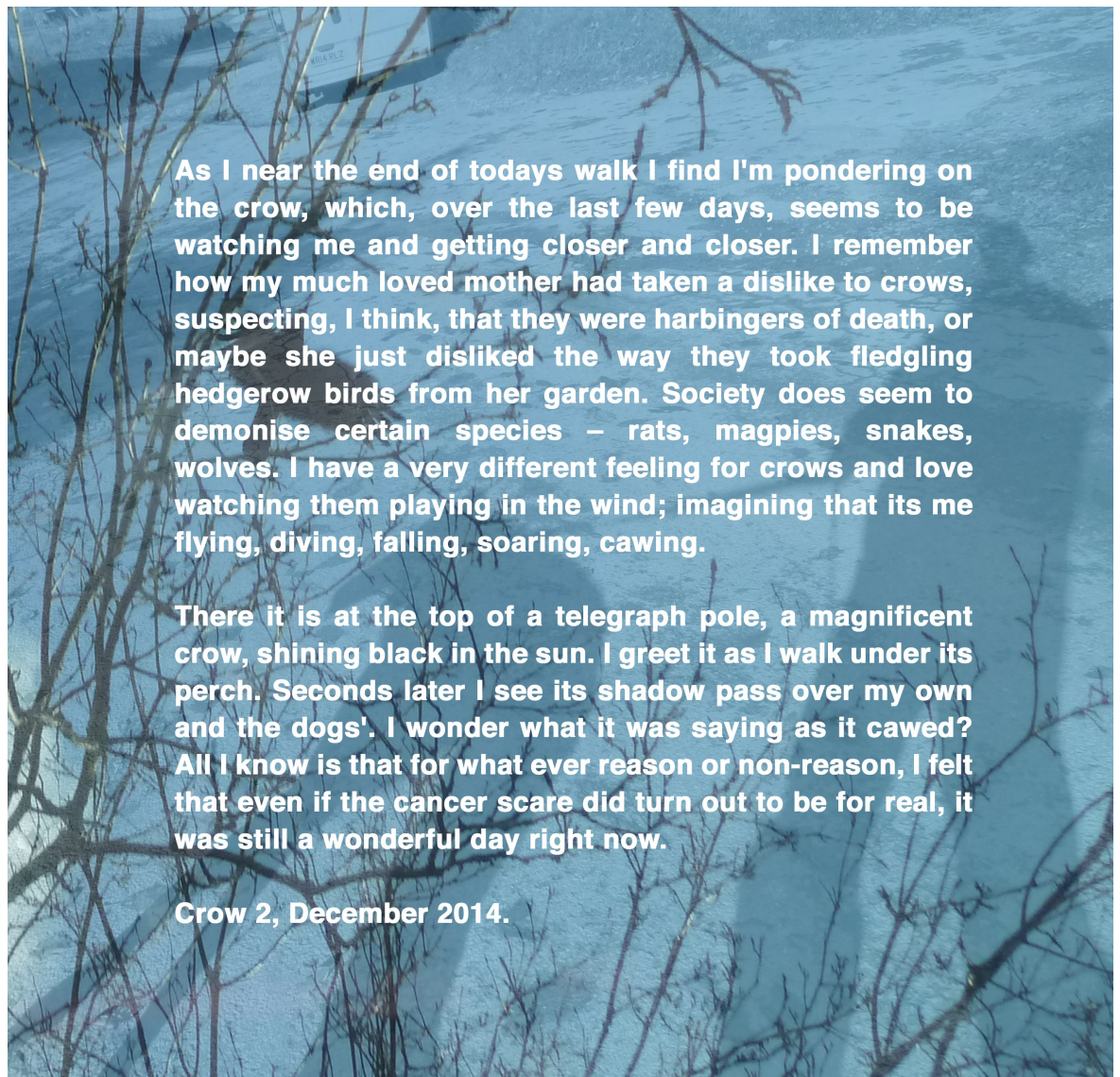


Figure 10. *Crow Two*. Digital Collage, the author, December 2014.

Part One explored the context for the study, using a practical ethico-aesthetic paradigm as the basis for a critical framework. The framework was then developed in response to the personal, social, art and environmental context. It reflected on earlier practice and other artists' practice by identifying threads to be woven into the emergent practice. The critical framework was further refined and a hypotheses and weaving metaphor was proposed as a process and methodology for further research.

Part Two studies the development of this practical ethico-aesthetic through interventions in three community led initiatives relating to The Stroud Valleys between 2010 and 2014. These are studied as three case studies, in each of which, the overall purpose was to *weave a community-landscape*. Specifically to make apparent and narrate individual and community subjectivity and relationships and to connect these with institutional, cultural and natural processes, with the objective of increasing understanding through dialogue and thereby enabling collaborative action. To reflect the non-hierarchical approach taken when engaged in community participation, a more conversational voice is adopted in Part Two and to reflect the auto-ethnological approach.

The different interventions raise different issues for the emergent practice in terms of scale, the nature of community and location, the type of changes envisioned and the interface with institutional frameworks as shown in Figure 11 below.

Returning to the original wording of the research proposal, there were a number of distinct objectives relating to community action: involvement in Green Infrastructure planning and delivery, and Landscape Character Assessment.

Chapter 4 studies *The (Canal) Weave* which is involved with Green Infrastructure, while Chapter 5 studies the *River Map* intervention, involved with Landscape Character Assessment. However, they overlap both in terms of policy and geography, and *The River Map* can be seen as an extension of *The (Canal) Weave*, dealing with a wider geographical area and constituency. Chapter 6 studies *Caring for Folly Wood*, which can be read as an example of grass roots green infrastructure delivery. The three long distance walks that were undertaken over the period, *Between A and Bee*¹, *In-between Places*² and *Transhumance*

*Walk*³, are also discussed.

<i>intervention</i>	<i>Purpose/change process</i>	<i>network</i>	<i>place</i>
<i>The (Canal) Weave</i>	To integrate the canal restoration project with other green infrastructure initiatives, plans and aspirations	Civil society groups active in Stroud, relevant NGO's, Stroud District Council, Cotswolds Conservation Board	Stroud Valleys, particularly the River Frome and canal corridor as they pass by Stroud town
<i>The River Map</i>	To integrate individual and community values and activity related to the River Frome corridor in the context of the Cotswold Conservation Board's Landscape Character Assessment	<i>Walking the Land</i> artists, Stroud Festival of Nature Consortium, Cotswolds Conservation Board, Civil society groups active in Stroud	Stroud Valleys, particularly the River Frome valley and Nailsworth stream as they meet and flow towards the River Severn
<i>Caring for Folly Wood</i>	To develop and implement a woodland plan and organisation to deliver it	Initially Stroud-wide community, then Stroud Woodland Cooperative	Three and a half acre larch plantation into ancient semi-natural beech woodland in the Slad Valley
Transition Walks			

<i>Between A and Bee</i>	To develop understanding between walking artists and scientists/bee campaigners	Walking the Land artists, Bee Foundation, Bath Visual Arts Festival	The Cotswold long distance footpath along the Cotswold escarpment, between Stroud and Bath
<i>in-between places</i>	To develop conversations about place with transition towns	V21 FLN group. Transition movement in the Co-op mid counties region	Between the Gloucestershire stretches of the River Severn and the Derbyshire Trent, especially around the “Cotswold Way” and “Heart of England Way’.
<i>transhumance walk</i>	To pilot art-walking as a way of narrating value of place	WtL artists, international community of story tellers and sustainable landscape interest group	Aurland Valley, Norway

Figure 11. Overview of the interventions and situations

The findings are then summarised with reference to the research question and the impacts and influences of the interventions on both the emergent practice and on the community initiatives. This includes evaluating an installation made and performed to reflect with partners and the wider community on the various interventions. Finally conclusions are drawn about the research and its process.

Chapter 4

THE (CANAL) WEAVE

Background

The research purpose was to explore and develop a practice that would involve and be involved with the community in the land use changes being stimulated by the restoration of the *Cotswold Canals*.



Figure 12. Line of Cotswold Canals Restoration. Crown Copyright and database rights 2015 Ordnance Survey.

Phase 1a of the restoration was underway as a result of a successful Heritage Lottery Bid⁴ and was now lead by Stroud District Council⁵. There was an undercurrent of concern about the project being a missed opportunity to, for example, put Stroud Town Centre⁶ on the map or regenerate the Cheapside area of town⁷. Equally concerns were being expressed about perceived threats to some of the town's green infrastructure and public realm, so, for example a group, *Stroud Against Gyratory (SAG)*, had sprung into being to combat proposed new road layouts that had been brought about by bridging the canal.

More generally, there was an often expressed concern amongst local people about development pressure, especially given the changes to planning legislation⁸. This was seen by many as a green light to developers, suggesting that the canal's most lasting legacy might be a corridor of private, waterside housing where currently there were inexpensive industrial units, remnants of past settlements and farms, playing fields and woods. During walks around the area, a number of people I met commented that they didn't want it all tidied up too much. I wondered if this was short hand for not wanting to lose a sense of locally evolved, and evolving, place to an imposed aesthetic.



Figure 13. *"We don't want it tidied up too much"* Digital photographs from *First Friday Walks*.

In recognition of such concerns, Stroud's Local Strategic Partnership⁹ (LSP) decided to research the community's ideas and aspirations for the restoration. In 2010, given my previous experience with the Capel Mill and other projects (Appendix 1), I was invited to undertake the research by a director of Stroud Common Wealth, Max Comfort, and to study these concerns as a part of this PhD. In accepting this invitation I made it clear that I would focus on green infrastructure, open space, and town and countryside interface. I was completing a paid project for Natural England encouraging the development of Green Infrastructure Strategies across the south west and was able to put the project forward as a community led example in this wider context.

Early on, in discussing the web like qualities of the area, the watershed and escarpment, cut through by river valleys and streams, bird migration routes,

animal tracks, textures and colours of various habitats, overlaid with transport networks, various histories, meanings and values and with daily experiences, we came up with the name 'The Weave' which for me also expressed what I was being asked to do. To avoid confusion with the weave metaphor, the case study is referred to here as *The (Canal) Weave*, although in practice it was referred to as 'The Weave'.

Collaborating

While Shannon Jackson recognises the value of social practice that “displays the importance of anti-institutionality in political art”, she is also interested in “art forms that help us imagine sustainable social institutions” (Jackson, 2011, p.14). Writing from a performance perspective, which she sees as being cross-disciplinary, time-based, group art, she is mindful of the need for “a degree of systematic co-ordination, a brand of stage management that must think deliberatively but also speculatively about what it means to sustain human collaboration spatially and temporally” (Jackson, 2011, p.14). Using Jackson's description of performance as an analogy is helpful in clarifying the nature of the collaboration. In the case of *The (Canal) Weave*, the group were members of a community of interest who brought their own lines and stories, and the stage was the canal at the interface between Stroud and the surrounding countryside. The project management was the equivalent of stage management in the immediate term and over the longer term, we had to be more speculative about the nature of the ongoing collaboration, indeed, the intention was to widen the collaboration by bridging between the community and public sectors and between human and more-than-human agency.

The verbally negotiated terms of reference for the collaboration between myself and Stroud Common Wealth were to:

- use a process that incorporates the aesthetic in exploring the social/cultural/political/environmental aspects of the project by walking and drawing with people
- create a relational or dialogical aesthetic by revealing a community narrative as an interface with decision making processes

- further develop a process which, over time, would enable community involvement in the decision making process about the restoration and enable community driven action in the context of Green Infrastructure planning.

At much the same time the newly elected MP, Neil Carmichael, set up a Canal Forum to share information about the canal restoration project's relationship with Stroud town centre. As a number of local groups attended this forum it seemed like an appropriate point of engagement. This made it possible to widen the Forum's remit to include consideration of the town's landscape setting and in particular the potential of the canal to link town and country. Conversely, it broadened the make-up of those involved with *The (Canal) Weave*. In comparison to wider environmental challenges, the project may seem inconsequential, however, as Fox says, in negotiating his relationship as an artist with his community, “let us start in a small and a domestic way. Make life and art work together. I work for my neighbours to the best of my ability” (Fox, 2012). In this way, collaboration is not simply an aim in itself, but is the process by which values are shared and understood at a meaningful level, developing the ground for future action orientated collaboration.

In terms of developing a collaboration between the community and public sectors, the practice needed to address questions about how the various parts of the planning system and local authority governance might be able to accommodate the delivery of a national project and district-wide strategies such as Green Infrastructure Planning, along with local people's aspirations and concerns. Consequently I wrote to Karen Toole (1963-2011), the then head of Community Services at Stroud District Council and Mark Connelly, the Land Manager at the Cotswolds Conservation Board¹⁰ in order to develop this interface. The communication with both of these bodies was positive about weaving a participatory approach into their work.

Encountering

Between November 2010 and May 2011, I walked various lengths of the Cotswold

Canals restoration. Seven of these 24 walks were with *Walking the Land* participants on *First Friday Walks*, the other 17 with people from local groups and organisations with a strong interest in the canal restoration and vision for its impact on the environment and interface with the town. On these walks, I recorded conversations, and along with participants took photographs and made drawings; these to be used to reveal the community narrative. This section explores some of these encounters by reflecting on the drawings produced.

The initial drawings (Figure 14) came about as a result of walking and talking with local activist, Ben Spencer on 24th November 2010 about the afore mentioned proposed traffic layout resulting in the loss of pedestrian flow in and out of the town centre. An outline alternative scheme had been produced on behalf of SAG and, as a development of the previous practice of combining drawings and photographs, a series of images were produced, overlaying SAG's scheme with photographs and drawings of the place undergoing change. The resultant 'digital collages' were inappropriate to their purpose in a number of other ways – the primary one being that they were images which said little about multi-sensory experience and how people felt about the place and the perceived threats to it – about its value to them. Secondly, despite trying to respond to the changes taking place, the images were static and didn't incorporate the dynamism of the situation.



Figure 14. Building the new road bridge at Wallbridge Stroud, collages from walk on 24th November 2010

The dynamism of relationships with a place in transition is similar to Mary Stewart's description of "ordinary affects" as:

a tangle of potential connections. Literally moving things – things that are in motion and that are defined by their capacity to affect and to be affected – they have to be mapped through different, coexisting forms of composition, habituation, and event.

(Stewart, 2007, p.4)

After this reflection, the practice began to shift towards developing *The (Canal) Weave* narrative in ways which would include reference to places in transition so that the dynamic aspect would be “mapped”. A decision to experiment with animation and was made, resulting in a number of animations exploring how the moving image might reflect walking through places, themselves in transition .

After a number of experimental stop frame animations made by drawing photographs taken on the walks and then scanning these drawings into the computer at various stages of completion and producing simple slide shows, their limitations soon became apparent, limitations which can be seen in Figure 15, a sequence of stills made from the December 2010 *First Friday Walk*. One issue with these is that they were made in the studio from photographs. Although there are many examples of artists successfully using cameras as a part of their process, this particular method was too many steps removed from being in the moment and in place with people. The drawings were laboured and held little of the feeling of the encounter, being more a record of it. Additionally, the way that the images appeared on the screen – for this is how the animations would be viewed, and I return to this later – was actually very static and seemed to be more about taking root in a landscape rather than moving through it.



Figure 15. Arundel Mill Pond weir: from *First Friday Walk*, 3rd December 2010

Attempts were made to increase the sense of movement and shared experience of a walk with community activist Martin Large and woodsman Adrian Leaman,

walking from Capel Mill, along the disused railway line to Dudbridge. Martin regularly comes on the *First Friday Walks* and was keen to draw as we walked. This meant that I too had time to make drawings that could later be animated, and also record conversations to use as a sound track.

now when we look at this landscape, hedgerows have been left to grow as straggly lines of trees. I think its a shadow of its former self and has really been let go whereas with woodland management and enterprise and education this could be a huge resource.

Martin Large.

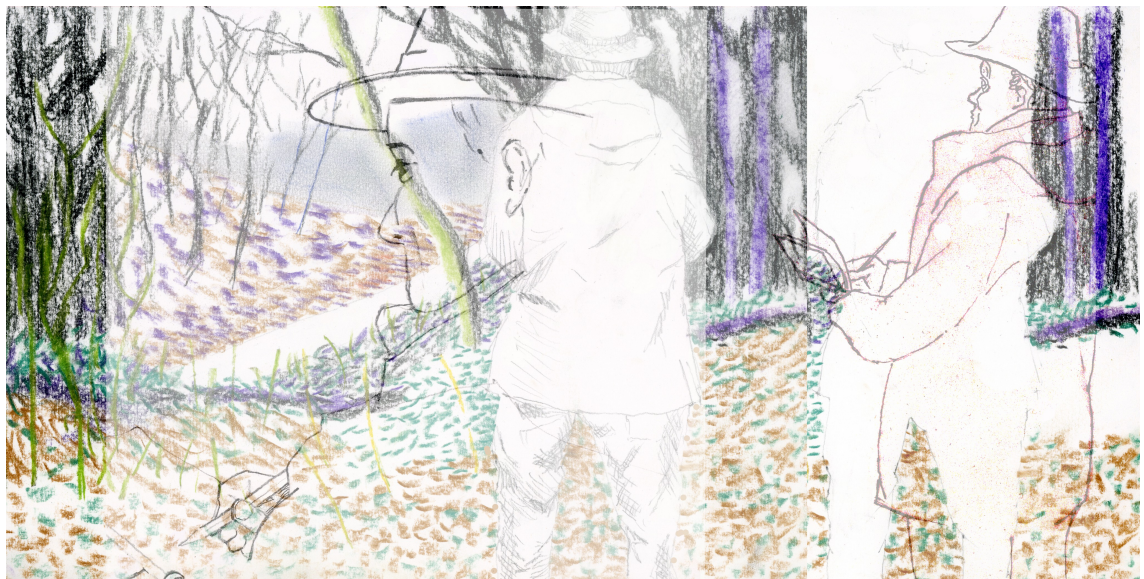


Figure 16. Dudbridge Cycle Track: collaged stills and transcribed conversation from animation made from walk on 16th December, 2010

The addition of colour and sound did slightly enliven the animations. Nevertheless they remained too static despite including drawings from different stages of the walk. The practice of drawing together and recording conversation simultaneously was a positive aspect of this encounter.

The drawings remained too illustrative and the attempts to represent Adrian's thinking about woodland produce was unsuccessful (Figure 17). This was perhaps in part due to being preoccupied by the technology of making animations and also being too concerned with their illustrative end use.

It would be a shame not to manage these sites and make them into diverse and beautiful woodland, and if we do, that will create a lot of materials that are really valuable for crafts.

Adrian Leaman.



Figure 17. Dudbridge Urban Woodland: collaged stills and transcribed conversation from animation made from walk on 16th December, 2010

On January's *First Friday Walk*, I had made drawings of falling leaves and recorded participant Tara Downs' story of a falling leaf as a sound track for it. Although the resultant animation was more successful in showing an “ordinary affect” and movement by the addition of video footage on which the leaf was superimposed, it remained representational and lifeless.



Figure 18. Falling leaves: stills from animation made from
First Friday Walk, 7th January 2011

Simultaneously, and in part brought about by *The (Canal) Weave*, I was also

involved in organising a Woodland Enterprise day with Martin, Adrian and staff at Ruskin Mill College¹¹ to be held in February 2011. This was symptomatic of time management issues, a result of pressure to respond to the dynamics of an active community.



Figure 19. Facilitating woodland enterprise seminar at Ruskin Mill College

The problem of the time it was taking to make animations also became apparent as the outstanding work to be made from walks began to mount up. For example, the walk on 11th January with Stroud's then mayor Andy Read, took place long before the animation of the falling leaf was finally published on *Vimeo* on 9th February and it was not until 28th February that preliminary drawings from the walk with Andy Read along lengths of *The WAS Way*¹² were made. This particular animation was not completed as I had lost the ability to reflect on the walks and on the work produced from them in time to prepare for and develop the next walk.

This was disappointing as good material was coming from the walks. For example, as well as making a link between the two powerful concepts of home and place when describing reasons behind creating the “WAS Way” as enabling people to access “the hill or valley you can see from your window [...] within a five minute walk”. Andy was also clear that for him “Landscape is not just visual and physical,

it is emotional”, saying: “there is a sense of place felt through walking in the countryside; for me a rhythm – you walk and you walk and that becomes your essence.” I heard this comment in two ways, as a facilitator of the walk collecting useful information about how people are affected by being out walking the land, and as a walking artist; spending time manipulating images and sound in the studio rather than experiencing the “rhythm” of walking!



Figure 20. *The Last Field*. Stills from incomplete animation of walk with Andy Read.

Nevertheless, experiments in making animations continued, including overlaying drawings on photographs and video, such as on a walk with fellow director of Stroud Nature, natural historian and illustrator Steve Roberts on February 8th .

Capel Mill is a place where you can leave the urban area and within seconds you're in the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – traditional hay meadows of Rodborough Fields – a summer blanket of flowers and views to the commons and along the valleys.

Steve Roberts

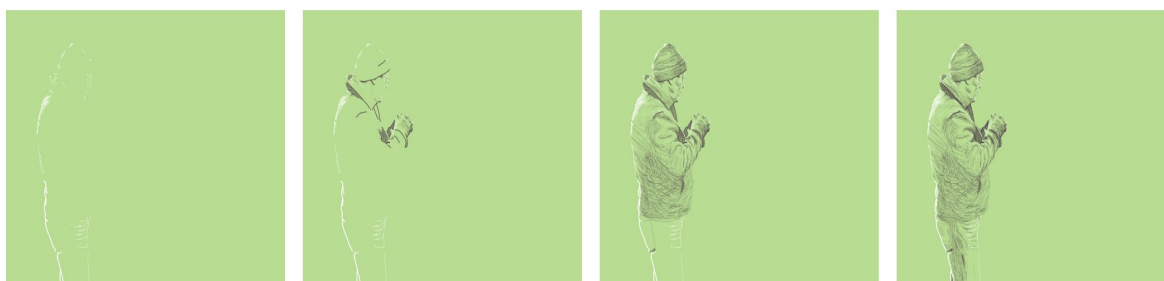


Figure 21. Drawings overlaid on video of River Frome walk, 8th February 2010

The shortfalls of the work had become clearer by the time of a second walk with Ben Spencer, this time joined by Rachael Lyons, another member of SAG, on 15th February when she said:

Living just over there the relationship the house has with the landscape and local history is quite a strong story and the road system just seems to cut right through former relationships with the land, with the railway, with the canal – the road system seems to be taking over the landscape and people are being forgotten rather than being reconnected with the canal and its historical context with the town. From my perspective as a housewife living locally [...] it just feels frustrating.

Rachel Lyons



Figure 22. Ben Spencer and Rachel Lyons point out their plans for a gateway to Stroud.

Rachel's comment reinforced a number of the aspects of why walking with people in their place had been chosen as a means of compiling the narrative and why the resulting work was 'failing'. It helped make the decision to focus on collecting everyday affects of landscape, rather than try to incorporate ideas of master plans, new urban fringe management and woodland initiatives or solutions of any sort, trusting that the overall collective process would address such matters in due course. This decision seems to have resonance (although I contest the modernist idea of utopia earlier in this thesis) with discussions at *Homework II*, a 2014 conference in Ontario on “utopic dreaming within artist-run culture as manifested through collaboration, friendship and long-term social engagement” from where Amber Berson reported that:

It seemed that in cases where artists were looking to design solutions and become activists they often failed and that it would be easier to start with a desire for community engagement and problem solving. It seems that artist-run culture has in some way failed to achieve the utopic project it set out to accomplish [...] Perhaps the problem, then, as Lambert and others spoke to, is no longer knowing where our collective utopia resides. In using art to help people define their own ideas of utopia, we can collectively engage in the social work required to effect real change. We must first envision “real” utopias to arrive at them.

(Berson, 2014, unpaginated)

Stewart's explanation of her hopes for her own book on ordinary affects were helpful in clarifying why the illustrative, or representative approach I had been taking was problematic. She writes that in her book she is trying to:

slow the quick jump to representational thinking and evaluate critique long enough to find ways of approaching the complex and uncertain objects that fascinate because they literally hit us or exert a pull on us. My effort here is not to finally “know” them – to collect them into a good enough story of what's going on – but to fashion some form of address that is adequate to their form; to find something to say about ordinary affects by performing some of the intensity and texture that makes them habitable and animate.

(Stewart, 2007, p.4)

Paying attention to *some of the intensity and texture* was a liberating suggestion and, referring back to the critical framework, seemed to mean:

- being less illustrative and representational
- showing movement and change
- including a sense of cultural and ecological value of place
- referring to sensations of experience place beyond the visual
- creating a stronger sense of being with people in place without them being the object or separate other
- collecting stories about people's relationship with place such as their emotional attachment to it, and the affects it has
- making work more spontaneously and in place

A specific aspect of this resonated with many discussions on *First Friday Walks* about how we generally stop to draw rather than make drawings of the actual

activity of walking. I was interested in finding a way of doing this, perhaps a natural development of the literally hundreds of indexical drawings I have made of train journeys; *Railway Lines*, which question who is making the drawing, me, the train, the driver, the railway line? A type of collaborative encounter, a type of amalgam.

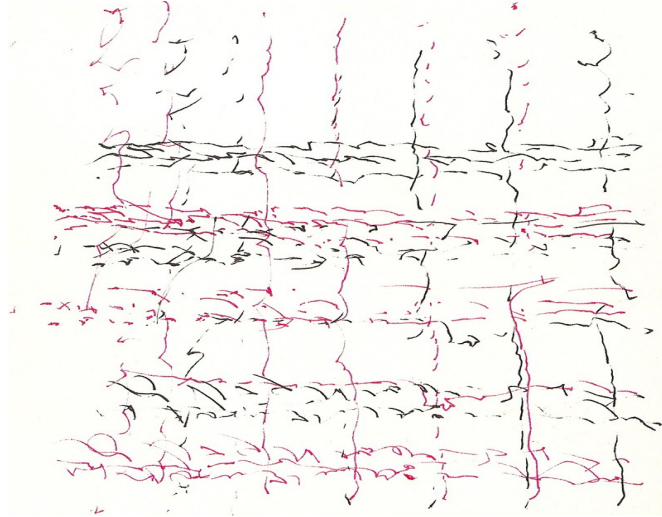


Figure 23. Railway Line between Cheltenham and Gloucester, 23rd March 2005.

As a development of this, I constructed a *DIY Drawing Machine*¹³ for making animations. The prototype was used in performing *Between A and Bee*, a three day walk in 2010 with the *Bee Foundation* along the Cotswold Way to Bath. On arrival we exhibited work and made a presentation as a part of the *Bath Visual Arts Festival*, an assemblage of a three day long walking-conversation between artists and scientists – and the more-than-human. Drawings made on *The DIY Drawing Machine* were scroll like, an attempt to draw the movement of passing through the bee pollinated landscape – a movement not dissimilar to the bees own lines of flight.

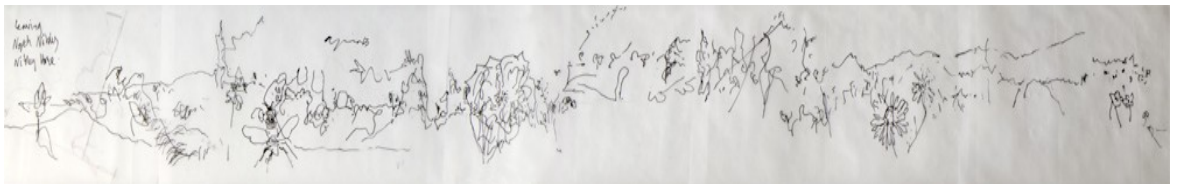


Figure 24. Between A and Bee. June 2010, example of drawing made on *The DIY Drawing Machine*, combining both drawing types.



Figure 25. *The DIY Drawing Machine.*



Figure 26. Drawing and walking on Rodborough Common with Ellie Harrison, as a part of filming for an episode of BBC's *Countryfile* programme¹⁴. 16th February 2012. Photo Kel Portman.

Some of the drawing machine work produced were of lines made while in motion, losing much of the reference to what was being drawn, becoming more about moving, while others were more a linked series of stopping points, drawings of significant moments/places on the walk – the bee stopping to pollinate.

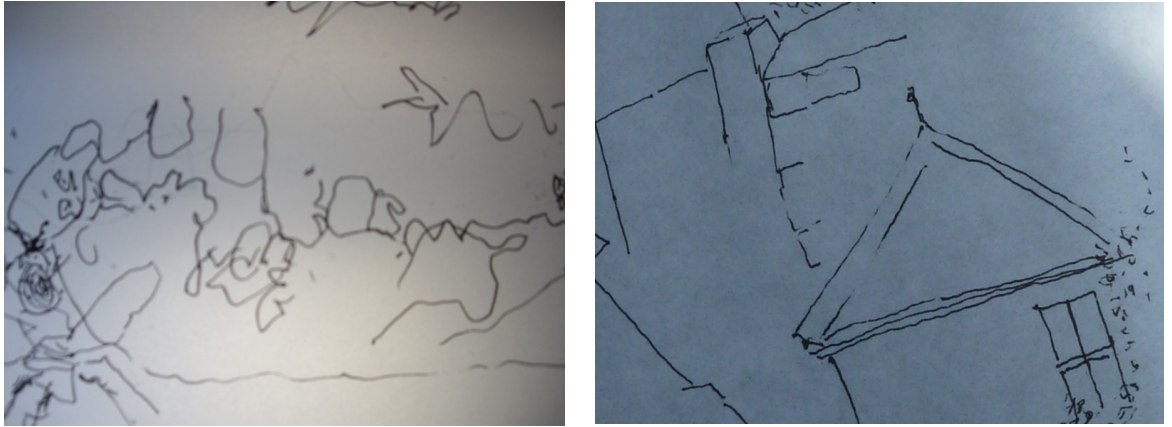


Figure 27. Details from two types of drawing using the drawing machine: The left hand image was made while I was walking, with the rollers being turned. The righthand one more conventionally drawn, stopping to look and stopping the rollers to draw. June, 2010.

In the doing, I became aware of the serendipitously produced shadows on the images. In the 2012 Harvard Norton Lectures, Drawing Lesson One: *In Praise of Shadows* (Kentridge, 2012), William Kentridge refers to the use of illusion in his work and, in countering Plato's ranking of illusion and delusion at the bottom his hierarchy of intelligence, instead shows the place that illusion has "in the making of knowledge itself". The distinction between illusion and vision is slight. A future as envisioned does not yet exist and consequently a means of revealing it is also illusory, be it architects' drawings, artists' impressions or something closer to my intended animation - less confining and more open to interpretation and collaboratively authored. I wanted to create an illusion which represented a shared future place, not a prediction but the possibility of possibilities.

Kentridge argued his case for illusion and knowledge-making by referring to the use of shadows in his own work, in Plato's writing and by using them as a metaphor for art making. He says:

it is in the very limitations and leanness of shadows that we learn, in the gaps, in the leaps we have to make to complete an image and in this we perform both the generative act of constructing the image [...] being fooled [...] and knowing we are being fooled, by being made aware of our part in the construction of the image, our part in the construction of the illusion, but most importantly our part in the construction of ourselves.
(Kentridge, 2012).

It was also useful to consider Kentridge's argument that illusion or delusion can be used to develop understanding, using a medium in a way which we know isn't 'real' and which, as a result, emphasises the need for us to independently make sense of what we are seeing or experiencing. This resonates with Beuys' ideas of self determination and the critical framework's participatory paradigm.

Kentridge's use of the medium to make political comment by encouraging us to consider what is behind the illusion was influential, not just in the abstract, but in the actual drawn quality of the work. Kentridge's simple black and white drawing, using light and shade to create illusion of people in space invites us to participate in the sense making. I decided that the animations would be further enhanced by the illusory nature of stop frame animation.

By adding a mounted camera to *The DIY Drawing Machine*, it became possible to regularly take a photograph of the 'drawing-walk' as it progressed. The idea of images gradually appearing could be combined with a more immediate, and illusory, sense of moving through place and equally importantly, could produce the images for the intended animation in place rather than slavishly working from photographs back in the studio. The drawings became more about moving through and being immersed in place rather than images of people in a landscape. (See Appendix 4 for additional drawings).

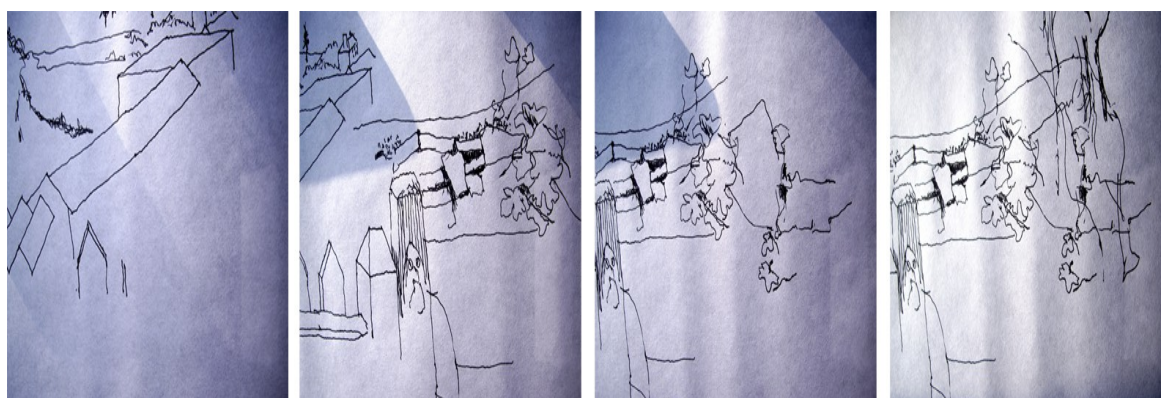


Figure 28. Stills from Garden Drawing, 22nd March, 2011.

Kentridge's ideas of illusion and knowledge making were useful added criteria of critiquing the experimental animations and by adding a sound recorder to the machine it was possible to further put into practice the idea of the encounters as

an example of an engaged aesthetic. The addition of the sound track was also about letting voices be heard, including sounds of the place itself; as Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel express:

Ecology [...] is about the recognition of the immense complexity involved for the entity – human or nonhuman – to have a voice, to take a stand, to be counted, to be represented, to be connected with others.
(Latour & Weibel, 2005, pp. 458 – 9).

While the nature of the encounters remained relatively standardised – walking, recording conversation, taking photographs, some slow walking, some drawing sounds – the purpose of the encounters had become more clearly about exploring the experiences that Robert Morris called “presentness” (Morris, 1978). The drawing process was to stop and make a drawing every few paces and take a photograph from the machine mounted camera of the drawing. In this way the images were a collage of drawings. So although they weren't 'made on the move', they did express transition between places, a sense of overlaid 'presentnesses'.



Figure 29. Bear Woods, *First Friday Walk*, 1st April 2011. *The DIY Drawing Machine* drawing. Pen marks were made while walking from west to east, pencil marks were drawn walking back, westwards, turning the rollers in the opposite direction.

The taking of the photograph became an important aspect of creating the

animations and involved noticing places to take the photograph where an interesting shadow could be cast across the scroll, or waiting for the sun to come out or go in, so as to locate them in time as well as space. As said, serendipity is at play in this process, and as artist and academic, Mel Woods acknowledges, art movements such as *Fluxus*, *Dada* and *The Situationists International* have all made use of serendipity in the creative process and goes on to ask “Can we design devices or vehicles that facilitate serendipity?” (Woods, n.d.) In a sense the drawing machine can be seen as facilitating serendipity in the way it 'captured' falling light on the scrolls. Woods quotes artist Eilidh McKay response to such moments “as a collaboration between you and your life” (Woods, n.d.) and it is this aspect of making the drawing, rather like the *Railway Lines*, that performs an encounter with the world, an unplanned and yet sought collaboration. In paraphrasing Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), who recognised the value of serendipity in his scientific work, Woods describes this in terms of adopting a mind set that is “conscious yet unconscious, controllable and chaotic.” This chimes with the idea of aesthetics as a reflective space, passionate disinterest.

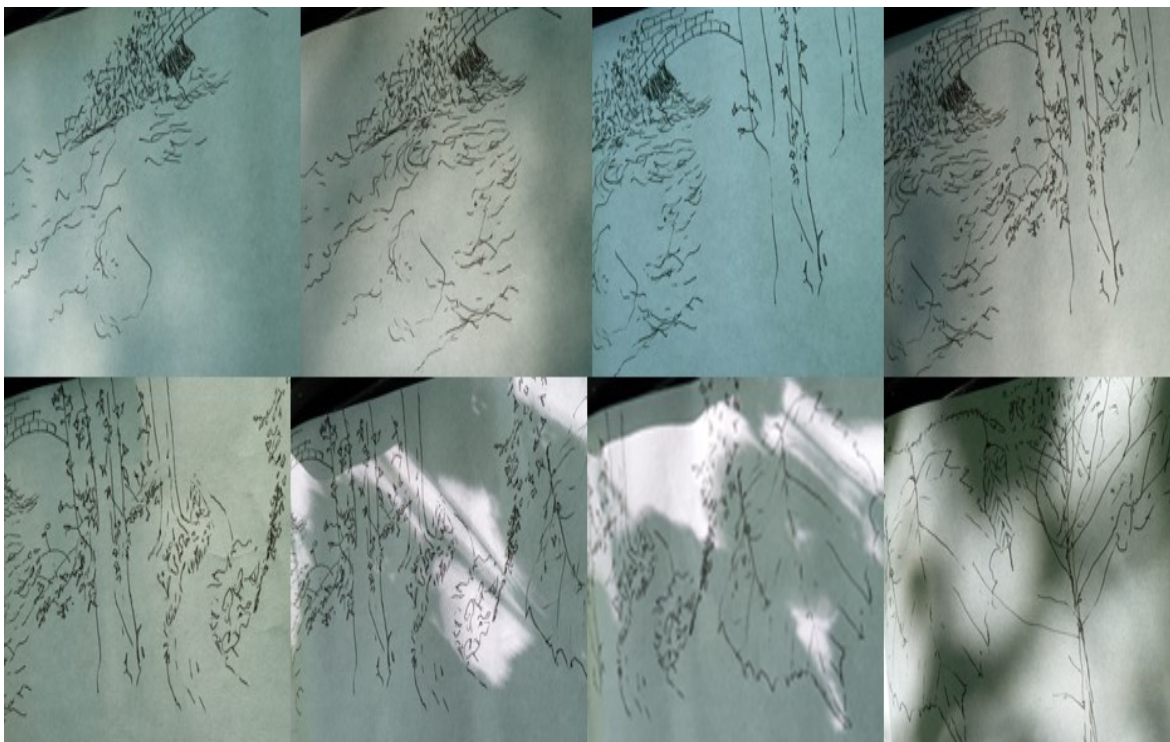


Figure 30. River Frome near Lodgemore. Stills from animation made on *First Friday Walk*, 6th May, 2011.

Exchanging

This section reflects on the development of the emergent practice in revealing and sharing *The (Canal) Weave* narrative. It refers to a symposium and animation. It also reflects on some of the issues arising from these exchanges.

14th May, 2011, Weave Symposium, Exchange, Brick Row, Stroud. While the encounters described above had been performed outside, the symposium was indoors. It was an opportunity to bring together a range of participants to discuss each others stories and aspirations and to plan future partnership projects. The idea here was to collect a community vision or narrative about the canal and River Frome Corridor. This could be compared to Beuys' *Actions*, but, Unlike some of Beuys' actions, people weren't invited off the street to engage but rather had been invited beforehand, often as a known representative of a group or interest and time had been previously invested in developing the relationships between participants and the project, many of the people being known to each other.



Figure 31. *Revealing and Exchanging*, Weave Symposium, 2011: as well as exhibiting the drawing from the drawing machine, photographs of participants and quotes from them on the walks were shown while the author recorded bullet points from presentations. Photo Tom Keating.

The lack of inclusivity of this process was recognised, although local authority representatives were present and the event opened by the local MP. Previously, local authorities in Stroud have criticised community activity as being by and for ‘the same old self interested group’ and there is undoubtedly a tension between representative and participatory democracy which the project recognised and took account of by inviting the wider community to participate in the following ways, by:

- putting on a town centre exhibition and public meeting
- putting the narrative from the walks and symposium on the Town Council’s website
- inviting other groups to voice their responses to the canal restoration at specifically designed interventions
- engaging with the Neighbourhood Planning Process.



Figure 32. Boat making and drawing workshop with Lucy Guenot, Helen Keating and Woodcraft Folk group on the River Frome.

In short, this is not a call for one or other of the systems of governance to dominate, rather an example of what Paul Selman calls *sustainability learning* which incorporates *social and institutional learning* (2011, pp.123-124), calling for processes by which local knowledge and aspirations are informed by and in turn inform public policy. The seminar was designed as such a process (See Appendix 5 for programme, invitee list and presentations). As well as presentations of local knowledge by the walking participants, strategic and expert input helped frame the discussions about future collaborative projects. These expert views referred to different approaches to *landscape change* and *place making*; heritage led

development, ecological and landscape strategy, public health and architecture, retail and trading.

The successful design of such exchanges are important in taking forward collaborative projects, as Selman says, “If it is conducted successfully, ‘sustainability learning’ is likely to generate outcomes that are more widely endorsed and therefore more likely to achieve implementation and compliance, as well as be more scientifically grounded” (2011, pp.123-124). This concern for community projects to be grounded in science is the other side of the coin to the concern for scientific projects to be grounded in community endorsement. The concern to find ways of integrating cognitivist and non-cognitivist understanding resonates with both Guattari’s suggestion that “it is the very production of science, technology and social relations which will drift towards aesthetic paradigms” (Guattari,1992, p.132), and with Beuys’ 1993 argument about reinvigorating the power of culture (over what he considered as the predominant Marxist ideology of the day, the *revolutionary potential of economics, class struggle theory*). He suggested that: “it’s time to show that art means the power of creativity, and it’s time to define art in a larger way, to include science and religion too” (Beuys,1993, p.31). Accepting that these different world views need to be somehow combined in our decision making processes was a reason for being inclusive in *The (Canal) Weave* process. This also resonates with landscape design theory and practice, as Brenda Colvin wrote:

Landscape design is the youngest art, since the refinement of our natural joy of landscape comes late in history. The understanding and perception of the visual goes deeper than what the eye sees, and owes so much to scientific knowledge that the study of landscape design must now bridge the chasm between art and science.

(Colvin, 1970: p. xxii)

However, many other tensions exist that cloud decision making processes which can lead to exclusion and consequentially unsustainable solutions. The LSP (whose chair was also chair of the chamber of trade) pushed for a tighter town centre focus. Led by a desire to be more inclusive, a Town Centre exhibition was held in partnership with the Chamber of Trade and Commerce along with a discussion event between traders, town councillors and civic groups. The *Weave*

*Advisory Group*¹⁵ was established as a way of overcoming these and other differences. The group had two important outputs. Firstly we invited *The Academy of Urbanism (AoU)* to visit Stroud as a part of their *Place Partnering* initiative and secondly we sought collaboration with the Town Council and other Parish Councils to develop a Neighbourhood Plan¹⁶. Both initiatives were aimed at bridging between the various sectors and town and country.



Figure 33. Briefing the AoU on the community networks and the place.

Assembling

These initiatives overlapped with the time when I was making *The (Canal) Weave* Animation (Appendix 6) that would combine the canal walks with the symposium. The intention was to reach people who had not been involved, to provide a community vision for the canal and river corridor and invite people on future walks. Figure 34 comments on the animation against these criteria.

criteria	strength	weakness
reveals future possibilities; envisioning community-landscape for the river and canal corridor, the relationship between town and country.	The relationship between town and country is strongly expressed, as is the idea of a community and landscape aesthetic	The animation is too busy in places, a combination of sound, images, video, recorded voices and written words weakens the envisioning quality
expresses a variety of values and meanings;	A good variety of values and meanings are given.	It would have been more successfully achieved by

telling of a variety of community aspirations, a collective envisioning referencing history	Reference to the past may be stronger than visions for the future	spoken word, rather than transcription of conversations
reflects being outside and in place; reflecting the dynamic co-creation between culture and nature	In places the editing of story and image achieves this. The weaving sound track reflects the agency of weaving culture.	Much of the first half of the animation is inside
reflects the actual collaborative walking process and ideas of transition; temporal, spatial and evolutionary	The drawings are more successful of this, including the sound track, than the video images	No clear move from how things are to how things could become
encourages and invites further participation and action - a part of an ongoing, open process, disseminated accordingly and used to invite future participation.	Showed how people could participate. The process had encouraged participants to collaborate	No process in place for evaluating role in consequent participation No response from invitation in the animation to make contact to arrange to walk

Figure 34. Strengths and weaknesses of the animation.

The animation can also be compared to a piece I assembled in a collaborative exhibition, *The Museum Box Project*, through *Space, Place and Practice*¹⁷, at Corsham Court in June, 2012. This assemblage did not really connect with partners in Stroud, although the exhibition was later shown at *The Museum in the Park*, in Stroud, as part of *SITE13*¹⁸. However, it was helpful in working through how else to show work made without, in my mind, colluding with a culture of spectacle. I was particularly minded not to design work to be watched on screen.



Figure 35. Making and showing the *DIY Drawing Machine* drawings as a part of the “Museum Box” Project, Corsham Court, 2012. This was made in the context of museums and suppression/interpretation of local knowledge of place.

On reflection, the animation was limited in a number of ways:

- it would lead to watching a screen and collude with the culture of the spectacle
- it was a very time consuming element of the practice and reduced time to be spent in other ways
- in itself, it did not have a direct and positive effect on places – e.g. it

represented places, but was not made from it

- it was not a metaphor and despite the use of shadows and stop frame animation, did not create an illusion that required sense making, because, like earlier drawings, it was too focused on making sense, too figurative.
- Its production and use hadn't been agreed in the original collaboration negotiations – at the time I hadn't known what the output would go beyond the walks and symposium. Consequently, despite being on the Stroud Town Council website, it had little impact on follow up events, such as the *AoU* visit.

The museum box piece above can be criticised in a similar way. In particular it is not made from the place it is about, and so has no 'real' effect on the places investigated.

Nevertheless, the overall intervention was a part of an ongoing process to include individual and community subjectivity about their place in future decision making. Other relevant issues include there not being a clear Green Infrastructure Strategy to relate to. However, many of the people involved, including myself in a limited way, are now involved in a Neighbourhood Plan for Stroud, emphasising green infrastructure. As mentioned in Appendix 1, the canal route and design around Capel Mill in particular has taken on board local aspirations, including the new park. With hind sight, I recognise that this is the nature of the democratic process and the shifts in perception of the area and resultant work should be viewed as success in influencing, rather than as a failure to deliver a specific, original vision.

The (Canal) Weave linked the up-and-running canal restoration with a richer community *place making* narrative. It included more voices in the existing framework of the local authority led process. It attained a measure of success with this and also developed the nature of the partnership between individuals, community and local authorities into the future. Regard building relationships with the more-than-human, they were particularly strengthened by the embodied practice of art-walking with people, in particular the value of the river corridor and the involvement of ecologists and other wildlife specialists. Despite the links between town and countryside being made apparent there was a pull towards

privileging the town, focusing on the urban as somewhere that place making could happen. The next chapter looks at working with the public sector more directly and balancing urban and rural needs, local people's subjectivity and strategic objectivity.

- 1 Between A and Bee: 2010 walk along the Cotswold Way between Stroud and Bath with Jessie Jowers and Carlo Montesanti from the Bee Guardian Foundation, and artists Tara Downs, Tom Keating and Kel Portman.
- 2 In-between Places was a walk between Stroud and Derby designed with colleagues, Julia Bennet, Alison Parfitt, Sue Porter, Diana Ray and Jaqui Taylor who, along with Lindsey Colbourne, Gordon Jackson, Helen and Tom Keating, Martin Large and Kel Portman, joined me to walk parts of the route and to meet transition practitioners along the way.
- 3 Transhumance Walk: A four day walk in Aurland, Norway with Jorun Barane and Morten Clemetsen, Helen Keating, Martin Large and Kel Portman, focusing through walking, drawing and story telling on the practice of transhumance and the future of summer farms and associated landscape and culture.
- 4 The initial impetus for the canal restoration had come from a group of local canal enthusiasts who established the Stroud Water Canal Society in 1972
- 5 During the process of delivering the canal restoration, the lead organisation, British Waterways, was abolished and the District Council took on its responsibilities.
- 6 As with many town centres, Stroud continues to compete with on-line shopping and out of town stores. It currently has 21 cafes and numerous charity shops and a number of empty shops. It has a weekly, Saturday farmers market which has greatly increased footfall over recent years and important festivals throughout the summer.
- 7 Cheapside lies to the south of the town and railway line, roughly a triangular site, with boundaries formed by the railway, canal and town centre access road. In recent years it has been the focus of a number of community led schemes, notably the buy out and redevelopment of "Hill Paul", a landmark building due for demolition, and a waterfront development scheme led by Project Stroud.
- 8 The Localism Act was introduced in 2010. So far the community has mounted campaigns against two planning applications by developers.
- 9 The Stroud District Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was formed in 2002 and is made up of members from about 30 different organisations. There are public, private, voluntary and community groups represented who have a diverse wealth of local knowledge and expertise. The LSP's purpose is to improve the quality of life for local people by encouraging effective partnership and sharing information between those people who can directly and indirectly bring about change.
- 10 The Cotswolds Conservation Board is the organisation that exists to conserve and enhance the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Established in 2004, the board is the only organisation to look after the AONB as a whole and is a statutory body created as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000. The act allowed for the creation of boards to oversee large AONBs that overstep county boundaries and cannot easily be hosted by one local authority.
- 11 Ruskin Mill College students range from 16 - 25 and are either residential or day students with complex behaviour and learning difficulties. These can include autistic spectrum disorders, epilepsy, dyspraxia, Asperger's, speech, communication difficulties and mental health issues.
- 12 The WAS Way – named after the idea behind the project of a circular **W**alk **A**round **S**troud- was established by Andy Read and Debbie Hewitt by signing and promoting existing footpaths that together create a continuous trail– further information can be found on Stroud Town Council's website and the Long Distance Walkers Association website.
- 13 *The DIY Drawing Machine*, made from DIY components – paint trays and rollers, a take on landscape painting as well as hi-tech machines.
- 14 The episode was broadcast on 4th March, 2012.
- 15 Weave Advisory Group: membership included representatives from Stroud Chamber of Trade, Stroud Common Wealth, Stroud Town Council, Stroud Valleys Project and Walking the Land.
- 16 Neighbourhood Plans, were introduced as a new tier of planning which sits below local planning. If they choose to, any community can now prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan, which would sit

alongside the local plan as part of the development plan for an area.(Source: CPRE)

- 17 Space, Place and Practice: Established by artists Suze Adams and Michele Whiting, is a research station through which visual artists and multi-disciplinary researchers meet to engage with issues of space, place and site. Its dimensions are produced through interaction and critical discourse which act as points of departure for individual practice and collaborative projects. Together we challenge and explore the interstices between embodied practice and theoretical enquiry, and there is no hierarchical distinction between making, thinking, writing, and doing. Our expanded practice is expressed in image, word and action. Our primary concern is practice-led research that examines the contested and problematic concept of 'place' and our attention is firmly focused on critical analysis within visual and textual (re)presentation of the experiential landscape.
- 18 *SITE 13*. 2013's Stroud annual visual arts and open studio festival, co-ordinated by Stroud Valleys ArtSpace.

Chapter 5

RIVER MAP

Background

There is much work using mapping to explore people's experience of place, their aspirations and needs, such as *community social mapping* and *deep mapping*¹. *River Map* is an example in a specific context of linking local people's aspirations and values about 'their place' to public policy, and to generate action. The purpose of the intervention was to engage local people with the Cotswold Conservation Board's review of their Landscape Character Assessment, specifically the *Settled Valleys Landscape*, a Cotswold landscape type unique to the Frome and Nailsworth Valleys (Cotswold Conservation Board, 2004, pp.68-71).

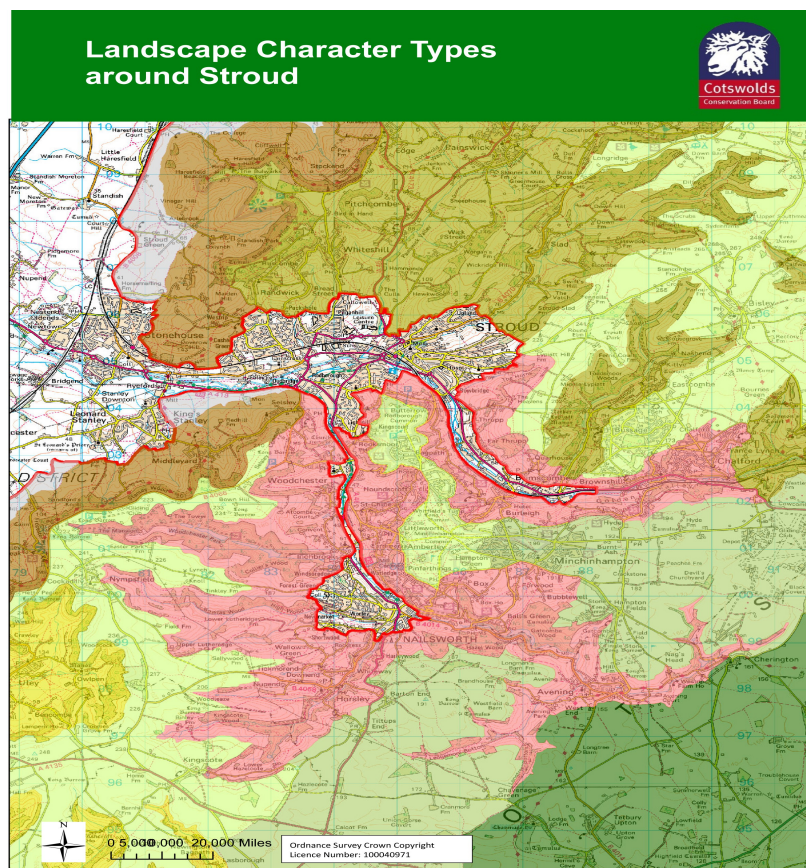


Figure 36. The area coloured pink around Stroud and Nailsworth indicates the Settled Valleys Landscape Character type.

On their website, Natural England, refer to Landscape Character Assessment in the context of delivering the European Landscape Convention:

The UK is recognised as already putting many of the principles of the ELC into practice. For example, the National Character Area map of England has been in use for nearly 10 years. Another example is the well-established practice of using Landscape Character Assessment to inform local policymaking.

(Natural England, n.d.)

However, having been directly involved in this work², I understand some of the challenges of putting it into practice, for example, Natural England often rely on the persuasive skills of their staff to encourage planning departments and other partners to take such policy onboard. It is an additional challenge to encourage grass roots engagement in the process, and there are no statutory mechanisms to do so.

Collaboration

In 2011, Stroud Community Land Trust provided funding through the *Festival of Nature*, and the Cotswold Conservation Board awarded *Walking the Land* a grant

	Walking the Land	Cotswold Conservation Board	Stroud Nature	Local food Hub ³	Stroud Community Land Trust
co-ordination	*				
Fundraising	*	*	*		*
10x walks with artists	*				
10x community exhibitions and discussion events	*				
2x conferences	*	*	*	*	*
Festival of Nature	*	*	*		
Seminar and exhibition	*	*			
New project development	*	*		*	

Figure 37. *Weaving the River Map Collaboration*. The asterisks indicate involvement in the various stages of projects.

through their Sustainable Development Fund to involve people in the review of the *Settled Valleys Landscape*. (Project Report, Appendix 7). This was a multi-layered collaboration involving artists, conservationists, farmers, land managers, project managers, event organisers, strategists and the wider community. The density of it is hinted at in Figure 37 above. This could be seen as a weaving pattern or instruction for the emergent practice to weave together. Below each asterisk another weaving pattern could be revealed, other levels of relationship; for example *Stroud Nature* includes forty or so local groups, which Steve Roberts and the author were weaving into the *Stroud Nature Consortium*⁴.



Figure 38. *Stroud Nature Consortium* seminar as a part of *The Festival of Nature*

A particular collaboration was the participation of thirty three different artists, writers and photographers (see Appendix 7 for full list) on the ten walks held between April 2013 and January 2014; a development of Walking the Land's *First Friday Walks*.



Figure 39. Participating artists negotiating the scope of collaboration

Whether this represents collaboration or co-operation is a distinction made by Jeremy Roschelle and Stephanie D. Teasley, quoted in David Patten's exploration of collaborative practice across art and architecture, saying "Cooperative work is accomplished by the division of labour among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving" (Patten, 2007). They compare this to collaboration which they see as a "coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem" (Patten, 2007). This view is contested by Paul Brna who suggests "that even within the closest collaboration possible (under their definition of collaboration) the participants will do some of the subtasks on their own (in their heads, on scraps of paper etc)" (Brna, 1998).

The question of collaboration and co-operation is for me central to participative practice. *The River Map* involved six of the participating walking artists meeting regularly to plan and develop the project – this included bringing to the table the 'scraps of paper and half formed ideas', from which our collaborative process took form. The distinction was a practical concern, for example, in distributing grants based on achieving targets, the artists who met regularly received more funding than those who simply cooperated by making work for the various exhibitions. It could be argued that this recognised the value of collaboration above co-operation.

Rather than theorising collaboration more generally, I here draw attention to the observation made apparent by Figure 37 above, regards *Walking the Land's* multi-disciplinary involvement. Similarly, Chicago based artist and educator Frances Whitehead "traverses disciplines to engage with engineers, scientists, landscape architects, urban designers, and city officials in order to hybridize art, design, science, and civic engagement, for the public good" (Whitehead, 2013). As a part of the *Embedded Artist Project* (Whitehead 2006), she poses the question "What do artists know?" and has answered it by publishing a list of artist skills which includes:

- synthesising diverse facts, goals and references – making connections
- production of new knowledge

- creative, in-process problem solving
- compose and perform
- pro-active, not re-active
- acute cognisance of individual responsibility
- understanding the language of cultural values
- participation and manoeuvring in non-compensation (social) economies
- proficiency in evaluation and analysis
- making visible the invisible

Whitehead's project aim is for artists, and therefore these skills, to be incorporated into local governance systems. *The River Map* collaboration with The Cotswold Conservation Board is an example of this.

The nature of cross sector partnership is of particular interest, what Paul Selman refers to as the 'process of social and institutional learning'. In conversation with Jo Burgon, the chair of the Cotswold Conservation Board's Grant Committee, on their annual review visit to successful projects on the 29th July, 2014, he recognised that "it is the robustness of the process that enables the subjective and qualitative findings to be taken seriously." This is reflected in Selman's claim that "Democratising landscape options [...] depends on a range of continuous processes that solicit public opinions and incorporate these into policy and planning options in order to align them with social preferences" (Selman, 2012, pp.123-124).

Encountering

First Friday River Walks

Perhaps we need to be thinking about the performativities of nature as embodied in the agencies of things like rivers.

(Jones *et al.*, 2012, p.96)

In *The River Map* intervention, the *performativity* of the River Frome was seen as an agency for settling the Stroud Valleys. Writers, video makers, poets, printmakers and photographers were invited to join Walking the Land's *First Friday River Walks*⁵ from the source to the confluence with the River Severn. These

participants responded initially to the river and its corridor, most doing so in shared recycled paper sketch books which artist Lucy Guenot had made for the project. Some instead used still and video cameras and others wrote. However the sharing and passing around of sketch books was an important aspect of the project in that it provided a commonality and a focus for participants which encouraged in-the-moment responses to be made, and importantly submitted. As referred to in Appendix 1, over the years we had tried with limited success to encourage such 'in-the-moment responses' by using a post card format in the *Wish You Were Here* project for example. Many of the books were collected after each session and handed round the following month, so they themselves were collaborations.



Figure 40. *First River Friday Walk*. February 2012

The encounters with the river were of prime importance, as apparent in the images above of artists Bart Sabel and Fiona Cam-Meadley. However, a part of the encounters for the wider community were engagement with the work of the artists at exhibitions and discussion events; the sketch books being central to these events. These events, could be seen as second hand encounters and to address this, they also incorporated walks along the River.

My own drawings further developed *The (Canal) Weave* experimentation, but rather than using the drawing machine, they were made in the sketch books. Although sometimes alone while drawing, they still reflected a relational aesthetic; they responded to earlier conversations and relationships with local people still in the making and were about places as I encountered them. They developed as an amalgamation of my own response to places, overlaid with other people's specific interests and concerns. As a result, they refer to an open future, as yet unformed



Figure 41. Sketch books on show as part of *The River Map* exhibition at Ruskin Mill College.

relationships between myself, other people and other-than-human, a direction rather than a known destination, a future amalgamation. Consequently one series of drawings were made around the edges of the page. As I walked, I stopped and looked up and down, right and left, and drew on the top or bottom, the right or left of the page, importantly leaving the centre open.



Figure 42. Drawing made walking through Thrupp

The sketch book remained upright so that the images always related to a human walking through places. Similar to *The (Canal) Weave* animation, I was interested in how places are in constant transition, how the marks were of the moment and location. The images below show a photographed series of marks being made as they appeared on the sketch book pages. (See Appendix 8 for more examples of sketch book images).



Figure 43. Drawings from February 2013
First Friday River Walk

Over the previous summer I had walked to Derby with colleagues to give a paper

on our walking collaboration, *In-Between Places*, at the *Affective Landscapes Conference* at Derby University. *The DIY Drawing Machine* had proved impractical to use it over such a long walk, camping and meeting up with Transition Groups along the way. Wanting to simplify the approach, sketch books were used to record the journey between Stroud and Derby, again photographing the drawings as they appeared on the page to provide images for making an animation (See Appendix 9 for additional drawings). As an extension of the idea of being in the moment and place, the performativity of the drawing act, this time I had taken the photographs with sketch books appearing in the bottom left hand corner of the image, immersed in the landscape and group activity. I was still seeing this as an alternative way of making stop motion animation and so also recorded conversations with people and sounds in place. A very brief animation was shown at the conference but without the sound. I decided not to complete the animation due to concern about producing work for viewing on screen.

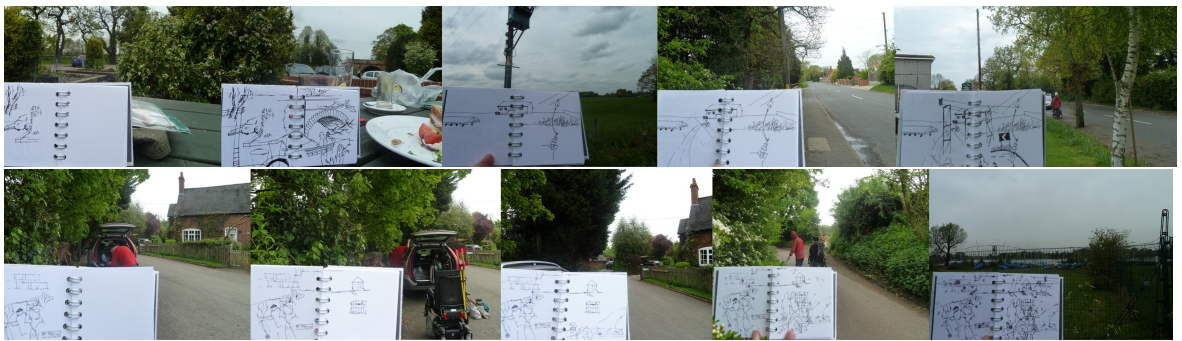


Figure 44. Images from *In-Between Places: Envisioning and Accessing New Landscapes* (Keating & Porter, 2015, p.232)

There were similarities with *The River Map* drawings but in the latter, the technique of having the sketch book as a part of a photograph of the wider activity was omitted, and also, rather than intending to make animations, the objective was instead to make still collages from the digital images taken of the drawings as they evolved – 'digital collages'. I was interested in showing time passing, not so much as a sequence of moments on an animation, but as a collection of moments captured and held still on paper. This way of making work about time and place seemed to raise the questions about duration more forcefully than an animation would. I was interested in the possibility of a still moment that also included the past and potential future.

This way of always being in-between appears to be a challenge for sustainability and is an example, to quote Guattari, of the artist's "capacity to invent mutant coordinates to extremes", engendering "unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being" (Guattari, 1992, p,106). The making of these images, always blurred, were pursued to develop the idea of both movement through space and time and of change.



Figure 45. Series of overlaid photographs of emergent drawings

Initially it was useful to work with the recycled paper sketch books, with their colours and patterns to respond to. Eventually, this was found to be too constraining and consequently folding drawing books were made. The unfolding format reflecting the scrolls produced on the drawing machine, as well as reflecting maps and linear walks and the way places unfold with each step. (See Appendix 10 for additional drawings).



Figure 46. Modified Drawing book, summer 2013

This change of format accelerated the rate at which drawings were produced. I

walked alone as well as on *First Friday Walks*, making drawings with a focus on the different aspects of places, again including concerns of others which informed and shaped my own response to places; collages of moments passing and situations changing.



Figure 47. Images of sketch book at Capel Mill. The right hand image is a digital collage of photographs of various stages of the drawing in process

As well as walking and drawing on *First Friday River Walks*, the encountering also created written verse, video and photography. It also involved collaborations with scientists and social historians. For my own art-walking practice, it also involved making banners, sound and video work.



Figure 48. Bat expert Simon Pickering at an evening of walks along the River Frome and canal at Capel Mill



Figure 49. Walking from the River Frome, across Rodborough Fields wild flower meadows to celebrate the heritage of the racking fields and to collect additional information as part of the public opposition to a planning application, filmed as a part of the BBC *Permission Impossible: Britains Planners* TV programme

Exchanging

Work made during the *encounters* was shown and discussed at community venues in conjunction with advertised discussion events and additional walks for attendees. The premise was for the work to initiate discussion. These discussions were facilitated in different ways, from 'guided walks' through the exhibitions with the artists, to group discussions recorded on post-it notes and questionnaires. Whatever the method, the objective was to collect additional information about how people valued their locality.

Common ground can be found between the showing of the work produced, with ideas of performance as practiced by Dee Heddon for example. In writing about her autobiographical performance, *One Square Foot*, and her use of Tim Miller's analogy of performance as a window onto the life of the performer. She says, "I like to think that the *square foot* is just such a window: not only onto my own life and experiences, but onto a whole host of other bodies and places" (Heddon, 2009, p.173). By exhibiting the artists' responses to these other *bodies and places*, the participants at the discussion events were invited through Miller's window into the life of the artists and also to become aware of the agency of the river.



Figure 50. Discussion event at Stroud Brewery exhibition, part of Stroud Visual Arts Festival, SITE13



Figure 51. Discussion event at The Exchange. Workshop exploring how the River Map has potential to supplement Natural England's Ecosystem Services approach

We wanted to make the river's agency seen and heard, similar to Heddon's reflection on the relationship between self and place, when she writes "the site itself becomes a co-author and co-subject" (Heddon, 2009, p.173). The exchanging aspect of the practice can be understood as artists creating a

reflective space in which their own responses to nature's agency is shared and in turn, elicits other people's responses.

As has been said, the idea of the *Warp of the Practice* is not a linear process. It is a support for the weaving. Throughout there is a toing and froing across the strands. The discussion events were in some ways both an exchange, as described above, and also an encounter, particularly when they included additional walks. Also, the discussions were to some extent influenced by the work shown and in this way were an encounter. For a number of the artists, the discussion events also became an encounter with community aspirations and these influenced the making of additional work to be shown later in the project.

At this point it is useful to reflect on the ethical considerations, particularly regarding authorship and audience as discussed in Part One. The project was not about enlisting people to participate in an arts project, it was about using art processes to enable people to engage with the statutory sector's planning for our common future. Rather than understanding the participation, and inclusion of people's aspirations in artists' work, it can be understood as outreach from the partnership referred to earlier and as such, an attempt to involve more people in the project, to be inclusive. Consequently thought was given to the location of the events in order to reflect particular places and, as far as possible, increase the nature of the audience that would be attracted, hence the choice of the local micro brewery with its own bar, an education centre for young people with learning difficulties, a social enterprise centre, a marquee in the park as part of the *Festival of Nature* and at the *Museum in the Park*.

Doreen Massey explores this interface between encounters and what she refers to as "terms of engagement". Her emphasises on the spatial and temporal nature of encounters helps explain the relationship between encounters and exchanges as a dynamic process, an interconnectedness of us all, describing it as "The space of many trajectories, the simultaneity of stories so far" (Massey, 2003, p.117). Hence the emergent practice, as it responded to making connections with others, was also the product of those connections, and by folding in the information gathered at the 'discussion events' became an example of how these trajectories - our

encounters - “are constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined” (Massey, 2003, p.117). If we are as Gormley suggested, to “use art as a way of investigating this perilous time” (2010), then the encounter/ exchange interface is an important space of collaborative reflection and the artists' work can be seen to reveal these moments of communal interest and *passionate disinterest* regards places. In this regard, the emergent practice has resonance with Massey's ideas that:

This space is always therefore, in a sense, unfinished (except that ‘finishing’ is not on the agenda). If you were really to take a slice through time it would be – in this sense – full of holes, of discontinuities, of tentative half-formed first encounters; space being made”.

(Massey, 2003, p.117).

These ideas are helpful in applying the emergent practice to the interface between constantly changing cultural and ecological processes.

Massey also writes that “There are always loose ends. If you were to make a map that really had the characteristics of this space, it would be entirely possible to fall through it” (Massey, 2003, p 117). The map metaphor and the idea of loose ends are helpful. A specific piece of work we made addressed some of our own *loose ends*. It was actually a map. One issue was that putting up exhibitions was time consuming and the discussion feedback loop also a drawn out process. We wanted a more direct approach. We produced an actual map, *River Map - favourite places*, and invited people to draw and put stickers on it to express how they responded to places in a number of ways⁶. The map was based on the AONB Landscape Character Types, an expert lead approach to valuing places. A second key was added by *Walking the Land*, inviting people to add their favourite places and routes by using coloured pens and adhesive dots. People were guided through the process and conversations were struck-up. Versions of the map were taken to different venues where people added their own local knowledge directly onto the map, thereby tying up some of the *loose ends* and filling some of the *holes* of our collective understanding.

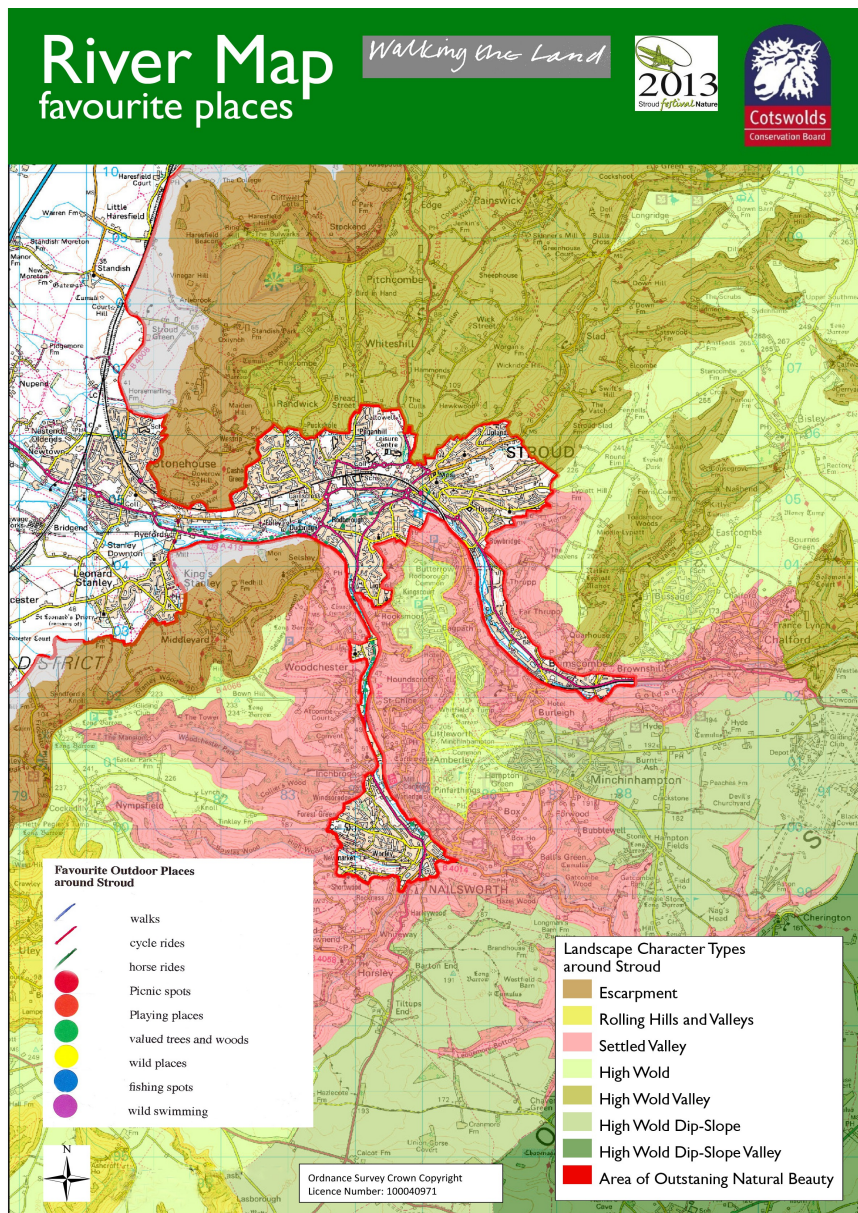


Figure 52. *River Map - favourite places*: inviting comment



Figure 53. *River Map - favourite places* at the Museum in the Park and Festival of Nature developing a collaborative cross sector process

The *River Map - favourite places* exchange raised a number of comments from collaborators and participants. A small selection of these are shown below.

- Provides me (the Cotswold Conservation Board) with very visible and accessible information about how people value and use the landscape
- good to have permission to draw on the map, feels like someone is taking notice, easy to use
- now what happens when I cross that stile, oh yes, turn right and walk towards the big view
- They mustn't build the incinerator over there, it would be seen from all along here (pointing to map)
- I love walking along this bit; the sunken lanes, overhanging branches and tree roots
- I never knew you could cycle that way. It all links up.
- this is where my child took their first steps – how do I mark that on?

Figure 54. A selection comments generated by
River Map – favourite places.

Assembling

As with the distinction between encountering and exchanging, the boundary between exchanging and assembling is pervious. Perhaps more accurately, as the action research assembles actionable knowledge, the resultant dialogue and shared learning can lead to further exchange and assembling. This cyclic process leads to action and further learning and consequently the refinement of the research process. This was the case with assembling the learning from *The River Map* case study, which culminated with an exhibition at *The Museum in the Park* and an associated seminar. A number of the involved artists had produced work which incorporated other participants' values and aspirations from previous discussion events. Tara Downs and Bart Sabel modified a museum cabinet to create a *Miniature Museum of Memories*, adding sound to collect aural histories as well as all manner of artefacts added by the general public.

The Long River Map, started as a collaborative piece between the author and Kel Portman and morphed, as shown below, into a collaboration with people taking part in the discussion events. In this way, the assembling both altered the pieces of work produced and also the nature of the practice. It is interesting that both the examples shown here were initially collaborations between artists before becoming collaborations with the wider community.

Figure 55. Tara Downs and Bart Sabel's *Miniature Museum of Memories*

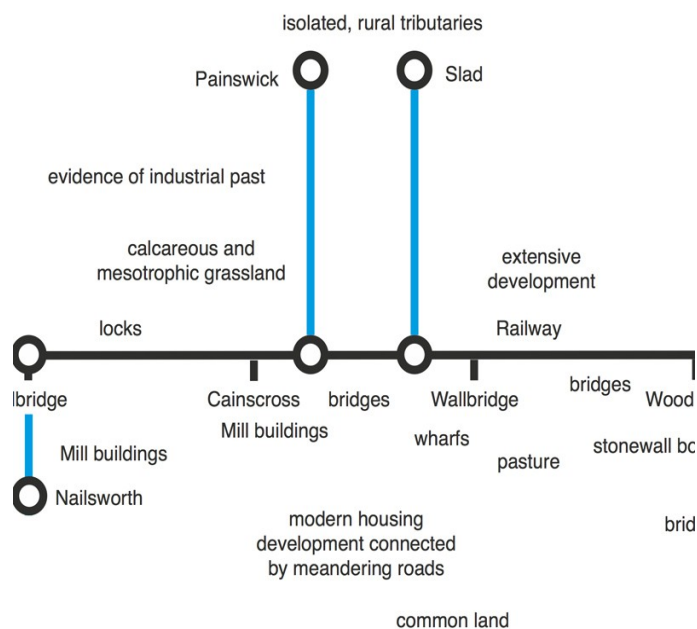


Figure 56. Detail from *Long River Map* as shown at Stroud Brewery in May, 2013. The author and Kel Portman.

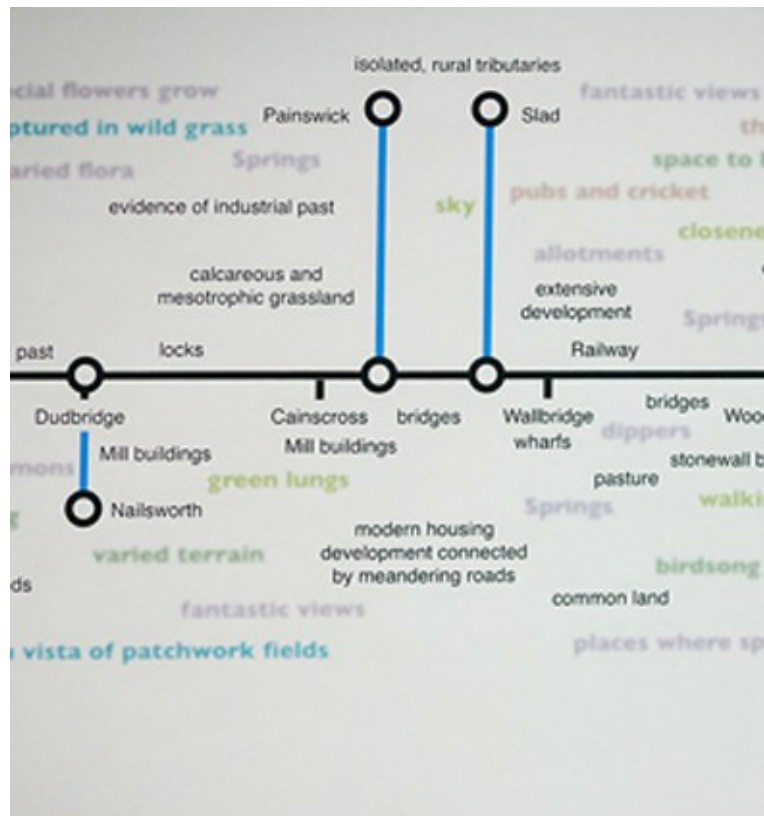


Figure 57. Same detail from *Long River Map* as shown at *The Museum in the Park* in November, 2012, having responded to the discussion event at Stroud Brewery. The author and Kel Portman.

It was also recognised in discussion with Natural England staff at one of the discussion events, that we were not only providing rich information for *Landscape Character Assessment*, but also for Natural England's *Ecosystems Services Approach*. These were interpretations of the art process, about which Sullivan writes:

It can also be argued that the process of making art and interpreting art adds to our understanding as new ideas are presented that help us see in new ways. These creative insights have the potential to transform our understanding by expanding the various descriptive, explanatory, and immersive systems of knowledge that frame individual and community awareness. These forms of understanding are grounded in human experiences and interactions and yield outcomes that can be individually liberating and culturally enlightening.

(Sullivan, 2010, p. 97)

The process did feel liberating in the way that I could incorporate my own subjectivity with those of other people, and it was apparent from the positive

reception of the work, that it was also culturally enlightening. It was also interesting that at the museum seminar, the artists felt quite overawed by the responses to the exhibition which were two fold. From the funders it was very positive, from the participants many of the comments in an open space⁷ session tended to leave us feeling slightly bruised as it brought out people's frustration with public sector consultation in general, rather than seeing the project as a step forward. However, this frustration on some people's part did reinforce the value of what we were trying to do in terms of being more inclusive.

Action research aims to 'to produce actionable learning' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) The exhibition celebrated and invited activity. A practical outcome of the process, stimulated by *The River Map*, was the establishment of a new *Wildlife Grazing Project*⁸. Although it is still at an early stage this is already forming a new focus for the collaboration, one in which many new partners are involved.

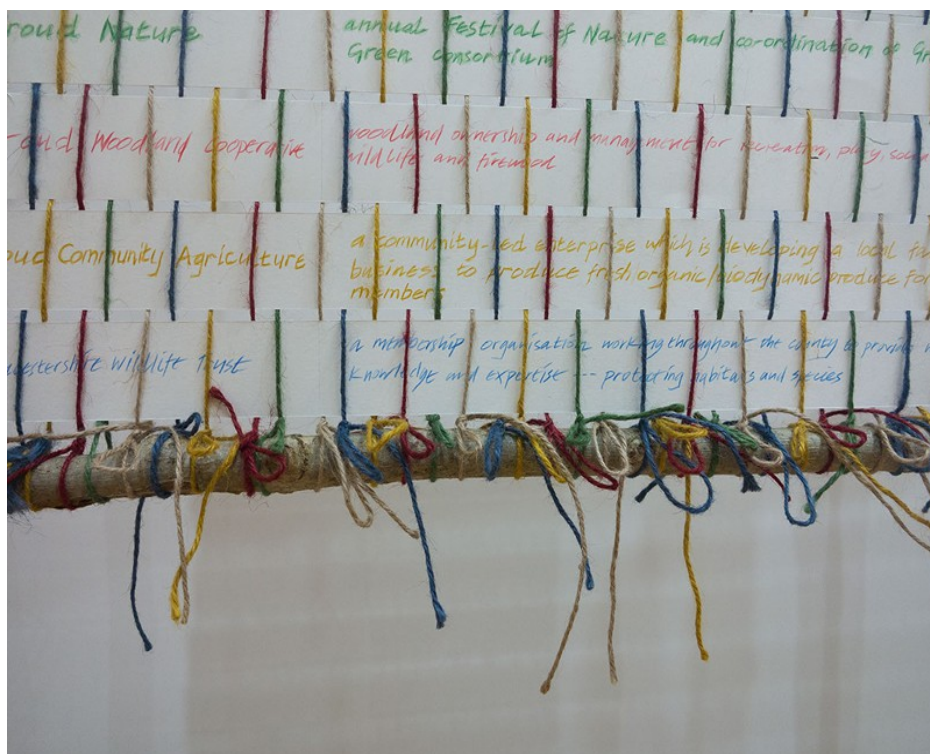


Figure 58. Detail from Loom as shown at the *Museum in the Park* to enable participation in projects. The Author.

In addition, Natural England are co-planning with the Cotswold Conservation Board and *Walking the Land*, a study exchange to the Stroud Valleys based on *The River Map* case study, and subsequent *Wildlife Grazing Project*. This is in

recognition of how *The River Map* has delivered the specific aspect of Natural England's *Ecosystems Services Approach* which relates to *cultural services* provided by the *landscape* as referred to in the earlier quoted email correspondence (Stearn, 2014). It is an example of the cyclic nature of the research methodology.



Figure 59. Inaugural meeting of Wildlife Grazing Project at Stroud Brewery.

Compared to *The (Canal) Weave*, *The River Map* intervention's aims were more straightforward and consequently more achievable. Key outcomes were that:

- the collaboration with other artists developed an additional network of people interested in applying cultural practices to local resilience
- the Stroud Nature consortium was developed
- the partnerships between and across sectors was developed
- the River's agency in co-creating place was highlighted
- My practice widened and my drawing continued to develop in context.
- The Wildlife Grazing Project was established
- Partners recognised the value of art to deliver multi-disciplinary projects

The next chapter studies the development of the practice in the context of caring for a small community owned woodland.

- 1 Iain Biggs writes that “ There’s no single definition of deep mapping. It’s a trajectory, a constellation of shifting impulses – in many ways ultimately educational – rather than a unified set of technical approaches or a creative methodology.” *Deep Mapping – a partial view*, 2014. Available online at <http://www.iainbiggs.co.uk/2014/10/deep-mapping-a-partial-view/>
In their book *Deep Mapping*, Brett Bloom and Nuno Sacramento [Publisher: Aburn, IN: Breakdown Break Down Press, 2017. Available online at <https://halfletterpress.com/deep-mapping-pdf/>] quote from William Least Heat-Moon's book *PrairieEarth*: “I was coming to see that facts carry a traveler only so far: at last he must penetrate the land by a different means, for to know a place in any real and lasting way is sooner or later to dream it. That’s how we come to belong to it in the deepest sense.”
- 2 The early stages of the research project overlapped with a paid contract with Natural England to develop the use of Landscape Character Assessments across the South West of England, as a part of delivering the ELC.
- 3 *Stroud Food Hub* refers to a number of local food projects in and around Stroud, such as previously cited Stroud Community Agriculture and StroudCo.
- 4 The Stroud Nature Consortium is a loose associations of local organisations co-ordinated by Stroud Nature, including: Gloucestershire Bee Association, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, the Museum in the Park, Stratford Park Management Committee, Stroud District Council, Stroud Town Council, Walking the Land.
- 5 *First Friday River Walks*: for the duration of the *The River Map* project, *First Friday Walks* focused on the River Frome and its tributaries. Participating artists were given a briefing and a core group of us met regularly to discuss progress and to liaise with Marl Connelly of the Cotswold Conservation Board. Members of this core group were Tara Downs, Lucy Guenot, Kel Portman, Valerie Coffin-Price (Ffin) and myself.
- 6 We provided coloured dots, coded to match a new key and asked people to identify walks, cycle rides, horse rides, picnic spots, playing places, valued trees and woods, wild places, fishing spots and wild swimming. Felt pens were also available for drawing and writing on the map.
- 7 *Open Space* is a group discussion technique whereby there is no preset agenda and items for discussion come from the floor.
- 8 Wildlife grazing is an approach to landscape and habitat management which combines supporting locally produced meat with future proofing biodiversity in the face of such threats as climate change.

Chapter 6

CARING FOR FOLLY WOOD

Background

Folly Wood¹ as a focus for a case study appeared serendipitously as the research was being formulated; another example of responding to what Guattari described as an *event-incident*. It was a new initiative relating to a single land ownership, albeit a multiple ownership, having less interface with the wider community and public sector² than the previous two case studies.

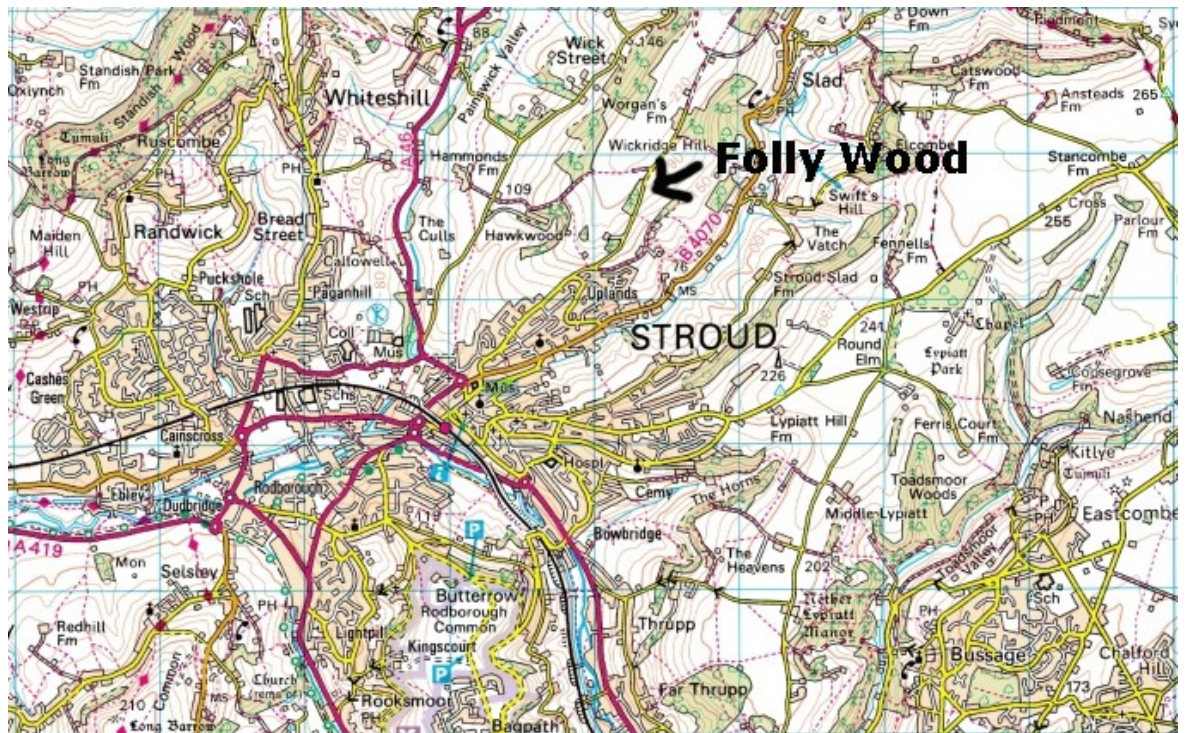


Figure 60. Folly Wood; Location.

Collaborating

A local activist, Ben Spencer, approached Martin Large, a director of Stroud Common Wealth, regarding buying a 3.5 acre woodland on the edge of Stroud. Four days later myself, Ben and Martin successfully bid for the land at auction. We

had received enough expressions of interest from local people in buying £500 pound shares to be able to offer around £20,000 to £25,000. The three of us became the initial directors of the Stroud Woodland Cooperative³ and distributed 64 shares which paid for the purchase of the wood and left a small working budget. I offered to co-ordinate and co-facilitate, in an unpaid position, the process of the next phase of considering what we would do with the woodland and how we, the 64 shareholders, friends and families, would organise ourselves to do it. This would become The *Caring for Folly Wood* plan. (See Appendix 11 for the plan and initial year's action plan).

Inclusivity has been mentioned earlier and Hal Foster's question about the democratic credibility of works encompassed in Bourriard's relational aesthetics (2002) applies to *Caring for Folly Wood*. He says that the politics sometimes "ascribed to such art" depends on what is "a shaky analogy between an open work and an inclusive society, as if a desultory form might evoke a democratic community, or non hierarchical installation predict an egalitarian world" (Foster, 2006, p.193). The *Caring for Folly Wood* intervention could be understood exactly as being about developing a practice to explore *an egalitarian world* regarding the membership's relationship in and with the woodland. However it does raise questions about the interface between the group and the wider Stroud community. In buying the wood, the process could not claim to be totally inclusive as it was formed by people who were able to buy shares in the wood, although, in recognition of this inequality, one of the group's principles is to engage with the wider community. Financial considerations aside, it would of course be unrealistic that everyone in Stroud could or would have wanted to join the co-operative. In effect, the project was offered as an opportunity for interested, local people to play an active role in managing or co-creating a part of their locality. Taking a broader view, returning to ideas of micro-utopia and transition, *Caring for Folly Wood* is one of a number of land-based projects led by and open to people in Stroud. The co-op plans to support similar projects elsewhere.

At our first gathering as owners of the woods (4th September 2010) we agreed an initial organisational structure based on topic groups, membership gatherings and core group meetings. Much of this is well rehearsed practice, and for example has

been included in Hopkins "The Transition Companion" (2011).



Figure 61. First Gathering in the woods and Celebratory Picnic.

Our structure, which included an ecology group and an arts and crafts group, reflected an ethos to include rational and sensory ways of understanding the wood and our relationship with it. Early-on the group decided that the plan preparation would take a year in which time we would get to know each other, our various needs and the wood through the seasons and its needs. We also wanted to achieve this through a non-hierarchical, inclusive and transparent as possible internal process, taking opportunities to develop members' skills and competencies. Regional *Good from Woods* research⁴ illustrated this in its Folly Wood case study, with this quote from a member:

it was refreshing to come to something like this where you get 50 or 60 so people who are there just doing it without creating unnecessary administration or hierarchies or silos or any of the stuff that you seem to get in other organisations, so for me it's been quite a hopeful experience.

(Good from Woods, 2014, Section 11, Indicator B, p.2)

Part of the perceived success of the process was agreeing a set of principles⁵ which were strong enough to guide us into an as yet uncharted future.

Encountering

During the year taken making the *Caring for Folly Wood* plan, members gathered in the wood at the equinoxes and solstices to celebrate seasonal changes. At such times, as well as eating, drinking, dancing, singing and hearing readings from quasi-pagan scripts, people were invited to draw, write and talk about how it felt to be in the woods; what they especially valued about it. The routine of fire lighting and sitting around the fire became iconic. These encounters had been 'designed' to help us understand our responses to the wood and to each other; our collective subjectivity, our hopes for the wood. They were shared experiences and conversations, folding in multiple understandings and perspectives. Similar to the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded *Ways of Knowing* project, we too “wanted to experiment with what it means to know things through collaborative and participatory research” (Ways of Knowing Project Team, 2013) and using a range of arts methods we too “experimented with methods which focus on embodied and emergent knowing” (Ways of Knowing Project Team, 2013).



Figure 62. Gathering for the Winter Solstice, 2010.

These gatherings were collaboratively designed. A member who was at the time chair of “Forest Schools Camps”⁶, Andy Freedman, along with partner Ruth Illingworth and Mike and Purdita Dawson, were particularly interested in using the quasi native-American metaphor of *for the good of the tribe* and also quasi-pagan

rituals. These metaphors, which were manifested in songs, fire rituals and readings, also enabled us to get to know ourselves in the context of communities that are now absent, as explored by Iain Biggs through *Border Ballads* referring to the songs he has studied as a “latent sonic *communal place*” (Biggs, 2009, p.8). Biggs hopes that accessing these places “may contribute to the gradual embodying of a 'quasi-pagan' mentality”, which he believes “is necessary to our future well-being”. (Biggs, 2009, p.8) He goes on to make the case that:

The lived evocation of another, quasi-pagan, animistic way of thinking constituted by these songs [...] offers an embodied potential point of resistance – activated through the shared community of singing and listening – to a social and cultural reductivism inseparable from the 'monotheistic individualism' pre-supposed by the forces that drive neo-liberal western market democracies.

(Biggs, 2009, p.12)

This resonates with Miles' ideas of *Myth and Gablik's reenchancement*. A part of this resistance was to encourage a more caring attitude by 'designing' the encounters to develop a shared commitment to the project by cross referencing the aesthetic experiences of being in the wood together with a growing understanding of our needs and the wood's ecology, history, enchantment and possibilities. An amalgamation.

Encountering each other in the wood, undertaking activities such as research into its history, flora and fauna, tree planting, taking part in such quasi-pagan rituals as tree dressing, all performed a weaving of a relational aesthetic between people and between people and woodland – a practical community-woodland ethico-aesthetic. Being in and caring for the wood became synonymous with being a part of and caring for the group. This was often expressed in the *Good from Woods* research into the well being benefits of Folly Wood as evidenced by this extract when a research participant was speaking about community ownership as:

a shared purpose to create a small community of its own [...] It's the sense of purpose that's really kind of tangible and concrete, and there's a common sense of value and a reason why we're doing this - it's kind of enriching lives [...] it's got a sort of longevity which is based on the fact that it's very simple, so the wood is owned by all these people and one of the main purposes is actually to come up and maintain the wood.

(Good from Woods, 2014, Section 11, Indicator A, p.3)



Figure 63. Member Martin Large reciting woodland poetry at the vernal Equinox, 2010.



Figure 64. Dressing the Holly with our wishes for our common future. Winter Solstice, 2010.

A large part of the process at the gatherings was to combine individual and group subjectivity with the needs of the wood, and accordingly *Walking the Land* facilitated a number of activities aimed at creating relational ethico-aesthetic experiences. Two of these which have been promoted by *Common Ground* are *Tree Dressing* and the *ABC of Place*. These provided a basis for encountering the everyday differently. As Common Ground say, “Creating an ABC liberates us from classifying things as rare or beautiful to demonstrate what we care about in the everyday”. They also refer to the way it can transform the experience; “it reshuffles things and juxtaposes them in ways that surprise and make you think. This can change what we see, disperse our complacency, make things we take for granted seem new to us and encourage us to action” (Common Ground, n.d. unpaginated).

A particular encounter was a 100 mile woodland pilgrimage, 29th May to 4th June, 2011, which, members of the arts and crafts group, Kel Portman, Tom Keating and the author walked together. On this walk we rubbed a tree approximately every mile and posted the resultant bark rubbings back to the group.



Figure 65. Woodland Pilgrimage, Day 1. Drawing 3. Beech, Helen's Wood.

The initial idea had been to engage with other woodland groups in response to the government's threats to sell off the nation's woodland estate. In the time it took to organise the pilgrimage, the threat had subsided and member's impetus fell away, leaving a disconnect between the walkers and the rest of the group. Nevertheless, the rubbings were exhibited at a woodland gathering and other members were invited to make and add their own tree rubbings around the wood.



Figure 66. Showing work from the Woodland Pilgrimage and inviting further participation. Summer Solstice, 2011.

The encountering Folly Wood facet of the practice manifested the group's aim to have an ongoing open process rather than a top down, hierarchical management system. Resonant of Beuys' *actions*, an objective was to encourage self-determination. For Beuys this was key to his expanded concept of art in which he saw human liberty as the basic concern (Beuys 2004). We were able to research through practice how individual and group freedom or subjectivity could be negotiated, also with reference to concepts of the woodland's freedom or agency. Accordingly, the way that the encounters were facilitated, how they fitted into the gatherings, how the feedback was taken and processed was collaborative throughout.

In a cross disciplinary research project concerning co-creative and participatory practices, Professors Paul Harris and Dr. Chris Fremantle with Anne Douglas have questioned whether participation is of itself democratic. (Fremantle, 2013). In summarising their findings, and referring to Kester (2012), Fremantle says “Kester makes a compelling case that context can be generative and transform the underlying logic of formal processes” and that the processes of such artists as Lacy have lead to “an aesthetic of participatory and co-created practices, not merely to the art work that might result in [...] an aesthetic of interaction” (Fremantle, 2013, 15-16 minutes). Their findings, particularly that Fremantle's idea of “the aesthetic of participation” (Fremantle, 2013, 14 minutes) is a way of increasing participation, is supported by this quote from the *Good from Woods* research: “You feel responsible for it and I feel more of a commitment to it, and then I think that it's less up to other people to look after it, like it's up to all of us” (Good from Woods, 2014, Indicator C, p6).

In terms of my own encounters with the woodland, as opposed to the group, I performed/made some work about “sudden oak death” a disease that was identified at the time as effecting larch. This engaged with the development of the management plan, stressing the need to gradually replace the larch trees, which were now over mature anyway, and to plant a mix of species to replace them, thereby increasing diversity and the robustness of the woodland.



Figure 67. The Author Performing *Sudden Oak Death*. March, 2011. Photo Kel Portman.

Woodland member and ecologist, Seb Bucton, and I collaborated on a piece of work, *One Metre Transects*, to record the ecology of the changing woodland floor which did not particularly add to the preparation of the plan, but does have the potential to monitor the effects of our work over the coming years.



Figure 68. *Black Bryony*. Part of *One Metre Transects* collaboration.

Exchanging

More than in the other two interventions, the interaction between encounters and exchange was very fluid. Collecting and compiling the richness of information in the woods from the encounters were often immediately followed by exchanging views and ideas. For example, as a part of the *ABC of Place* referred to above, people's words were displayed and samples read out. There are two reasons why there was this overlap. Firstly, large numbers of the membership regularly met in the woods as a group, so that distinctions between the woodland and the woodland group were blurred. Consequently, encounters were equally with the wood and members of the group. Secondly, as has been seen, unlike the other interventions, the collaboration was clearly framed by the agreed principles, and people had literally bought into the project on equal terms. In this way the subjectivities of all members were clearly the business of the whole group, and it was this relationship between other members and the wood that people wanted to encounter and at the same time, reveal and exchange their own subjectivity.

This fluidity in turn was part of an ongoing process of reviewing the research practice. A reflection here is that the situation with the other two interventions required the practice to play a role in 'holding' information and arranging events at which it could be revealed to others. With *Caring for Folly Wood*, the situation required the information to flow between members almost immediately. This fluidity brought its own challenges and required constantly reviewing the research process. For example at one gathering, as we worked through and discussed ideas to do with how people wanted to use the space, wondering how to communicate this with members not present, on the spur of the moment I offered to make copies of a simple base plan for people to add to at our next meeting. Other people immediately offered to collect pieces of cloth to demarcate activities. This became the basis of the design for that next stage of the research.

Not all members participated in gatherings which raised questions about inclusivity and democracy. Citing the "Power Law Distribution" model as a way of comparing "the numbers of people who could contribute in relation to the numbers of people who do contribute", Fremantle *et al.* suggest that "A few people make a significant contribution and a lot more people make a much more limited contribution"

(Fremantle, 2013, 10-12 minutes). Rather than see this as a failure of the process, the process should be seen as responsive to post-postmodernist ideas of heterogeneity.

Assembling

As mentioned, we needed to address ecological, spatial, temporal and organisational issues so developed a mapping process to consolidate our discussions and discoveries. Previous gatherings had reached a level of agreement on the range of activities and facilities we wanted to develop in the woods. The gathering divided into four groups, each provided with a canvas base map and pieces of cloth. Each group responded to a number of questions about where previously agreed, activities should be sited. This was done through walking around the wood in conversation and then sticking the fabrics onto the base maps.



Figure 69. Displaying the various spatially mapped activities. Spring Equinox, 2011.

Each group then presented their ideas to the whole gathering. After the event I produced and circulated amalgamations of the four maps, which in due course became the basis of making decisions about the spatial and temporal layout of our activities in the woods.



Figure 70. Groups feeding back on their aspirations and ideas.



Figure 71. Compiling the maps.

After the event, as a part of compiling the final folly wood plans, I assembled the findings from the mapping event by overlaying the four images. This approach echoed the drawings I was making in the other two interventions.

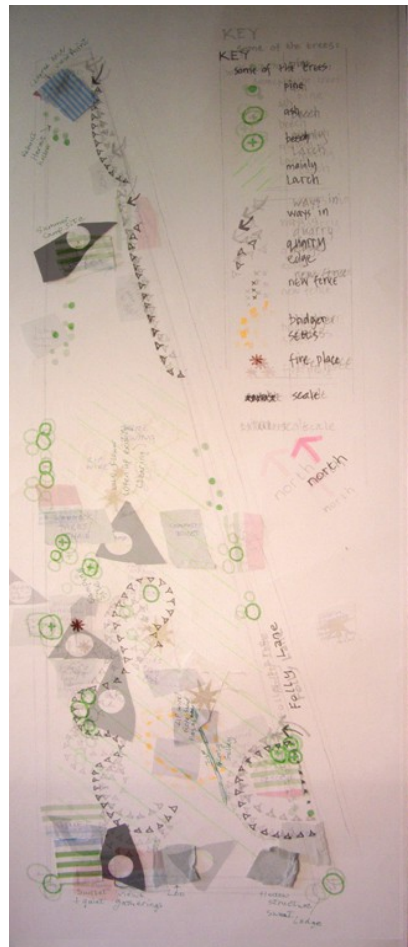


Figure 72. Assembling the mapped findings.

A particular issue to reflect upon has been the status of the woodland itself in the practice. Unlike the two other interventions, I had initially wondered whether the woodland, as a co-created place, could be claimed to be the product of the art activity. Biggs has a similar question and in response to Kester's (2004) privileging of a performative, process based approach above a productive practice, asks "Why, for example, should 'object makers' such as Andrea Thoma and Joyce Lyon not provide *both* content *and* context, since they in fact arrive at their 'objects' precisely through a 'performative, process-based approach'" (Biggs, 2012). He suggests that "This tension is a 'stick with two ends'; ends that nonetheless have to be 'thought together'" (Biggs, 2012). For me the *thinking together* means understanding my process as practical aesthetics and any process co-ordinated or

performed, or any product made, are all aspects of the practice. In other words, there is no separation between them, just different stages or facets of a relational practice.

Another interpretation of art process and product was discussed in Chapter 3, with Collins' idea of the art being the interface, a process too complex to contain within a piece of art. However, Part One of this thesis very clearly raised the potential of metaphor as '*prima facia* evidence of the creative act'. Reflecting further, the co-created maps referred to above, and similarly maps produced in *The River Map* project can be seen as assemblages of people's interface and interactions to each other and place. Are these metaphors? Do they provide the '*prima facia* evidence of the creative act'? The whole *Caring for Folly Wood* has been rich with *active metaphor*, tree planting as hope, woodland pilgrimage as resistance, firelighting as conviviality, maps as co-created place, group gatherings as open democracy. *Caring for Folly Wood* and the group could be understood as a metaphor for how to balance cultural and ecological systems. However for me this would raise an uncomfortable ethical issue of the group having performed a metaphor, when in fact they were caring for a wood. This question is taken up in the summary to the thesis through the assembling and performing of an installation – *Weaving a Community-Landscape*.



Figure 73. Moving into action. Planting woodland edge trees and shrubs, November 2011.

- 1 Folly Wood is a three and a half acre larch plantation over-planted into into ancient semi-natural woodland. It is just beyond the urban edge of Stroud on the east facing slopes of the Slad Valley and in the Cotswold AONB. The larch was planted about 90 years ago and was unmanaged, with many trees covered in ivy and some dead or dying.
- 2 There are constraints regards felling which is controlled by the Forestry Commission. There is also landscape planning policy relating to the AONB, which aims to conserve, enhance and increase native woodlands. Any change of use from woodland would require planning permission.
- 3 Stroud Woodland Co-operative was established as Community Benefit Society.
- 4 *Good from Woods* was a lottery funded research let and co-ordinated by the Silvanus Trust between 2010 and 2014, in partnership with Plymouth University, the Woodland Trust, Neroche Scheme and Forest Research. A team of four members of the Stroud Woods Co-op researched a case study focusing on the benefits of membership of a woodland co-op. See <http://www.goodfromwoods.co.uk/case-studies-2/>
- 5 The principles are set out in the *Caring for Folly Wood* Plan, Appendix 11.
- 6 Forest School Camps is a voluntary, national educational charity which began in the 1930s, drawing its philosophy from progressive educators, from the Woodcraft movements and the Native Americans, from Quakers and others. Special importance was attached to the experience of boys and girls, children and adults, learning to work and play together close to nature.

Summary of Findings

We need new social and aesthetic practices, new practices of the Self in relation to the other, to the foreign, the strange – a whole programme that seems far removed from current concerns. And yet, ultimately, we will only escape from the major crises of our era through the articulation of:

- a nascent subjectivity
- a constantly mutating socius
- an environment in the process of being reinvented

(Guattari, 2000, p.68)

In the case of *The (Canal) Weave*, the findings point to the challenges of applying the practice within a complex and cross sectorial situation, where not all partners were clear about the nature of the collaboration. Certain aspects of the intervention were speculative, for example working in parallel with the preparation of the Local Plan and a Green Infrastructure Strategy, and uncertainty about funding the canal restoration work. Nevertheless, it was found that the process did help incorporate people's subjectivity with institutional processes and led to establishing a Weave Advisory Group, which itself led to additional action. It was found that art-walking was useful in revealing a *community-landscape aesthetic*, sharing visions for a desirable future. It found that the making of the animated drawings initially created using *The DIY Drawing Machine* was instrumental in developing a collective understanding of the initiative and retaining the artist's involvement and co-facilitation. It also found that simple stop frame animations, made while walking, revealed and narrated a community-landscape aesthetic. A particular learning point here related to developing a making process, the stop frame animation, which was capable of synchronising with the dynamics and time demands inherent in complex partnerships. However, animation was later replaced by *assemblage* as a way of avoiding artist/audience distancing.

Learning from *The (Canal) Weave*, *The River Map* intervention was found to bridge between individual and community subjectivity and an established and expert led, institutional process. In this case, the shared expectations of the collaboration, although still complex in the range and number of collaborators, was

clear with all partners. The additional, funded resource of more artists allowed for time to be spent more effectively on the encountering and exchanging facets of the practice. It was found that the three stage approach taken - making work in response to the river corridor, discussing the work with the wider community and incorporating the outcomes of the discussions into additional work – revealed community subjectivity. It was also found that the feedback loops and reflection amongst partners as a part of assembling the findings, led to action and strengthening partnerships, such as the the *Wildlife Grazing Project*. This action, can be understood as a further stage of incorporating community subjectivity and nature's agency. The intervention continued to challenge and develop the artist's drawing practice, and it was found to have refocussed and developed the practices of a number of the artists, photographers and writers who participated in First Friday Walks. Also, the Stroud Nature Consortium was developed.

In the case of *Caring for Folly Wood*, it was found that using simple art activities, such as those pioneered by *Common Ground*, alongside social exchange and scientific survey, integrated cognitivist and non-cognitivist understanding about being a part of the group and of the woodland. The use of simple rituals, based on quasi-pagan songs for example, helped to transform an everyday place and develop a sense of community. It was found that facilitating the dispersion of creative input amongst the group both increased resources and enriched exchange of views. Facilitating this active involvement was found to have moved the relationship from a cooperative relationship to a collaborative one, becoming particularly important as the group moved toward taking action. It also was found to have strengthened of the Folly Wood community. Caring for the wood, became synonymous with caring for the group; *Folly Wood* became the name of both the woodland and the group caring for it.

The three case studies find that the development and application of the ethico-aesthetic practice has created examples of intermediary processes for bridging between individual and group subjectivities and between these and the primarily, objective culture of the Town and Country Planning System, including Landscape and Green Infrastructure Policy. Processes which also reveal nature's agency.

As well as local impacts, the methodologies and outcomes explored and developed in this research are having an influence elsewhere. For example, Natural England are arranging a study exchange visit with regard to their Ecosystems Services approach with a view to wider application. In reviewing *The River Map* project, The Cotswold Conservation Board have suggested applying a similar approach to The World Heritage Site of Bath and have committed to sharing the learning across the family of protected landscapes; the 35 AONB's and 10 National Parks in England.

Two research threads are now further drawn out; firstly with regard to the impacts in the context of the interventions and secondly regard the impact on the practice. This is a slightly uncomfortable distinction because, as suggested in Reason and Torbert's idea of *the action turn* (Reason and Torbert, 2001), and borne out in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the collaborative action research approach produces actionable learning for the participants and researcher, which is then folded back into subsequent research activity, often reconfiguring the methods and even the questions. This overlap will be seen in Figures 81 - 83 below. Nevertheless it is helpful to be able to pause the process, to assemble the findings and reflect on these two symbiotic aspects of the research under the headings of:

- *Racking Fields* – a representation of the impact of the research practice.
- *Warp of the Weave and Assemblage*– summary of the impact on the practice

Racking Fields

With regard to the impacts and influences on the interventions, figures 74 to 73 are a series of works made in response to the adaption of Barrett and Bolt's criteria for practice based research (figure 2, page 11). Their form and colour resonates with the earlier critical framework, Hummocks and Tall Grasses, and with the tradition of drying and stretching woven cloth in Rodborough Fields, known locally as the Racking Fields. They also resonate with the community's protest against development of Rodborough Fields. (pages 3 and 135).

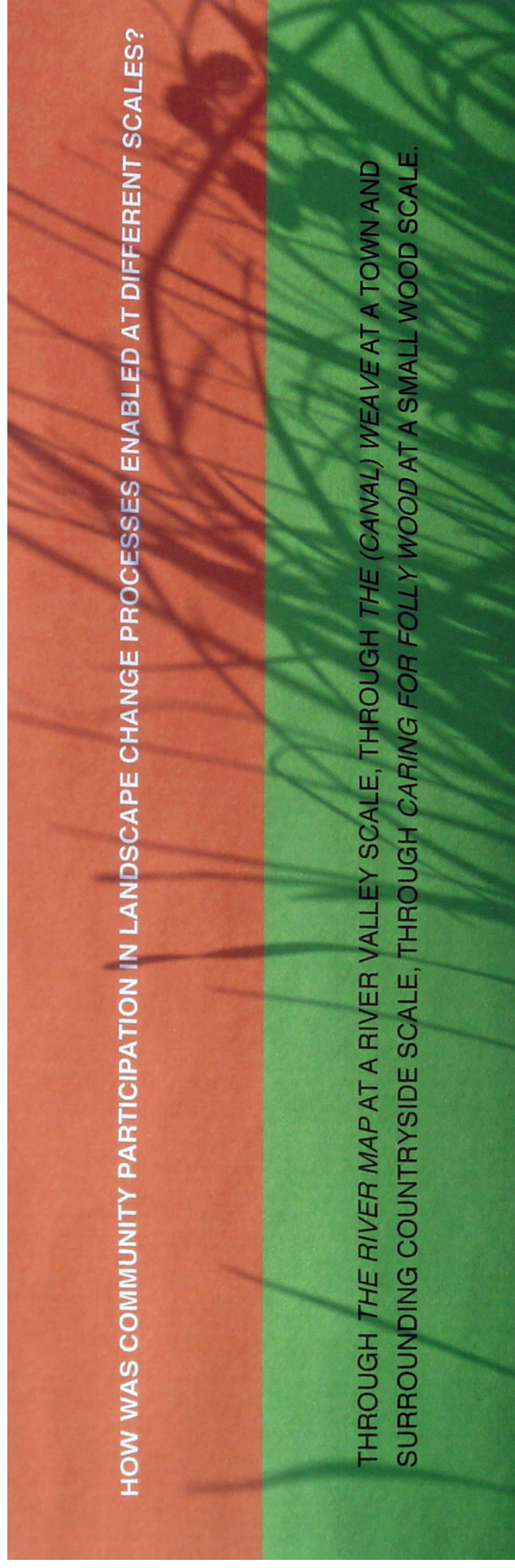


Figure 74. *Racking Fields 1.*



HOW WERE SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE VIEWS INCORPORATED IN DECISION MAKING?

THE (CANAL) WEAVE: WALKS AND SYMPOSIUM LEADING TO ONGOING DIALOGUES, PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES.

RIVER MAP: WALKS, DISCUSSIONS AND ART WORKS FED INTO THE AONB PLAN AND INTO PROJECTS.

CARING FOR FOLLY WOOD: THROUGH WORKING GROUPS IN THE WOODS, DRAWING, WRITING, SINGING, MAKING.

Figure 75. *Racking Fields 2.*

DID THE INTERVENTIONS BRIDGE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY, INSTITUTIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENT?

THE (CANAL) WEAVE: YES, BUT THE EMBRYONIC PARTNERSHIPS CREATED NEED FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.

RIVER MAP: YES: PARTICULARLY BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS, LANDSCAPE AGENCY AND THE STATUTORY SECTOR.

CARING FOR FOLLY WOOD: YES, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND THE GROUP AND THE WOODLAND.

Figure 76. *Racking Fields 3.*

HOW DID THE INTERVENTIONS OPEN OUT INTO THE BROADEST QUESTIONS ABOUT THE KIND OF
SOCIETY AND CULTURE THAT WE ESPOUSE AND WISH TO INHABIT AND PROMOTE?

THROUGH ALL INTERVENTIONS; BY HEARING OPINIONS AND ASPIRATIONS AND REVEALING COMMUNITY-LANDSCAPE
NARRATIVES AS A FRAMEWORK FOR INFORMED, COLLABORATIVE ACTION. BY MODELLING PARTICIPATION IN SOCIALLY
AND ENVIRONMENTALLY JUST PROCESSES, THAT RESPECT PAST AND FUTURE GENERATIONS, HABITATS AND SPECIES.

Figure 77. *Racking Fields 4.*

HOW WERE LOCALLY DIFFERENT FORMS OF SOCIABILITY, ENVIRONMENTAL
INTERACTIVITY AND COLLECTIVE STORYTELLING ANNOUNCED?

THE (CANAL) WEAVE: WALKING, TALKING, EXHIBITIONS, PUBLIC EVENTS AND DISSEMINATING THE ANIMATION.

RIVER MAP: EXHIBITIONS AND DISCUSSIONS AT VARIOUS VENUES, WALKS, FESTIVAL, SEMINARS.

CARING FOR FOLLY WOOD: THIS HAS BEEN MORE ABOUT MANIFESTING DIFFERENT FORMS, HOWEVER THEY HAVE
BEEN ANNOUNCED ON VIDEO, THROUGH THE *GOOD FROM WOODS* RESEARCH, AT CONFERENCES AND LOCAL EVENTS.

Figure 78. *Racking Fields 5.*



HOW HAVE THE INTERVENTIONS SUPPORTED, OR BEEN SUPPORTED BY SUSTAINABLE, COMMUNITY PROCESSES?

THE (CANAL) WEAVE: OUTCOMES INCLUDED THE ACADEMY OF URBANISM EVENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SETTING-UP OF THE WEAVE ADVISORY GROUP, INVOLVEMENT IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCESS.

RIVER MAP: INCLUDED IN THE AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES, INTERACTION WITH NATURAL ENGLAND'S TRAINING EVENT.

FOLLY WOOD: INTERNAL PROCESSES; AGM, CORE GROUP MEETINGS, MEMBERSHIP GATHERINGS, FRIENDSHIPS, DIRECTORS RESPONSIBILITIES ETC.

Figure 79. *Racking Fields 6.*



HAVE THE INTERVENTIONS LED TO ACTION?

THE (CANAL) WEAVE: ACTION INCLUDES, THE NEW PARK AT CAPEL MILL, INTERPRETATION OF THE CANAL CORRIDOR, PUBLIC ART COMMISSION, FURTHER RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCESS.

RIVER MAP: WILDLIFE GRAZING PROJECT, FESTIVAL OF NATURE, WALKING THE LAND PROJECTS.

FOLLY WOOD: TREE PLANTING, CONSTRUCTION OF WILD PLAY AREA, SEATING, COMPOST TOILET, WOOD FUEL GROUP, ETC.

Figure 80. *Racking Fields 7.*

HOW HAS THE RESEARCH ELUCIDATED THE VALUE OF CREATIVE ARTS PRACTICE

THE (CANAL) WEAVE, BY REVEALING:

- THE MULTI-VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH THE RIVER AND CANAL CORRIDOR AND ITS INTERFACE WITH THE TOWN IS VALUED
- HOW A PRACTICAL COMMUNITY-LANDSCAPE AESTHETIC CAN BE FACILITATED AND APPLIED TO THIS SCALE OF LANDSCAPE CHANGE PROCESS USING ART-WALKING AND METAPHOR
- HOW THE COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE HAS ITSELF BEEN TRANSFORMED

Figure 81. *Racking Fields* 8.

HOW HAS THE RESEARCH ELUCIDATED THE VALUE OF CREATIVE ARTS PRACTICE

RIVER MAP, BY REVEALING:

- THE MANY VALUES FOR THE 'SETTLED VALLEY' LANDSCAPE
- HOW TO INCORPORATE THESE WITHIN THE STATUTORY PLANNING SYSTEM
- HOW TO INITIATE ACTION
- HOW A NUMBER OF ARTISTS CAN COLLABORATE ON SUCH WORK
- HOW THE ART PRACTICE IS ITSELF TRANSFORMED.

Figure 82. *Racking Fields 9.*



HOW HAS THE RESEARCH ELUCIDATED THE VALUE OF CREATIVE ARTS PRACTICE

FOLLY WOOD, BY REVEALING:

THE VALUE OF DEVELOPING AN ARTS PRACTICE TO WORK WITH A GROUP OF PEOPLE TO
PREPARE A PLAN AND TAKE ACTION TO CARE FOR A JOINTLY OWNED WOODLAND. ALSO
HOW THE ART PRACTICE WAS ITSELF TRANSFORMED.

Figure 83. *Racking Fields 10.*

The Warp of the Weave

The weaving metaphor was found to have provided both the core of the research methodology and the practice. In other words, by weaving together theory, context and practice as a dynamic interface, weaving was manifested as an *active metaphor* to:

- facilitate participation in community initiatives, including enabling deliberation and taking action by revealing actionable knowledge, in turn leading to positive *landscape change*
- incorporate individual, community and institutional subjectivity together and with nature's agency, by reconciling ethical and aesthetic considerations and sensitivities, placing equal weight on aesthetic and ethical considerations
- create an ephemeral, woven artefact, upon which collaborators and others could further reflect and create new connections, and which reconciled tensions between process driven art practice and the production of *prima facie* evidence of the creative act.

The findings can also be expressed in terms of reflecting upon applying the four facets of the weave metaphor as in Figure 84 below.

Collaborating: the importance of developing shared aims and roles between participants, including the artist. The importance of an inclusive feedback/reflective process around agreed milestones to enable the collaboration to be renegotiated (or not) to reflect learning. Recognising the limitations of deliberation in participatory democracy, keeping it real in terms of instigating action.

Encountering: the centrality of the adaption of an art-walking practice to facilitate embodied knowing amongst participants, in particular contact with other-than-human. It appears to be an inclusive way of enabling participation. A way of transforming everyday *landscape affect*. Allowing the boundaries between this and other facets to be porous.

Exchanging: the necessity of facilitating situations to enable the sharing of subjectivity and objectivity, including nature's agency, for given places so as to

open opportunities for further shared understanding and collaborative action between people, communities, institutions and with nature.

Assembling: the use of metaphor to enable artistic autonomy within a collaborative framework. A purpose/brief for making and performing ephemeral work. A means of reflecting collectively on the collaborative process and co-envisioning/imagining a collective future for the land and people, and in such a way as to begin to manifest that future and at the same time develop new connections and learning.

Figure 84. Reflections on the multi-faceted practice.

Assemblage: weaving a community-landscape; an installation, including a book and associated events, at The Museum in the Park, Stroud, 5th - 20th April, 2014.

By means of these transversal tools [clefs], subjectivity is able to install itself simultaneously in the realms of the environment, in the major social and institutional assemblages, and symmetrically in the landscapes and fantasies of the most intimate spheres of the individual.

(Guattari, 2000, p.69)

The weaving metaphor was also used to assemble many of the research outputs, weaving them as an artefact with which people could interact, albeit temporarily. The resultant making was a shift in the practice, a development from walking and drawing in places, through working in Folly Wood, to now cutting trees and weaving them as simple hangings. This activity was in response to ideas of *active metaphor*, similar to Beuys' *7000 Oaks*, in that the cutting of the trees also performed habitat management, coppicing areas of woodland, thinning trees or removing them from areas designated as grassland. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) was chosen in response to ash die back¹, its everydayness, its bark and bud colours and suitability for weaving. There was also a link between the hangings and traditional harvesting of ash for tool handles and the like. Another cultural link was the use of red and green cloth.

Assemblage was an *active metaphor* made of real world outputs, outputs of the process, such as the author's and other participants drawings, poems and

photographs, as well as maps of walks, woven ash hangings and larch benches made from Folly Wood thinnings and a book of the process (appendix 12).

The woven installation, referred to the act of weaving a *practical community-landscape aesthetic*, a way of facilitating positive land use *change*, rather than referring overtly to the practical action that it helped to initiate and shape. However the author was present to guide people around the exhibition in order to explain the real world outcomes and invite further participation in the projects as well as adding drawings, words and additional ash branches. As with *The DIY Drawing Machine*, the *Assemblage* could be seen as both performative and productive, but in a more collaborative and serendipitous way. This invited involvement was a considered part of the whole, an ongoing process of facilitating participation, rather than treating people as spectators.

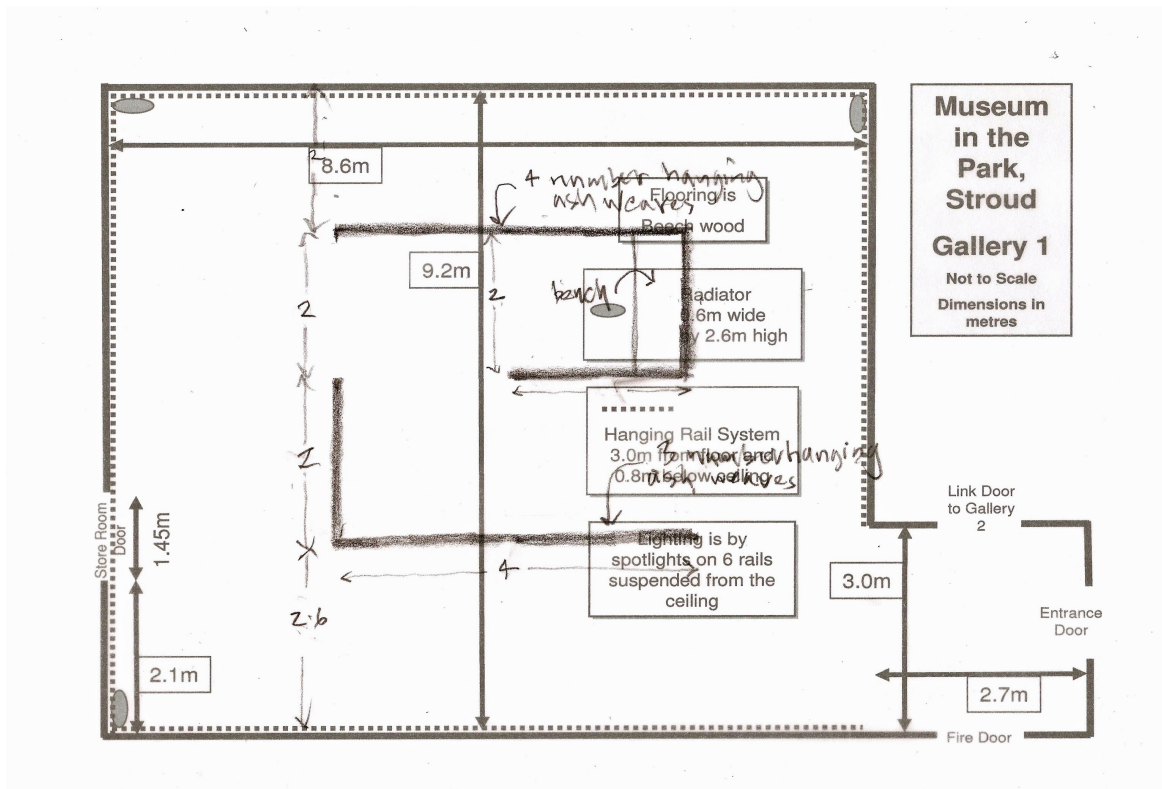



Figure 85. Layout.

The installation was designed similarly to an open space, with walking routes through and around it. Copies of the book about the research were placed in the sitting area in the centre .

Assemblage also aimed to aid reflection with and between project partners and

invited increased participation and collaboration. Consequently events such as that on April 5th was considered of equal importance to the ash weavings. Amongst the activities was a walk around the installation led by colleague Alison Parfitt who engaged participants in taking turns to read from the installation, voicing many concerns and aspirations. Performing the metaphor. Similarly a video of a conversational walk through the installation was made with with video maker Andy Freedman (Appendix 13).

A S S E M B L A G E :
w e a v i n g a c o m m u n i t y - l a n d s c a p e



P r o g r a m m e:

2.00 arrivals-view & add to installation
2.30 welcome & introductions
2.45 presentation & questions
3.15 workshop discussion
4.00 choice
 "open space"-discussion groups with agenda
 from the floor
 view & respond to exhibition
5.00 Close

MUSEUM IN THE PARK, STROUD
www.museuminthepark.org.uk

Figure 86. Event Programme.

Taking *Assemblage: Weaving a Community-Landscape* as a reflective pause, the following images from the installation demonstrate changes in practice brought about by the key learning throughout the inquiry.



Figure 87. *Assemblage 1*. The installation included briefing Clive Chinnick a theatrical services company, to design and make a hanging light to project the hangings against the wall, while leaving the floor and ceiling unlit. This aspect of the work was an autonomous decision made in context of the collaborations.



Figure 88. *Assemblage 2*. April's FFW. With reference to embodied knowing, the installation was an experiential space, a walk through the ash hangings, with sitting area and larch bench. The hangings were double sided, resonant of immersion in a walk.

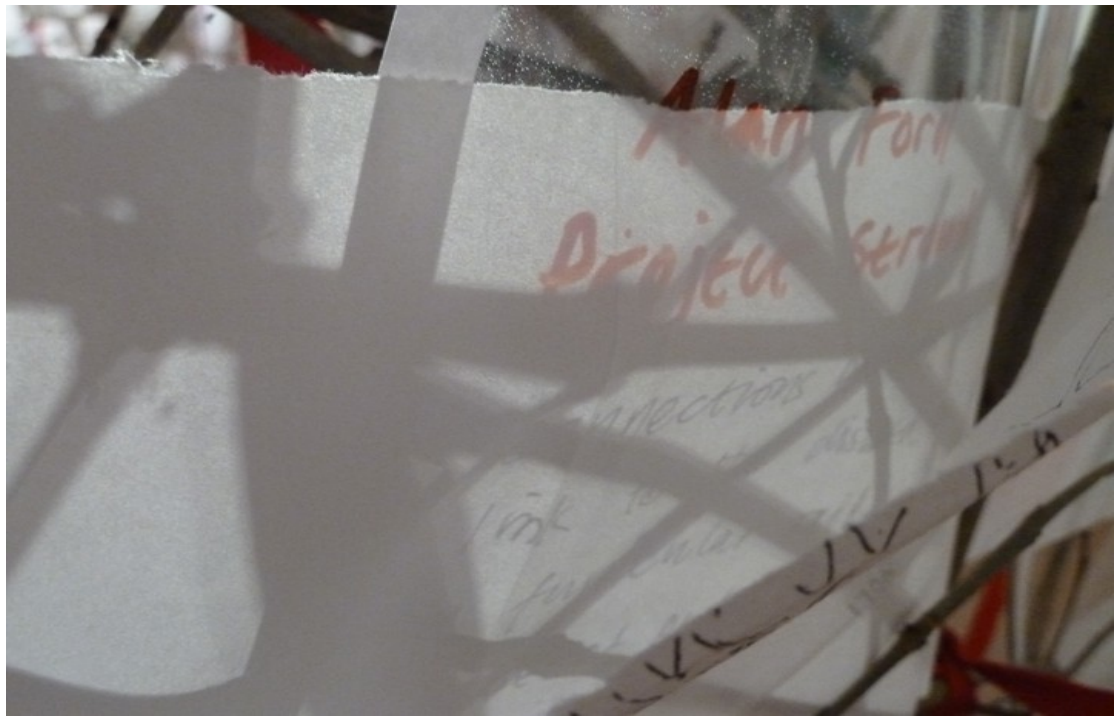


Figure 89. *Assemblage 3*. Developing the earlier transitional drawings of moving through places and, rather than showing animations on a screen, leaving more to the imagination through still projection and illusion.



Figure 90. *Assemblage 4*. The installation was added to by and with visitors as a manifestation of co-creating place, increasing participation and folding new learning into the research. Their comments on cloth tied the structure together.

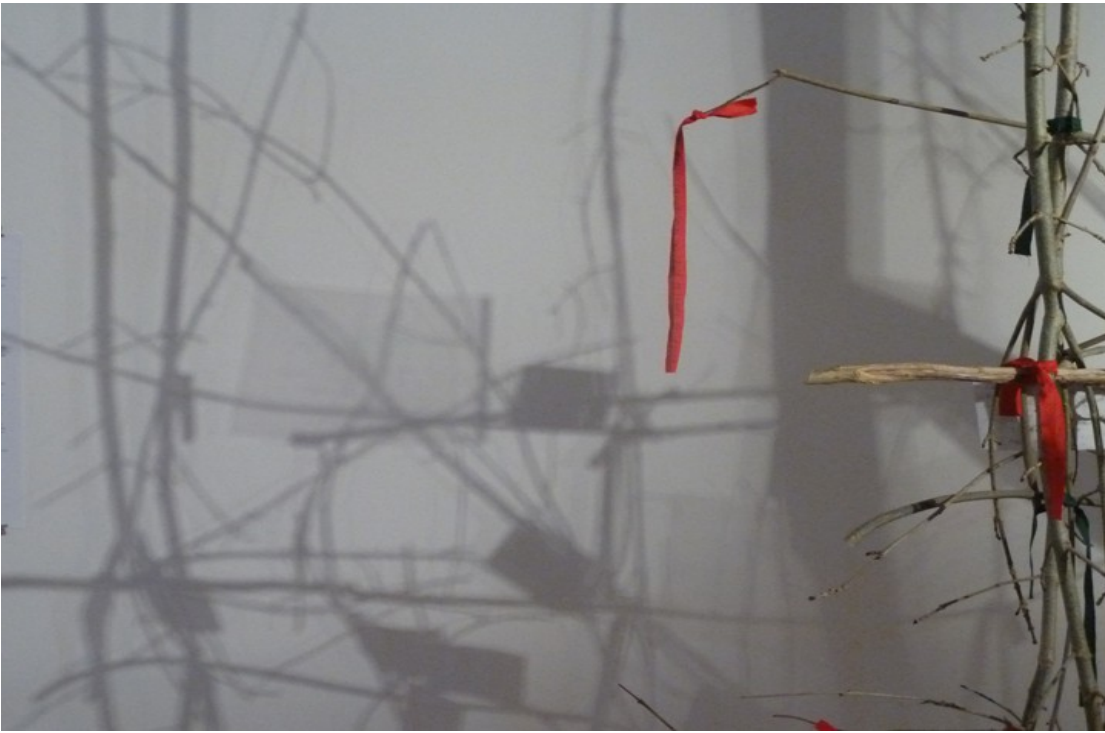


Figure 91. *Assemblage 5*. Reconnecting community and other- than-human. In adding the drawings and maps to the ash hangings, the visual impact on the wall, reminiscent of our impact on the planet, was very apparent.



Figure 92. *Assemblage 6*. The weaving Metaphor revealing and enabling conversations about the *Lifeworld*, revealing serendipitous moments.



Figure 93. Assemblage 7, Objective about Subjectivity 2. Revealing community narratives as understanding of real world situation, aspirations and meaning.

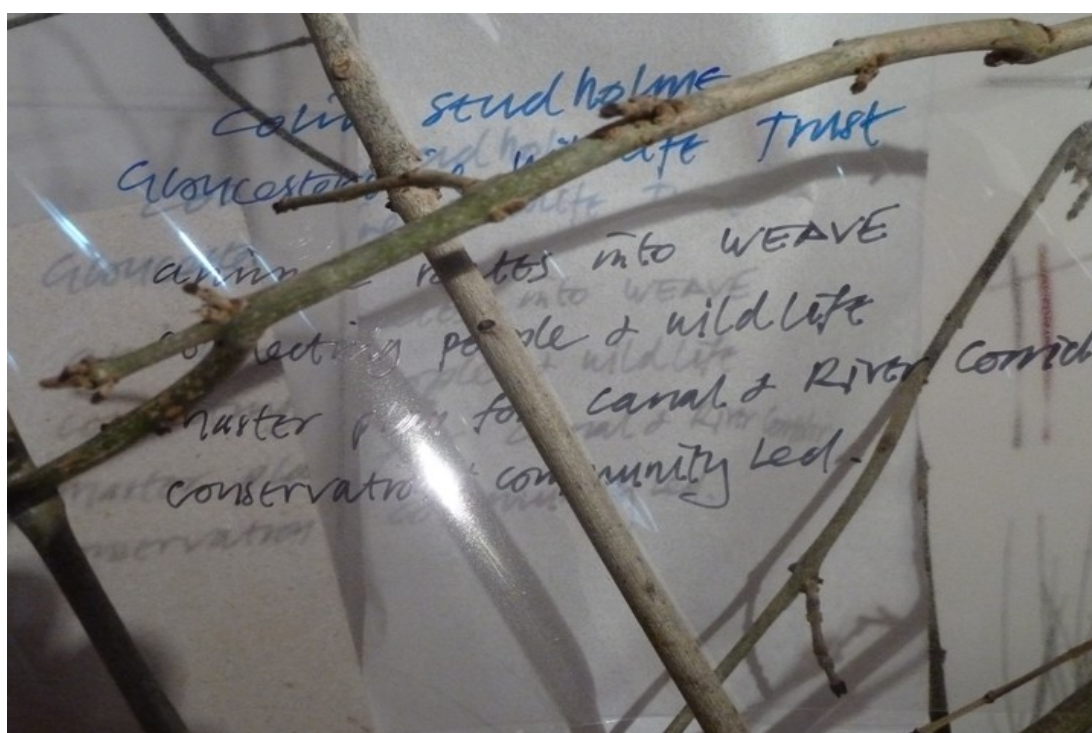


Figure 94. Assemblage 8. Inclusion of work made from the (Canal) Weave seminar, an for example of, revealing a transversal, collective and common vision of the future, perceived by the participants as good, beautiful, just and sustainable.



Figure 95. *Assemblage 9*. Metaphor as Manifestation. Materials collected by ash coppicing is sensitive to past rural cultures and biodiversity as well as manifesting future impact on habitat. A *community-landscape* yet to come.



Figure 96. *Assemblage 10*. Performing collaboration, finding new ways of hearing more voices. Manifesting individual, community, institutional and subjectivity and nature's agency.

Conclusion

This section is structured as follows:

- Research Question, Methodology and Initial Discoveries
- Challenges, Limitations, Constraints and questions of Replicability
- Interpretations
- Implications

Research Question, Methodology and Initial Discoveries

The central research question considered to what extent is it possible for a locally embedded art practice, which utilises, in broad terms, walking and drawing, to be developed to form and perform socially and environmentally engaged art which can reconcile individual and group subjectivity with often objective, institutional processes. A supplementary question being to what extent such an art practice, which is understood as an aesthetic practice, can offer, develop and facilitate processes in which nature's agency and human subjectivity are equally invested?

In response to the question, the research inquired into an emergent practice in an environmental and social context by developing and applying:

- a hopeful, auto-ethnographic approach to reflect upon a transversal, collaborative and participatory, action research methodology
- an ethico-aesthetic paradigm as a critical framework for the practice, a manifesto, based on walking and drawing
- *active metaphor* as a method for reflecting on the practice as it facilitated land use change through three case studies

This was found to successfully reconcile questions raised in literature and practice relating to:

- cognitivist and non-cognitivist approaches to aesthetics – such as balancing scientific and sensory ways of understanding places, for example through *Caring for Folly Wood*
- subjective and objective understandings of landscape and place – such as

discussing and reflecting with others with different world views, for example in *The (Canal) Weave* symposium

- issues of ethics and aesthetics in socially and environmentally engaged arts practice – in particular by adopting a multi-faceted, participatory practice
- cultural and ecological systems - for example through *Caring for Folly Wood*, by incorporating the membership's needs alongside the woodland's agency.
- Integration of subjectivity into town and countryside land use policy - for example incorporating urban people's values into *Landscape Character Assessment* and addressing Stroud's interface with the countryside through *The (Canal) Weave*.
- community action and institutional policy and strategy – such as by creating processes to bridge between individuals, groups and organisations to create actionable knowledge, for example through *The River Map*.
- questions of process and product in art by making and performing *prima facie* evidence of the creative act – in particular by the use of *active metaphor*.

Challenges, Limitations, Constraints and questions of Replicability

The challenges, limitations, constraints and replicability of these findings need to be considered and recognised as follows:

- the scope of the literature and practice review of a complex area of interest covering land use change policy and implementation, local governance, community resilience, relational, participatory, environmental, social, dialogic and connective aesthetics, socially and environmentally engaged art practice and theory.
- the specific context of the three case studies – the nature of the places studied – topography, biodiversity, local cultural significance
- the local appropriateness of the weaving metaphor
- the relatively short time frame of the interventions, in particular regard judging long-term impacts and legacy
- the specific framework of Green Infrastructure Planning and Landscape

Character Assessment or other appropriate policy

- the propensity and availability of people in the local community to collaborate and take action, including the artist's ability to reach sufficient numbers of people to make the results meaningful
- the willingness of the local authorities and The Cotswold Conservation Board to collaborate and the level of their adoption/development of Green Infrastructure Planning and Landscape Character Assessment
- the degree of embeddedness of the artist as a part of that context, including the level of arts infrastructure
- the level of resource available across all contributors, including the researcher's inexperience and knowledge
- the limited time available to use the examples to further investigate the wider impacts of the collaborations in a global context and share that learning more widely

Interpretations

The research can claim to point to three symbiotic increases in knowledge as follows:

1. Demonstrating through practice how land use change processes provide suitable context for developing and applying socially and environmentally engaged art practice.
2. Demonstrating examples of the impact of adopting an ethico-aesthetic paradigm on an emergent art walking practice, in particular increasing an understanding of reconciling ethics and aesthetics as a practical example of 'art into life'.
3. Demonstrating that researching an ethico-aesthetic practice can reveal and increase knowledge about creating and facilitating processes through which local people and their local government, and other statutory and non-governmental organisations, can collaborate in the field of land use change, whereby:
 - individuals are enabled to deliberate on and take action to contribute to

positively changing and caring for their surroundings as a part of Green Infrastructure Planning and of Landscape Character Assessment processes.

- communities and sectors are enabled to provide and reflect together on local examples of the wider issue of rebalancing ecological and cultural systems, as they contribute to global land use change.

Implications

This research has been conducted within the context of Green Infrastructure Planning and Landscape Character Assessment, and with the artist embedded in the local context. While some of the positive implications of the research have been mentioned in the summary of findings, the limitations above lead to the potential for further research and development of the practice, in particular by researching the potential of developing in different situations, different policy framework contexts and different locations, so as to further develop “an emerging mosaic of oppositional practices that is both local in effect and international in scope” (Kester, 2011, p.212). How for example could an alliance of such practices disseminate and maximise their learning in order to develop a substantial, sustainable shift in and further development of robust, alternative processes to influence global land use change.

However, the context of the current research also changes constantly, not least as a result of the UK's changing relationships with the EU, the long term effects of austerity on local authorities and others and the continued effects of climate change. Locally housing development continues to put pressure on all types of land-based resources and changes in the make-up of the population change our relationship with places. This provide further questions for the research and provide opportunity for deeper research, perhaps tempered by Lippard's “Community doesn't mean understanding everything about everybody [...] it means knowing how to work with differences as they change and evolve” (Lippard, 1997b, p.24).

There are two significant and unexpected areas of learning for the author, arising

from the adoption of an ethico-aesthetic paradigm. Firstly the symbiotic relationship between two agendas; the reconnection between people and environment and reconnecting art and life. This conjunction, which appears to emphasise the relevance of an appropriate aesthetic engagement as a part of the ways we experience and make decisions about being in the world, could be further researched and tested.

The second area is the use of *active metaphor*. This could be further studied in the contexts set out above; would the weaving metaphor retain its potency, or would new *active metaphors* arise in different locations and contexts? Could the *weaving* simply become more inclusive of people and applied to more places? Does the *warp of the weave* need to be refined or altered? For example, should resource availability be included in the warp? What happens with the practice as it shuttles between the warps of the weave? Given the transversality of the practice, could *the weave* be applied to developing closer collaboration between practitioners from different disciplines? For example, would it provide a useful framework for studying the impact on the collaborators' emergent co-practice?

In considering these options, the learning gained and relationships thus far developed continue to inform and inspire the transversal practice, developing and manifesting an example of interconnectivity and interdependency, while simultaneously they have opened questions for further practice led research.

- 1 Ash Die Back, Chalara dieback of ash (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), is a disease of ash trees caused by a fungus called *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*. (The fungus was previously called *Chalara fraxinea*, hence the name of the disease. Chalara causes leaf loss, crown dieback and bark lesions in affected trees. Once a tree is infected the disease is usually fatal, either directly, or indirectly by weakening the tree to the point where it succumbs more readily to attacks by other pests or pathogens, especially Armillaria fungi, or honey fungus. The first signs of Chalara in Britain were found in a nursery in Buckinghamshire in February 2012. Improved monitoring techniques continue to uncover new finds. As we continue to monitor the situation around the country we expect to continue to find more new cases. (Source: Forestry Commission, 2015. Available at: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara>)

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Events attended

2010

- 14th September National Drawing Conference, University of Brighton.
 10th November *Sense*, Seminar, Bristol University. Contributor.
 20th November Vison 21, writing weekend. *Being with sustainability*. Laugharne. 20th November

2011

- 3rd May Field Trip, Llanddeusant, Brecon Beacons National Park
 1st and 2nd July *Memory and Being in the Moment*, seminar, UWE. Contributor
 12th October WIRAD PhD Symposium, Cardiff. Contributor.
 14th November *Gainsborough's Landscapes: Themes and Variations*. Exhibition and study day. The Holbourne Museum, Bath.
 18th November Drawing Symposium, Swansea Metropolitan University. Contributor.
 28th November Joseph Beuys, *Artists Rooms* touring exhibition, National Museum, Cardiff.

2012

- 13th January *Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman*, Grayson Perry, British Museum.
 15th March *To the River*. Sophie Rickett, exhibition, Arnolfini, Bristol.
 16th July Drawing on Landscape, David Nash. National Museum Cardiff.
 21st August *The Robinson Institute*, Patrick Keiller, Tate Britain.
 5th-7th September *Practice Makes Perfect*. PhD Symposium, Swansea Metropolitan University. Organiser.

2013

- 30th May AHRC *Connected Communities* Seminar. Birmingham.
 30th May A Universal Archive: William Kentridge as Printmaker. Mac, Birmingham.
 12th August *White Horses*, Richard White and Ali Pretty exhibition, Devizes Museum.

Author's exhibitions, publications, presentations, long walks, seminars and workshops

2010

- 19th May, South West Region Landscapes Partnership Annual Meeting, Somerset College of Art and Technology. Design and facilitation
 30th May-2nd June *Between A and Bee* Walk from Stroud to Bath
 3rd June *Between A and Bee* – presentation, Bath Arts Festival
 13th June-13th July Walking the Land Exhibition, *Between two Shores*, The Old Passage, Arlingham. Contributor
 27th July Green Infrastructure South West Steering group meeting, Exeter.
 26th August- 5th September Tidal Severn, The George, Newnham, Exhibition. Contributor
 1st -25th September Walking the Land Exhibition, *Wish You Were Here*, *The Prince Albert*, *Rodborough*.

2011

- 2011 The Walk, the gatherings and the presentation, *Moving Between the Lines*. Bristol: Wild Conversations Press for PlACE, pp. 61-64.

12 th February	Weave, artists workshop, Stroud. Organiser.
24 th February	Educational Use of Gloucestershire's Woodlands, Seminar, Ruskin College. Design and Facilitation.
12 th May	Weave Seminar, Stroud. Design and Facilitation.
29 th May - 4 th June	<i>Woodland Pilgrimage</i> . Gloucestershire.
4 th -8 th July	<i>External Perceptions of Stroud</i> , exhibition, organiser.
22 nd October	<i>Landscape Scale Planning</i> . Exchange visit from Norway. Contributor.
5 th November	Vision 21, Writing Weekend.
2012	Landscape Aesthetics In Practice, <i>Journal of Visual Art Practice</i> , Volume 11 Number 1, pp. 15-25
2012	Walking the Wateryscape: Exploring the liminal, <i>Journal of Arts and Communities</i> , Volume 4 Numbers 3&2. pp.11-31. (written with Kel Portman and Iain Robertson.
12 th -19 th May	<i>In-between Places</i> walk. Stroud to Derby.
25 th - 26 th May	Accessing New Landscapes, conference paper with Sue Porter at <i>Affective Landscapes Conference</i> , University of Derby.
8 th -10 th June	<i>In-between Places</i> walk
23 rd - June	<i>Museum Box</i> exhibition, Corsham Court. Contributor.
25 th June	Presentation at WIRAD GRADE PhD symposium and work in exhibition.
24 th to 29 th July	Fiord Walking, Study exchange looking at transhumance and slow tourism.
19 th November	Vision 21 writing weekend
2013	
9 th March	River. Artists workshop. Stroud. Organiser.
15 th April	Spring Green Conference. Stroud. Organiser/facilitator.
4 th - 6 th May	River Exhibition and discussion event. Stroud Brewery
6 th - 30 th May	<i>Museum Box Exhibition</i> , Museum in the Park, Stroud.
1 st July	River Exhibition and discussion event, The Exchange, Stroud.
19 th July	Public Protest walk, Rodborough Fields, Stroud.
19 th August	River Map workshop, Stroud. Organisor/facilitator
8 th September	River Map, Stroud Festival of Nature.
9 th September	River Map exhibition and discussion day, Ruskin Mill College.
1 st - 12 th November	New River Map exhibition and Symposium, Museum in the Park, Stroud.
November 16 th -17 th	Vision 21 writing weekend, Laugharne.
2014	Good from Woods Research. Silvanus Trust. (With Seb Bucton, Ali Coles and Jackie Rowanly.
5 th - 22 nd April	Assemblage: Weaving a Community-Landscape, exhibition, Museum in the Park, Stroud.
6 th April	Assemblage: Weaving a Community-Landscape, Seminar
5 th -25 th September	<i>Art of Walking</i> exhibition, Museum in the Park.
28 th - 30 th November	Vision 21 writing weekend, Laugharne
2015	Berberich, Campbell and Hudson(Eds.) <i>In-Between Paces: Envisioning and Accessing New Landscapes</i> . In <i>Affective Landscapes in Literature, Art and Everyday Life: Memory, Place and the Senses</i> . pp.223-238.(Written with Sue Porter).

Appendix 1.

“Back Casting”; Reflecting upon the the critical framework

The *Hummocks and Tall Grasses* critical framework generated in Chapter 2 of the thesis is used here as a series of reference points. An analogy is that previously, the practice was like walking without the map and that by revisiting these earlier journeys, scraps of the map can be found and used to reflect on the practice.

This appendix examines the practice under four headings. Figure 5 (pp. 57-58) is referred to throughout, using the abbreviations H&TG, numbers 1 to 8. It is also provided in Appendix 3 as an interactive “manual” for ease of reference. After each example, a diagram highlights the reflections which are summarised and analysed in Chapter 2 (Figure 6, pp. 59-60).

1. Vision21 Facilitator Network

Since 1997, the practice was undertaken with colleagues¹, facilitating community participation in projects and national initiatives such as The Market and Coastal Towns Initiative² and Stratford Town Design Statement³. Such projects involved drawing and place making through facilitated visioning exercises and community building, gradually creating a shared vision for the future of localities.

H & TG	strong	medium	weak	Comments
1	x			There could have been greater emphasis on wider environmental issues.
2			x	The initiatives themselves were a type of metamorphosis process.
3		x		The 'value' of the natural environment was placed alongside aspirations for the built environment.
4	x			Resource went into engaging wider community and sectors with opposing views.
5			x	Most of this work was undertaken in meeting rooms, with walks only undertaken by V21 colleagues.

6		x		There was good sign-up to these well resourced top-down projects amongst active citizens.
7		x		Action was facilitated but the idea of balancing cultural and ecological systems needed greater emphasis.
8				N/a

Figure 1. .V21. Showing degree of compatibility with *Hummocks and Tall Grasses* reference points.

2. Walking the Land.

Having increasingly used arts activities in earlier work, with Kel Portman and Tom Keating, we established the art collective, *Walking the Land (WtL)* in 2004. Initially *WtL* walked and exhibited work, using these exhibitions to invite others to walk and respond to the walks with us, exploring the relationship with the world around us. A 'nowness' of now was how Dennis Potter (1935-1994) so poignantly expressed this in the 1994 interview with Melvin Bragg⁴ about his writing and past in the Forest of Dean and dying of cancer; choosing to talk not about the significant "Blue Remembered Hills",⁵ but about the garden plum tree seen through his window, he said:

the blossom is out in full now, there in the west early [...] it's white, and looking at it, instead of saying "Oh that's nice blossom" [...] I see it is the whitest, frothiest, blossomiest blossom that there ever could be [...] the nowness of everything is absolutely wondrous, and if people could see that, you know [...] There's no way of telling you; you have to experience it, but the glory of it, if you like, the comfort of it, the reassurance [...] The fact is, if you see the present tense, boy do you see it! And boy can you celebrate it.
(Potter, 1994)

A particular focus for the practice was to more fully understand the ability of walking/drawing/photography to transform feelings about everyday experiences. To reveal people's passion. Steven Shaviro writes: "A good synonym for Kantian disinterest might well be *passion*. The scandal of passion is that it is utterly gratuitous: it has no grounding, and no proper occasion" (Shaviro, 2009, p.6).

Tim Ingold (2000, 2011) addresses the question of how we are in the world by summarising his reading of Merleau-Ponty's (1962) conclusions, writing: "since the living body is primordially and irrevocably stitched into the fabric of the world, our perception of the world is no more, and no less, than the world's perception of

itself – in and through us” (Ingold, 2011, p.12). Angelica Nuzzo expresses this by coining the term ‘transcendental embodiment’ writing: “the body is no longer a mere object of experience but the necessary a priori condition thereof [...] the human body [...] becomes the compass for our “orientation” in the world” (Nuzzo, 2008, p.7). Such phenomenological ideas were implicit to work that *WtL* undertook. We sometimes co-performed slow walking - the group walking in line concentrating on each movement and the surroundings; a silent, meditational walk of fifty paces or so, taking maybe five to six minutes. As a facilitator of these slow walks there is always an outsider, observational aspect to the practice, always a consideration of what has just happened and a thought to what comes next as well as a deepened experience of place and being in a group. It is this 'as well as' aspect of the practice that makes it possible to be in the moment with people as *well as* at the same time reflecting on it.

Elements of the practice felt privileged and detached from everyday life and environmental concerns. Ingold suggests an interdependence between human and non-human, writing that “human existence is not fundamentally place-*bound*... but place *binding*” (Ingold, 2011, p.148), a very different relationship from that of the flaneur, the detached observer. Deidre Heddon understands this as relational, and in her role as co-ordinator of the *Only Human?* 2014 Festival in Glasgow⁶ was quoted as saying: “To be human is to be always more-than-human – and in a context of climate crisis and environmental degradation, it is important that we recognise and understand these inter-relationships, the things that connect us” (Stewart-Robertson, 2014).

WtL’s exhibition, *Arboreality*, at *Westonbirt Arboretum*, was an example of developing relationships with the more-than-human, in this context endangered taxa, particularly the Dawn Redwood, raising awareness about the arboretum's work in safeguarding endangered trees and reinforcing our relationship with these threatened trees. We did this through a variety of interventions such as wrapping trees in coloured silks influenced by Eastern philosophy to draw participants into a closer spiritual relationship with the trees and offering walks and drawing workshops linked to the *Big Draw*.



Figure 2. *Dawn Redwood Cube and wood pile*. Digital photograph printed on paper and treated with linseed oil, the author, 2008.



Figure 3. Drawings made in Stroud installed in Dawn Redwoods in Shanghai. Installation and Photograph, Lu Jian.

H & TG	strong	medium	weak	Comments
1		x		Working at Westonbirt incorporated science and art. On some walks we provided similar input, for example inviting ecologists, farmers, historians etc.
2		x		Many of the images were metaphorical.
3		x		On walks, time was spent discussing cultural and ecological systems, but not prioritised. However, the <i>Aboreality</i> project highlighted this relationship.
4		x		Limited by the number of people on walks, although additional people involved through

				exhibitions and events, including at 'non-art' venues.
5	x			Walking proved to be a good way of connecting people together and with place.
6			x	Some projects have helped build temporary partnerships.
7			x	
8				N/a

Figure 4. WtL. Showing degree of compatibility with *Hummocks and Tall Grasses* reference points.

3. First Friday Walks

In writing about walking, Ingold adopts “the term wayfaring to describe the embodied experience of this perambulatory movement” suggesting that “it is as wayfarers that human beings inhabit the earth” (Ingold, 2011, p.148). He contends that “lives are led not inside places, but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere” (Ingold, 2011, p.148). *WtL's First Friday Walks*⁷ resonates with this. They also rely on their very simplicity and accessibility to bring about what Yi-Fu Tuan describes as “the aesthetic hints of another reality” (Tuan, 2012, p.155). For *WtL*, it was the experiential engagement afforded by walking that was of interest; the direct experience and reflection in place. Although Tuan's text is rooted in Christianity and Buddhism, he expands on this idea of the aesthetic as transformative of the everyday:

our senses are equipped to give us the “lilies of the field” and other marvels of nature and art, only we seldom use them to the full, preferring to go through life as though perpetually affected with a head cold. When the cold lifts, our surroundings have the fresh look of new creation.

(Tuan, 2012, p.155)

And no doubt, after this metaphoric head cold has cleared, the world would not just have the *look* of new creation, but also sound, taste, feel and smell new and fresh. To replicate this in the moment

Initially *WtL* was content that any work produced was similar to showing workings out in the margins of a maths exam paper, instead emphasising the actual walking experience above making work. However work was shown on *WtL's* website, dedicating gallery space to people. Overall, it was found that participants were reticent in showing such work, being more used to showing 'finished' work.

However we became interested to exhibit work around the area as a way of engaging a wider community and so developed specific projects; one example being *Wish You Were Here*. Participants used post cards as if sending brief holiday messages about how they valued the landscape we walked through. *WtL* hoped that this format would make the work less precious and encourage people to exhibit.

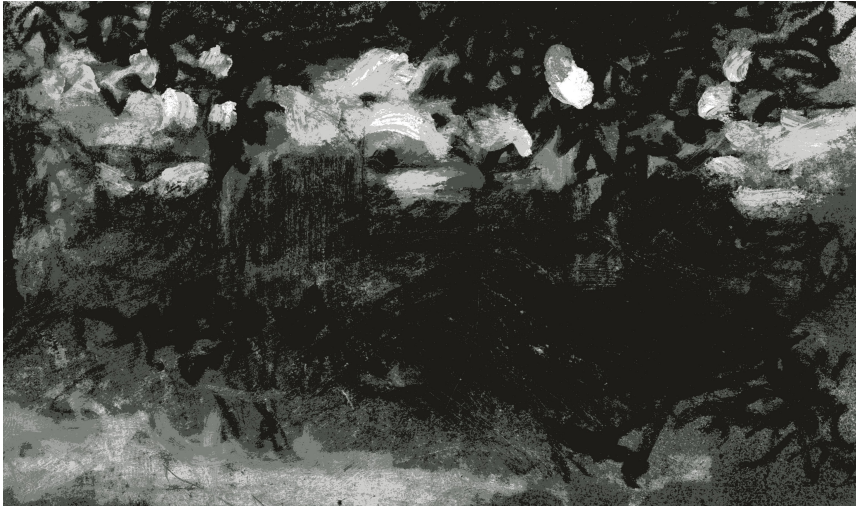


Figure 5. *Wish You Were Here* walk from Woodchester to Selsley Common. Drawing by Chris Smith.



Figure 6. *Wish You Were Here* walk from Woodchester to Selsley Common. Drawing by Valerie Coffin Price.

As a part of opening this work to a wider audience, it was shown in *The Prince Albert* public house, accompanied by leading local walks as a part of Stroud's first Walking Festival. Neither the walks or the exhibition opening were well attended,

despite the local authority support for the initiative. An example of better integrating WtL's agenda with other initiatives was involvement with the *Remembering Rodborough* Project.⁸ We arranged public walks accompanied by local historians and played back stories recorded from interviews with older residents, using old photographs and maps to add depth to everyday and current experience of the walk.



Figure 7. A public walk and youth video project, both part of *Remembering Rodborough*.

H & TG	strong	medium	weak	Comments
1		x		Specialists were invited on the walks, e.g. ecologists, historians, farmers, land-managers, archaeologists, yoga teachers.
2		x		The 'wish you were here' project was metaphorical.
3	x			The walks were a good way to explore human\non-human relations, but they did not bridge to an institutional level.
4		x		The widening of participants and increased

				showing of work went some way to exchanging a multitude of values.
5	x			Participants were immersed in <i>landscape</i> .
6			x	Despite exhibitions and events, the walks were relatively isolated from decision making about place.
7			x	Very little direct action regard landscape change was envisioned or put into practice.
8				N/a

Figure 8. First Friday Walks. Showing degree of compatibility with *Hummocks and Tall Grasses* reference points

4. Capel Mill

Capel Mill⁹ was a long-term community lead project to develop a visitor centre under the railway aqueduct at the disused, water-driven dye works situated on the disused canal, adjacent to a footbridge across the River Frome, linking town and countryside.

During SITE04, Stroud's annual visual arts festival in 2004, *WtL* curated a series of installations at this site. *WtL* collaborated with writer Sean Borrowdale, visual artist Louisa Fairbrother and sound artist Oogoo Maia, making a number of on-site interventions to transform what was a popular walk into and out of town.



Figure 9. *Water driven Drawing Machine*. Installation at Capel Mill dye works. The author, 2004.

A relevant context at the time was that the site, a much cherished natural and cultural heritage site, was under threat from the canal restoration and associated building. *WtL*'s intervention coincided with local authority led public consultations

being undertaken about the route. Portman's piece invited passers by to write words on hanging red cloth, reminiscent of *Stroud Scarlet*, as a way of revealing how the site was valued. After dark, photographs of the work were projected onto the railway viaduct.

As well as the collaboration between artists, there were other ongoing collaboration between architects, a micro brewer, a furniture makers' co-operative, illustrators, canal enthusiasts, a green builder, wildlife experts and social enterprise facilitators. The four volunteer directors – an architect, illustrator, green builder and the author, had made good progress developing a joint business plan and with fund raising for a building. In identifying and moving towards a common task, we can be seen to have used what Berleant refers to as a social aesthetic; the aesthetics of the situation (Berleant, 2005), bringing, as suggested by Kester, “a sense of the possibility of a kind of community that is not externally imposed, but is felt at the individual level. It makes reference to the possibility of a larger sense of being together” (Kester and Lacy, 2007, p.6). We led walks, put on exhibitions, held a small festival and worked with an architectural practice to produce feasibility studies.



Figure 10. Capel Mill Festival. Local MP, David Drew, and Town Mayor, Kevin Cranston, help recreate Capel Mill in the town Centre.

Tuan approaches collaboration in a straightforward way, referring to it as being “simply engaged in a common task” and, of particular relevance to my practice,

suggests that “Working together in the field, planting or harvesting, produces a sense of oneness that, at the same time, is also a oneness with nature” (Tuan, 2012, p.26). While the idea of oneness with others or with nature is appealing, it is also problematic for my practice in that it perhaps denies difference and also suggests an ideal, forever, state of being rather than a dynamic and hopeful process. Indeed, a vital part of the collaboration collapsed when the land owners of Capel Mill, The County Council, changed political colour and the land became unavailable to us.

However, about ten years later, the site has been changed. The canal passes through in a more or less sympathetic way, the river corridor is being cared for in recognition of its value to the wider community and the Capel Mill site became the first Community Asset Site in the District. There is no community run landscape inspiration centre but there is a canal-side park with a piece of public art. The area has won a CPRE award but falls far short of the original shared vision.

H & TG	strong	medium	weak	Comments
1		x		Strong collaboration within the partnership through a business planning process, but eventually broke down with withdrawal of land owning partner.
2		x		Occasional use of metaphor helped develop understanding.
3	x			Relationship between river, wider ecological systems and cultural systems were highlighted.
4		x		Art installations 'captured' passing people's values, and festivals and similar events engaged a wider public.
5	x			Guided walks and events at Capel Mill were the most successful element in connecting people with locality.
6		x		A community project was initiated and developed.
7		x		Action was facilitated but came to an abrupt end. (However, years later renewed action was initiated.)
8				N/a

Figure 11. Capel Mill. Showing degree of compatibility with *Hummocks and Tall Grasses* reference points.

Appendix 2

Post-Modern, 'Third Way', The New Zealand Council for Educational Research

http://www.shiftingthinking.org/?page_id=64

20th century/'modern' social democracy	Neo-liberalism (hyper-modern)	21st century 'third way' (post-modern)
Representative democracy	Interest-based democracy	Deliberative democracy
Universalist, one-size fits all, collective good, (=> also assimilationist). Equality of opportunity, inclusiveness, difference = deficit.	Individual rights and freedoms, choice, and enterprise; differentiation (and increased range) of products and services (market will deliver 'quality').	Diversity, plurality, multiple ways of being/subjectivities; personalised learning, integrated/multiple services; 'politics of difference', difference = a 'resource'
Bureaucratic separation (and differential power relations) between managers & workers, policy-makers/service providers and practitioners/service consumers	Emphasis on cost-effectiveness & accountability, outcomes and outputs, choice of services deliverers, consumer choice & self-reliance.	Retreat of state from some (previously) core functions (some questioning of state's continued legitimacy); increased emphasis on security matters – personal, national & economic; 'targeting' of service to areas of very high need; more homogenous local communities.
Policy-makers/service providers are 'experts' and 'know best' (top down), universal/same rules for all, education compulsory (a collective good).	Consumers are best placed to determine own needs. Policy-maker's role is to provide information and guidelines, and, where absolutely necessary, provide some 'targeted' support.	Consumers of service expected to meet own information needs – to research their 'choices'. Increased emphasis on partnerships, relationships, dialogue and 'process', on exploring, negotiating & debating differences; emphasis on participation, 'grass roots' political activity, 'voice', collective information-gathering & decision-making (knowledge development). New democratic spaces and identities – new roles and new forms of activism (NGOs, media, pressure groups, consumer collectives); role of traditional expert downgraded/diffused.
Collective good of nation state, extending full suite of 'social rights' to all as basis for equality of opportunity; 'welfarism'.	"No such thing as society"; protection of individual rights and freedoms, education = a 'positional' (and individual) good; "managerialism" and 'marketisation' of social services....	Dissolving of nation-state; societies = 'networks and flows', not 'structures', 'global citizens'.
Education has a number of roles (many of which conflict), but a key role is to provide basic skills, and then to screen & sort, for participation in segmented economy.	Under-theorised/superficial concept of education's purposes.	Emphasis on 'competencies', 'learning to learn', 'lifelong learning', 'critical thinking', innovation, EQ, communication/relationship/ teamwork skills – etc etc

Appendices 5a and 5b

The (Canal) Weave Symposium

5a. Purpose and Programme

9.00 AM until 12.30 and 1.15 to 3.00PM, Friday 13th May 2011, The Exchange, Brick Row, Stroud, GL5 1DF

The purpose of the symposium is to share information about the canal corridor and in particular flag-up projects and aspirations relating to it so as to develop a strong community vision for how the restoration can act as a catalyst for rural and urban enterprise, landscape, town and heritage conservation, learning and outdoor recreation.

The symposium is an opportunity to input ideas, liaise with other groups and organisations and find out more about the national and local context for helping influence the kind of future that the canal could help deliver for Stroud and its rural hinterland. The morning session will be followed by a project development workshop

Programme

9 00	Arrivals and Coffee	
9 30	Welcome and background: the opportunity	Neil Carmichael, MP
9 40	Introduction to the day: realising the opportunities	Max Comfort, Stroud Common Wealth
9 50	External Perceptions of Stroud	Elena Marco, University West of England
10 05	The Traders' Views	Carole Garfield, Chamber of Trade
10 10	Mapping Projects; weaving the opportunities	Participatory exercise
11 30	Coffee and look at the drawing	
11 45	The Cotswold Western Corridor – Landscape Connections	Mark Connelly, Cotswold Conservation Board
11 55	Natural England – supporting the Landscape Community, Localism and Green Infrastructure	Val Kirby, Natural England
12 15	Developing a Community Vision and Narrative	Richard Keating

12 30	Project Delivery based on Social Identity	Edward Nash, Nash Partnership
1 45	Lunch	
2 00	Project Clusters	Participatory exercise
2 40	Feedback and next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy and strategic framework • project milestones • collaboration • fund-raising • sharing information • future up-date event 	Participatory exercise
3 15	Thanks and Close	Max Comfort

Followed by tea and biscuits

5b Attendance List

Neil Carmichael	MP
Max Comfort	Stroud Common Wealth
Mark Connelly	Cotswold Conservation Board
Carole Garfield	Stroud Chamber of Commerce
Richard Keating	Walking the Land, Swansea Metropolitan University
Tom Keating	Walking the Land
Val Kirby	Natural England
Elena Marco	University of the West of England
Edward Nash	Nash Partnership
Deborah Young	Constituency Aide
Geoff Beckerleg	Project Stroud
Ken Burgin	Cotswold Canals Trust
John Comparelli	University of the West of England
Sue Capener	Stroud Town Council
Cllr. Rebecca Charley	Whiteshill and Ruscombe Parish Council
Cllr. Kevin Cranston	Stroud Town Council
Ruth Davey	Westley Farm
Cllr. Roy Derbyshire	Rodborough Parish Council

Alan Ford	Project Stroud
Lois Francis	Canal Knowledge
Andy Freedman	Forest School Camps
Cllr. Steve Hurrell	Stroud Town Council
Mike Jones	Transition Stroud
Rachel Lyons	Stroud Against the Gyratory
Ian Mackintosh	Stroud Water Textiles Trust
Clare Mahdiyone	Stroud Valleys Project
Terry Morgan	Federation of Small Businesses
Neville Nelder	Cotswold Canals Trust
Cllr. Brian Oosthuysen	Gloucestershire County Council
Paul Pilkington	University of the West of England
Kel Portman	Walking the Land
Steve Roberts	Stroud Nature
Ben Spencer	Folly Wood Co-op
Colin Studholme	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
Jan Thomas	Canal Knowledge
Apologies	
Cllr. Jo Elliot	Cainscross Parish Council
Martin Large	Stroud Common Wealth
Adrian Leaman	Wholewoods Environmental Arts
John Meadley	Transition Stroud
Tony Robinson	Cotswold Canals Trust
Paul Rutter	Countryside Consultant
Ray Wilson	Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology

Appendix 7.

River Map: Final Report

Sustainable Development Fund – Walking the Land's River Frome Landscape.

1 Background

Walking the Land (WtL) and associated artists have been walking the Stroud Valleys and River Severn on the first Friday of the month for the past four years, collecting images, sounds and conversations about the landscape. As a part of post graduate research at Swansea Metropolitan University of Wales Trinity St.David, Richard Keating has been working with people in the Stroud Valleys to study how an arts practice can be developed to help engage people with landscape change. In conversation with Mark Connelly from the Cotswold Conservation Board, this developed into a project to help inform the review of the Cotswold Landscape Character Assessment of the Settled Valleys Landscape – the landscape character type of much of the Stroud Valleys. A number of months into the project, WtL successfully applied to the Conservation Board's Sustainable Development Fund.

Other collaborators in this project are Stroud Nature, who run an annual Festival of Nature and Stroud Community Land Trust with additional input from Stroud Museum, Stroud Brewery, Rodborough Fields Preservation Group, Ruskin Mill and The Exchange and The [Community Land Advisory Service \(CLAS\)](#).

Earlier in the research (May 2011) Mark had given a presentation at the WEAVE Symposium in Stroud and the possibility of a Wildlife Grazing project met some interest. This possibility was woven into the seminars and network events with particular attention being paid to including representatives from Stroud's active local food network.

2 Project aim and objectives

The overall aim has been to develop deeper and broader community engagement with the AONB Management Plan, in particular the review of the Cotswolds Landscape Character Guidelines in collaboration with the Cotswolds Conservation Board, specifically the “Settled Valleys” Landscape type, by:

- supporting artists in producing work which will formed the centre point of walks, workshops, discussions and debate about landscape change in different locations/communities

- arranging discussions/events/shows to engage communities and integrate Landscape Character Assessment with local landscape activity, including at the Stroud Common Wealth AGM, at conferences, two networking events, Stroud Visual Arts Festival and Stroud Festival of Nature.
- holding a final exhibition at the Museum in the Park.

“River Map” also had an additional but overlapping research purpose in the context of the Swansea sponsored project, which was to study the development of art practice in enabling community engagement with landscape change processes. These findings will be written up in more detail as a part of the doctoral thesis.

3 Summary of project delivery

All targets were met and an additional seminar was held as well as an additional exhibition and walk. Also other people have become involved and are planning to engage a number of schools in the future.

Notably the Wildlife Grazing project has been initiated, a number of local grazing projects have been started as a result, and a steering group has met and planned early steps of larger scale implementation including training and communications. Art walking and further exhibitions are included in the programme.

- 10 walks with artists
5th April, 3rd May, 7th June, 5th July, 2nd August, 8th September, 4th October, 1st November, 6th December, 3rd January,
- 10x liaison/art making workshops
16th April, 29th April, 31st May, 9th July, 14th August, 3rd September, 15th October, 25th October, 5th November, 6th November
- 10x community discussion events and walks
4th May, 11th May, 12th May, 18th May, 4th July, 9th July, 19th August, 8th September, 11th September, 9th November
- work made for exhibitions that accompanied discussion events
included sketch books, large scale River maps, photographs and drawings, poetry and video
- Spring Green Conference, 15th April
- Festival of Nature and network event, 6th and 7th September,
- November River Map Seminar and Final exhibition discussions, 6th to 11th November
- Wildlife Grazing Project 9th October, 20th January

4 Activities in more detail

4.1 Walks with artists

These ten 'First Friday Walks' have attracted local artists, photographers and writers for a total of 600 hours of walking along the Frome and Nailsworth Stream. Sketch book work has been produced, video taken, sounds recorded, poetry written and photographs taken and a deeper understanding of the landscape gained, in particular how it affects us.

Most of the length of the Frome has been walked above and below Stroud as well as along the urban parts of the river. Walks have also been taken along the Nailsworth stream.



July First Friday walk around the Nailsworth Valley



Some of the sketch books on display at Ruskin Mill

Participating walkers/artists: Rachel Beard, Stewart Butler, Fiona Cam-Meadley, Jilly Cobbe, Valerie Coffin-Price, Ian Cridland, Sue Cridland, Tara Downs, Eileen Dunlop, Lucy Guenot, Sylvain Guenot, Ahrabella Heabe-Lewis, Karin Jarman, Phil Johnson, Richard Keating, David Moss, Alan Mossman, Claire Nicole, Carlos Ordonez, Kel Portman, Martin Large, Dot Newton, Wendy Rendall, Deborah Roberts, Philip Rush, Bart Sabel, Chris Smith, Jacqui Stearn, Nik Taylor, Bob Loe, Roberta Loe, Alison Vickery, Cynthia Whelan,

4.2 Liaison/art making workshops

Workshops have been run at which work was developed from the sketch books and from other preliminary work collected on the walks. The purpose was to make work suitable for inclusion in the exhibitions that complement the community discussion events and, later on. To make work for the two larger exhibitions – Ruskin Mill and The Museum in the Park. Notably a Miniature Museum Of Memories (MMM) has been made as well as River Maps and a loom.

Planning meetings and other negotiations took place to integrate the project with the Spring Green Conference, with the Stroud Consortium Network event, the Festival of Nature, Ruskin Mill's programme, Stroud Common Wealth's AGM and the Museum's exhibition programme. Towards the end of the project, a public meeting was held at Stroud Brewery to invite people to engage with

a wildlife grazing project, again within the context of the settled valleys landscape type and subsequently, a steering group attended to take the project forward, including the use of art walking as a way of revealing an ongoing narrative of the grazing project; its successes, challenges and personal stories.

4.3 Stroud Spring Green Conference

40 or so organisations attended this day long conference at the Museum in the Park with Mark Connelly making a key note presentation on Stroud's landscape and ecological setting. This helped to see local green space action in a Landscape Character Assessment framework, with other presentations placing it in other local planning frames. There were also two workshops on arts and landscape, with others on planning, working with volunteers, community engagement and collaboration. Participants agreed to meet again in the late summer to consider and develop a pan-organisation overview and collaborative project ideas, including a Conservation Grazing Project as it turned out.



Workshop at Spring Green Conference

4.4 Community Discussion Events and Walks

4.4.1 To coincide with the Stroud Visual Arts Festival in May (SITE13), two events were held at Stroud Brewery with walks along the Frome and up into the surrounding wooded hillside. The second discussion event was well attended (a dozen people) and some useful comments collected (Appendix 1).



One of the community discussion events at Stroud Brewery as a part of the Stroud Visual Arts Festival

4.4.2 Also coinciding with the Visual Arts Festival, Tara Downs and Bart Sabel held two collecting days for their Miniature Museum of Memories in Stroud's Museum in the Park; their project has been developed as a way of collecting information about how people value the river landscape.



The Miniature Museum of Memories

4.4.3 The exhibition was put up at The Exchange, Stroud's Social Enterprise Centre, for about five weeks where the project was discussed at the The Community Farm Land Trust's AGM and Stroud Common Wealth's AGM which was attended by a group of about a dozen very active and influential citizens. It was also visited by other people using this community resource.

While still at The Exchange the exhibition was added to by the Miniature Museum and an evening discussion event was held for local artists and writers and community planners, including a very useful workshop session on National Character Areas being run with input from a member of staff from Natural England.



National Character workshop at The Exchange

4.4.4 During July, as a part of the campaign to save Rodborough Fields (from development), a

walk was held through the mills and along the canal and River, with actors and poets reading from historical documents about the valleys and particularly the heritage of the Stroud Scarlet. Scarlet banners were specifically made for the event and carried as a part of a short talk about the Settled Valleys project. The banners were used to recreate one of the most loved local paintings of the racking fields (anon) from Wall Bridge. About 75 people attended and the walk was filmed by BBC 2 as a part of their 'Planners' series. Participants were interviewed about how they valued the fields and a short video made of the event.



Recreating the Racking Fields

This discussion event was unusual in that it was initiated by external circumstances and involved a different sort of walk and work. It was however successful in engaging people and a useful opportunity to practice the well used adage in community work of “starting where people are”, in other words, starting with their concerns. In this context the sometimes perceived 'dryness' of countryside policy was instead seen as relevant and essential.

An additional walk was led by local naturalists and experts that invited people to help record the wildlife of the area. A particular relevance of this was to illustrate the value of certain urban habitats for wildlife in the settled valleys.

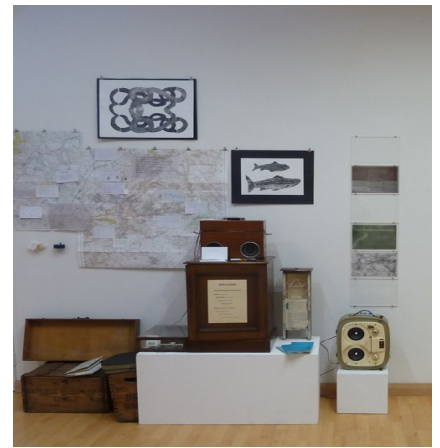


Expert, Simon Pickering 'shows' the walkers a number of bat species at Capel Mill.

4.4.5 The fuller exhibition, including the Miniature Museum was shown at Ruskin Mill, also with new work which had been influenced by the discussion events that had been held up until that point. While at Ruskin Mill, a further discussion event, collection day and walk were undertaken plus an impromptu viewing and discussion about landscape with a group of new staff. A meeting with an art teacher and her students also led to work being made by them which was then shown as a part of the final exhibition in the museum.



Collection day, walk and discussions at Ruskin Mill



Students work incorporated into MMM

4.5 Stroud Nature Consortium Seminar and Festival of Nature

Following on from the Spring Green Conference, a framework for collaboration and ideas for collaborative projects were developed at the seminar; conservation grazing, woodland and water management and a landscape/ecological/access vision for Stroud were discussed.

For the Festival of Nature a 'People's River Map' had been made and was added to by local people marking their favourite routes and places. A couple of hundred people participated. This began to show very graphically how people use the countryside and proved to be a very accessible way of making comments about landscape and led to many impromptu discussion about what is important and what is perceived as negative in the landscape. From a landscape experience aspect, it was fascinating to watch people converting their memories of walking in the landscape into making marks on the map – very clearly reliving experience of place.



Adding to the River Map at the Festival of Nature

4.6 Final Exhibition and Seminar

New work was created for this exhibition at the Museum in the Park and upwards of 300 people visited it in the short time it was on. As well as discussions with these visitors, including additional collecting for the



*River Map as catalyst for conversation during
Museum exhibition*

Miniature Museum and additional adding to the River Map, a well attended seminar was held which outlined the project, discussed the art work and gave an opportunity for people to discuss both in small workshops. The main findings from this was that the project had been a good way to engage people with the AONB and that more was needed, particularly a greater involvement of young people, older people and people with disabilities.



Workshop at River Map Seminar in the Museum

Perhaps the single most striking theme was that the project had begun to re-people the landscape.

From an arts perspective, those involved found the process developmental and created a lot of new and different work. Many who visited the show commented positively on the unusual and collaborative approach taken while some at the seminar pondered on the mix of environmental action and art.

5 Findings

5.1 Overall

More than thirty people have been directly involved in delivering the project through walks and helping arrange events and making work.

A number of approaches were taken and trialled from a socially engaged arts practice point of view – the very personal approach of one to one (re)collections in the Miniature Museum of Memories, the direct encounters with and conversations about landscape on walks, group discussions which highlight a range of values and create a relational aesthetic, intervention in other live projects and concerns and integration in a variety of ways with the community's various landscape, art and nature initiatives and organisations.

Over a thousand people have taken part in discussion events and additional walks and a further hundred or so people have taken part in seminars or conferences.

The project has both broadened and deepened an understanding of the Management Plan and the Settled Valleys in particular.

Overall the process has proved to be a useful way of engaging people with Landscape Character Assessment and capturing the social values inherent in landscape. It has provided qualitative data about how people value the settled valleys landscape and has also demonstrated that a primarily aesthetic approach can initiate action.



Participants at the Final Exhibition

5. 2 Exploring Landscape Values

5.2.1 Written comments..

The ways that the “Settled Valleys Landscape” is valued was expressed through a number of media. Appendix 1 is a list of comments made at some of the discussion events taken from post it notes or proformas. While they give a flavour of how people value place, the post it notes don't include the conversations that lie behind the words that were written, while the proformas, although

more considered, were more than many people were willing to complete.

5.2.2 Images, verse and video

Many of the ways that people value landscape are expressed in the images, verse and video that were produced on the walks and some are attached on disc as Appendix 2. Their use in stimulating further response to landscape was a central method for the project. This aspect of the process was referred to at the final exhibition as “Encounters” and put people in direct touch with the landscape and also with other people’s values for it. In other words, the project increased the opportunity for experiencing the landscape and for sharing understanding of its many values.

5.2.3 New Work

As the project progressed, the artists incorporated the comments that people had been making into their work making, creating what was referred to “Assemblages”. Such works were varied and included:

- combining image and words
- composite images that expressed some of the nature of a landscape in transition
- a video of a collaboration between artists and the local community art with sound track of how people value the place

Examples are attached as Appendix 3 on disc.

5.2.4 Maps and Miniature Museum

Although in many ways these were “assemblages”, they are worth separate mention for a number of reasons. Firstly that both are examples of the work being made in the moment with the participants and as such a very direct dialogue between artist and participant, one in which any concern of the artist’s interpretation being removed, instead the artist playing an even more facilitative role. Secondly, the Miniature Museum and the Map especially, produced very readily located information for use by the Conservation Board. Images are attached as Appendix 3 on disc.

5.3 Community Infrastructure

The report has given a flavour of numbers involved however, it is worth pulling out from this some underlying issues which relate to the project area and its community which would have an effect on the replicability of the project elsewhere.

5.3.1 Walking the Land have been leading First Friday Walks for many years and as such were able to develop these into First Friday River Walks, having the infrastructure and profile to attract people along and a willingness to contribute this aspect of the project as match funding

5.3.2 Walking the Land are networked with a number of other Stroud based activities which facilitated the community facing aspects of the project, notably the Stroud Visual Arts Festival (SITE13), the Festival of Nature and Stroud Nature Consortium.

5.3.4 The lead officer from the Cotswold Conservation Board attended a number of events and positively contributed to the discussions as well as the design and review of the project as it progressed, including seizing opportunities as they arose.

5.3.5 The points set out above are not conditions for success but give an idea of the sort of community infrastructure to link with in order to facilitate such projects.

Particular thanks to Stroud Brewery, Stroud Nature/Stroud Nature Consortium, Stroud Community Land Trust, Stroud Common Wealth, Ruskin Mill, Stroud Museum in the Park.

6 Future Work generated by the project

The closing section of the final exhibition was referred to as “Action” and as has been said, a number of continuing strands have been initiated by the project. A couple of people have planned discussion events for later in the year, one at Archway school, another at Maidenhill School. Other useful ideas came from the project which could be initiated given the resource, particularly ideas around engaging older people and collecting their landscape stories.

The project will be incorporated into the PhD Thesis being written about Landscape Aesthetics and as such will hopefully gain further exposure.

The Wildlife grazing project is up and running and a firewood co-op has also been set-up. Sitings of rare moths and butterflies have been recorded and a related, a new art project is in development. As this report was being written the Cotswold Conservation Board heard that they had been successful with an HLF bid and are able to direct some of that towards the wildlife grazing project.

7 Appendices

7.1 Comments from events

7.1.2 Common Wealth AGM

features-

Springs, wells and the way springs are landscaped with stonework
network of footpaths and rights of way

woodlands and the connections between them

animals, bird habitats where you might see e.g. dippers at Capel Mill

places where special flowers grow e.g. orchids – Minchinhampton, Rodborough, Selsley Commons

Open spaces – commons, small patches of special land including orchards and allotments

Stroud Museum and Stratford Park and 'The Secret Garden' as the genius loci of the valleys

variability and contrast – industry in countryside theme

very different habitats
fantastic views and enclosed valleys
river and canal
varied flora reflecting different habitats
amazing mills
scary walks
amazing footpath network
unique commons

wide vistas from the high ground
varied terrain – open, woodland
footpaths

woodland accessibility
bluebells and wild garlic
birdsong

rolling hills and valleys, but more than rolling, I'd say plunging valleys with hidden gems
space to breathe and relax

what I value in the From Valley:
the wealth of wildlife flora (especially) and fauna
the varied aspects – woodland, commons, river banks, nature reserves (Siccaridge especially)
the walks along the tow path and in woodlands,
also the evidence of historical industrial activity and the way nature has taken over.
Hedgerows, wild strawberries, raspberries, lilies of the valley, bluebells
elemental life

the dry stone walls
the industrial canal environment
the wild flowers
the buzzards
the beautiful walks
the variety of mini landscapes

stress less
wooded area and copses
co-housing, housing for life in sympathy with landscape
acquiring common ownership of woodland/green spaces
Stroud Community Agriculture
pubs and cricket

space/green

sky

wildlife

'wilderness'

play

exploration

walkways

view

swifts

freedom to wander

exploring new places

closeness of countryside to town (Rodborough Fields)

forage in farmers market for wild food

Stroud Valleys Project

stone walls!

Ice cream on the common

walking – woods, common

biodiversity – bluebells, butterflies, orchids, trees, badgers, doormice, birds

sense of place – nature, people and change

antidote to the city (- example of how to live >mongolia > Stroud (lab)> experiment in living)

a place to raise a family

livelihood and landscape

7.1.2 Exchange Discussion Event

amazing recreational walking and nature

easy to find peace, quiet and fresh air

green lungs

allotments

public space

mills

intrinsically different

vibrancy of mixture of industry, small businesses and homes - concerns over large blocks of new housing

land use and economics – connect rural enterprise with landscape change

biological value

the people and what they produce

separation of Stroud and Rodborough

front garden

(lack of caring for environment here – cycle track litter, vandalism, scruffy, down at heel)

diversity of the landscape from the aspect of the hills and valleys and the old industrial mills

contrast – wild, part tamed, tamed, derelict, dereliction reclaimed by nature – all in a glorious

juxtaposition

up and down – hills and valleys

connection between people and the landscape

discovering

...changing perspectives and views of valleys...surprises... from the shapes of geography to

people's ways

hidden valleys

secret places to be found

place for discovery

view points

open space – therapeutic value, psychological health

feel embraced by the scale of landscape. Love the steep wooded valleys when exiting the

Sapperton tunnel on the train to Stroud – feels like entering paradise, wonderful to follow the river into town.

Beautiful wildlife

Arcadia (21st Century)

Venn Diagrams – how do we circumscribe the local? What about redcoats and slavery?

The topography of five steep valleys with woods and fast flowing stream together with Cotswold

Scarp looking westward

small spaces – surprise hollows – valleys with water courses, the fields, woods and settlements

social history within the landscape – rescuing ordinary people from the enormous condescension of parents

I like the lanes that look like green tunnels

joined-up green space corridors

ability to travel within the landscape without transport i.e. walking

walking along the scarp, surprised by a western vista of patchwork fields, Severn and Wales

Not a chocolate box environment

stories, threads – historical and contemporary -

not always staying on the safe, well trodden paths

human scale

connections

desire lines

access to paths for recreational walking in a safe way

old wiggling footpaths tracing older footsteps and streams

value the web of footpaths, weaving through the valleys and along canal and water courses

commons

take ownership, make individual – idiosyncratic

space, open space

not just preservation, chocolate box

community ownership – orchards, woods, tourism, energy

lushness (so much green)

variety

beauty

open skies

awareness raising/threat

economic possibilities

sense of history

feeling enclosed

connection with nature

our little bit of arcadia – beautiful, light

and the history that is so visible everywhere

ancient history – dreamland of spirits

rarity of species and features

large trees left over from old estates

woods – Randwick

beech woods and blue bells and wild garlic

light – its play on everything

Dippers at Capel Mill

Orchids and skylarks on commons

the spirit of people here loving the place

local identity

community green ethos mill buildings

ocean floor – Eolithic stone

the evocative names of places – the Vatch, Spillmans, Uplands, Rodborough etc.

light captured in wild grass

7.1.3

Proformas from the Brewery Discussion events

(attached)

7.2 Accompanying CD

7.2.1 Encounters – examples of work produced on the walks.

i. sketch books

- ii. poems
- iii. photographs

7.2.2 Assemblages – examples of work incorporating feedback from discussion events

- i. long map
- ii. River Map
- iii. Slide show containing:
 - transitional drawing
 - words and images
 - weaving

7.2.3 Moving image and presentation

- i. Miniature Museum of Memories (video)
- ii Rodborough Fields (video)
- iii. Presentation at Museum (power point)
- iv "River Frome" dvd (video on separate disc)

APPENDIX 8a



LOOKING AFTER FOLLY WOOD

THIRD DRAFT

LOOKING AFTER FOLLY WOOD

1 Introduction

Between July 2010 and June 2011, the members of Stroud Woodland Co-operative organised themselves into a number of topic groups in order to research how to look after Folly Wood. The research was gathered at topic group events and fed into regular core group meetings, open to all. The core group developed ideas and plans from these findings and fed these back to seasonal gatherings of the wider membership.

At these meetings further research was undertaken as to people's:
aspirations for buying the wood
ways of valuing the wood
choice of activities in the wood
location of activities in the wood

(see appendices for more detail).



Figure 1. Maps produced at the Spring Equinox gathering

2 Principles: Early in on in the process a set of principles were agreed as follows:

“Our overall principle is that the wood can be enjoyed for generations to come. Everything should start slowly and be low impact with full respect for the place, the environment and each other, that we seek to find a way of working together with respect when putting the spirit of this principle into practice. Examples of this principle in practice are:

Tree management: Folly Wood is not a completely natural woodland, and as such at times it will be necessary and desirable to remove individual trees and replant others: it's part of looking after the wood. Parts of the wood will be used for activities and other parts restored, and both will require woodland management.

The overall aim is to restore and manage the woodland, its trees, flora and fauna to be similar in nature to the ancient semi natural woodlands in this part of the Cotswolds, not withstanding that it will have a range of relatively intense uses by the group.

In practice this will mean gradually replacing the majority of the larches with a range of suitable species. Unless unhealthy and dangerous, existing mature species such as ash, beech, oak, sycamore, holly, yew and pines will be kept and self seeded and young saplings of these other species will be kept. A wider variety of species will be considered such as field maple, small leaved lime and hedgerow species.

The value of the woodland in the wider landscape, both as a visual feature and for its biodiversity value should be recognised as a part of the management operations. In particular, felling of larches should be a gradual process over at least a ten year period unless overtaken by the presence of Sudden Oak Death.

Permanent structures. Generally, and for the time being, we will not develop permanent structures (such as buildings, car parking, hard surfaced paths) - they require considerable investment of time, energy and materials and significant funds to construct and maintain. Permanent structures in Folly Wood are also more likely to attract interest from people who may not have the best interests of the wood at heart.

Vehicles in the wood: Visitors to Folly Wood should consider local residents and the environment when bringing their vehicles. Wherever possible visitors to the wood with cars should park on the main bit of Folly Lane. No motorised vehicles (i.e. motorbikes) should be driven within the wood: to do so would compromise the ecology of the wood as well as prevent others from enjoying the wood.

Nature reserve: All the wildlife of the wood is of value to us, and we may keep one or more areas largely as 'wild' areas with minimal intervention and disturbance. We also recognise that Folly Wood is a resource to be enjoyed by the Stroud Woodland Coop community and not a strict 'nature reserve'.

Materials - any structures in the wood (paths, fencing etc.) will use natural and local materials (ideally from Folly Wood itself) wherever possible.

Access - all Folly Wood members are welcome to the wood. We will develop a calendar to ensure that we can enjoy the wood in a variety of ways. In accepting that there won't be hard paths, we will need to strive to enable people with a range of abilities to gain access. We also need to devise appropriate access for members and the wider community, baring in mind our legal responsibilities.

Fires: Fallen dead wood is a finite resource in the wood and also important for woodland ecology. We should use wood for fires as economically as possible, monitoring our wood use over time.”

3 Towards a layout

Following analysis of the maps produced at the Spring Equinox, the map and related principles below were produced and discussed at the Summer Solstice gathering.

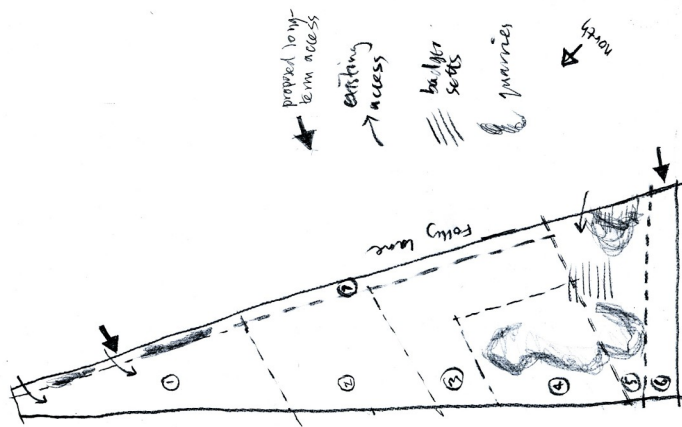


Figure 2. The map shows seven zones or patches into which specific uses and activities are placed.

A number of guiding principles have been allocated to each of the seven zones based on our current knowledge of the site's flora and fauna; there may be specific management operation needed to conserve/promote particular species.

Gradual restoration of the woodland has been estimated to take place over a ten year period, 2012 to 2022. Each year, removal of ten percent of the agreed number of larch from each zone should happen, other than from zone 3 where 20% of the larch to be felled could be removed between 2017 and 2022. Each year new tree and woodland edge planting to take place and changes in ground flora to be monitored.

Installation of other infrastructure to happen in parallel, taking account of issues such as visibility from roads and footpaths, re-use of felled timber etc.

Zone/ patch	Existing features	Woodland management principles and operations	Activities and structures
1	Large number of pines with mix of broadleaved species. Relatively open. Quarries against lane. Remains of building at top corner. Easy, level access	Remove all but a few larch. Introduce limited number of new species such as Rowan and oak to create an open woodland. Create and/or leave clearings for ground flora.	Formalise access. Provide sign board. Create shelter in ruined building. Locate appropriate place for simple seating. Bird and bat boxes.
2	Predominantly larch plantation with mature ash and other species especially along the boundary with field. Good views to east and north east,	Gradually reduce larch to 5%, starting with least healthy. Leave some lying for invertebrates. Encourage natural succession and also replace with appropriate native species. Create open woodland, leaving clearings to encourage ground flora. Include small areas of hazel coppice.	Paths through. Occasional seating to take advantage of views to the east. Bird and bat boxes. Some coppicing.
3	Predominantly larch with some beech, ash and other native species. Sloping to road. Potentially good views through trees to east.	Very Gradually remove 95% of larch, leave some lying, encourage natural regeneration and provide robust woodland mix including dense under story to screen active zone 4 from road and provide enclosure and shelter. Include areas of hazel coppice.	Some coppicing. Some play structures. Create views through from zone 4. Compost toilet facility.
4	Predominantly larch with specimen beech and some ash and holly. Quarries an important feature, Views out to south, east and west.	Remove all larch, starting with the least healthy.	Provide majority of activity space, including fire site, shelter in quarry with removable cover and banked seating. Play structures in northern quarry. Wood store.
5	Quarries and badger sett. Quarry next to road has good mix of tree species.	Gradually remove 95% of larch. Leave some lying for habitat. Encourage natural succession and plant appropriate tree species and shrubs to create dense woodland.	Discourage activities and structures. Redirect path. Provide sign unless provided in zone 7. Fence to discourage tipping and allow only very limited parking/delivery.
6	Predominantly larch with open feel and views to south (Stroud), south west and west.	Keep as open woodland, Gradually replace larch with deciduous species. Create clearing for flowers.	Simple meditation clearing. Simple bench. New access and signage.
7	Woodland edge with mature trees and flower rich areas in places. Access points.	Plant hedge using native, non-invasive species, leaving wild-flower verge adjacent to the lane. Consider running hedge behind either or both of the two long quarries at the northern end of the site to maximise habitat.	Access to woods, with signage.
N.B. Much of the boundary has the remnants of a stone wall. A decision needs to be taken whether to repair and replace this, whether to repair lengths, whether to remove or leave much as it is. Where possible the felled trees to be used for structures, including any path edging, steps and chipped for surfaces as appropriate.			

Figure 3. Principles by zone/ patch

3 Further research and resources

Further research is needed before finally deciding on precise management regimes, in particular a fuller flora and fauna survey and more work on aesthetic appreciation of the wood, including its appearance in the landscape.

More detailed decisions about tree felling and planting as well as design decisions for some elements, particularly in patch/zone 4. The general approach is that these decisions will be delegated to those group members undertaking the works, co-ordinated via the core group initially with input from those of the group who offer to become specialists – see Figure 5.

At the summer solstice gathering it was felt that people would like to take responsibility for a patch (zone) or an element within it. These have been added to Figure 4 below. The next step is for groups of people to choose a patch and to use this template to produce a costed work programme including people hours, training, tools, equipment and materials.

patch	People	activities	materials	equipment	additional resource	£
1						
2		Path layout, prepare for tree felling and replanting. Seating, coppicing in due course. Bird and bat boxes.				
3	Jo, Andy	Compost loo path layout prepare for tree felling and tree and shrub planting improve views out				
4						
5						
6	Martin, Barbara, Ruth	Path layout prepare for tree felling tree and woodland edge planting improve views out. Seating.				
7						

Figure 4. Annual template for looking after your patch

As well as taking responsibility for looking after a patch, it was agreed that people would need to be responsible for specific activities. This would include becoming specialists and offering advice and support to groups looking after their patch.. These specialisms will generally sit under the remit of the existing Infrastructure and Woodland Management group and supplement the work of the other topic groups.

specialism	people	notes
Tree felling, including training		
Tree planting, including training		
Coppicing and green wood skills		
Path construction		
Bird and bat box construction		
Furniture and signs		
Play features and other structures		
Letting contracts		
First Aid		
Timber storage, seasoning and firewood		

Figure 5. Specialist advice and support

Appendix 8b

ACTION PLAN: April 2012 - March 2013

Item	Budget Estimate/ in kind payment/income	Lead person/group
Thin larch trees and unsafe trees in area 4 in accordance with the Folly Wood Plan. Plank wood if there is a demand for products	In kind days: 1 day contractor £200.00 chain saw use: £150.00 self financing	Ben Spencer. (Richard Lewes, Richard Keating.)
Complete rural benches and tables in quiet area, including 'thrones'/'totems'.	In kind days: chain saw: £50.00	Martin Large , Ruth Illingworth
Complete compost toilet	In kind days:5	Andy Freedman, Greg Pilley, Nadine
Design, make & erect two number sign boards (timber available)	In kind days: 4	Seb Buckton
Continue tree planting (trees etc. in stock, including some pot grown at Hawkwood)	In kind days:30	Richard K., Gabriel Kaye
Clearing and managing new clearing and placing benches	In kind days: 4	Jackie Rowanly, Seb Buckton, Nadine
Mark, clear and set-out new paths	No action required	Mark Harrison
Create more play possibilities	No further plans, will respond to children's ideas	Ali Coles
Convert larch and other felled timber into fire wood, stack and organise disposal. Fuel. Arrange chain saw course for members	In kind days: 30 Self-financing Self-financing or fund-raise	Richard Lewes. Ben Spencer, Mark Harrison, Richard Keating
Arrange woodlands open day	£350 from earmarked from rural task force money	Richard K., Martin Large
3x group celebrations, informal bbqs and AGM Printing, postage	In kind days: 5 £10	Alice Goodenough, Andy Freedman, Gabriel Kaye
Admin. Costs: insurance, update website, mail outs etc.	In kind days: £ 650	Ben Spencer
Set-up and administer membership scheme	In kind days:3 Income: £400	Helen Keating
Totals: expenditure income balance	£ 1400 £ 400 (£1,000)	

- 1 Colleagues include Julia Bennett, Alison Parfitt, Sue Porter, Diana Ray and Jaqui Taylor. We first worked together as the Facilitators Learning Network to facilitate Vision 21 and its various projects.
- 2 Market and Coastal Towns Initiative: Early in 2000 the Government encouraged the formation of public agency partnerships in order to develop regeneration initiatives that could tackle issues faced by market and coastal towns and the surrounding rural communities. This initiative aimed to help communities to plan their future, build their skills and implement their plans. It also aimed to help co-ordinate activity of local and regional agencies to provide a 'gateway' to funding programmes that would make things happen. My involvement in this was through a facilitators co-operative called *Sustainable Futures* where I worked closely with Alison Parfitt and Neil Spencer in Lydney and Minehead.
- 3 Stratford Town Design Statement: This was a pilot Town Design Statement in which I was involved with Alison Parfitt through Sustainable Futures. It is a published document that gives a detailed guide to the character of a town. It sets out the specific nature of the buildings and landscape which make the town distinctive, with recommendations on how to encourage new development that enhances and complements what already exists. A Town Design Statement is similar in concept to a Village Design Statement but the scale and complexity of towns means that a carefully co-ordinated approach is required in its production. The Stratford Town Design Statement was adopted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 30th September 2002.
- 4 The interview was recorded on March 15 1994. It was broadcast by Channel 4 on April 5, 1994 in the *Without Walls* interview with Melvyn Bragg.
- 5 *Blue Remembered Hills* is a British television play by Dennis Potter, originally broadcast on 30 January 1979 as part of the BBC's Play for Today series. They refer to Potter's childhood memories in the Forest of Dean which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 6 "Only Human?" Festival in Glasgow was held in November 2014 to explore how the arts and humanities offer innovative ways for us to think about and explore the relationships and dependencies between human and non-human, to consider what it is to 'be human' in a world with others.
- 7 First Friday Walks: Since 2005, Walking the Land artists have been offering and leading free walks on the first Friday of each month around Gloucestershire and neighbouring counties. On the walks we produce our own work and encourage people to respond to the walks. Work performed/produced includes: drawing, photography, sound pieces, landscape interventions, video and writing.
- 8 Remembering Rodborough. A 2008/09 Heritage Lottery funded project to celebrate the history of Rodborough Parish
- 9 Capel Mill is the former dying mill on the River Frome on the edge of Stroud with remnant cultural artefacts, such as mill pond. The footpath across the River links town and country and the river at that point is a local nature reserve. The Great Western Railway viaduct passes over the river at the same point and it is adjacent to the Stroud Water Canal. It's a valued and informal open space used by all age groups in many ways. A local group had well advanced plans for its restoration as a social enterprise centre.