Making an Exhibition of Ourselves

A participative inquiry that seeks to create change through generating artful representations and curating new ideas using 'Bridging, Making and Curating'

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Abstract

The question this inquiry asks is 'How can we hear what people have to say, have their words represented for others to hear and for them to be organised in a such a way that positive action can emerge into their world?'.

This is an Action Research inquiry set in the industrial modernist world. The start was my first-person inquiry as I tried to be heard again following a work-related mental illness. Through this very personal experience I developed an approach that helped me recover. The approach was based on Artful Knowing; 'questioning norms and assumptions through artful activity that is directly sensed and experienced'[1], where I expressed myself through made objects. I learned that my Making practice only served me so far and that the additional factor in recovering was through the curation of objects with others and then learning from their responses

While my recovery was nearly complete my inquiry was not. I extended this to a second-person inquiry involving first individuals and then groups of participants. From these separate inquiries emerged a method. My thesis is that for people's potential to emerge a series of steps are necessary. This approach is Bridging, Making and Curating. The Bridging is about creating engagement and social connections; the Making asks people to build artefacts that respond to an inquiry question; and the Curating develops means of displaying the artefacts so they can be understood and developed through conversation and interaction. Any one of the individual steps is not enough, it is only the whole system that creates the environment for change.

This work provides a method that can be used by creatively orientated Action Research inquirers. Specifically, it adds a comprehensive element to Artful Knowing and Making by offering the elements of Bridging; Making links with co-inquirers and the context around the inquiry, and curational practice from the art world; namely keeping and display, postproduction and interactive exhibiting.

Inquiries undertaken using this approach have made positive changes for individual co-inquirers -and teams involved. This thesis offers the approach for others to use.

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[1] (Seeley & Thornhill, 2014)

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Dedication

The compulsion to finish this doctorate comes from many directions. The most immediate of which is the death of my marvellous mother-in-law last night, Joy Campion. I read her the summary I had written for the examiners while she was in hospital six weeks ago and she said 'Well I understand what you are doing now – apart from the odd long word. It is good and you must finish it.'

So, now this dissertation is dedicated to:

- My late tutor Chris Seeley who was the inspiration for many of the ideas that have developed into my doctoral practice and the spirit behind my recovery from my breakdown. Just prior to her death she told me 'You have got a fine doctorate to write'.
- My Mum and Dad, Jean and Peter Goscomb who both encouraged me to undertake this doctorate. Dad started it all off by saying 'There is more in you Chris' at my Master's graduation, and my dear Mum who sat with me as I was writing in 2017 and made me promise that 'I would get it done'.
- The wonderful Joy.

Thanks to all of you very special people for your encouragement and now I hope this dissertation lives up to your expectations.

In memory of

Chris Seeley	*1966-2014*
Peter Goscomb	*1926-2015*
Jean Goscomb	*1931-2017*
Joy Campion	*1938-2019*

21st December 2019

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I would especially like to appreciate the love and support my wife Eleanor has shown me during these years of research.

I thank Kate McArdle, my supervisor, for her guidance and encouragement. Especially, for her wonderful sense of humour that has kept me going through the tough times. To Geoff Mead, for his friendship and companionship over the years that this thesis has been in the making.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the part my favourite history teacher, Pat Crimmin of Royal Holloway College, had in giving me the belief in my abilities and the curiosity to research and to inquire. She can rightly claim her part in inspiring me to undertake and complete this work

Preface

'You have got a story to tell' stated Geoff Mead, a friend, teacher and a person closely connected to this piece of writing, just before I set off to his flat in Lyme Regis on a retreat to get the writing of the first full draft of the dissertation underway. I am now sitting at his kitchen table surrounded by the paraphernalia of my 'workstation' getting bedded in for a busy weekend of writing glancing across to the sea and reflecting on what is ahead of me.

I certainly have got a story to tell – and I need to get on and tell it. While you could say that this dissertation is getting on for five years late. The intervening years have been full of tragedy and inquiry that will shape what I am about to write. In February 2014 finishing this doctorate seemed within reach. I completed my last piece of examined written work and had experienced a vivid and generative viva. I was genuinely excited about completing the doctorate and participating in the final discussion about my work. I sensed that I had a contribution to make to knowledge, the potential of undertaking practice that would make a difference to people and the makings of a strong thesis.

Then the world gently fell apart; Chris Seeley my marvellous, inspiring, whirlwind of a creative supervisor died, my endlessly kind and generous father fell ill and fell into a dementia-fuelled decline leading to his death, then my dear Mum, having supported Dad, experienced a stroke causing partial blindness and then later fell, went into a coma and died; and most recently my special, determined and loving Mother in Law, Joy, succumbed to cancer after a year of illness . Through each period being able to apply myself to finishing the dissertation seemed so remote. My way of paying tribute to these four special people is to get what is in my head on to paper so that I can complete this doctorate that all have supported and encouraged.

The extra time that I have spent on this doctorate, compared to the planned timeline, will extend to five years when it is finally submitted. The good news is that this is not just a late running version of the dissertation I would have submitted at Christmas 2014, it is much richer and fulfils the promise I imagined after my last piece of examined work in 2014. Talking to colleagues who have completed their doctorates on schedule about what I have done they shared that what I have undertaken is the next part of their inquiry that they have not got around to. Not only is there is a story that is more rooted in practice, but it is the product of more creativity, it is richer for seeing the outcomes of earlier work

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and has been the beneficiary of a wider exploration of art and literature. It has led to forming a thesis that builds on, challenges and extends existing practice.

The story I have got to tell comes together in the words and images that follow. I think it is a story of my release from illness into a rich horizon of creativity and possibility that has allowed me to address a question that has played on my mind since my early twenties. You will read about my own struggles to express myself and to be heard. You will see my adoption of an artful and curation-led practice that centres on exhibiting the stories of many others. You will encounter my wrestling with the challenge to have those many other creative and passionate voices heard and to be acted upon. You will enter into the exhibition, that is this thesis, of the method that I have developed and my assertions about the human dynamics I have witnessed and what they tell us about interfering in the system of misplaced power, assumptions and false certainty and to have those voices heard and acted upon.

That is the story I have to tell and the thesis I have to exhibit to you, my audience.

Making an Exhibition of Ourselves

Section **1 The Entrance**

Chapter 1

The Exhibition Flyer

As I started to create my dissertation, colleagues and friends noted that the finished document would be like an exhibition of my thesis and that I would be its Curator. If that is to be the case, then I need to present the 'Exhibition Flyer' that guides you through what is displayed in this document.

To accompany the words of this flyer, I have created an artefact that illustrates the story that I am hoping to tell (see Figure 1). The picture illustrates the thesis as a river, with the different chapters flowing together in a series of confluences; each adding to the story. The model shows the stream starting in the still waters of a lake, as the idea emerged, and then finishing with the wild waters of a delta flowing into the open seas, as the thesis moves into contact with the world.

Each of the streams joining the main flow represents one of the chapters.

Chapter 3 starts with a description of who I am and what I brought to my inquiry. The still waters of the lake represent my background and education and the stream joining the outflow from the lake is the mental illness that I suffered and that situation's consequences for me.

In Chapter 4 the stream is joined by my exploration of Action Research, as I make an 'Intervention on Myself'. I particularly highlight Heron's 'Ways of Knowing' (1998) and the significance of Artful Knowing (Seeley & Reason, 2008) as a new way of expressing myself. This is joined by my discovery of making as a first-person method that helped me re-establish my self-confidence and self-awareness. It describes my own early Making practice and my first tentative steps working with others.

As this tributary joins the main stream the chapter continues with my new understanding of how Curating can play a major part in my first-person understanding. The chapter

culminates in a recollection of the viva that brought all of my first-person inquiry together, presenting the possibilities for the second-person inquiry.

Bridging, Making and Curating is explained in Chapter 5 as a system. There are separate detailed explanations of all three elements in the subsequent three chapters and then Chapter 9 demonstrates how they all intertwine in practice. They are placed in the context of my early practice.

The next stream, in Chapter 10, reveals my strengthening understanding of curating. The practices of 'Interactive Curating' (Muller, Edmonds, & Connell, 2006), Exhibition making and participation led 'Socially Engaged Art' (Birchall, 2015) are explored in depth, particularly linking to my own practice.

Having tested and explored the elements of the method and practice the confluence of all the streams comes in Chapter 11. It is about the impact of the practice on creating positive outcomes for individuals and for broader society, of providing guidance for practitioners that might want to learn or adopt the approach and a discussion of how my research builds on my understanding. This chapter includes a discussion of power, the silences and ethics experienced in the practice

Chapter 12 draws the inquiry to a conclusion which includes a test of validity and quality and an assessment of the contribution of the study and the thesis to both knowledge and practice.

The Epilogue is an exit from the 'Exhibition that is my thesis' and is a reflection on the final viva.

Figure 1 The map of the Exhibition that is my thesis

Chapter 2

An Introduction to my Inquiry

Getting Under Way

Set in the modernist industrial and commercial world my thesis is about getting words, in the form of artful representations, into the world so that they can make new understanding and generate change. My inquiry describes how the people I have worked with can explain their thinking, share their insights and generate new ideas; both to themselves and others. My research has developed a method that keeps and organises those representations and then it is about exhibiting those curated ideas in an interactive format so that they can be worked with and can become the basis for understanding and change. I believe these new insights can be part of creating a fairer, more liberal and more comprehensive world.

The inquiry has been informed by an artful way of knowing (Heron, 1998; G. Perry, 2013; Seeley & Thornhill, 2014). The research takes a comprehensive outlook (Buckminster Fuller, 2008) inclusive of different disciplines and paradigms. The inquiry orientates the work towards creating the liberal society that Denzin describes (Denzin, 2001, 2003a).

Using these perspectives I have moved from a first-person inquiry, where I focused on my own recovery from illness (Marshall, 2016) to where I have developed a method that allows my inquiry to continue and flourish in the second-person inquiry (Judi Marshall, 1999; B. Torbert, 2006). This method includes three essential elements. These elements are Bridging (a means of linking people together, to create pause and for them to understand the context and social setting of the work) (M Heidegger, 1962), Making (where people make artful representations of how they want to speak out and that describes what they want to say) (Frayling, 2011; Ingold, 2013; G. Perry, 2013) and Curating (such that made objects are displayed and become the centre of conversation as individual pieces and a collective display of the artefacts of people's voices (Obrist, 2014)). At each stage of the method there is, what I refer to as an intervention, intended to stimulate some form of action and generative conversation (Freire, 1996). The method has adopted a high degree of participation and interactivity. Through Curating the artefacts and mounting 'social exhibitions', that serve to bring people together, I have seen

ideas deepen, understanding to grow, and then generate a move to collective reflection and action (Birchall, May 2015; Edmonds, Bilda, & Muller, 2009; Helguera, 2011; O'Neill, 2012; Staniszewski, 2001). An important point to make is that Curating covers a number of interconnected areas. Curating covers the keeping of objects, their sharing and display, the postproduction of artefacts to develop and enrich their meaning and the placing of these objects into exhibitions. It also covers the interactivity within these exhibitions and framing of actions that emerge from them.

By the end of writing this thesis I can place the work more comfortably into the literature – noting the links to hermeneutics (Gadamer, 2013) and to the bricolage, which is first mentioned by Levi Strauss (1966) and then developed by Kincheloe (2004). However, I try to locate my work 'fully' I am drawn to the character of the flâneur; as the wanderer, who may go anywhere, and the discoverer of unlikely connections that normally remain concealed. As such the flâneur describes the characteristics of the way my inquiry has transpired (Frisby, 1994).

The Ground I Have Covered

This inquiry has been a personal voyage into new places, new emotions and new thinking. For me to present a formalised report of my dissertation with a method, practice examples and underpinnings of theory as separate chapters would not reflect the way the expedition has unfolded and the thesis has revealed itself to me through a series of epiphanic moments (Denzin, 2001) and shifted through as new possibilities have opened up. Therefore I present this document as a chronological series of adventures, each revealing more of the thesis (Mead, 2011). It is a story that I am presenting to you, the reader, not just laying out the thesis but also illuminating the path I have followed. I hope it carries the same joy, pathos and excitement that I have experienced conducting inquiry as you find in reading this dissertation.

An Illustrative Story

I am conscious that the description of the thesis that I have given you so far may not explain very well how my method links to the idea of revealing unexpressed ideas.

Therefore, I want to give you an example of what this method looks like in practice (Figure 2). I would like to offer a short account, written in 2013, that captures the essence of what happens when my method has been used in practice:

> Sitting in the Rose Garden at Ashridge next to a colleague in July I heard the most unexpected, rewarding and delightful story. Sue started with the words 'You must hear this!' She told me about me about her application of my developing practice of Bridging, Making and Curating – loosely based on a quilting session I had previously presented. She had set up and run a session in a moment of shared boredom, using the well-equipped craft box of her friend, with their three children. They were working on the kitchen table in the setting of a well-appointed country kitchen telling a story from their lives. She told me about the fun and joy they all had laying out the pipe cleaners, sequins and wool on the glued together fabric and the obvious pleasure they had taken from working together.

Figure 2 Imagining the Making underway

> Then came the most wonderful and most revealing part. Her friend's nine-year-old daughter was working on her picture at the extreme edge of the table. When invited to come close the girl said – 'No that is where I am. I am always over here because I do not have any friends. She said this in the most matter of fact way. My friend recalled the particular moment that she thought she would brush it away – saying something like 'No, do not worry it cannot be that bad' – instead she went to the girl and asked her to describe her picture and explain what she had said. Thus, she captured the moment and made it accessible for the family. Mum shed a few immediate tears while gaining a wonderful window into her daughter's mind. It would be a fairy tale ending to be able to say that every was now resolved

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however six months later the mother and my friend are still discussing the incident. Recently the girl has asked to talk to her Mum about what happened. When I asked my friend the consequence of the incident during the making she said that it had opened a crack in the hitherto closed door for a conversation to continue.

This story opens the opportunity to rehearse the essence of my thesis. When people speak what they say can easily get lost. Either because the words are simply not recorded or registered or because they are heard only in the context of the listener and consequently the message the words contain does not get remembered as they are transmitted. It is my contention that the use of artful means alongside the spoken word generates an active and persistent representation of a person's world that captures and animates the context and the sentiment in which they are said. This gives resilience and sustainability to the individual's agency to make changes to their own thinking and that of others. With the words retaining their vibrancy through the made object, there is now the question of how they get heard such that they can be acted upon. I have determined that if the made objects are curated – that is to say displayed in such a way to engender conversation and reaction – and then exhibited such that they can be shown to others who were not at the initial making allowing them to become immersed in the story– then changed conversations can emerge. Once these conversations have been further curated a layered display of meaning and artefacts goes on to offer a deep understanding and a strong connection. This can then be a part of stimulus to action. My experience from practice is that this cycle leads to perspectives being changed and then cycles of action taking place.

Cycles of Inquiry

My inquiry has proceeded through five significant cycles of inquiry (there have been many shorter ones) that have shaped this dissertation. Briefly described they are:

- New inspirations and early adventures in Action Research

  My first contact with Action Research as I recovered from illness

- First-person Epiphanies

  Moments in my first-person inquiry that pointed to wider possibilities

- Developing my second-person approach

  The emergence of 'Bridging, Making and Curating' as an approach and a method

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- Interactive Curating and Social Exhibitions

  Understanding and developing the significance of Curating and exhibitions

- Seeing the big picture

  Understanding connections and realising the possibilities for change

New Inspirations and Early Adventures in Action Research

The model I made on the first day of our doctoral workshop in April 2011 illustrates this phase very well (Figure 3). Firstly, the request to create a representation of our inquiry through artful means illustrated the generative and creative nature of Action Research. It was for many an invitation to draw or to paint – for me it was the first time of many I found myself making a three-dimensional object. Secondly it allowed me to explore my thinking about the world in a new and different ways that unpeeled new insights for me that proposed both interpretation and action.

For the first part this event provided the link between my previous modernist life, where I reflected on how to study power relationships and change and my new post-modernist world where I was exploring how to change the world that I encountered. Furthermore, I was invited to express my curiosity not only in words but in other artful ways.

For the second part the model I made on the first day of our doctoral workshop in April 2011 opens an important interpretation. It illustrated a gradient between two sets of people talking; at the top of a slope are two big important people confident the topic they are discussing is the important one while at the bottom are smaller people clamouring for attention. Despite the fire burning around those at the bottom no one was helping.

Figure 3 3D Model made at our first workshop

This vignette expressed the heart of my inquiry. How could those people's views be connected? How could they work together to create change?

This model, and particularly the stairway image, took me back to my experiences in and around the aftermath of the King's Cross Fire in 1987 and was the stimulus for reflecting on events that happened to me all that time ago. In 2015, I wrote:

> I found myself at King's Cross Underground station arriving on the Piccadilly Line. As I stepped on to the escalator it came to me. I found myself at 1300 on the 19th May right back at the place that inspired my inquiry. I took a picture immediately on the escalators at the very point where the fatal fire started that culminated in the deaths of 31 people back in 1987. I was closely connected to the fire at the time of the incident and in the years that followed. As I reached the lovely clean and bright ticket hall my mind went back to the ticket hall the day after the fire when I first saw the scene of devastation. I remember my quavering voice as I described the incident to my fellow students in the bright spring sunshine at Ashridge in April 2014.

During my time working with the people who were at the station on the night of the fire one phrase kept emerging. It was simply 'why did they not ask me? I could have helped prevent the accident happening'. Those unheard voices stayed with me as my career developed and I tried to involve people and develop skills to listen to those I worked with.

In 2011, as I recalled this significant moment of revelation about powerlessness and a lack of agency there was a new very personal context. I had a breakdown late in 2010 at work because I was not being heard and I could not intervene. So, the inquiry started off from a very personal perspective; it was now about me – and how I could regain my voice and restore my thinking and influence. In fact, I was wounded and needed to heal and to rebuild. This meant that I was very malleable to new ideas.

I write now with the confidence of someone who has been immersed in Action Research for six years. When I sat down for the first time with the group who were to be called ADOC 3 (the Ashridge Doctorate in Organisational Change – Cohort 3) I only had the slightest grasp of the nature of Action Research and what it entailed. What I did know about the framing of the programme seemed right for me, with the emphasis on exploration, deep engagement with people and the researcher as a participant, as I decided to return to learning to try and accelerate my recovery.

My earliest adventures in the world of postmodernist research saw me experimenting with the stories I loved from history, from my earlier exploration of discourse and presentational knowing from scholars such as Karl Weick (1993). However, I found that they were the tales about others and that it was first-person action inquiry that allowed me to discover things about myself, develop new thinking and new means of expression. In 2014 I wrote, reflecting on the role of Action Research:

> A key precept of my old world was the need to be certain and sure before acting – and certainly writing – Action Research has liberated me from this. The self-reflective element and the use of repeated cycles of research have added an indefinable quality in that there is no end to the exploration and only new insights to explore.

First-person Epiphanies

Once I had learnt more of Action Research practice – particularly Artful Knowing I used this to expand my thinking. I had so enjoyed the first part of my studies using Action Research and Artful Knowing I was delighted to see very positive outcomes. There were moments where my thinking leapt forward with a series of epiphanic moments (Denzin, 2001). Through the experience and the investigation, I emerged from the pall of my illness and loss of self-confidence, in the manner described by Romanyshyn in the Wounded Researcher (2007), to become healthier and stronger.

Over the course of eighteen months I started to make models to help reveal my own thinking. These expressed my understanding of theory. I made the 'Squiggle', representing linkages between the past, through understanding the historicity of a subject, to its present, with a representation of participative inquiry, and then on to the possibilities of the future. Then I made 'The Trapeze", a model that helped me get to grips with the coexistence of the paradigms of modernism, postmodernism and constructivism (Figure 4).
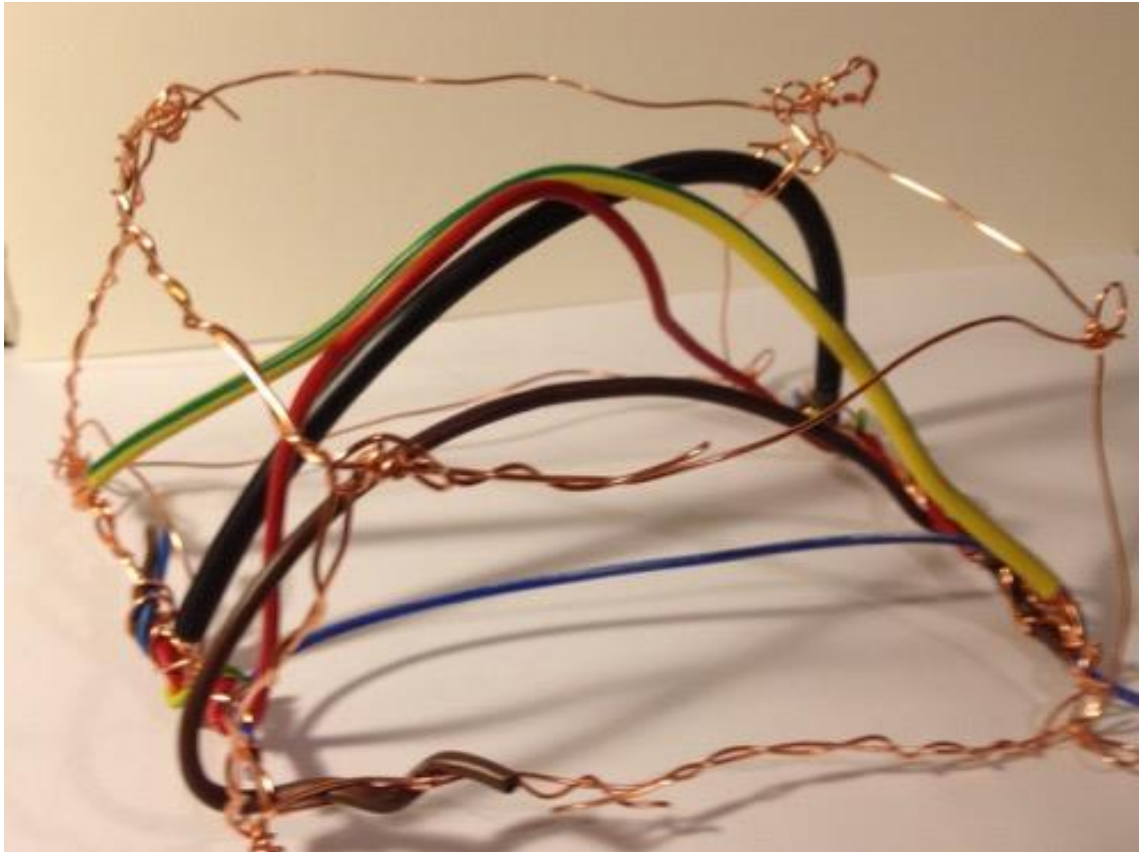
Figure 4 'The Trapeze' Interlinking Paradigms

At the same time, I made objects that helped me express my growing confidence and well-being, that showed my recovery underway. This culminated in a critical moment where my making of a simple collage and poem was combined with the response of one of my fellow students; who built on the model and pointed to further possibilities. This revealed the potential of Making and Curating used together as a way to develop and enlarge ideas made by me in the first-person and then responded to by others in the second-person.

This process culminated in the 'Transfer Paper' viva. In advance of the viva my examiner offered me a challenge – he suggested that the paper suggested that my inquiry was complete and asked me how I thought I would continue. In service of me leading the conversation and Bridging across to his challenge, to inquire into how I might continue, I offered some of the artefacts I had produced through my Making practice to the group. Accompanied by my good friend Alan, a bright, generative discussion emerged, where the

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objects were first displayed and then talked through. The process of curating these artefacts forged a clear set of possibilities for the next steps in my inquiry. In essence, the reflexive conversation encouraged me to dwell in my first-person inquiry a little longer and not to rush to something new. I was to consider how I could bridge from what I had already done in terms of Making and Curating in a broader context rather than charging towards the bright sunshine I had depicted in a picture I had painted. So, I now found myself not trying to seek a new inquiry but rather to extend my first-person inquiry using the insights gained in the viva. At that moment the method that I have used and developed appeared.

This early part of my doctoral inquiry was so revelatory for me – as I found new academic ground to stand on, increased personal confidence as my illness diminished, I learned more about what is significant to me and, through all this, a new method emerged that I had quietly developed for myself – with artful representation and presentation at its heart.

Developing My Second-person Approach

The next significant cycle of inquiry was about being curious as to whether the method that had served me so well in my first-person inquiry could be extended into a second-person investigation. The experience of my early first -person inquiry was to give the three-pronged approach of Bridging, Making and Curating. The cycles of inquiry that saw me experiment and explore the three elements with groups of friends and colleagues were creative and exciting cycles of inquiry.

The first experiment was to build on and develop the cues around dwelling – and particularly around pausing to understand context and for the participants to get to know one another – as I had done for myself. Heidegger's work (1978) is a key influence in this. His writing supports the idea of making a 'bridge' across from a current reality to new possibilities through creating a deliberate step of dwelling and holding relationships before the conversation advances.

Developing the Making element provided scope to examine what could be used as materials, how people could be encouraged to participate and how to take the creativity of first-person Making into a setting where there might be many present and many people wishing to express their ideas and insights.

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Where the second-person inquiry offered the greatest opportunities were in the Curating, there could be enormous possibilities generated from the display of these artefacts and the conversations that arise I sought to explore the enormous possibilities generated from the display of these artefacts and the reflection and conversations that arose. This cycle of inquiry was where I started to explore what had happened in the display of artefacts and to consider how 'Curating' might work in a group setting.

Applying my approach to the second-person and working with others to create bonds, to make and to curate gave some great outcomes for those involved – helping them with understanding, sharing ideas and generating new possibilities. I refined and codified my approach learning much about how it could be applied successfully and what could go wrong. Above all I discovered that there was a system within the method and that there was not a linear application of the elements. I found the combination of the three and the interaction of the three together to be as important as the individual elements. None of them had a more important role than another.

Interactive Curating and Socially Engaged Art

As I applied my approach with groups of varying sizes I found that much as I could write about and quote Curating theory and practice I was resorting to classic facilitation methods to present and represent the inquiries being undertaken. There was a disconnect between the two and I certainly I felt that there was a stronger taxonomy and practice to be applied to my work. Exploring this formed the next cycle of inquiry.

In terms of my practice, I had moved from the most basic form of Curating – where the artefacts were akin to the individual collections of the enlightenment Grand Tourists (Cook, 2013, p. 95). Like those collectors, it was like opening the drawers of treasures and hearing the individual stories that went with each of them, and how the linking of the stories brought the revelations and the insights. I had progressed to being the 'classic' Curator – the keeper of collections, carefully arranging their artefacts and displaying them for visitors (Brennan, 2010). However, this practice had no means of dealing with sharing reflection (which was private to each individual and was not shared or discussed among the Curators and the visitors) Even looking at more postmodern approaches, like Obrist's exhibition 'Laboratorium' (*Laboratorium*, 1999), were still curator centric. In these cases, the curator commissioned the work and the audience interacted with the show – where

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there was no shared reflection or joint conversation. With the lack of any such practice I had inquiries that did not reach their potential because I had not the means of connecting all the possible conversations together. My early research had got me so far but not far enough. This cycle of inquiry was about finding those practices that generated that reflection and conversation and translating them into my approach.

In the early part of 2014 I sought to explore new Curating practices, where the Maker and audience could play more of a role in this experience together. A chance happening placed me in touch with the work of Lizzie Muller and her research into Interactive Curating (Muller et al., 2006). This work brought the ends of the normally linear connection between the artist, the curator and the audience into a virtual triangle (Figure 5).
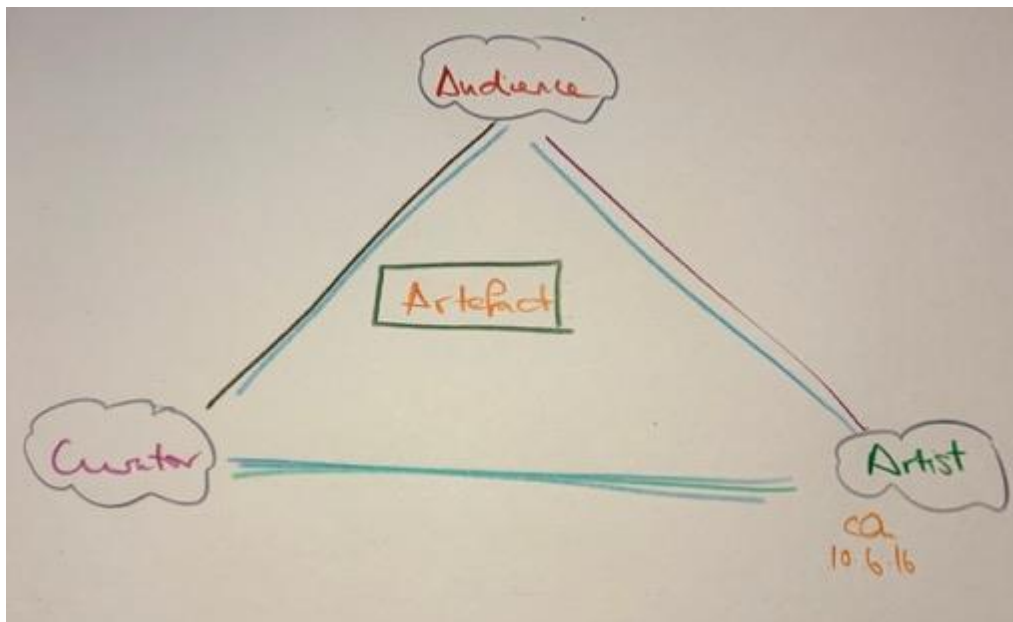
Figure 5 Lizzie Muller's Interactive Triangle

She placed the audience in a place to build and generate new possibilities with the artist – beyond the originally conceived and represented form in the made object. This shift in thinking changed not so much the form of the method that I deployed rather it was my ambition for what could be possible – with a deeper involvement of the participants, a fuller role for those that might be introduced to the voices at a later date. Furthermore, this work introduced the idea layering the curated interactive conversations and even influencing the nature of the made object or artwork. All in all, the practice enabled by Interactive Curating broadened what I, as curator could hope to achieve.

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The Exhibition

My inquiry continued as I examined the potential for seeing exhibitions as a fully participative and interactive event within my curating practice. My personal experience in understanding the possibilities of the exhibition came from my curating of the 'Celebration' event for my late supervisor, Chris Seeley. I curated the event with her husband. The organisation of the exhibits merely provided the framework for conversations, for making, reading poems and creating an environment where all the people celebrating responded to what they saw and felt and heard. At the event, something new was created around Chris's life for her friends and colleagues. It was not that the memories lived on it was that new memories were created. I hoped that this would be the basis for further developing new practice in my inquiry.

My inquiry went on to make another discovery. Socially Engaged Art is an art led curating practice, centred on a connection between art and social change (Helguera, 2011). While the heart of the literature centres on experiments undertaken in Chicago and the United States there are examples in the United Kingdom, for example the work of Deveron Arts in Huntly, Aberdeenshire (Sacremento & Zeiske, 2010). They have taken artists to live social settings and used the interaction between the art and the audience to initiate different forms of social change. Primarily the projects have been focused on bringing communities together and creating political activism. With this inspiration in mind I have explored how participative and interactive exhibitions, based on the inquirers' own art, can initiate further inquiry and, in turn, change.

Seeing the Whole Picture

This cycle of inquiry responded to the very simple question, asked of me by a friend in 2015, 'What does happen when people experience your method?' This question allowed me to reflect on two issues – firstly, what were the outcomes of people's participation with the approach and secondly whether there was any impact beyond individual's experience, on the world in general. In parallel this question allows me to follow two further trains of thought. The reflection allowed me to develop my thesis – as it sits in a theoretical framing, and secondly, I have been able to match what I have observed in my practice alongside my co-inquirers with that of other's practice in the field.

My reflection on the outcomes of the approach for individuals and for groups helped me consider the contribution of the research. In particular how I have used artful means to get words into the world, curating them to be heard and digested and staging exhibitions to have those words cause change to be initiated. In a similar vein reflection on the setting of the world has allowed me to explore the more general practices and theories that my work have become linked to. It has allowed me to reflect on the role of Critical Ethnography, specifically the work of Denzin; Critical Pedagogy, linked to Freire; Hermenuetics from Gadamer and Rorty; the role of bricolage and the flâneur linked to the comprehensive thinking of Buckminster Fuller and von Humboldt. It was also the chance to reflect on how the theories and practice from other fields I have discovered apply to my work. Particularly how other art-based practices have operated in the world of business and change. Alongside this I considered the practices from the staging of exhibitions, design and architecture.

More obliquely, and very valuably, I have spent time reflecting on the difference I have seen in the way voices are expressed in my method; being less like the modernist male dominated voices of certainty to engendering a voice that reflects research in 'women's learning styles' (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986).

This cycle of inquiry brought my inquiry from being all about a method to placing the outcome as a significant contribution to theory and practice in a broader comprehensive world.

Wrestling with My Role

Alongside these discrete inquiries there are two that have run through much of the period that I have been engaged in second-person inquiry. The first is around my role in the work. At the viva for my final course paper at the beginning of 2013 I was challenged on the role I played in the method I was using and the inquiry I was following.

A part of this has been to consider whether I am 'in' the inquiry with my participants or whether I stand separate to the inquiry. I have examined the nature of my role in relation to liminality and have reflected on this insider and outsider role. To a large degree, I was inspired by the Royal Academy exhibition called 'Sensing Spaces'. This remarkable indoor architectural exhibition had people looking up, reaching out, making creative items and enjoying the freedom to explore new textures and spaces. The architects were not there

to tell them what to do they were the remote creators of the spaces that the audience found themselves exploring.

Similarly, I have been drawn to the literature in the field of curating that passionately discusses the role of the Curator. This explores the question of whether the Curator is the author of the work at an exhibition and the relationship they might have with the artist or whether the Curator is the coordinator of a series of contributors who have their own authority in the art and how it is exhibited. This debate goes as far as suggesting that the Curator creates a setting 'that is a type of laboratory' a place for "experiment, for conflict and controversy"' (Martini & Martini, 2010, p. 269). This model suggests greater participation and involvement from all involved. At the same time, I have wondered whether I am the artist of the artefacts that appear in my work – so that that those who do the making are in fact making for me as part of a single piece of art to my design rather than them having the agency to make their own and express their own voice. You will see this explored as the dissertation progresses.

Silences and Presentation

Through my research there has been the challenge of how I am true to the many participants in the many inquiries that I have undertaken.

There are two aspects to this. Firstly, how I ensure that the people who contribute have their words, artefacts and ideas carried through the curating process and into exhibitions, such that their intentions and expectations are satisfied and secondly how the sentiments of those who have not fully contributed – those who have chosen to remain silent are not ignored. For those that do remain silent are offering their own perspective in that very act.

Coupled with these two concerns are the ethical matters of keeping people safe in how information is generated and curated. Part of this has been ensuring that those originally involved understand how it has developed through Curating and discussions at exhibitions. These ethical matters are discussed through the dissertation.

Section 2 Context

Chapter 3

Understanding My Context

Framing

This chapter's objective is to place me, Christopher Goscomb, in the context of the doctorate. This consists of a short biographical note and an outline of the research perspective that I started in 2011. I will illustrate both with a number of stories. I will close the chapter with a statement of my ontology, epistemology and axiology.

Importance of Context

Action Researchers are united in their stand on the importance of context. Jack Whitehead has written about the 'underlying importance of context and voice in Action Research' and explores the meta issues involved through a consideration of the need to change epistemological contexts if the world is to change (J. Whitehead, 2019, p. 210).

From a more operational point of view, the importance of context is framed by Perry and McGarry (R. Perry & McGarry, 2017, p. 600), who write:

> Every good journey has a purpose, with that purpose triggered by past experience, a desire to learn something new, and shaped with our beliefs. It is also located within a broader context and series of events that led to its commencement.

The significance of context is important to me from both broad and narrower perspectives. I need to explain the purpose of my exploration, where that has come from and what initiated the activity for each section of my work – because it changes. Also, I want to show how my context changes as I try and push the limits of my own context to challenge the epistemological barrier that Santos, quoted by Whitehead, describes as needing a 'radical break with the modern western ways of thinking and acting' (2019, p. 211). This will unfold in later chapters. For the moment, you need to know about my background and situation when I started this inquiry.

Part 1

My Story – Who Am I?

I am a fifty-nine-year-old white male. I am married to my wife Eleanor and, unfortunately, we have no children.

I am a historian by original academic training and have gone on to study psychology and sociology prior to starting this doctorate. I wanted to be an engineer but could not do the mathematics – I still retain a love of all things technical. I enjoy making things.

My work has been my passion and my undoing. I have spent most my career working in the transport industry, which I love – namely for London Underground, Eurotunnel, easyJet and now a multinational engineering company. Much of my time, which includes the most recent, has been working in Organisational Change in a variety of forms.

In 2010, while at Royal Dutch Shell I suffered a breakdown caused by anxiety, brought on by my inability to intervene against a powerful manager with whom I could not communicate. This caused me to lose my equilibrium and my ability to continue at work. This incident changed the direction of my life. I know I am recovered – albeit still with scars – but I also know that I am a different person to the one who succumbed to mental illness.

The episode inspired me to re-enter learning in the form of this doctorate and to embark on this inquiry. This has meant that I have brought a new voice to the research, compared to the one I might have brought before my illness. This is more than just an interesting inquiry for me – this experience has been part of my recovery and development.

Being Ill and a New Direction

I can write about these events very dispassionately now. However, for some time I found them frightening and very disabling – I was frozen. All that had been certain for me disappeared, I felt a great burden on my shoulders and a hopeless inability to talk and to think. However, the memories lie close to the surface and things can bring them rushing back to the surface. From 2010, I recall the most vivid example of how the anxiety affected me. I wrote:

> It was just before Christmas in 2010 and I drove myself to Aberdeen to buy my nephew's Christmas present. This was no ordinary gift – this was his railway-mad

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uncle buying Lewis his first model railway. Even through the veil of my anxiety, I was excited that I was to buy this first Hornby train set – just like the one my Mum and Dad had bought for me. In the shop, I pondered over which set to buy – there were three or four to choose from – passenger or freight? Steam or Diesel? Modern or Historic? I made my choice and went to pay. As I completed the transaction, I felt this massive weight come down on my shoulders, I was watching myself in this from without, removed from my body. I could hardly move, borne down by the weight and struggled to walk and think. It was not an emotional moment, it was cold and disabling. I struggled to some open space and phoned Eleanor. I could not drive home, I could hardly walk. Eventually, having found a place to sit, I slumped, with the weight still pressing down – crushing my mind and my body – waiting to be rescued. I reflected that even the most joyous moment could be crushed and the happiness could be suffocated by this pressure.

The implication of this experience for my research is that I have experienced what it is like to suffer the overwhelming burden when one's voice is lost. This is an experience I have been able to apply to my research. While it is always important to read, for example, the Wounded Healer (Frank, 1997) to seek descriptions and inspiration, having the memory and scars of the reality of these circumstances have been an important source of context and understanding in my research and developing practice.

Just how I conceive that the impact of this very negative experience can be played out in a positive manner in this research was part of this reflection. I wrote at the same time:

> I think that my indignation is about the way that power and leadership in 'the system' that operates our society can promote powerful discourse to the detriment of individual's well-being or their ideas that is not comprehending of different perspectives. Therefore, I believe that my inquiry has been about exploring just how I could make a systemic intervention to give people a voice, through Making and Curating, and to give them a bridge to the hierarchal power culture in which they work. I want a positive environment to exist for everyone to hear, understand and act on the complete system view and not just the privileged. My ideal situation is that the Bridging, Making and Curating is a positive aid for those in power as well as for those whose voices are not heard. If this could happen, then a positive power would be available to all and that could change everything for everyone.

At the heart of what you will now read is an intertwined account of using my story and experience to continue my recovery and reforming who I am in the world. I hope that telling this story will reduce the chances of others experiencing what I have gone through.

This notion of storytelling as part of recovering from an illness is discussed by Franks who writes:

> Stories have to repair the damage that illness has done to the ill person's sense of where she is in life, and where she may be going. Stories are a way of redrawing maps and finding new destinations (1997, p. 53).

Writing now in 2019, these dual threads are no less diminished in joint intensity as I regularly meet the scars of my illness and encounter, with increasing frequency, places where voices need to be heard, broadcast and acted upon.

At the start of 2011, I realised that learning could be part of my recovery, which was why my entry to the Ashridge Doctoral programme. My idea turned out to be right, not just in finding a way of becoming well, which it indeed has proven to be. The programme also gave me a way to move through the fear and the burning sensation in my brain. Greenspan writes that 'the alchemy of fear is moving through the frozenness to the authentic emotion' – through this programme, I have felt fear and anger and I have found a way to develop new. As she says, 'When we are fully capable of feeling fear we are open to the feeling of joy' (2003, p. 168). My study – both in terms of the first-person inquiry that enabled me to overcome my anxiety and the second-person inquiry where I have taken a method into the world and had a chance to have people's ideas expressed and heard – has been a powerful means of feeling the fear and the exhilaration of joy.

A Word about the 'Ashridge Doctorate in Organisational Change'

I came to the ADOC programme very late and with little preparation. It was, for me, an epiphany (which you will read more about later), that changed many things in my life.

The Ashridge programme is rooted in Action Research and the researchers' pursuit of inquiry. Kathleen King, former Director of Studies, describes the programme as being:

> based on the warmth of collegiate collaborative inquiry with a strong support structure to intertwine our thinking as researchers and at the same time the encouragement to go out into the wild world and to initiate action that will support a sustainable society for the future. (King & Higgins, 2014, p. 2).

Kathleen succinctly describes the goals of Action Research and what it might achieve (2014, p. 3):

> The characteristics of Action Research place a different requirement on the researcher. It is not our task to work within strict scientific rules that guide our

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results, rather it is the freedom to pursue where the greatest benefit might come for the world and to be sure that what is learnt can be framed within ethical and moral terms that do not damage what is created.

The programme has allowed me the freedom to explore exactly what Kathleen suggests, and that is that new ways of exploring change might be founded and that new conversations might provide the possibilities for society to follow a different path.

My Career

This short biography explains many of the threads that have come to life in this inquiry.

- I brought my traditional modernist educational upbringing to my new study, finding it hard to use the first-person in my writing and yet at the same time relishing the chance to be part of my research as a participant rather than just observing it as a bystander.

- Even in technical environments it has been the quality and capability of my colleagues that has been most important. Through most of my career, I have seen the quality of voices ignored and ideas and observations pushed aside by those in power. On a number of occasions, I have seen this done with bad outcomes and even fatal consequences. I want to do something to have those voices heard.

- The technical world – of engineering and science – has been part of my private interest and working experience throughout my life. Put simply, I like to 'fix' and solve things. Living in this world of 'and' has become important to me. Where the growth of people can be incorporated within a technical world, combined with art and architecture and discovery and design, there can be a positive force for good and the possibility of a different future.

- Becoming ill was a deeply significant time for me – thankfully it was not serious in its greater implications for my well-being – it did however unpick most of my certainty and self-confidence. The cause of the breakdown was my inability to speak out when I felt in the grip of a person's power. I lost my ability to intervene and to add my ideas to the prevailing direction of action. The experience took away my entire sense of agency and left me an empty shell. My study has given me the chance to rebuild my self-worth and self-confidence, and for me to build something that might allow others to gain and learn from my misfortune.

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From this story, I emerge as a man readier to take on the world that hurt me and to be more of a part of the world that made me and that I love. In the words of Frank in The Wounded Storyteller, I was 'unmade' by my illness. However, 'unmaking can be a generative process; what is unmade stands to be remade' (1997, p. 172). Furthermore, I do not want to deny this past and these perspectives. They have been part of me as a person much longer than Action Research has had an influence. Most importantly, the inspiration for this work comes from this past and my previous experiences and so I hope to embrace all this context for my work. It is as Romanyshyn writes (2007, p. 4):

> Research with the soul in mind is re-search, a searching again, for something that already has its claim upon us, something we have already known, however dimly, but have forgotten… The topic chooses the researcher as much as, and perhaps even more than, he or she chooses it.

Therefore, it is important for me to be very aware of this context and background and for you to have some understanding of the elements that make up my history.

My Influences and Previous Practices

History and Historicity

History is my first academic love. I studied history at university and have continued to apply a historical perspective to my work. I have been fascinated by the events that have led up to historic situations in relation to situations in which I have found myself working. My curiosity has always been caught by the actuality of what people said contemporaneously and the deeper knowledge that this gives to any situation.

The distinction that I have come to apply to my inquiry is that between historicity and history. While 'History' is a line of academic study, where the historian's skill is to make an interpretation of events – as is found, for example, in the different interpretations of events in the English Civil War that are based on expositions of political or religious perspectives relating to contemporary views of privilege and democracy whereas historicity looks for what was said by the exponents at the time.

A definition of these terms is suggested by Nicholas Whitehead (2003, p. xi):

> By history is meant those culturally observed texts, visual and aural representations, verbal narratives and oral and somatic performances that are discrete tales that make specific histories. History is not then a cipher for 'time', but the creation of time itself. By historicities is meant the cultural proclivities

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that lead to certain kinds of historical consciousness within which such histories are meaningful.

I would like to bring this to life with an example from my favourite period of history: the 18th-century Royal Navy (as evoked in Figure 6).

Figure 6 Robert Paton - The Battle of Quiberon Bay 1759

Historians writing about the design and construction of British ships wanted to point out that the quality and battle worthiness of French vessels was superior. There is research that specifically calls upon the testimony of captains of the time who write about captured French ships being much preferred to their British counterparts. If we stop there for a moment and examine what the historians were saying. Marcus writes (1975, p. 7):

> The truth was that the art of Naval Construction was far more studied than over here, where the rule of thumb methods of shipwrights, rather than scientific principles, usually prevailed… The excellence of French shipbuilding, was however, counterbalanced by [the] superior strategy, seamanship [and] discipline of the Royal Navy

The impact of their argument was to enhance the 'Nelson' halo of superior seamanship in spite of the battle worthiness of the French ships. Historians could call on the evidence that their ships were built by highly trained engineers, 'Ingénieurs' – like Marc Brunel (the father of Isambard) while British vessels were designed by artisan shipwrights, 'Surveyors', with little technical training depending on experience that went back to time-honoured apprenticeships and experience handed down by word of mouth. So out of the edited and reported headline of 18th-century British sea captain's opinion came a string

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of arguments and assertions. However, researchers specifically interested in the design of ships went a step further and probed deeper into the voices of those captains from their diaries (McLeod, 2010, p. 121). What the diaries revealed was that they indeed preferred the French ships for convoy raiding and one-to-one combat – as the French designs were fast and allowed them to capture ships and to make money. In the same line of research, Brian Lavery revealed less glamourous contemporary writing that indicated that British ships were better in the line of battle – as they could keep their position in the line and formed better gun platforms (1983, pp. 115-116). The contemporary voices said the French ships made you money while the British vessels won battles.

The difference is significant for my inquiry. History represents the overlay of time and opinion and intellect on to any given event whereas historicity represents the origins of those events and therefore the voices that were present at those events. I take my curiosity about what people were saying at the time, at the centre of operations in the past into my inquiry on the present for the future.

Ethnography

Early on in my social science career, I came across research from ethnographers. At the time, I was being taught the rigours of the quantitative positivist experiments and the ethnographers' proximity to 'real people' and 'real events' was seductive. The ethnographers in question were David Collinson, who placed himself on the shop floor in a British engineering organisation (Collinson, 1992) and Michael Burawoy who worked as machine operator in the engine division of a Chicago-based organisation (Burawoy, 1982). Their deep 'undercover' ethnographic research showed the possibilities of hearing people's opinions and perspectives where listening does not normally venture. Their extraordinary research deep into engineering organisations was at one level inspiring – as they recorded extraordinarily candid and insightful conversations – and at another it was very frustrating to read their reports of what had been said without a chance to hear their questions and the interaction between them and the subjects they were working with. At that point – seductive as their stories from ethnography were compelling – there was something missing in the pseudo-science of their approach. They had found the action but the nature and rigour of their research meant that they were controlling the voices rather than being able to set them free. They were both able to use the ethnography to present their own research interests but not to directly involve the shop floor workers

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in change. My frustration in this is shared by researchers in parallel fields. Brotherton (2019, p. 3), in his survey of critical ethnographic research into gangs says :

> The Chicago School's [a significant ethnographic movement at the University of Chicago] work on gangs for all its pioneering ethnographic insights…refus[ed] to plumb the structured lives and grids of researched spaces and subjects leaving the fault lines of capitalist production and exchange relations… somehow outside the orbit of the scientific gaze.

This research had a formative impact on me, it illustrated the possibility of being close to the action and the people who were experiencing the impact of the policies and decisions of those in power. At the same time, the structure and discipline of the methodology kept the actual voices and their potential to act distant from the outcomes of the research.

Karl Weick and Organisational Psychology

If the ethnographer opened my eyes to getting close to the shop floor, then the writings of Karl Weick offered me a view of how organisational practices could be presented and studied. Weick, together with the work of his students and collaborators laid 'real world' storytelling of serious accidents where people and technology met and from where practical – and applicable – theories emerged from his work (K. E. Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999).

When I went back to review my experience of his work, I remained enthralled by the stories and the rich descriptions. However, as with the ethnographers, I found some weaknesses in the approach. I returned to the article that had left the biggest impression on me. I wrote this summary in 2011:

> Kathleen Roberts (Weick and Roberts, 1993) has characterised life and work on board US Navy nuclear aircraft carriers (see Figure 7) as 'a million accidents waiting to happen' and in her study on 'Heedful Interrelating on Flight Decks' she illustrates why the system is as remarkably safe as it is. She paints a picture of the characteristics of this system with some powerful images – such as the circumstances when a pilot poised on the steam catapult that throws the aircraft into the air will switch off his or her engine. To be quite clear that the ship is not about to launch the powerless aircraft off the end of the ship a member of the crew stands astride the steam catapult holding up the trigger safety for the device in their hand, thus showing the pilot that the system is safe. At which point the pilot will turn off the engine.

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Figure 7 Flight operations on the USS Ronald Reagan

She proposes that there is a socialisation process in the organisation that means a 'collective mind' develops and that this creates a 'collective mental process' where the body acts together. She adds to this notion with the idea of heedfulness – as she says, the idea that the collective mind works towards the most favourable attributes of being consistent and attentive among other attributes.

While Roberts describes a system that does work remarkably well in a very stressful situation, she also describes when it goes wrong and what can make it go wrong. She described an accident that occurred when senior officers changed the plan so frequently, destroying the ability to heed; as a result, one of the crew broke a rule and failed to stable an aircraft properly and then went on to drop a 3,000lb bomb on to his legs. Another example involved a complex situation with aircraft landing and taking off when a series of aircraft defects occurred and 'heed was lost' causing an aircraft to ditch. In this case, Roberts discusses how there is a loss of 'care', meaning that, in the hurly burly of the incident, those involved lost track of how they interrelated to the changing environment. This in turn caused the effort to become patchy and more isolated. Essentially, the collective mind was lost.

What I noticed from this account and others was that the voices of the people who are the subjects of the stories are missing. There is a clinical precision in the telling of the stories but the personal accounts are absent. For example, in the story of the bomb falling there is nothing of the perspective of the two characters whose actions are described in the text.

This phenomenon extends itself to Weick's use of the story of the Mann Gulch tragedy. Mann Gulch is the location of a forest fire in South Dakota in 1949 where 13 firefighters were caught by a change of wind direction and failed to heed the advice of an experienced firefighter and ran to their deaths in the flames. Weick's account follows the same clinical description as a medium for him to reach a platform for his theory making. He brought this story back to life in service of describing his 'sensemaking' theory. In this particular case, the paper written by Weick excluded the voice of the survivors and other witnesses. By contrast, Norman Mclean's book 'Young Men and Fire' (MacLean, 1992), an earlier account of the incident that was the source of Weick's article, is rich with the voices and conversations connected to the fire and its consequences. With my new inquiry about missing and unheard voices, this revelation stood out.

I conclude that deep participation and the associated voices, is sadly missing from the approach Weick takes. It is my view that he takes the people out of the research to make the account as scientific as possible. I reflected that the telling of stories from the industrial work context is especially potent and an element that I would want to go on to use in my own work. The absence of the voices in these stories makes them weaker. They might 'mess up' the line of argument and theory making but their perspective is essential to the depth and real-world quality of the research. I realised that these voices must be part of my work.

My Claim to Making

I feel a very strong disposition to Making. I realised that my first inclination when faced with a challenge is to make an object or to draw a map – seeking to get a bigger picture and a new perspective. This is a pattern that goes back a long way in my life. Chris Seeley asked me to document this – so I have built a mobile to help me think about and present my Making credentials (Figure 8).

In making this mobile, a number of interesting thoughts sprang to mind. I realise my teens

and early twenties were creatively barren years and while very fulfilling in other ways I wonder what I might have missed. I notice that I did not make anything and lurking in the back of my mind are the times that I was told that I was not good at art.

My earliest memories of Making are: building a snow bath when I was three, as I remember I started with an old bath filled with snow and then tipped it out like a giant sandcastle; I remember planning and building a dock complex in the back garden, digging out the mud to represent the river and docks and then lining it with clay and floating my model boats in it (Figure 9).

Figure 8 The model representing 'my claim to making'

Figure 9 The Dock complex

Moving to adulthood, I know I have made items designed to fulfil a purpose – such as dynamic signs powered by a broomstick over Underground ticket gates to help people know which were open and shut (Figure 10) and the aluminium ramp I designed to help cars into Eurotunnel shuttle trains The poor design of the train meant many customers were having their cars damaged. My device cured the problem.

More figuratively, I built a maquette of the complete Eurotunnel system using Lego, telephones and redundant computers that allowed us to practise with the system before it was finished and built (Figure 11).

Figure 10 The moveable signs on Underground ticket gates

Figure 11 The Eurotunnel Layout

I shall show some of my maps later in the dissertation but for now I will refer to some theory in this field.

The work I did caused one of my senior colleagues to write in his biography:

> We did not have a tunnel or a railway so we needed an alternative. Chris Goscomb, one of the most lateral thinkers I have ever come across, bought a selection of Lego and built the track, crossovers and all' (2012, p. 175).

My reflection suggests that Making is a reflex for me, a route I resort to naturally to overcome problems. My inquiry now considers whether this approach could be translated into a practice for interventions involving others.

While our modernist perspective of maps is that they have to record the precise layout of territory or structure, history tells us that this has not always been the case, for example ancient religious maps, such as the Tamnam Map (Figure 12) that mixes real places and myth in telling the story of Buddha (Malamud, 1999).

Figure 12 Tamnam Map from the Traiphum Manuscript

I have found much inspiration from a simple call 'to use maps where maps are needed', as Mark Monmonier has urged social scientists to use maps to explain in contemporary research (1993, p. ix). In my inquiry, the map has been a means of exploring the boundaries of what I know; exploring the contours of my metaphorical world and then

using the 'white edges' to explore what I do not know.

Safety

I have worked in a series of high-reliability industries during my career and managing safety – or the consequences of not managing it – have been very apparent to me.

This model from James Reason is held up as the means of explaining the series of defences that need to be put in place to prevent accidents (J. Reason, 1997, pp. 12, figure 1.5) and, of course, it explains how the absence of one or more of the defences can be the cause of a mishap (Figure 13).
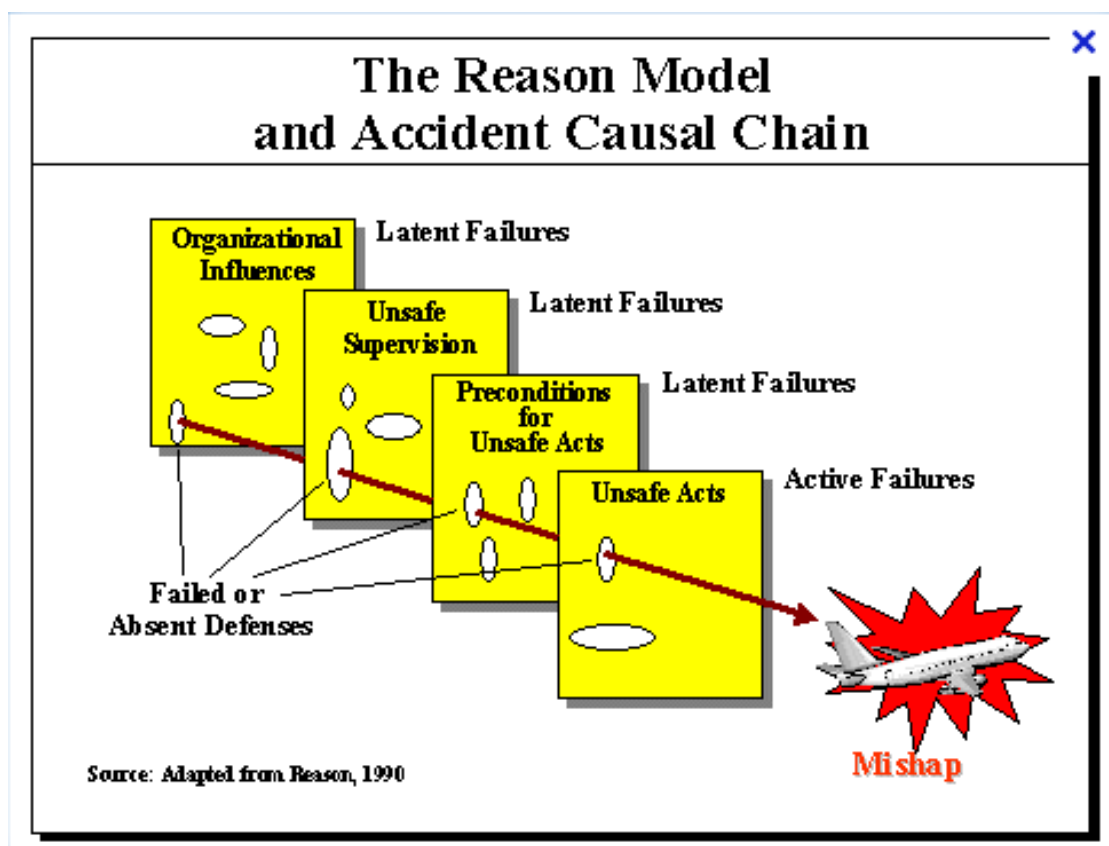
Figure 13 James Reason's Swiss Cheese model

My experience is that while this model works to show that there does need to be a mixture of process and people defences in place, it does not suggest the importance of understanding how the reality of those defences works on the ground. I want to

share two stories from my work experience that underline this critical need. This issue has gone on to be a critical element of my inquiry.

The Oxford Circus Fire, November 1984

The first is from an inquiry into a very serious incident. The report is indicative of a culture that looks at a system from the top down, that seeks to make the situation OK and not to disrupt the status quo. On the 23rd November 1984 a fire started in a materials store on the northbound Victoria Line platform that led to severe damage to the station and caused many people to be trapped on trains stalled between stations, which were subsequently evacuated. No one was seriously injured in the incident. The investigation identified that the fire started in a materials store and was probably caused by a cigarette igniting builder's materials (Transport, 1984).

The focus of my attention is the report of the investigation into the fire. This report is a strong statement of the culture of London Underground and explains by the absence of evidence what I stand for in my inquiry. There is an overwhelming emphasis on the operation of trains, the actions of certain senior operational managers and the examination of the project activities of the contractors. There is no attention to the voices of those who were working at an operational level, asking the perspective of those who managed operations or understanding how they felt about the capabilities of the systems in which they were working. Certainly, there is no evidence in the report of asking the people at Oxford Circus of their concerns and fears and where matters could be improved to have prevented the fire, of how the evacuation of the station worked, and how passengers reacted to the experience they faced. Those voices are absent. The report closes down the potential of the incident and seeks to anchor firm solutions to avert any possible repeat of exactly the same circumstances. The recommendations centre on changes to construction activities on stations and the extension of the smoking ban. There is no inquiry into the overall system at work or projecting different outcomes into the story. Quite simply, for an incident with such enormous potential for tragedy, the report is all that Bateson finds cause to rail at the scientist and engineer who make snap conclusions and rush to action (Bateson & Bateson, 2005). I see a culture that privileges the technical and the certain and one that tries to force an isolated logical outcome from a situation that is messy, vested in absent human voices and perspectives and part of a wider, more complex system than is portrayed.

The King's Cross Fire, November 1987

This second story is about an incident in which I was directly involved, and shaped my early contact with this degree and my inquiry. To put the story in context I share an excerpt from my Transfer Paper (Goscomb, 2012):

> I was called to assist at King's Cross the night after the fatal fire on 19th November 1987. Although I had worked for the London Underground for seven years at this stage I knew the station as a passenger above all else. The impressions that I came away with from the station that night are indelibly etched on my mind. I remember being based in a small, dirty and uncomfortable office adjacent to the area where the fire had taken place. To start with the 'Tube ticket hall' was still a scene of a crime as the 31 bodies were removed from the ticket hall and the forensic examination of the area was completed.

> This left me with a feeling of foreboding and distance from the events of the fire, my mind left to imagine what horrors might exist behind the hoardings. When I was allowed into the area what met me filled my emotions. The air was still thick with smoke and dust. It was dirty oily dust that got everywhere and the smell was terrible – I was told because of the people who had been burnt. The damage to the familiar ticket hall was extraordinary in that it was that of a burnt pizza – where everything could be identified although everything was blackened. There was very little of the area that was completely destroyed by the fire. Of course, the floor was covered in the dust but there were areas where the dust had been particularly badly disturbed, which I took to be where the bodies had been laying and then had been removed. The floor tiling at the top of the escalator had exploded, forced by rapidly heating metal in the escalator floor tray and the reinforcing bars to shift and grow in milliseconds.

> I will always remember the effects of the fire in certain places. The edge of the fire in the escalator shaft sticks in my mind where a clear delineation between the unburnt paint and the blackened, damaged surface was as sharp as if a decorator had painted the join. In the ticket office, there was a phone that had melted flat – it had not burnt, it had just melted. In the safe, bundles of notes had the edges singed, obviously exposed to sudden very high temperature.

> At the time our instinct was to get the station open for passengers and we focused on this. However, I remember sitting at home after a shift at the station wondering if the incident would have an effect on me. The memories of the night have been indelibly printed on my mind and have doubtlessly had an impact on my view towards safety and have left me with the question – that is still there and spawned this inquiry – how could this have happened?

The official report, known as the Fennell Report (Fennell, 1989), into the fire determined that the fire was caused by an extraordinary chain of events that resulted in an explosion

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in the ticket hall area, causing a momentary flashover of immensely high temperatures. The explosion, the heat and loss of oxygen in that moment was the cause of the 31 deaths (Ibid, p. 100). Moreover, the report went on to be very critical of the management of London Underground. It challenged the organisation on its 'tolerance' of fires and the combustible components of fires. Furthermore, Fennell was highly critical of the management culture of the Underground and the manner in which it engaged with its people (Ibid, pp. 18-19) . My personal experience of this culture after the fire is the inspiration for this inquiry.

This is illustrated by another excerpt from my transfer paper

> Following the fire, I worked in and around King's Cross as a shift manager and then as the responsible manager for the station. At this time I came to know the people on the station who had been at the fire on the night – such as 'Jock' the Railman who had been at the bottom of the escalators stopping people going up into the small fire that was initiated by the cigarette who had people push past him (who he knew went on to be engulfed in the explosion), and the Station Inspector who chose the plan in mitigation to the incident and who talked about why he had not used an extinguisher on the small fire. I felt the stinging rebuke of the Londoners who called me a 'murderer' when I was at the station in uniform or who stared through me at a memorial ceremony three years later. Of course, Fennell was right and there was much in the way the Underground was operated and the manner in which the people were managed that was at the heart of the cause of the disaster– captured by the evidence of the Chief Fire Inspector of the Underground who gave damning evidence of what he had seen wrong with the systems at King's Cross. When asked what he had done about the things he observed, he said: 'I sent a memo but no one replied' (ibid).

This story highlights what my inquiry is all about – acknowledging the wider system, living with complexity and listening to those who understand the 'ground truth' in their organisations. In the end, I come away from my memory of the staff at King's Cross, and the relatives of those who died, with the question that the people at the station asked again and again – 'Why did no one ask me how the fire could be prevented?'

Now, I would like to set the incidents and my experience into some theoretical context. This is illustrated by a quote from Robert Chia, a graduate of the Lancaster Critical Studies school and a former mechanical engineer in the airline industry, which states that the modernist paradigm can be looked at as:

> A widely held and deeply entrenched code of ordering which is itself tied to a

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fundamental belief in the isolatability of different aspects of human experience (1995, p. 585).

The Oxford Circus inquiry and the culture described in the Fennell Report fits into this model. Furthermore, this is compounded by the characteristics of modernism described by Chia such as:

‘triumph of reason’, ’objective scientific logic’, a ’foundational theory of knowledge’, and a ’linearity of thought’” (ibid)

All of which give false confidence by imagining that what is proposed will hold the ‘solution’. By contrast there is little attempt to seek, question and listen so as to understand what is going on in the system as a whole – informed by the people in who work in it.

By contrast, postmodernism ‘represents a challenge to these values and a search for more promising possibilities’ (Gergen, 2009). Chia describes this as ‘a style which privileges action, movement, process and emergence. It is also a style which is at home with paradox, uncertainty and the not-yet-known’ (p. 597).

The Political Edge and My Values

There is a need to describe my ontology, epistemology and axiology as I move into the inquiry. The first two will wait until I have described more of my work. However, my values are abiding – and to a large part elucidated by all these stories and examples in the preceding paragraphs.

While this is an academic inquiry I have come to realise that there is a strong political edge to this type of work – where the societal impact goes beyond simply establishing knowledge or adding new thinking to the academy. The two theorists who best describe my values are Norman Denzin, who claims his work is explicitly directed at enabling a liberal democracy though the interactive autoethnography that frames his work. He particularly calls out the potential conflict and ‘struggle’ that might go with his goal (Denzin, 2001, p. 5). I have been taken by the work of Paolo Freire, after first being introduced to it by his writing on participation, and then realising the political struggle that his work entailed as he aimed to educate and give voice to the underprivileged of Brazil (Freire, 1996, p. 73). At the heart of what is important to me are the principles of

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deep involvement, listening and then raising those matters that have emerged to public attention..

What strikes me about both writers is that listening to the people involved and enabling them to be heard represents a challenge to the power of the regimes in both writers' work, bringing with it some risks. As Peter Reason writes, 'Participation, listening and pointing to alternative possibilities can have challenging outcomes' (2007, p. 194).

There is another dimension to my values and that is the need to be creative and to Make (I know the deeply hurt feelings when I have been told not to be creative or to Make). As I have inquired more deeply into Curating and exhibitions, I have become aware of the political power of art in this medium – and its potential. Staniszewski writes about 'The Power of Display' (2001) and points to the significance of art when it is placed into the public scrutiny and the power exhibited art can have in society – she particularly refers to the opportunities lost by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the 1970s. Researchers working in 'new media' particularly point to the political influence of audience on shaping the art, Kravanga, quoted by Graham and Cook, says:

> 'Participation' means more than just expanding the circle of recipients. The form of participation and the participants themselves become constitutive factors of content, method and aesthetic aspects.

This goes as far as changing art's meaning and its value for society through their interaction – interaction means shaping and reforming and not just talking. I have been moved by the stories of political awakening and change through curated art described in the writings of the South African, Kim Berman (2017). Her inquiry took artisan-made paper and then used the material to capture 'prayers' made by people suffering from Aids and HIV. These were used to generate much needed conversation on Aids in South African society in the communities themselves. Taken together, these three examples describe how Making can be at the forefront of talking differently to the world.

I will expand on my experiences later in the dissertation. However, I want to note the values that I hold and the potential impact these may have in my inquiry.

Section 2

Chapter 4

An Intervention on Myself

This is for my beating heart...

One day I know that it will get better music is healing – I love the feeling....

Until that day comes I will just be saying...

The world keeps spinning – changing the lives of people in it nobody knows where it will take us but I hope it gets better, better, better....

Speech Debelle – Spinnin' (2009, p. 11)

Introduction

This chapter has two threads. The first is a series of passages that lay out the theories and the practices that have influenced my inquiry. The second, intertwined between the theory passages, has sections that reveal the development of my practice through a series of cycles of inquiry.

The practice passages follow my early first-person encounters with Action Research. They illustrate the way that presentational knowing and artful ways of knowing came to the fore in my practice and allowed me to rediscover my health and to establish a new outlook for me. You will read how this led to the discovery of a means of recovering my health and to find a radical new means of expressing myself. Through this exploration, I came upon the method that I have now developed as my second-person practice, which is at the heart of this thesis.

These practice sections are broadly in chronological order. Below you will see a map that lays out the progression of the chapter.

The theory sections are:

- Action Research and Artful Knowing
- A Wandering, Comprehensive *Bricoleur*
- Denzin and Hermeneutics

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- Reflection and Learning

The practices threads are:

- Experimenting and Testing
- Recovery and Sharing
- Learning How to Move On

Context

This chapter is about the biggest intervention that I have made in these studies, and probably my life. The intervention I will describe took me from the shaky and insecure man I had become by April 2011 to the much more capable, reflective and resilient person I am now – not just fit to survive but also to create and to contribute

The chapter is a story of my growing relationship with Action Research; the space it has given me to explore and to be creative and to move beyond the reflective to the reflexive. The story starts with me as a weakened man and ends with the first shoots of the approach that forms the heart of this dissertation – Bridging, Making and Curating.

The lyrics of the rapper Speech Debelle's song 'Spinnin'' quoted at the start of this chapter describes really well how I was at the start of this period. I had no ambitions for a grand plan, I was happy that I had found a route via a doctoral programme to squeeze some expression from the void I was experiencing and I was happy in the company and inspiration of my fellow students and my supervisor Chris Seeley. At this point I could at least recognise that there was something of the faintly remembered beating heart from the old me and all I could hope was that there would be some change, some improvement and that I would become better. I had promised myself – through my work counsellor – that I would come out of the experience of the breakdown better than I had gone into it. At this stage I had no way of knowing how this would happen. I just hoped that if 'the world kept spinning' then something would come along. My experience of recovering changed through the doctoral programme, moving from a matter of battling to make a little progress to being a warm, exciting and enriching progress that has been always enjoyable and often exciting, where in, Speech Debelle's words, 'I have loved the feeling'. The medium that this would become reality was through my intervention via the doctoral programme and Action Research.

Theory 1

Action Research and Artful Knowing

In the 1990s, I applied to the Cranfield Business School for a position as a researcher at the college. In response to my explanation of wanting to positively change businesses, I was horrified to hear the interviewer tell me that the research I would be conducting would not be applicable in the real world. At a stroke, I was put off the academic world. This desire to use research to create change remained dormant until I started the ADOC programme when I became familiar with Action Research.

When I applied for the ADOC programme I was very clear what I seeking. I wrote in my 'Acceptance Paper' in 2011 (Goscomb, 2011) :

> Learning and researching are not enough – I want to put what I learn into practice. Discovering a line of study that specifically mandates this is a real discovery and has made me rethink what might be possible.

What I was seeking was a means of using research to discover new ideas in the place of work. Hilary Bradbury reinforces this perspective (2010, p. 93), when she writes:

> Unlike conventional social science, its purpose is not primarily or solely to understand social arrangements, but also to effect desired change as a path to generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders

Bradbury puts the challenge for Action Researchers into two very simple questions. They are, for research heavy inquiries 'Where is the action?' and for exuberant practice heavy inquiries 'Where is the research?'(Bradbury Huang, 2010)

I will now show my understanding of Action Research and then highlight those elements that informed the progress of my inquiry. This understanding is well described by Reason and Bradbury (2008, p. 1) who describe Action Research as:

- producing practical knowledge relevant to everyday life;
- contributing to human flourishing, in an embedded relationship with the wider ecology of the planet;
- promoting participation and democracy, in the service of epistemological quality and social justice;
- being concerned with reflective knowledge in action: taking emergent, developmental forms

Marshall adds (2011):

> These offer a schema of criteria against which to develop and debate (action) research practices. They explicitly invite attention to values, for example

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requiring reflection on criteria for judging 'worthwhile purposes'.

I would add two further characteristics as definitional in Action Research practice. These are:

- Operating systemically with contextual sensitivity, including attention to timing; and

- Paying attention to issues of power, as an important companion to aspirations of participation.

These features fitted well into my intentions at the outset of my inquiry. I wanted to undertake work that was significant, I wanted people to participate in my work and make my work about the world as experienced by them and not to limit it to an abstract piece of modernist proof laden research. The explicit reference to context and to power are important because they are the factors that directly affected me as I started my research and so continue to be an issue that I held as my inquiries developed. These characteristics, lightly held, have a given me a framework to adapt and to explore.

My introduction to Action Research through the ADOC programme has revitalised my hopes for making a difference to my world, in contrast to my qualitative social science and historical upbringing, and using the research to make a positive impact on my world.

I have always been fascinated by what makes the world work, be it in my historical studies in eighteenth and nineteenth century maritime history or my more recent exploration of safety culture in the North Sea oil industry (Goscomb, 2006). However, Action Research offers the legitimacy not just to understand and then to propose theory but rather to work with people directly involved in a certain context to influence and change their environment. Bradbury confirms this perspective, where she comments (Ibid)

> Action Researchers do not readily separate understanding and action, rather we argue that only through action is legitimate understanding possible; theory without practice is not theory but speculation. Our activist wing might summarize that Action Research takes knowledge to the people.

This combination of theory, action and participation have brought an important discipline to my work. I can make changes in the world in which I am working, however, these changes come with academic context and the voice of others.

Action Research has given me new language to frame, isolate and to integrate different types of work through a series of levels. Practitioners in the field, such as Peter Reason and Kate McArdle call them 'strategies of inquiry' (2004) and the three 'persons' feature

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through my inquiry. 'First-person' research has been very important for me personally as it has allowed me to experience what Bill Torbert describes as 'a quality of our moment to moment experience of ourselves' (B. Torbert, 2006, p. 209) . First-person inquiry is described 'as an inquiry in ourselves' (2006, p. 38), and is where the first episodic moment in my inquiry was located. In this chapter you will read about how my first-person inquiry played a key role in me re-establishing my health and well-being after my breakdown. The next chapter features my second-person practice 'of speaking and listening to others' has been so important in growing my participative practice and my method through curiosity, learning and working alongside others (Ibid pp211). It underpins the application of my practice. Third-person inquiry has been related in my inquiry to the political – the forces that impact the first- and second-person practice that I am undertaking. This is particularly present where the outcomes of inquiries emerge from intimate second-person interaction into the view and judgement of others.

At the same time each type of person inquiry has linked together and are, as Reason and McArdle say 'highly independent' (McArdle, 2002) . They have occurred in my work in the form of a dance, – jumping from one to the other – each one adding connections and links to the next. So, you will see in this chapter how the integration between first and second-person stimulates my interest in Curating and presentation. You will see illustrated in Chapter 6 where my first-person inquiry leads me into the second-person and the action of the second-person leads me to the political action of the third. This dance is named in research relating to 'New Media' (computer-based art) where the finer details of 'interaction' are explored and practised with audiences, artists and Curators (Seck Langhill & Muller, 2016). In my practice this is exemplified by the work in Nottingham, where in Chapter 7 my inquiry relates to front line staff and then to the management team and then with them both brought together some of the most revealing outcomes of the intervention emerge. This connected and iterative nature of Action Research has been so important for achieving onward positive and generative progress. This has formed the basis for the method and practice I have developed and many of the insights I have generated.

These different perspectives and the dance between them, fitted well into my intentions at the outset of my inquiry. I wanted to undertake work that was significant, I wanted to involve people in my work and make the outcomes for the people and to leave with positive action that had influenced the world in which I had worked.

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Artful Knowing

I have had the chance to look at the world through fresh academic eyes thanks to the opportunities of Artful Knowing (Seeley & Reason, 2008). Artful Knowing derives its standing from John Heron's work on Extended Epistemologies (1998, pp. 52-57). He divides the inquiry process into four different ways of knowing; practical, propositional, presentational and experiential. Seeley and Reason point to a critical quote that extends these ways of knowing beyond the limitations of traditional means of academic expression.

They write in relation to experiential knowing, presentational knowing and practical knowing:

> His four interwoven ways of knowing reach beyond the confines of conventional intellectual positivism to embrace the preverbal manifest and tacit knowings we might associate with artists, craft people and our own guts and hearts and bodies (2008, p. 28).

Importantly, for my inquiry there are philosophies that aim to link artful outputs to our world in general and to work in particular. John Dewey's 'Art as Experience' first of all links the world to artful expression (2005). He writes:

> Even the bewildering aspects of the world in which we live are material for art when they find the form through which they are actually expressed (Ibid, p. 337).

Than he links the art to our understanding of the world:

> Through art, meanings of objects that are otherwise dumb, inchoate, restricted and resisted are clarified and concentrated, and not by thought or working laboriously upon them, nor by escape into a world of mere sense, but by the creation of a new experience (Ibid, p. 138).

Then there is the connection between Artful Knowing and the world of work. In my previous experience, the workplace was not one that comfortably worked with forms of expression that vary the positivist world of reports, PowerPoints and tables. However, there is the successful application of Artful Knowing to this world. Such an approach is described by Seeley and Thornhill (2014). They define Artful Knowing in this context as the intersection of 'artful activity that is directly sensed and experienced' and 'questioning taken for granted by organisational norms and assumptions' (Ibid p. 12). The authors stress the challenge of taking artful practices and underline the benefits of taking new forms of expression into the workplace to challenge and look at organisational practice in

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different ways through different means. Their research gave me much confidence to look at my own work and then later work with others to challenge theirs.

I want to explore the act of Making marks, and committing to Artful Knowing a little more. The significance of this act is underlined by the artist Bob and Roberta Smith, who writes through his art that 'DRAWING IS ABOUT MAKING YOUR MARK; ART IS ABOUT FINDING YOUR VOICE AND FEELING CONFIDENT TO USE YOUR VOICE' [artist's capitalisation] (Smith, 2018). Bob and Roberta Smith (Figure 14) share the art work that carries this message in response to discussing the suppressed artistic voice of his mother.

Figure 14 Bob and Roberta Smith – Art is about…2018

He showed to me the connection between the act of Making this first faint mark and using it as a platform to have a different voice expressed in a different way. Certainly, I came to relish that first mark making as the door to expressing myself, and through my experience to explore whether this might be that same for others.

As my inquiries have developed, I have found that propositional knowing is not enough and I must explore my work through artful and skilful means before I can fully collect my thoughts together. I have sought understanding from painting and making models (represented by this model showing my progress with my inquiry built into a rock outcrop) (Figure 15).

Grayson Perry, the Turner Prize-winning artist, has given me permission to be an artist and to confidently make marks and make meaning. I have heard Perry speak twice in

person and his persona draws you into easy-going possibilities that are elegantly radical. His exhibition at the British Museum, 'The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman' (G. Perry, 2011), playfully extolled the skills of the craft on display at the museum as well showing how an artful approach can tell a fine story. In his Reith Lecture series, he poked fun at the art world, both showing his love of his field and its weaknesses (Ibid 2014). The enduring message he gave me was that art is not for an elite – everyone has a right to express themselves in any medium and to place their work in the canon of artistic endeavour and therefore for it to stand in its own right as both beautiful and the bearer of a story for others to interact with. He writes:

> I firmly believe that anyone is eligible to enjoy art or to become an artist – any oik, any prole, any citizen who has a vision to share… With practice, with encouragement, with confidence *You* can live a life in the arts. (Ibid 2014, pp. 3-4a).

I have found that the act of making marks, creating objects or the idea of creating objects generates powerful conversations about the world in which people find themselves. In first-person inquiry, this accounted for me. However, Chris Seeley and Grayson Perry would say, with a little gentle encouragement, that the Making of objects for many provides a new and very strong voice that lifts their words above the written to provide a means of telling new and powerful stories to the world.

Artful Knowing has shown me a way of expressing my ideas; and those of many others who have been participants in my inquiry. I have found that this practice works in all parts of organisations and society, from the people who have little chance to normally express their voice to the powerful, who find their cultural shackles released; both groups are able to say something that they want to say in a fresh way. Through Artful Knowing, I have been able to give myself, and all those others, a voice of great depth and texture that has taken their expression beyond words and writing to pictures and models.

Figure 15 A model depicting my progress built into a rocky outcrop

Practice 1

Experimenting and Testing

My first cycle of practice was about learning how apply action learning and for me to experiment with the ideas it brought. Those first two models and their stories I have discussed (Figures 2 & 3) were in response to the request of others and I was led by the form that others suggested. In spite of their value in helping me learn from their interventions, this section moves on to narrate my early inquiry in response to my own questions.

Before moving on to the particular episodes, I think it is important to remind you of the context at this moment. I was still ill and, indeed, in April 2011 had not spent time with many new people or had tried to respond to new intellectual challenges since I fell ill in November 2010. I remember my brain feeling very fragile and striving to think new thoughts but not go backwards.

My early steps were to explore my previous practice through new eyes. The inquiry I was exploring was about what it takes to step into a situation to change its outcome. I wrote about my experiences at King's Cross not as a historian but rather as someone reflecting on my own experiences and feelings. I learnt to write in the first-person and use images to bring to life what I was writing. Here are two short extracts to illustrate this move. The first relates to the King's Cross Fire:

> I found myself at King's Cross Underground station arriving from the Piccadilly Line. As I stepped onto the escalator (Figure 16) it came to me. I found myself at that moment right back at the place that inspired my inquiry. I took a picture immediately on the escalators at the very point where the fatal fire started that culminated in the deaths of 31 people in 1987 (Figure 17). I was closely connected to the fire at the time of the incident and had always found myself asking, 'Why did no one step in to affect the events that led to the explosion that killed so many? Many people could have but no one did'. As I reached the lovely clean and bright ticket hall, my mind went back to the ticket hall the day after the fire when I first saw the terrible scene. I remember my quavering voice as I described the incident to my fellow students in the bright spring sunshine at Ashridge in April 2011.

Figure 16 King's Cross Piccadilly Line escalators in 2011

Figure 17 King's Cross Piccadilly Line escalators in 1987 after the fire

This return to my reflection on the work of Karlene Roberts and Karl Weick (K. Weick & Roberts, 1993) (see page 42), now in the context of Action Research. I wonder what the impact of their might have been with deep participation and hearing the associated voices. This essential part of Action Research is missing from the approach that Weick and Roberts take. At the same time, I reflect that the storytelling from the industrial world is especially potent and an element that I would go on to use in my own work. What if I was to combine the participation of those involved within the context of the industrial world?

These early tentative inquiries using some of the action inquiry thinking are, I can see now, very naïve. However, they started to mark out a big change for me and my approach. From third-person writing that aimed to make a rational conclusion and depended purely on the text to tell the story, I had now started to explore something very different. Now, my writing aimed to ask a question – to inquire. I was able to ask this question as me rather than some anonymous third person and I was able to support my words with other media. Now, instead of just a statement, there is reflection and consideration of the many potential outcomes.

In these early stages of my inquiry the work I was doing fell into what I came to know as autoethnography. Tessa Muncey drew my attention to the idea that writing from a position of living a life and doing research together is the healthy position to take – I now realise that they are inseparable. She writes that the 'too subjective or too self-indulgent' is where the sense lies and where the new narratives emerge to give sense and insight to, in this case, my world (2010, p. 2). For me, autoethnography is recording and reflecting

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on what I am living, thinking and saying, I have found that grasping these thoughts and moments helps me explain my thinking and to explore the quality and comprehensiveness of my thoughts.

As well as trying to use Action Research to explore the work of others, I took the opportunity to explore the way of thinking in relation to my own actions. This was an autoethnographic piece that emerged in this phase that I called 'The Chair'. I was inquiring into what it took to speak out. The situation emerged during one of our tutorial sessions when the tutor chose to sit on the arm of her swivel chair and I stepped in to prevent her having an accident. Here is my reflection on my actions:

> I felt really churned up – I had done something for what I thought were the right reasons and noticed the emotional impact it had had on me and wondered whether I felt supported by the group or whether they felt I had disrupted something. I thought about the group's tutor and what had happened to her. I had chosen not to shout across the room but I wondered about the impact on her and how she felt. I had a feeling she should be grateful but thought that she might not – maybe she felt I had overstepped the mark.

It seemed to me important to share my reflections with the teacher, and she responded:

> I must admit I was really quite shocked by your intervention. Again, I was moved by your description of your inner quandary as to whether or not to speak, and your decision to get up, walk across the middle of the circle, lean into my ear while I was speaking and explain your concern for me. I'd like to offer you a challenge... is that any less powerful a move than shouting across the room? It comes from a different place and with a different intent, and yet I'm reminded of the idea that 'the meaning of the gesture is in the response' and my response, I own, was no less than if you had spoken out from your seat.

Sharing the reflection and then using the response of the tutor to further consider my perspective seemed like a very natural response to the situation. Unknowingly, I had fallen upon a practice that was to grow in importance in my inquiry.

A feature of this earliest phase of my inquiry was to use art created by others as inspiration and a means of promoting reflection. The moment when this possibility first emerged was in the beautiful and tranquil gardens of the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice. In the warmth of the Venetian afternoon I came across a piece that just caught my attention. It was a three-sided installation in glass – each side pierced by a circle – one plain glass, one a mirror and just a hole. The artist is Dan Graham and the piece is called 'Triangular Solid with Circular Inserts' (1989). His work (Figure 18) is focused on the idea

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that modernist architecture with its curtains of reflective glass conceals what is going on in buildings, giving a power to their occupants and a position of weakness for those outside them (1999, p. 174).

When I stopped to look at it and to examine it in more detail, I realised that it brought to life a thought I had been developing. I wrote at the time:

> We came across a sculpture in glass and mirrors – this seemed to convey the scenario found in a situation that requires intervention. A situation looks the same to everyone closely engaged with it; in fact, it is quite different from even the most adjacent perspective. A situation that at one level looks the same is an easy place for the misinterpretation of intention and response to take place – meaning that even a well-meaning intervention can be misunderstood. It underlined how different perspectives could be mistaken as the same.

Figure 18 Dan Graham – Triangular Solid with Circular Inserts 1989

As I explored these different aspects of Action Research I put in place certain practices to fully understand the different elements. The first of these was map making. This initial

map tried to place the different threads in relation to each other. It was my idea to use the map as a way of exploring the whole territory of my inquiry as well as to see the interaction of the elements (Figure 19). Additionally, it allowed me to think about what was beyond the map and how to go about exploring the as-yet unknown.

As I drew the map in 2012 I wrote:

> The tone of the cycle of inquiry is that of the explorer – as I proceeded along I wanted to be open to all the views and images I could gather. The ethnographical element of this – and the way that I found myself in the midst of the inquiry is important to the form that it has taken on. I have already talked about the auto-ethnographical aspects of the inquiry but this method is very important. Finding a way of showing how the insights affected me and that they were falling on the fertile ground of me growing in strength during my recovery is in itself an important part of the developing story.

I now turn to the themes that emerge from this first cycle of inquiry. The first is a determination to explore as I tried out how Action Research practice might apply to my research and to me making changes to my life. I delighted in the ability to try out new ways of learning and seeing how I responded to the reflections that came from the experience.
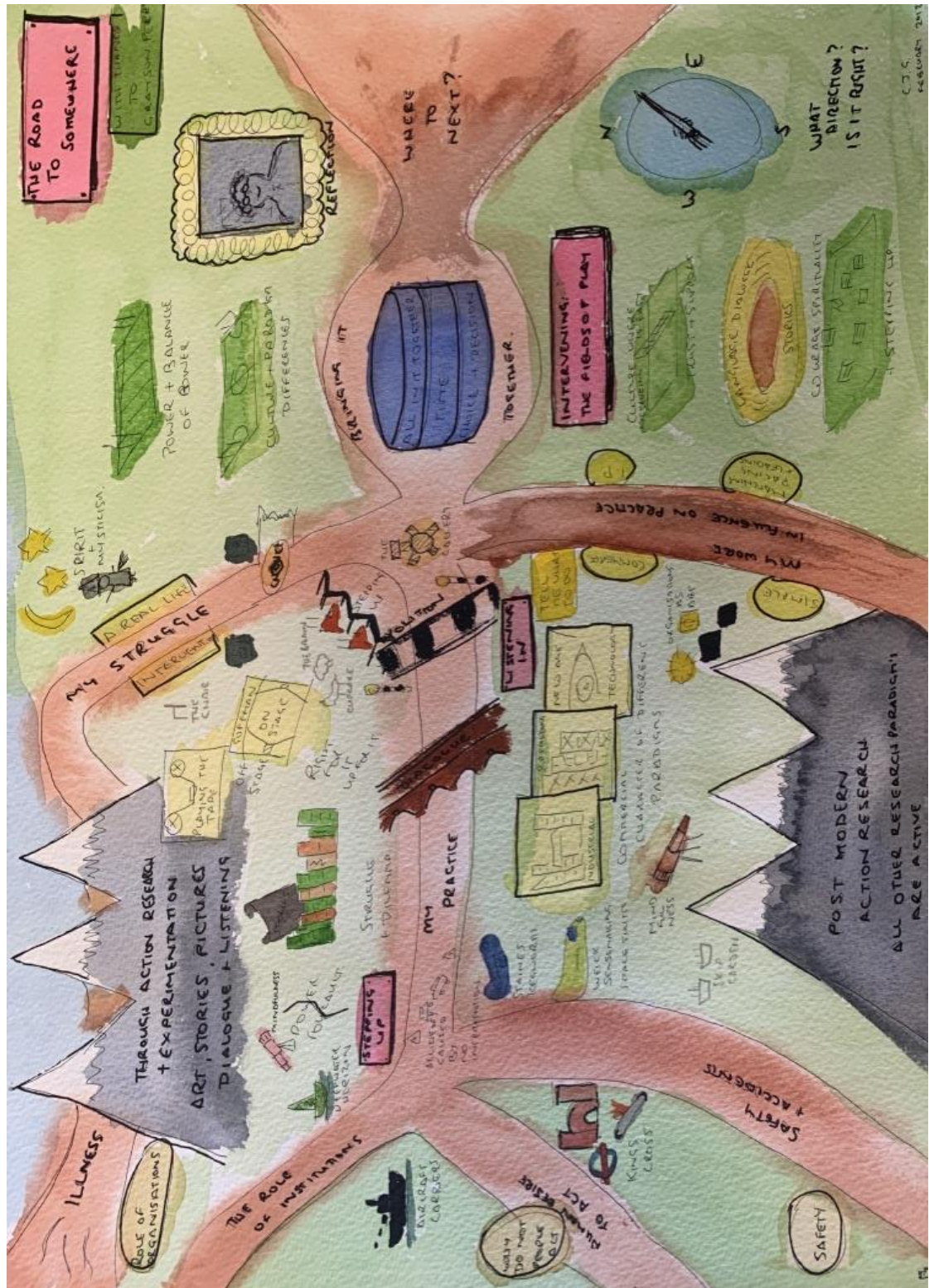
Figure 19 A map to put in context Action Research into my inquiry

What I drew from my learning from Action Research and Artful Knowing was a cycle that established a first-person intervention to make something happen and then to capture the moment of inquiry in words and pictures. My reflection developed into an artful response – with drawing or an image to help my thinking. The story of 'The Chair' announced an important addition to this in sharing the output of the reflection with another.

This development seemed to allow something new to emerge. This in turn provided further material, which, like the edge of the map, allowed new territory to be explored.

Theory 2

A Wandering, Comprehensive *Bricoleur*

Comprehensive Thinking

Richard Buckminster Fuller (Bucky) has a special place in my inquiry, the American 20th-century polymath, was introduced to me by Chris Seeley, as someone 'I really ought to explore'. 'Bucky' draws no distinction in what might be applied to making 'Spaceship Earth' (Buckminster Fuller, 2008) grow and thrive; including arts, science and engineering (Figure 20) as resources in his breathless exploration of possibilities. He calls this approach 'comprehensive' and wrote to explain in a private letter (1968):

> Comprehensive thinking alone can see the order of priorities and the ways in which the whole complex of local universe events can and must be accommodated.

In Bucky's extraordinary life, his application of comprehensive thinking took him to designing cars, houses, maps and simulations determined to better use the world's resources. He would overlook no possibility or be turned from any specialisation in his mission to be, as he called himself, a 'Comprehensive Anticipatory, Design Scientist'. Johan Salk, the inventor of the polio vaccine, said of Bucky:

> His was a revolution for integrating and enhancing human systems rather than taking them apart. His desire and purpose was to improve the quality of life on the planet' (2007).

I am inspired by Bucky's lead and I incorporate some of his spirit in my work.

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Figure 20 Bucky's first Geodesic Dome in Kabul in 1979.

From my recent research, I would add Alexander von Humboldt to Bucky's side. Although from a different era – he lived from 1769 to 1859 – Humboldt instantly inspired me with his connection to art and poetry (he was a friend of Goethe), his professional qualifications in engineering and his appetite to explore flora and fauna and the human impact on nature (Wulf, 2015). These two gentlemen have given me permission to explore and include all sources of information – and certainly for me operating in a modernist technical world with a postmodern Action Research perspective – they have given me a freedom to act. What I find reassuring is that they both worked and struggled and developed this comprehensive approach in the face of societies that questioned their unusual and challenging perspectives. I have been inspired not to give up as I have applied my Dionysian people-centred inquiry to an Apollonian, rational thinking, engineering world.

The consequences of thinking in a 'comprehensive' manner have taken me to diverse areas of interest, these include design and architecture; art and Curating; and science and

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engineering. Being comprehensive provides a means to be open and to integrate these ideas into my inquiry. Happily, I have evidence that this is the case, as Chris Seeley wrote in an early comment on my progress paper: 'Don't underestimate your healthy capacity to stay open-minded – open to whatever comes next.'

There are two other aspects to these comprehensive thinkers that have influenced my inquiry. The first is their openness to display and to engage people with their work. Bucky and Humboldt, both curated and exhibited their work (although they never named it as such themselves). Bucky displayed his Dymaxion House in Marshall Fields' store in Chicago in the 1930s to get his idea to reach a wider public (Keats, 2016) while Humboldt opened access to his exhibition cases in Berlin in the 1830s so women and men outside the political classes could have contact with his discoveries (Ibid 2015, p. 194). They both used the display of physical objects that they had developed or collected to represent their ideas as the means of positively inciting interaction and to draw attention to popularise their thinking. The open gesture they deployed – to include, to engage and to generate is an inspiration for this approach in my inquiry.

Before I leave this topic, there is one more dimension to add. This is seeing the world as a system of interconnected elements where repeating patterns can provide insight to how apparently disconnected elements are associated or even connected. For my inquiry, this is important as newly emerging voices are commenting on features of an integrated system rather just disembodied ideas. To my group of companions on this matter, I would add Gregory Bateson. The English anthropologist offered the idea that the world is fully interconnected through an organic system – where damage to one part could lead to further impact elsewhere – and certainly he railed against the engineers and scientists who made decisions without full consideration of the consequences of their actions (Bateson & Bateson, 2005). However, in Bateson's wide practice he did not connect the various elements together. At a lecture, his daughter Nora said that the followers of her father's work might be surprised by the other disciplines around them as opposed to those of Bucky and Humboldt in similar circumstances , who would feel connected to the whole audience as they advocated of a connected and comprehensive world they advocated.

For Bucky the comprehensive world, where proper management of the planet's resources would mean plenty for all, depended on a systemic connection between ideas, technology

and human compassion (Buckminster Fuller, 1981). Humboldt's contribution to this story is rather more practical as he sought to prove that the earth was a single system and his scientific expeditions aimed to show a commonality of flora and fauna by climate and altitude rather than location. Significantly, this idea of 'theoretical pluralism' is not one that only comes from historical practice. Gerald Midgley, a social scientist and significant author in this field, says (2011, p. 3):

> The relevance for theoretical pluralism in systemic Action Research is that commitments to action may drive the choice of different theories, depending on how they fit with the rational domains that are invoked in the local context.

The notion of comprehensive thinking and the more contemporary thinking helps me locate the many stories that come from the Making process into appropriate theory for the context. This helps establish the possibility that Curating proposes appropriate connections for the world being explored.

Bricolage and *Flânerie*

My current tutor Kate told me to be clear in this dissertation that my wandering across different theories and ideas was not based on indiscipline or a lack of focus. To respond to this, I locate my practice into two quite separate lines of thought. The first is '*Bricolage*', crudely defined as using what you find in order to get a job done and the second is '*Flânerie*' which is described as wondering about with eyes wide open and encountering unexpected events and objects. I will now explore how these two topics apply to my inquiry.

I realise that my determination to follow a comprehensive approach and to move between an industrial modernist context and a postmodern Action Research-based inquiry; and then to broaden this further by using Artful Knowing, incorporating Making, exploring art, architecture, and Curating (which includes postproduction, interactive curating and exhibition making) does not fit into any obvious category. Furthermore, as I will discuss later, my move to explore juxtaposition and allegory places a further dimension to this. This means I am interested in placing unexpected ideas and items in unexpected relation to one another. On this basis, Kate's concerns do seem very valid. I have two theorists that have helped me place this particular perspective.

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Claude Lévi-Strauss is the first thinker to introduce the concept of Bricolage (1966). The French anthropologist offered the possibility of not being stuck in one way of thinking, using only one set of theories or being stuck in a single paradigm. Strauss wrote:

> The *bricoleur* is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, the rules of his game is to use whatever is at hand

He notes that the original meaning of the word refers to 'swerving to avoid its direct course to avoid an obstacle' (Levi-Strauss, p. 16)

I now realise that he was not offering a free-for-all but was instead offering the researcher the chance to meet whatever context he was coming towards by matching the thinking, tools and techniques to create access and equality. The academic Joe Kincheloe takes this thinking a step further and makes the approach more rigorous, not only suggesting that many methods may be employed to meet the context that the researcher finds but also that critical *bricoleurs* can themselves employ many perspectives to help them understand what they might come across.

Kincheloe writes (2011, p. 117):

> critical *bricoleurs* might employ historiographical, philosophical, and social theoretical lenses to gain a more complex understanding of the intricacies of research design.

I now realise that *bricolage* is not a lazy way of doing what you like but rather a highly disciplined approach of meeting people where they come from and using all theoretical means to understand the complexity of what is found.

I have found an interesting reference to *bricolage* in relation to design, which seems to have a number of parallels for this research (Wängelin, 2007). She shares a quote from a fellow design academic:

> Design as bricolage has four intertwined strands. First, design is a form of art. Second, design is a form of science. Third, design is extensive. Fourth, design arises from the interplay of structure and event.

To which she adds:

> The *bricoleur* uses all available knowledge, of immediate interest or outdated, within or outside of him/herself, to solve a given problem.

… and further:

> Design is probably close to the mode where intuition and personal accumulated experiences are put to use in an exploratory work.

All this pulled together speaks into my own inquiry; where there is a mixture of paradigms at play, where knowledge comes from the past or current practice, and where inspiration, creativity, seizing the moment or using deeply held knowledge might be significant. It all joins together in service of the inquiry question and the potential positive outcome.

Kincheloe describes this practice as follows:

> The researcher becomes an independent, impassioned learner, the research becomes almost entirely improvisational or inner directed, and it unfolds naturally with less need for specific or pre-determined instruction in the traditional sense.

This freedom to work within a very wide-ranging set of theories and practice comes with responsibilities. The freedom must serve the participant or participants and must be in service of open conversation on the way to a positive contribution for society.

To the theory of *bricolage*, I add the art of the *flâneur*. I have been drawn to the notion of wandering freely and meeting what you find with openness and generosity and a strong spirit of curiosity. Flâneurism was an 18th-century idea that came with wandering the streets of Paris. One definition (White, 2001) is:

> A *flâneur* is a stroller, a loiterer, someone who ambles without apparent purpose but is secretly attuned to the streets he walks – and is in covert search of adventure, the aesthetic or the erotic.

There is a connection to Jung's psychology of flow where he believed that there was a universal causal connecting principle, which he called Synchronicity. This has been described (Van den Berk, 2012):

> When Jung spoke of synchronicity, when spontaneous inner experiences have a similarity with more or less simultaneous events in the outer world.

Denzin describes such moments as 'epiphanic'. He says these are 'those life experiences that radically alter and shape the meanings people give to themselves and their life projects' (2001, p. 34).

This description and definition is all very well but the question that needs answering is, 'How does this fit in with my inquiry?' The idea of 'Flow', 'Synchronicity' and 'Epiphanic Moments' are fine outcomes. What I have sought is how to get there. *Flânerie* provides a

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guide for one approach. Giving myself permission to wander, to observe and to dwell has provided me with many insights. For example, I have already described the encounter with the art installation in Venice and you will read about my moment of epiphany with a response to an artefact that was made in response to my work in this chapter. What being a *flâneur* means to me is having the state of mind to be open to what comes along and seeing it in the context of what I am thinking. Being a *flâneur* has been both literal, where I have physically wandered and seen and observed, and it has been figurative, in that I have taken the same state of mind to conversations.

Commenting on the role of the *flâneur* in social science, Frisby suggests that it is not just spectating, it is also acting as a detective (1994, p. 90). This is an important aspect of my practice. My wanderings are purposeful, I know that I am looking for something. I remember when I encountered the work of Alexander Calder for the first time, which has now become an important metaphor for how my second-person practice works (see chapter 6). I went out looking for how a curator works, so I was looking for references on my trip. When I unexpectedly met Calder's work, it was a coming together of inner thoughts and external stimuli. However, I still had to be in the right frame of mind to greet the event. I have tried to adopt the openness of the *flâneur* in my first-person inquiry to create those moments of insight. I have gone on to try and apply this approach to working with others.

Practice 2

Learning and Growing

This section starts with the influence of two exhibitions at the British Museum on my continuing practice with art as a means of reflection.

The first was 'Vikings' (Williams, Pentz, & Wenhoff, 2014) and the most significant exhibit was an original long boat, which created a feeling of awe with the sheer size of the vessel. However, the insight was how the curators had told a story with the exhibits. They had used simple day-to-day objects to show the sophistication of the Viking culture, maps coupled with objects found at the limits of their exploration revealed the extent of their travels, and beautiful jewellery pointed to an unexpected appreciation of the aesthetic. The story woven by the curators overturned the idea that the Vikings were only a violent, barbaric race. Setting this practice in its context, they went on to show the civilisation's parallel refinement. They painted this picture simply through the way the exhibits were displayed and described. This reflection stayed with me.

The second was the 'The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman' by Grayson Perry (G. Perry, 2011). The exhibition itself was an array of Perry's pottery and Making set in juxtaposition with artefacts from the museum's collection. I was delighted to see an example of Perry's mapmaking in the form of a glorious embroidery. Most striking was an earthenware and glass ship, set beside a fine model of an 18th-century ship. An insight for me was that the model was designed by Perry and made with others. The exhibition was wonderful in changing perspectives – and seeing both new and old exhibits in a new light. However, what I did after leaving the show was most significant. At the foot of the steps adjacent to fine Roman statues was a lady offering us a chance to make small model boats. The models that my wife and I made were naïve and very simple (Figure 21). What I had just experienced was both an affirmation of a subconscious practice and the awakening of a new practice. The insight was the possibility of Making in response to an exhibit. I found that this action helped me think about what I had seen and experienced, and it opened up new insights that were significant for me and my perceptions. This Making in response to others' work really does not appear in the literature – the only related material is in relation to Interactive Curating with technology-based art (Muller et al., 2006) .Building my little ship model created a new possibility for my practice.

Figure 21 My Ship model with the rest of the fleet at the British Museum

My first chance to realise this practice for myself was a first-person exercise while at Ashridge. We were invited to create an object that responded to the building and its grounds. Inspired by my experience with Grayson Perry, I made a model that tried to represent the history of the building as a series of layers (Figure 22). The layers were set at rough scale when viewed from the side, showing how events were often far apart. Looking back from the present to the past, the events seemed to be one on top of another – merging time and creating a single vista, and from the past looking forward there was no clarity as to what might happen. This model gave me first-person insight to the act of response and the creativity that ensued. I was interested in how I then went on to tell the story and let others experience what I had created.

Figure 22 My wire model showing the past and the present

The moment of epiphany came as a result of a piece of writing that related to my well-being. Written on my wedding anniversary, and at a stay at the Bath Priory, I wrote a poem that announced my return to a feeling of health. With the poem, I included a picture of me sitting in the sun in the beautiful garden (Figure 23). This was a moment of great significance for me, both showing my renewed state of mind in a form that I would have never attempted before my illness. However, this was just the first step. Back at Ashridge we were invited to show our work to a friend and they were asked to respond to our made objects. My friend Alan created a very special model that reflected my sentiment of recovery and took it an extra step forward. He used my picture in the sun and mounted it twice – once on the land and then showing me on a boat at sea, 'exploring with my new strength', as he told me (Figure 24). This was the most exciting moment. In responding to the image, Alan had shown me possibilities I had not thought were there. His artefact

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combined with mine illustrated what might be there for me. This was both an important waypoint in my life and a dramatic illustration of the practice I was beginning to explore.

Figure 23 My original picture
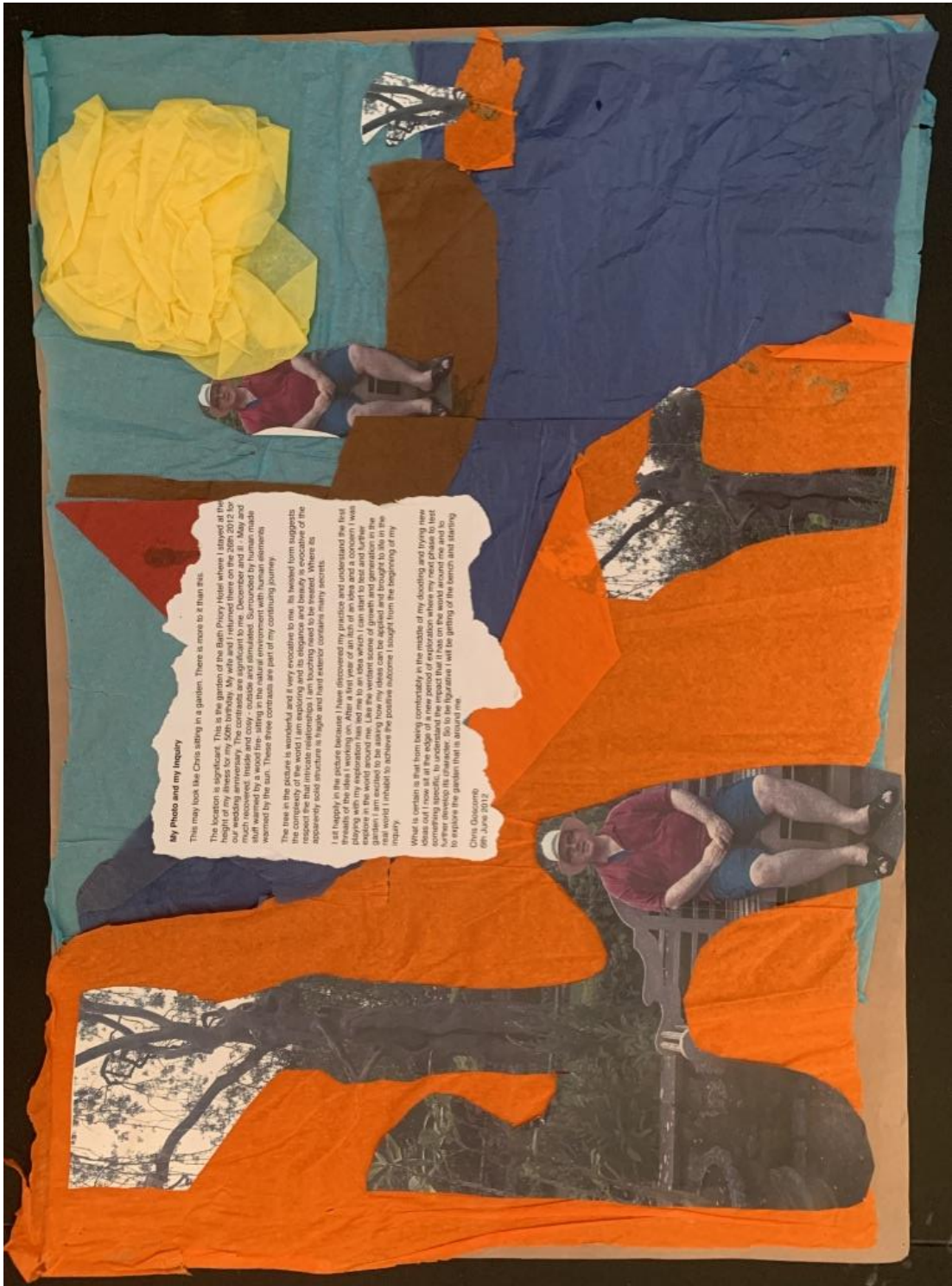
Figure 24 Alan's reinterpretation of my picture

The encounter had redoubled my excitement about Making, presenting and receiving responses from those around me. Above all, I learnt that the first-person process of Artful Knowing can be enhanced by offering the artefact to others – who in turn add their perspective and their creativity. Certainly, in my case this extra cycle of inquiry offered me opportunities that I had not even considered and reframed my own reflection. This possibility then came to rest in my mind as a further resource to consider.

The big thing that adds to my experience of Action Research and Artful Knowing is the significant addition Curating to others and seeking their response can make to an inquiry process. I note how the knowing flips from first to second-person and then back to first while at the same time the viewer of the artefact gains insight for themselves. Until this point I had not seen Curating as a distinct activity in organisational change, only reflected on as a metaphor for practice.

Theory 3

Denzin and Hermeneutics

Writing about Norman Denzin, a stalwart of ethnography, may seem anachronistic in the context of this Action Research-led thesis. However, I am struck by the passion and energy he has for the outcomes of his work. This is the theoretical thread that I would like to link to this work. He writes about the intentions for his work:

> It enacts ethic of care and ongoing moral dialogue among persons. It enacts an ethic of personal care and responsibility. Politically, this aesthetic imagines how a truly democratic society might look like, including one that is free of race prejudice and oppression (2001, p. 4).

This notion of working participatively and with a goal of creating a different balance of society put into words something I was feeling. With my illness caused by a lack of dialogue and my inspiration created by a desire to create that dialogue with care and responsibility, it is a theoretical position that must inform my work

Further, Denzin invokes a comprehensive approach to tackling social problems. He aligns the social researchers that are ready to explore the link between 'critical inquiry and

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social justice' and the '[celebration] of resistance, experimentation and justice' (2001, p. 5). All of this resonates strongly with me. Certainly, as an Action Researcher, I can comfortably thrive within his thinking. As I started this inquiry, I did not realise it would have the political impact that Denzin leads me towards.

Hermeneutics

The link between Denzin's political inspiration to this theory section is all about how one can learn from the world. Denzin advocates looking at real-life events, and hermeneutics is a set of theories and practice that relate to direct interpretation of the world. The origins of the theory stretch back to biblical studies. However, work by German philosopher Immanuel Kant and others in the 18th century start to make the study more general. A contemporary definition is simply that 'hermeneutics aims at understanding and is founded on interpretation as its principal form of knowledge' (Wängelin, 2007, p. 4). Much of the current thinking is based on the ideas of Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his work 'Truth and Method' (2013). Critics of his work contend that his view of interpretation was limited to textual interpretation only, as Tom Rockmore says (1997, p. 126):

> Language can always be reduced to a text, but much of the human world is not linguistic in form and cannot be expressed as a text without doing violence to it.

I am interested in hermeneutics as a means of explaining how I can take a piece of art, an object and the narrative that the creator uses to explain what is behind what they have made. Obviously, the narrow definition does not help me. Fortunately, there are fields of study working with objects and words that have adopted hermeneutic thinking to help develop their understanding of their work.

I return to the article by Eva Wängelin to illustrate this. This article applies hermeneutics to the design process, which is at its heart artful. Highlighting four aspects in hermeneutics, namely the interpretation, the understanding, the preconception and the explanation, she describes a hermeneutical spiral where they all work together thus (Ibid, p. 4):

> It is important to recognise that a hermeneutic attitude implies a dynamic changing process where the interpretation varies, due to the fact that changes in

the relation between explanation and understanding influence the interpretation. The preconceptions become the foundation on to which everything is put in relation.

This expansion of Gadamer's thinking suits my work very well. So much so that an article from the field of fine arts, quoted by Wängelin, suggests that the only moment the artefacts and the words emerge is in the 'live time' experience and interaction with the artist's visual thinking' (Macleod & Holdridge, 2004, p. 166). In the context of my inquiry, I can confidently pursue the idea that there is value in interpreting from the words, images and objects that I and others produce in this inquiry. Moreover, there is the clear suggestion that creating dialogue and cycles of dialogue puts the interpretation and understanding into sharper focus. As with the design and fine arts example, it is not just understanding that emerges, it is also a platform for a tangible outcome that can then be lived with that generates further understanding and growth.

There is one adjunct to this section. I would like to step back and look at these three theory sections. Starting with the ideas of participation, of seeking to carry out work that seeks to change the world, embedded in the past and current political context. To take *bricolage* as a means of experimenting and playing with what emerges and then to see Hermeneutics as a dynamic way of moving the gathered insights and perspectives into an understanding that can move into action. I think this brew of complex interactions reflects well on the critical nature of the subject matter often being considered and replicates my window on the world – hear the voices of many, play and experiment with what they are saying and frame the interpretation of what is found back into the participative mix to determine what can be done and how those great ideas of many can be put into effect to change the world.

Practice 3

Branching out

As I moved into this final cycle of this first-person inquiry I had the opportunity to curate my own exhibition of my practice. This brought together the story for me to reflect upon as I curated the materials and for others to see as they were presented (Figure 25). As I am writing many years after the exhibition, I am pleased to see that many elements of the display have been discussed in this section. I hope you will recognise some of the images.

Once again, the two threads I have established emerged in the Making. First, putting together the exhibit helped make me think, in selecting the items to display, then in designing how they would come together, and most importantly in reviewing and reflecting on the different elements as part of my inquiry in this visual and fluid setting. The result is that the curated picture is both an artefact for others to view and a deeply considered story for me.

I was able to use the curated boards to have a conversation with a member of the faculty who viewed the board. Our discussion started with her noting the way I was putting the material together and the care I was taking to put the material in place. This led to me discussing my inquiry and both of us exploring how my work overlapped with her work.

Figure 25 My curated story

In parallel with putting the exhibition together, I spent time reflecting on where I had got to with my inquiry. I realised that for much of this first period, despite my intentions 18 months earlier to apply my research to the wider world, I had found myself 'intervening on myself'. My response to this was to reflect on taking my research to a wider audience. One of the issues that I considered was how the Action Research approaches I had learned

would sit in the wider world. Knowing that my interests were set in the industrial world, with a strong tendency to a positivist way of thinking, I made a model that reflected on how the different paradigms might sit together (Figure 26). Significantly, my model expressed the view that it was not a case of one way of thinking subverting another – rather that they co-exist. In keeping with my views of comprehensive thinking, it seemed entirely appropriate to use approaches from one paradigm around the edges of another – in particular, to explore areas that have been hard to resolve.
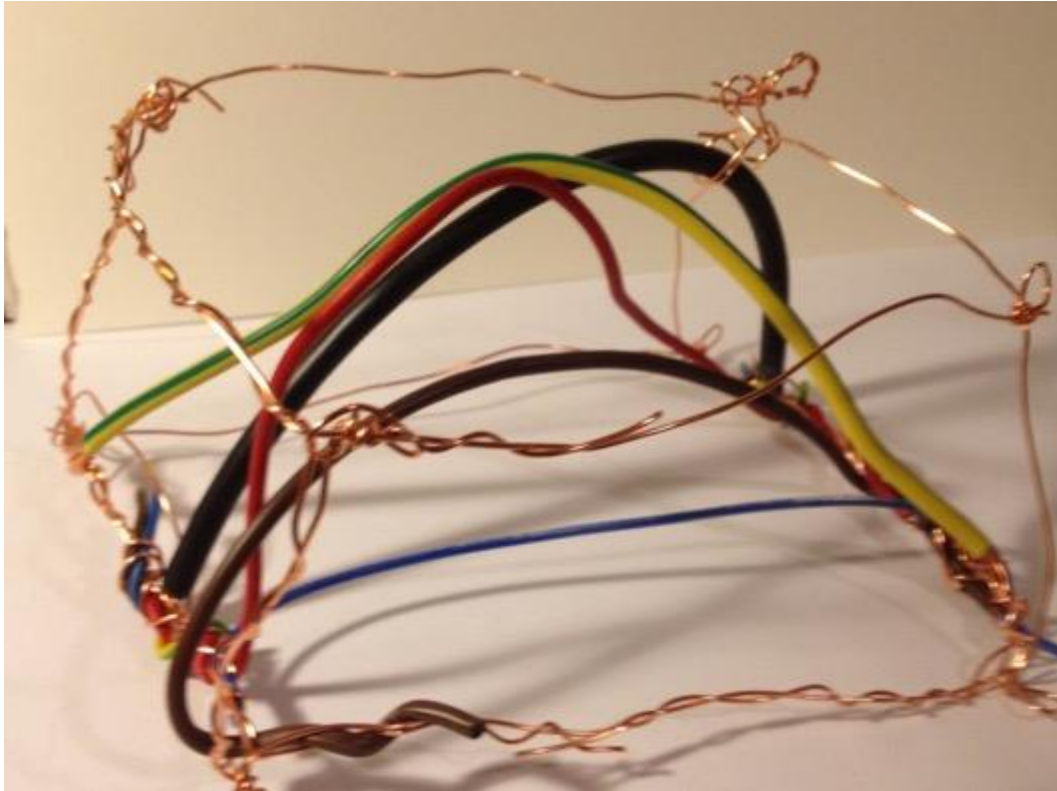
Figure 26 The co-existence of paradigms

This said, I then started tentative inquiries alongside colleagues using Making and then having conversations to explore their challenges and issues. They were very much experimental but allowed me to work alongside others using Making and the subsequent Curating to a group for different thinking to emerge. This is what I wrote in my Transfer Paper (Ibid - 2012):

> A group of engineers wanted to initiate their part of their company's change
> programme and they asked me to help. It was a chance to help them intervene

with the 12 countries that they work with in a different way. I decided to take the bold step of getting them to consider the future, their present and the journey between them building Lego models (Figure 27). This was somewhat of a risk but I counted on them wanting to build. It has become something far more. The exercise gave them the chance to talk about the obstacles they face in a more open and transparent way – tearing down the façade of normal business talk and to consider the different power structures they work within. They have explained to me that they have had much more productive discussions and have gone far faster than they could have considered possible.

Figure 27 The Engineers making their new future

This was a very small experiment but through it I learnt the possibilities of taking my first-person inquiry into a second-person inquiry.

The defining moment of this phase of my inquiry came at my Transfer Paper viva. My examiner had told me in advance that the paper met all the criteria for the stage of my studies. However, he was curious about how my inquiry might develop as, to him, the work seemed finished. Before the viva, I had prepared material to inquire into his question. I had written a short paper, made up some cards addressing certain themes and

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had painted a crude picture (Figure 28) that illustrated my move from ill to well and where I thought my inquiry might develop. This passage describes how, using the practice I have described, this conversation proved to be participative, generative and a platform for setting me off on a different course with my inquiry. The remainder of this section is an excerpt from my account of the event that illustrates how the practice of incorporating Making, presentation and reflection creates new possibilities:

> Very quickly, the mood of the room changed as my examiner declared my transfer paper to be 'a fine piece of work and yet complete' and wanting to put him at my service to determine whether I wanted to continue and, if so, how I would proceed. Marshall's definition describes the situation perfectly 'Second-person Action Research involves people coming together to inquire into issues of mutual interest' (2011, p. 243). Indeed it went deeper than this – with the examiner's words signalling something more, his openness marked an 'intention is to help create a community of inquiry in which all participate in decisions about the process as well as the content of the research' as Marshall explains (2011, p. 246). The viva was not to be a defence – rather it was to become a continuation of my inquiry and much more of a joint exploration.

> The actions of the next 90 minutes reflected this. First, I got all my artefacts out and ready… and then I told my story, using the painting as the backdrop, and proposed my new inquiry. I tried very hard to show my intention to strive for new ground – for the horizon and for new adventures and my commitment to look ahead. At this point, the examiner asked me to stop my presentation and proposed an alternative. Instead of charging forward towards the horizon, he asked me to focus on the red bridge in my picture and to consider dwelling and reflecting on that – to remain connected to my recent history and remaining where I was [in order to] mount my exploration (Figure 29).
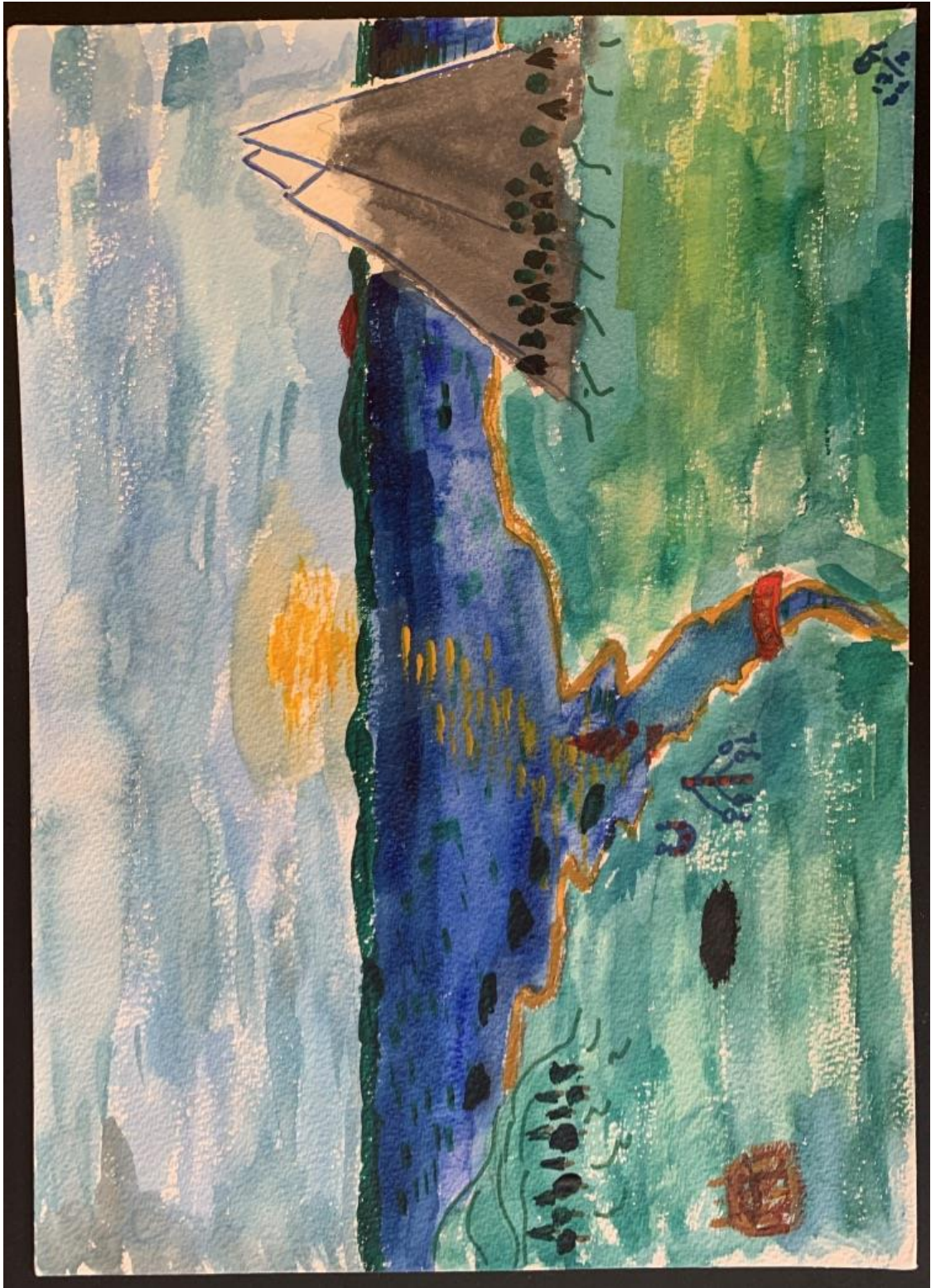
Figure 28 My Viva painting – The Bridge

With his comment, something very special happened. As Marshall puts it, 'A form of recursive inquiry, seeking to connect sensitively with 'context' in a dialogue of relationship' (2011, p. 248) emerged in the room.

All four of us in the room moved forward and gathered around the picture as if it were a map. We put the written script and story aside and were drawn to the items on the table. We started to move them around and form a shape – an artefact all of our own Making appeared in the moment (Figure 30).

Figure 29 The Red Bridge – Blown up from original picture

The red bridge became the centrepiece and the cards were reorganised. The red bridge had now become the place for the dwelling to take place and the simple journey across the bridge would provide many of the insights. The cards formed around the bridge. 'Safety and Security' was there to guarantee my well-being, the 'Isles of Wonder' card was now focused on the immediate location and the 'Prospectus for Intervention' was interesting yet premature for the moment I had reached.
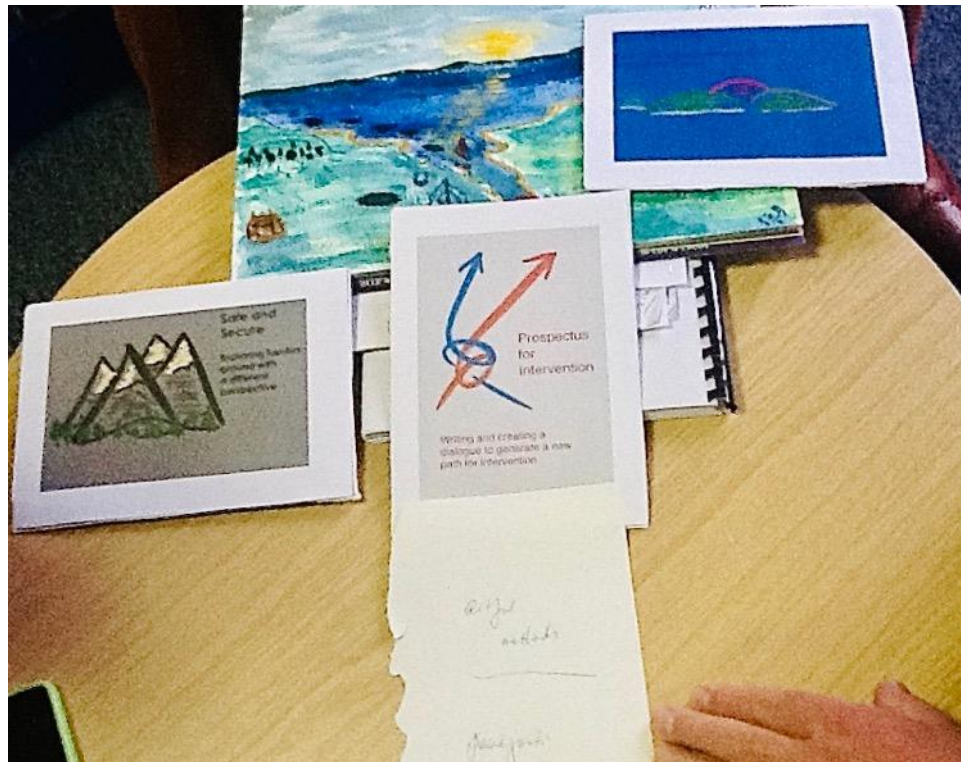
Figure 30 The Generative Table Top

What we had made together was a new map for my continuing inquiry. In this phase, the relationships changed in the room and certainly for my part I was happy to 'open my purposes, strategies and behaviours to challenge' and beyond that I think we all 'displayed the necessary attention, strength, vulnerability and integrity to open the space for inquiry, giving up control'. Above all, there was something warm about the mood in the room as the conversation became 'a form of recursive inquiry, seeking to connect sensitively with 'context' in a dialogue of relationship' (2011, p. 248).

Marshall talks about power in Action Research practice (2011, p. 248) and I believe we saw shifts in this during the session. To start with, the examiner

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positioned himself in judgement, then he offered to be in service of my inquiry and then he became part of it as he proposed a line of inquiry through dwelling. I started out ready to fight for survival and became open to a dialogue that shifted to being generative and exploratory, where I was a participant in a joint exercise between the four of us in determining how my inquiry could proceed. Alan and Chris were bystanders for the early part of the discussion and then when we drew close to the picture and started to play with the artefacts, they became involved – facilitating an artful approach that moved and grew. On reflection, the magic in the room occurred when the power shifted to us all working together as part of a common inquiry.

Chris Seeley, said at the time the viva had become an act of co-inquiry and growth in its own right. The generative nature of the session had gone further than I could have imagined and by working together through the curated objects we had found a different beginning for the next phase of my inquiry. The final comments from the examiner were that 'the viva was [as] equally fascinating, thoughtful and inquiring as the paper'.

This viva had brought together all the practice elements I had been working on. Of course, there was Action Research practice and using Artful Knowing as a stimulus for action and reflection. However, the viva contained elements of what I had learnt in my exploration to that point. I believe that the interaction between made objects, curated objects and conversation is a vital thread. The additional element of reflecting the curated objects back into conversation through interaction is where the discovery and new possibilities will arrive.

Theory 4

Reflection

A key precept of my old world was the need to be certain and sure before acting, and certainly writing, such that there was no going back once committed. Action Research and particularly the idea of cycles of inquiry has liberated me from this. It has meant adopting reflection practices that Judi Marshall (1999) describes as:

> A range of beliefs, strategies and ways of behaving which encourage me to treat little as fixed, clear cut. Rather I have an image of living continually in process, adjusting, seeing what emerges bringing things into question(p. 156).

The self-reflective element and the use of repeated cycles of research means that there is no end to the exploration and only new insights to explore. However, the regular and geometric research cycles described in textbooks, for example by Coghlan and Brannick

(2004, p. 10), (Figure 31) do not reflect the creativity and irregularity in my practice. The links in the model to my practice are the forward and upward movement.
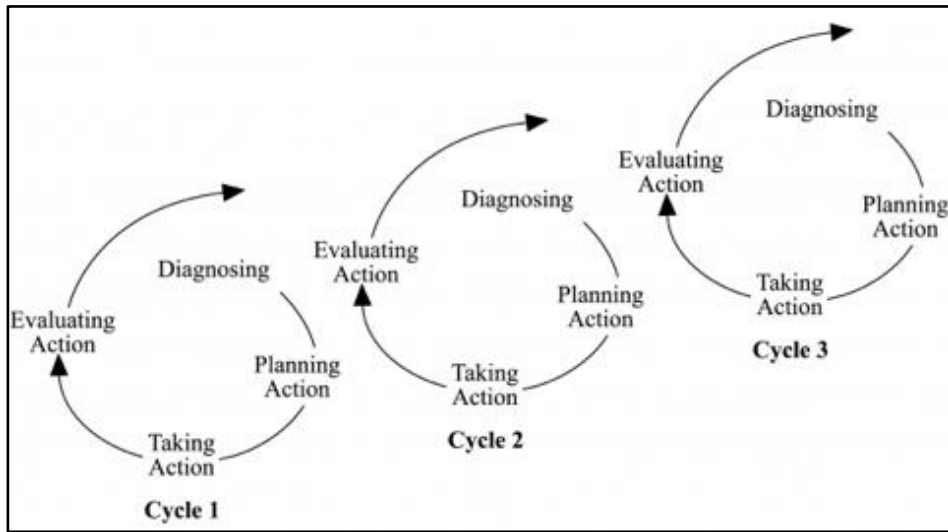
Figure 31 Action Research Cycle – Coghlan and Brannick 2004

Rather, it follows the track of a drawing I did in May 2011 (Figure 32).
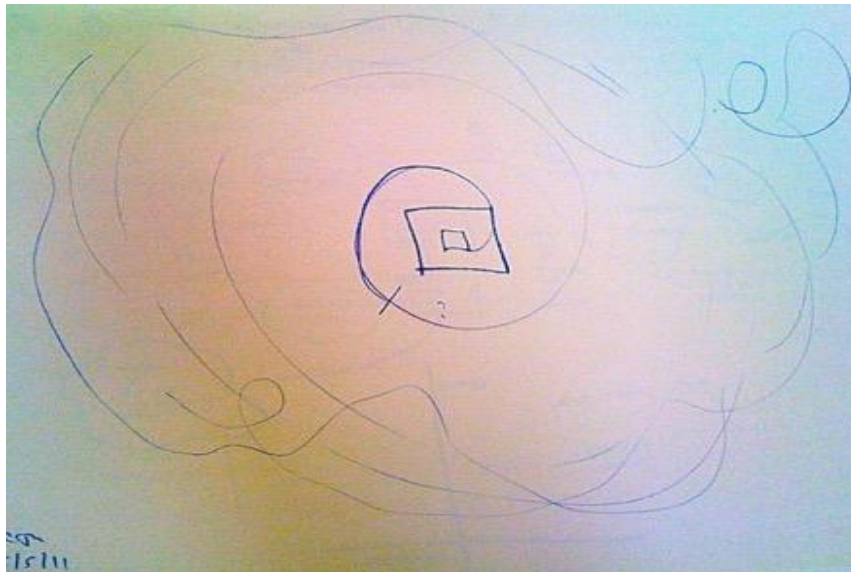
Figure 32 Doodling and Meandering

I have come to call this doodling and meandering. It does not lack the rigour and quality that Coghlan and Torbert describe yet, I think, it has heightened characteristics of liberty

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and openness. In this I call on words from Judi Marshall that capture the feeling of freedom and exploration. She says:

> The rhythm and discipline of moving from action to reflection seems to generate its own momentum, and so to enhance different forms of attention and of behavioural experimentation (2006, p. 307).

My inquiry has had many cycles, all of them meandering rather than being geometrical. Rather, I see cycles of inquiry as a much more organic and creative process. I show a version of this model that I drew that emphasises connectedness of the cycles, the creative possibilities and the cumulative nature of the reflection (Figure 33).

Figure 33 Reflection is an organic process

There are two theoretical models that further help describe this dynamic. The first is 'triple loop learning' as described by Bill Torbert (2006, p. 21). In this model, originally developed by Chris Argyris, the first loop affects the tactics and the operations as simple improvements are made. The second, affects the strategy, the structure and the goals, while the third impacts the vision, direct and long-term outlook. I can certainly demonstrate the three loops of learning in my first-person practice and will go on to show how this emerges in my second-person inquiry.

The second model was conceived by Gregory Bateson in 1964 (2000, pp. 279-308). The difference between the two models is described thus:

> Bateson's levels appear to involve enacted and enabled change in relation to contexts, whereas Argyris and Schön emphasise intentional inquiry into contexts and their 'governing variable', plus conscious agency in changing those variables. They differentiate between a process of inquiry and deutero-learning [transformational learning] (Tosey, 2006, p. 10).

Paul Tosey's paper both explains the levels and reflects on the challenges Bateson's work poses. At face value the five levels have a similar feel to Argyris's work. However, Tosey highlights the increasing degree of challenge each poses and underlines the intellectual challenge at each increasingly exact level. The levels are described thus:

- Level 0 is about a 'right or wrong' answer;
- Level I is about changes of 'knowledge skills and attitude' against a known body of knowledge
- Level II is about learning within a specific context. Tosey talks about 'not only learning but simultaneously learning how to learn'. This dual path means that as well as learning in an organisational context, one learns how the context or politics affects what one is learning;
- Level III is described as 'not only learning, but simultaneously learns how to learn, and learns how to learn how to learn'. The challenge of reaching this level is described by Bateson himself who says 'something of the sort does, from time to time, occur in psychotherapy, religious conversion and other sequences when there is a profound reorganisation of character' (Bateson, 1973, p. 273).
- Level IV 'would be change in Learning III, but probably does not occur in any adult living organism' (Tosey, 2006, p. 3).

The pertinence of Bateson's approach to my inquiry is threefold. Tosey describes the five levels as going on simultaneously, both on an operational level and at a higher learning level. This certainly occurs in my first- and second-person work, where I, and co-practitioners, are learning how to tweak the method and are learning about the situationally placed representations and how insights might help change the thinking at the highest level of understanding. I will talk about practice in this chapter and in chapter five that reflects this. Second, there is no hierarchy, so that, unlike Argyris's model you do not have to climb the levels sequentially and Level 0 learning can be as significant as Level III. I recognise this from my work, where the nature of the learning can be different and can pop up at any level, at any time. Lastly, the Bateson model includes the 'acted and

embodied change' with the spiritual and the logical co-existing. Indeed, Tosey also suggests the existence of the aesthetic that bridges the layers and identifies patterns (Ibid, p. 11). In my inquiries, this co-existence of the logical and the artful is a vital element. This model lends a way of having the two co-exist as the cycles of inquiry progress, come together and take a form or shape.

Considering my work as a continuous cycle of inquiry has been at the heart of the development of my practice, the relationships I have developed with co-practitioners and the thesis I am presenting.

Practice 4

Creating a system

Here is a recap of the development of the cycles of inquiry.

The squiggle model (Figure 34) was made in the latter stages of this first cycle of inquiry. It started off as a doodle that tried to describe 'the motion' I had experienced in the conduct of my inquiry. At the time I wrote: 'This model is now a good summary of my reflection of how I had seen my practice using Action Research methodology.' This takes two forms.

The first was in terms of its creation. The model emerged from a doodle (Figure 32) that tried to capture the notion that Action Research 'squiggled' from the present to the events of the past, back to the present and then going into the future with a reference to the present and the past – making something more complete. The initial doodle developed into a picture in a series of colours that differentiated the separate threads after a period of initial reflection.
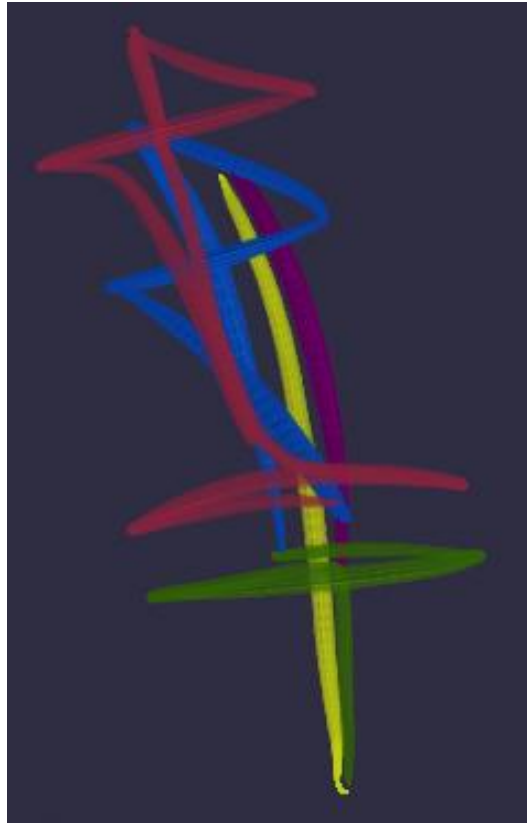
Figure 34 An early doodle of the Squiggle

The shape of the drawing now seemed to capture the dynamic of my inquiries and the conversations I had with others. Having discussed the drawing with others, the concept seemed to resonate with them. However, it did not reflect the three-dimensional nature of the dynamics of the inquiry, in the sense that the stories, references and insights came from many planes. From this discussion emerged the model that shows how the conversation is dynamic, motioning to and fro, and coming from many perspectives. The suspended shape conveys this and is shown in figure 35.
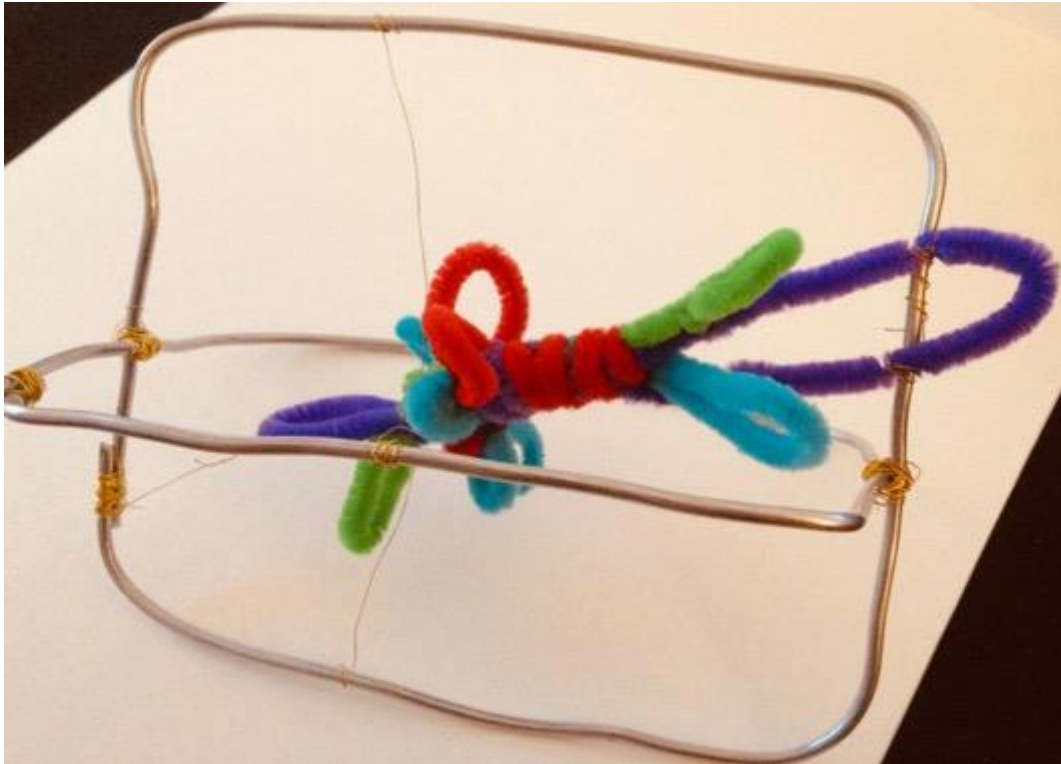
Figure 35 The 3D squiggle model

Having shown how the model has come from a cycle of experiments, conversations and reconstructions, the other form the squiggle takes is as form of meaning. The model is a comprehensive view of my assessment of the inquiry process. I am trying to capture the freedom of *bricolage* and the curiosity of *flânerie*. I want to show that the process combines the connection from the past and people's experience as described by Rorty, to an assessment of the current state, as indicated by the thinking of Artful Knowing and then a connection with the future possibilities. Its movement tries to capture the cycles of inquiry and the spiral of hermeneutics. As Huang writes, this comes with a dynamic movement between the three. In line with Buckminster Fuller, this is a comprehensive process, where all the elements must be a part of an inquiry.

What I present is this dynamic, shuttling and many-sided object as representative of the inquiry process I am working with. You will see the ideas included in the squiggle model further are developed through the next chapter.

Section 3 Method and Practice

Chapter 5

Bridging, Making and Curating

Preamble

My earlier chapters plot the story of how I adopted Action Research methodology to help me recover from my mental illness and to regain my voice through a wandering collection of experiences and experiments. The Transfer Paper viva brought all that meandering *bricolage* together into a more distinct shape and form. The form that emerged started with reflection and assimilation of ideas; went on to employ Making as a means of processing and representing those ideas and then needed to find expression for and together with others to develop those insights. After my Transfer Paper viva and through another cycle of inquiry, I developed this set of methods into a particular approach. I have called this 'Bridging, Making and Curating'.

In addition to naming the approach that emerged in the intensely personal first-person inquiry, an inquiry on myself, the viva encouraged me to think beyond the first-person and to wonder if the approach could be applied to inquiries with others – to the second-person.

This chapter explores both these dimensions; that is to say the early use of 'Bridging, Making and Curating' in the second-person dimension, in pursuit of raising voices and having them heard. I will start with an overview of the Bridging, Making and Curating process and then move on to describe the theory around each, my experience and then examples of practice. I shall close the chapter with an overview of the application of the approach.

A Taxonomy for an Inquiry

In July 2013, I constructed a board to lay out my ideas and explain to others how this approach came together and the nature of its constituent elements. This board is attached as an A4 drawing and will provide the basis of discussion for this section (Figure 36)

Figure 36 Bridging, Making & Curating – A taxonomy

You will see that the approach is described in the three elements of 'Bridging, Making and Curating'. Together they form a single approach. Very much in the tradition of Alexander von Humboldt, Gregory Bateson and Buckminster Fuller, they are intended to co-exist as part of a single comprehensive system. To an extent, it is in the mould of the map metaphor, as it shows the route through and between the elements. Very distinctly, the three elements offer different gestures, with reflection of Bridging drawing people together, Making producing objects through the use of the hands while looking inwards and then offering the objects out for display, interaction and new learning through Curating.

The stream of ideas that brought these elements together originates with my first-person inquiry. The first part was about coming to terms with Action Research as a new methodology and a new way of looking at the world, a new ontology if you like. Most important in this was the reflection upon and the integration of these new ideas into my thinking. As this developed into 'Bridging', I explored the work of German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who specifically talks about bringing together new ideas and new relationships as a specific element of human behaviour.

For much of my adult life, I have been channelled into expressing myself with words and with writing, the joyful experience of my first-person inquiry allowed me to turn to my hands to express myself through Making. I found Making gave me the space to develop ideas through my hands and then to have an object or an artefact to represent what I was thinking. This allowed me to inquire into other more presentational and artful means. The result of this was to develop Making as part of my first-person practice and then, after some tentative experiments, to extend it to the second-person.

Curating is about taking the artefact and presenting it to the group that made the objects, or to others, so that they can make a deeper sense of what has been made and for others to be enrolled into the thinking of the Makers. While I been fascinated by the power of the process of Making (into which I include artful inquiry), I found it hard to see how the process which would engage others with the made objects. Chris Seeley talks about moving bodily into the artful inquiry from the Making process (Seeley & Thornhill, 2014). I would say that this bodily move takes you out of the artful Making and into Curating. Curating is the place where the artful form takes on a new life as the object of consideration and feedback, where the assembled output of a Making session can take on new life and carry combined and powerful stories.

There is one other critical element that should be mentioned here, which adds to the notion of an integrated system. This speaks to the metaphor of the rhizome, as described by Deleuze and Guattari, where the sub-surface root connects together many plants on the surface (1987). While I have to describe the three different elements individually, in the practice of the approach they are bound together and are rather integrated. This means in the Bridging phase there may be some form of representation through objects, or that in the Making phase are places where the early objects are shown and discussed. What I want to express even at this early point in my exposition is that all work with one another.

I hope this passage has helped explain the overall taxonomy of the approach. I now want to explore each of the elements in some detail before returning, at the end of the chapter, to demonstrate how the taxonomy works as a whole.

Section 3

Chapter 6

Bridging

Overview

In this section I will go into my exploration of Bridging in some detail. I will examine significant bridges in my life, and especially those from history. I will look at the common threads from actual bridge-building and how they, when seen as metaphors, apply to my inquiry. I will examine the philosophy and theory around Bridging. I will then look at practice accounts from my work, testing how these metaphors have come into reality for me.

The idea of Bridging originates around the need to connect in an artful participative inquiry. Without the inquirers participating together, only limited creativity can emerge. This builds on my first-person inquiry when others were involved as contributors to my work helping to me develop my ideas. Therefore, building this level of commitment and connection in my second-person inquiry seemed to be a requisite. I sought the same level of connection in my second-person exploration.

The Red Bridge

The bridge became a part of my inquiry on the evening of the 16th October 2012 when I was finishing the painting I was going to take into my viva. The painting showed my transition between ill and well, and the dark places I had left together with the distant horizons I planned to explore. Between the two worlds, I painted a stream and then a bridge to link them. I decided to highlight the bridge by painting it red (Figure 37).

Figure 37 A focus on the Bridge and the two banks

This caused the bridge to be picked out in our Making session in the viva. During our discussion about dwelling and linkages, I was encouraged to explore in and around the bridge as part of my continuing inquiry rather than rushing off to explore new territories. This section represents what Marshall calls 'an inquiry into connection and critical questioning, rather than [being] ordered too neatly in one frame' (Ibid, p. 15).

There is something of the cross-disciplinary *bricoleur* as I piece together many elements of the social landscape (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2005, p. 304) in search of something rather than trying to make a conclusion. Above all, I want to show how Bridging and the bridge form both a metaphor and action in my approach to my inquiry.

Building My Own Bridge

I recalled that I helped build a bridge myself. I wrote the following in a paper in November 2012:

> As part of a development programme I was running, I took a group deep into the Brecon Beacons National Park and we constructed a footbridge.
>
> I want you to imagine empty moorland in the foothills of the mountains, criss-crossed with fast-flowing mountain streams. When we were in the mountains building the bridge, it was raining hard in the persistent manner of a natural environment trying to chase away human interlopers. As a consequence, the streams were swollen, the water wild and the soil muddy (Figure 38).
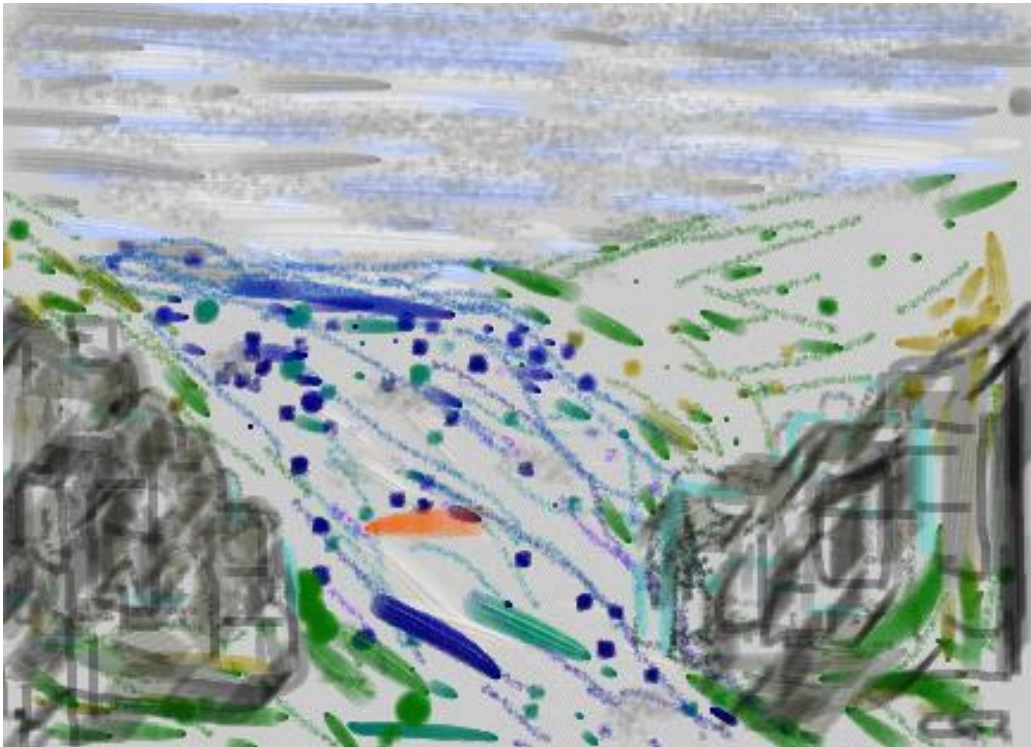
Figure 38 My impression of the scene at the bridge building site

> The site of the bridge was interesting in itself. In this stark moorland landscape, where vegetation was characterised by ferns and clumps of grass tufts, there was a cluster of deciduous trees marking the ruins of a finely constructed lodge adjacent to a barn. The site of the bridge was next to this structure. The remains of two badly damaged abutments jutted out from the banks of a stream. They were shiny in the rain and defiant as they struck out into the frothing water and

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were wide enough to carry carts. Now there was a lesser ambition in our minds –
to join a gap in a defined public footpath through the park.

The ambition may have been relatively small but the labour to realise it was significant
(Figure 39).
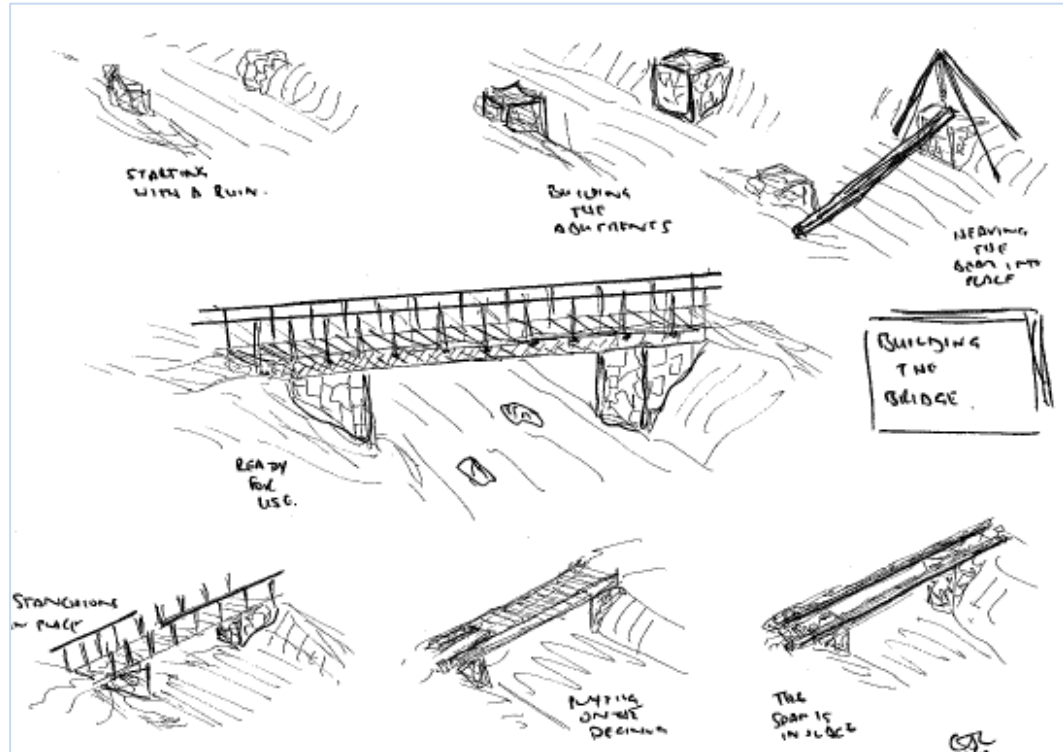
Figure 39 Building the bridge

In the pouring rain, we harvested stone to build the abutments back up. Mixing cement in
the shelter of the derelict barn, we carefully reconstructed the stone, laying layers of slate
on to cement. We did this up to our knees in cold water and doused with rain. We paddled
across the stream to move materials and scrambled up muddy banks to reach the level of
the path. Slowly the abutments regained their shape and strength (Figure 39).

The second day presented new challenges as the weather had changed – the rain had
turned to snow. We clustered round a flipchart planning the day around a blizzard. Now
we had to erect the structure of the bridge; the structure of the bridge was two 20ft-long
10in-square wooden beams. We had to manhandle them half a mile from the road. Much
of the morning was taken moving these substantial items by brute strength to the site of
the bridge. With the cement cured, it was possible to place the beams in place. First, we
had to get them across the stream using ropes and pulleys and then they had to be lifted
into place. With much heaving and a great deal of exertion, the beams dropped into place
on to the abutments. We had formed a bridge and bridged the gap.

With the beams in place, the nature of the effort changed. Now we could walk across the
beams – we had a bridge. With temporary rope handrails in place, we started to lay the
decking and then the handrail stanchions followed by the handrails. These were

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substantial timbers ready for years of use in the weather but they could not compare to the strength of the beams that were now hidden.

As the sky faded to dark grey we stood back and admired the bridge we had built. Now the gap in the path was joined. The struggle across the turbulent waters, slipping on stones and clambering up muddy banks was no longer necessary – there was now a five-second walk across a wooden walkway with a handrail. The bridge was built (Figure 40).
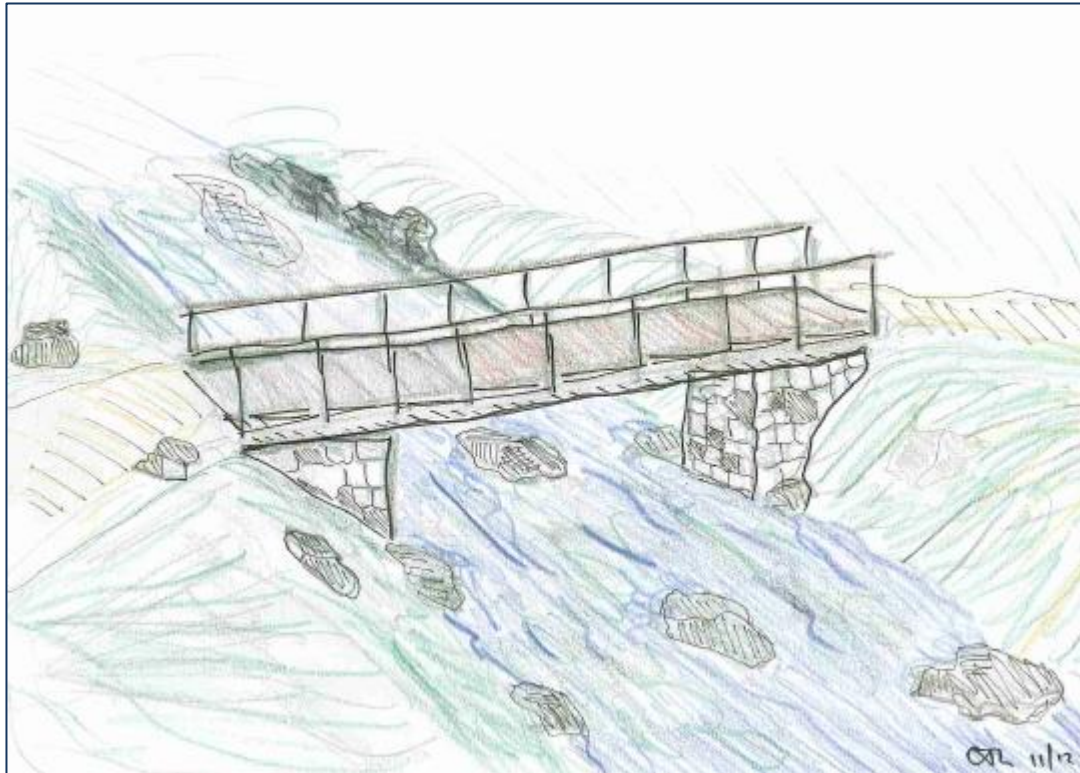
Figure 40 The finished bridge

Before the bridge was built, it was an effort to cross the gap and even more to carry the materials. To create the bridge, we were at one with nature and at the same time imposing our human stamp on the environment. We used the resources around us like the stones from earth, the gravel from the stream and the timber cut from trees in the local forest.

When the bridge was finished, there was no connection with the effort that had gone into creating it. There was a five-second walk, now on wood in between soil and stone. All that work had created a non-event for the walker rather than an event or a structure that would be admired. Indeed, the average walker would not notice the abutments, the span or the careful woodwork.

The construction process has a metaphorical significance for my inquiry:

- There is an effort required to knit the structure to the bank
- The Bridging has to start from both sides
- This work creates the inherent strength of the bridge

- To put the main structure in its final location is the decisive action in making the link

- Even for a small bridge, temporary structures have to be erected to lift the final parts into place

- User often do not even notice the bridge when they are crossing it

- The process carries some hazard

Bridging in the Literature

I would like to link Bridging to the literature I have used in this study. Buckminster Fuller has a very pragmatic view of the bridge (1981, p. 27). He says:

> Human travellers coming to a river and finding a bridge to cross it spontaneously use the bridge instead of hazarding themselves in the torrents.

Put in my terms, the bridge – when it is made – becomes the obvious crossing point. Gregory Bateson uses the Bridging metaphor to portray the linking of ideas (1973, p. 470). He says:

> There are bridges between one sort of thought and the other, it seems to me that the artist and the poets are specifically concerned to these issues.

The inference in this quote is the idea of the 'and' to which Donna Ladkin referred (Ladkin, 2006). This suggests that the bridge connects matters that are intangible – and maybe spiritual.

The main thread of writing on the bridge comes from Heidegger in his essay, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking'. Heidegger repeats Buckminster Fuller's pragmatic view in saying:

> The bridge lets the stream run its course and at the same time lets mortals their way so that they may come and go from shore to shore (1978, p. 248).

This emphasises its ability to link to nature in letting the water flow unheeded. He particularly emphasises the all-encompassing nature of the bridge – linking people with the physical and the spiritual:

> The bridge gathers in its own way earth and sky, divinities and mortals... the bridge gathers the earth and as landscape around the stream (1978, p. 249).

Finally, I draw attention to the creative power he sees in the bridge. He says 'the bridge swings over the stream with ease and power'. (1978, p. 248). The richness of Heidegger's writing captures many of the ideas that have cropped up in my studies. The strength and physical power of the structure is such that when the bridge is operating, it is invisible – allowing a flow of people and water.

The all prevailing qualities of the bridge are described in 'Humber Bridge' by Philip Larkin (2003):

> Reaching for the world, as our lives do,
>
> As all lives do, reaching that we may give
>
> The best of what we are and hold as true:
>
> Always it is by bridges that we live.

To draw this wonderful part of my inquiry to a close, there are some important connections to be made. There is something very powerful about the bridge and the role it plays for all of us. Every day we cross extraordinary structures without thinking and without being conscious of the effort that goes into them. Maybe I can frame my efforts in trying to intervene in the spirit of the bridge constructor – I can be deliberate about the foundations and the structures I need to heave into place to provide links that will serve to join and unite others. I can be ready for the hard work of crossing the waters from bank to bank before the bridge is completed. When I have forged the link with others, I can be aware of the power, the strength and the spiritual nature of the structure that has been built.

The possibilities that the bridge can bring are framed by Arthur Analts (*The Icon Design Trail 2013*, 2013, p. 105):

> The bridge represents the link between start and destination, a symbolic conjunction of two worlds, but most important a transition to a new one.

In describing and exploring the concept of Bridging, I need to refer to the work of Reason and Gaya Wicks. They draw attention to the concept that I am discussing here (2009, p. 244). They say:

> The narrative seemed often to be told in terms of 'what we did together'. In defining their practice, Action Researchers will usually talk about engaging with participants in cycles of action and reflection... But, often success or failure of an inquiry venture depends on the conditions that made it possible, which lie back in the originating discussions: in the way the topic was broached, and on the early engagement with participants...

However, they describe this in terms of Kemmis's communicative space, who states the space:

> Is constituted as issues or problems are opened up for discussion, and when the participants experience their interaction as fostering the democratic expression of diverse views (2009 Ibid)

My research confirms the absolute need for this space to be opened and for the space to be present for fruitful inquiry to be initiated. However, my experience is that this link needs to be forged before the space can actually open. This is where the Bridging takes place. Jurgen Habermas, in his theory of communicative action, calls for the uncoupling of 'systems' (associated with the economic and administrative elements of society that are linked to power) and lifeworlds (that with are 'qualitative and enacted and reaffirmed with in communication) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; 1995, p. 138). The Bridging step could be seen as shedding the constraints and power of the system and giving the participants the confidence to cross – through the Bridging – to a space where the communicative space can be formed. I am suggesting that the struggle in my story of building a real bridge has to be applied to my metaphorical Bridging in order to allow participants to be able to enter the communicative space.

For all the strength and power of bridges, they are fragile and can be broken. A perfect metaphor for this took place on the 9th of November 1993. The bridge that had joined together the city of Mostar and its Catholic and Muslim inhabitants was destroyed. With the destruction went the spirit of the town and its unity (Figure 41).

Figure 41 The Rebuilt Mostar bridge

A local journalist wrote of the people as the bridge came down (Blakstad, 2002, p. 149):

> They proclaimed a day of mourning, since the demise of the old bridge ripped their hearts out.

Ivo Andric, a Yugoslav poet, wrote:

> Of all the things that man erects and builds driven by his vital instincts nothing is more superior or valuable than bridges… They belong to everyone and are equal to anyone, useful built with purpose and serve nothing that is clandestine and evil (Ibid, p. 150).

The impact of the destruction of this bridge underlines the importance of Bridging to social structures. In the case of my inquiry, these links allow conversation to happen that otherwise would not, with a confidence and significance that shapes the subsequent actions and produces a strong link between my inquiry and people's realities. Care has to be taken to ensure that they are maintained.

Bridging Practice

At this stage I would like to translate the metaphor of bridges and Bridging into the context of my inquiry.

- There is the need to put in strong foundations for the conversation and the inquiry. This needs to be done up front.

- There is hard work to be done in communicating between parties before a link can be created and the participants stay in their safe place until that is done.

- Quite often a temporary structure needs to be put in place to create the links, such as a new metaphor or an ice-breaker to get a conversation going.

- Once the bridge is in place and ideas and people are linked, it will become less significant as a structure. However, because it is not noticed does not take away from its importance and significance.

I now want to illustrate this with a practice account relating to bringing together a group of transport planners.

It starts with a visit to Denmark and Sweden. The reason for the visit was the launch of a project to save a significant amount of money (some 10 million euros) from a transport company's bus and rail operation by better managing the planning and deployment of resources. The project leader Philip and his project manager Anna had asked me to help work on the approach for their project. Before the visit to Copenhagen and Malmo, I had helped them on the structure of their overall inquiry and particularly a questionnaire they were using to get mutual understanding of what was going on in the 30 operations and 13 countries of operations.

The purpose of the visit was to build a bridge between the project and the Swedish operation. My role was to understand more of a local operation before the main part of the project and to see how Anna and Philip conducted these meetings. The great fear in the local operation was that Philip would tell them what to do. I was impressed that, right from the start, Philip explained that the change would come from local knowledge. Philip displayed impressive listening skills as he heard Bjorn, the local manager, describe the challenges of making plans with the government and the continual expansion of traffic caused by the region's growth (Figure 42).

Figure 42 A Malmo Region Local Train – Planned by Bjorn

With the early fears put aside, Philip, Anna and I were initiated into the world of Malmo rail transport. It seemed that the common language was maps. Philip explained to me that every team had used a map to explain its activities – and this was used as a jotting pad while a common understanding was reached.

The activities of the day had mimicked the building of the bridge. We started off with two separate positions; then there was careful building of foundations and lots of wading across the rough waters to prepare before construction took place. Then, the construction happened with common understanding, building trust and sharing the learning both ways. By the end of the day, the bridge was open – possibilities for change were being discussed and the potential benefits of joining the other countries to seek co-operation.

The impact of the day mimicked the inescapable physical backdrop – the Oresund Bridge linking Denmark and Sweden (Figure 43).

Figure 43 The Oresund Bridge

We crossed the 8km-long bridge in 15 minutes rather than a 40-minute ferry. A great deal of effort had gone into build it over five years yet it had quickly provided a seamless link.

The practice continues into the workshop when all the planners came together for the first time. We were aware that this group was divided by language, culture, size, nature of operation and politics and that we needed to find a way of 'Bridging' the group to bring them together. We used two exercises; the first was using maps (the transport planner's favourite reference tool) to ask the group to explain where they were physically and metaphorically (Figure 44).

Figure 44 Working with maps

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From the different maps we gave them, they chose a story to tell. As well as the maps, we then gave them Penguin Book covers that were resplendent with pictures and words (Figure 45).

Figure 45 The Book cover cards

We asked them to use the cards to say how they felt coming into the workshop. The pictures helped those with weaker English tell their story just by using the images. We were able to go back to this exercise several times to recalibrate how people were feeling. These acts of Bridging brought the group together as they discovered similar backgrounds and motivations, and it helped them find the confidence to communicate together even without a common language. Participants gave very strong positive feedback about these sessions.

This causes me to think how I see myself during the Bridging. To start with, I see myself as one of the builders – wading around in the water with the other participants, building temporary structures and then making the links more certain. Where I stand when the bridge is finished is most important for me. Putting that into a picture, I offer this painting by the railway artist Terence Cuneo (Figure 46). In his picture, I am the platelayer on the Royal Saltash Bridge watching the train rush by unnoticed by the passengers. I am in a liminal place, away from the action and the discussion. I maintain the permanent way across the bridge to keep the connection safe while making sure the participants can make their full contribution; so that they can achieve all that they want from their inquiries. It

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is the perfect metaphor for how I want to conduct my role while implementing the method.
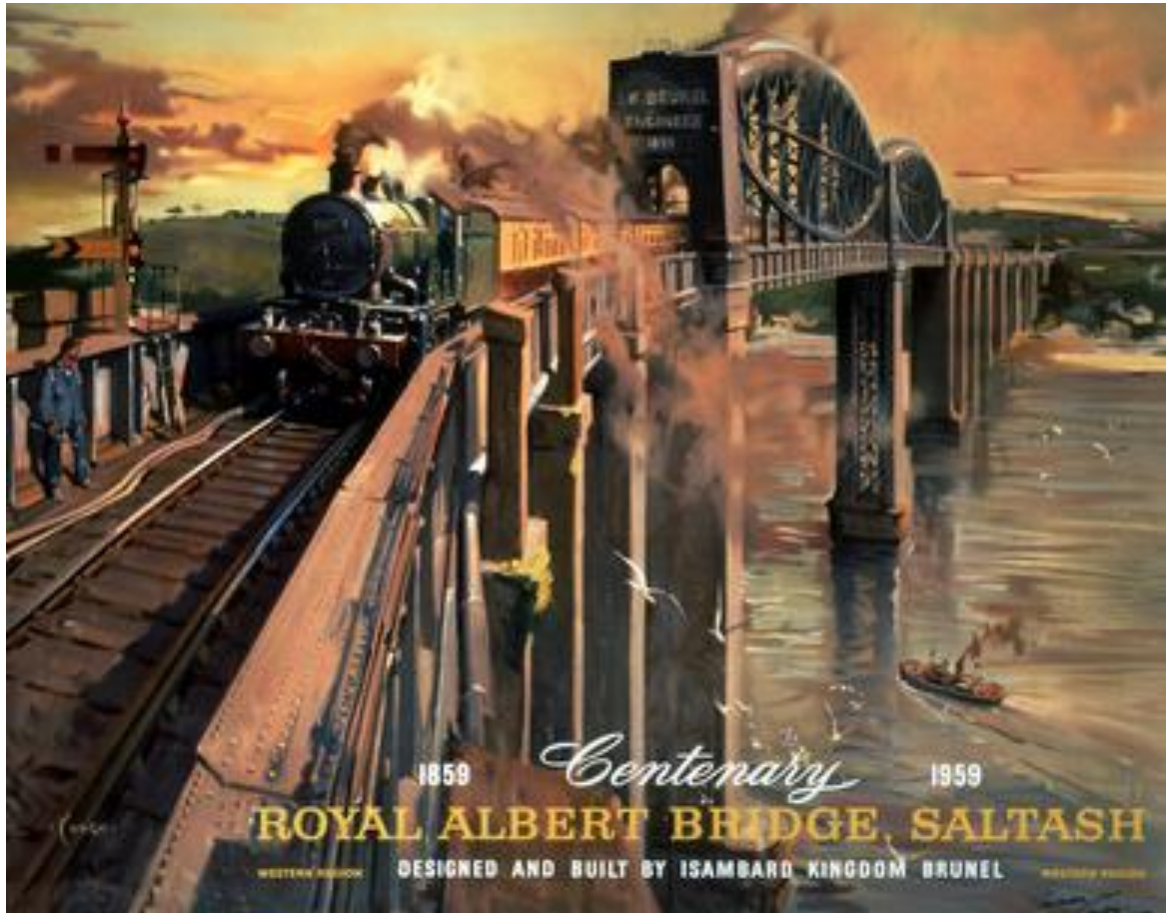
Figure 46 Terence Cuneo - Royal Albert Bridge 1959

Section 3

Chapter 7

Making

Overview

This section of the paper deals with the important topic of Making. Important, because for me it is at the heart of my approach, it is where the expression and the creativity arise. It is, as the comprehensive anthropologist Maker Tim Ingold explains (2013, p. 21):

> I want to think of Making as a process of growth. This is to place the Maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials. These materials are what he has to work with, and in the process of Making he 'joins forces' with them, bringing them together or splitting them apart, synthesising and distilling...The most he can do is to intervene in worldly processes that are already going on.

Once the Bridging is done and the space for conversation is set it is the Making that provides the artefacts and the stories for people to reflect their ideas and perspectives.

Through this section I explore the origins of Making in my practice; my claim to being a Maker, the theory and practice in Making and my own practice. I try to show the impact of Making through both first-person and second-person inquiries.

Origins

The events of the viva went beyond exploring dwelling and Bridging. The critical event in the session was the moment we turned from dialogue, moved to the artefacts and started making something new. It was the outcome of the Making element that seemed to me to provide the biggest breakthrough and the most insight. After the session, I reflected on this and wondered if there might be something in my inquiry about successful interventions through Making. There have been many suggestions that support this notion. Buckminster Fuller is quoted as saying (Fossland, 2016, p. 72): 'The best way to predict the future is to design it [and make it],' as he spoke about the need to plan for enormous population growth (1981), Professor Simon Schaffer (2013) said while looking at how automata shaped knowledge 'if you want to understand it, build it' and finally Grayson Perry said in the 2013 Reith lectures (Perry, 2013b, p. 18):

> Art does have a very powerful thing that it can offer you and that is you know when you get involved in making something, you kind of forget yourself for a moment as well; and you also, in little ways, you are affecting the world. You know

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> if you feel powerless and depressed or something, if you're making something you are in a small way changing the world.

All these quotes suggest that Making serves to present possibilities and through the Making gain access to even stronger outcomes.

In February 2013, I wrote what my inquiry into Making was about:

> I want to tap into the inherent skill in people around their knowledge of their work, the expertise they have in discourse and the deep archaeology of the experience. I argue that using 'Making' and the various methods that go with this practice will find ways of moving beyond the normally crippling power structures to cause something different to happen. It is the Making of new forms of discourse I seek to make, a crafting that incorporates words, like the work of Grayson Perry, with his tapestry and pottery (2011), and Thomas Heatherwick (Heatherwick & Rowe, 2012) with his structures and devices – that serve to astonish and inspire. Essentially, I am talking of crafting to make new models of the world.

The Making Literature

The literature addresses Making from many angles. The first I have chosen is by the psychodynamic child psychologist D.W. Winnicott (2005). He addresses the way that children – and adults – use objects to represent and extend their reality to what he calls 'other than me' items (Ibid, p. 4). He describes how 'healthy children' will adopt these items as representative of their mothers and they will become a prop to feeding or sleeping and that later in life they lose their secondary meaning (Ibid, p. 14). In this case, they are operating as 'Transitional Objects' (Ibid, p. 132). However, for children with troubled childhoods these go on to be more significant – and the object that represents the mother goes on to represent a deep attachment into adulthood and remains very relevant to the person's life. I do not want to explore the psychology of all this but I do want to show how objects are used by humans as a way of representing our worlds from the earliest ages – and to suggest that making use of significant objects is part of our very early instinct to use 'other than me' objects as a way of representing personal reality.

Sandplay Therapy extends this psychodynamic thinking one step further. Based on the Jungian 'concept that the psyche has an autonomous disposition to heal itself', the Sandplay theory is intended to facilitate this recovery when working with children and young adults who harbour mental issues. The play is conducted with a standard-sized box with a blue painted bottom filled with dry sand. Water can be added to allow the sand to be moulded and a stock of dolls and models are available to build a story during the

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Sandplay. The practitioners claim extraordinary outcomes for the practice, Barbara Turner writes: 'There is a quality and unsullied elegance in a sandplay that embodies a psychic process so complete as to defy all attempts to comprehend is fullness' (2005, p. 5).

Turner gives the following explanation for the symbolic process at work. She says:

> Drawing on the many images and experiences the individual has attached to that particular archetypical core, the psychic energy courses… through the self and re-emerges into consciousness as a symbol (Ibid, p. 37).

The simple tools together with the significant outcome has direct relevance for my research into Making, suggesting that with little resource the outcome can be packed with meaning.

My next reference comes from the earliest Action Research practice. Kurt Lewin, the founder of social psychology, was deeply involved in experiments during the Second World War to increase efficiency and productivity of the US war effort (Wansink, 2002). One of his experiments was designed to increase the consumption of offal (for example, sweetbreads and kidneys) (Gold, 1999, p. 270). Quite simply he took two groups of housewives (deemed to be the meat-buying decision makers). The first group was shown a cooking demonstration and the second invited to make recipes using the meat products. His experiment showed that the group making the meals indicated that they were 10 times more likely to use the products than the demonstration group (Joule & Bernard, 2007). My conclusion from this is that 'Making' and connecting to ideas through the hands establishes in groups a greater sense of personal ownership and commitment than being solely connected by impersonal lecture.

Academics and intellectuals identify the critical dual possibilities of 'Making'. They see the connection between the physical act of Making and the spiritual and emotional benefits that come from it. Christopher Frayling asks the key question when he writes, 'What is distinctive about craft knowledge to the intelligence of feeling?' (2011, p. 31). I would ask a slightly different question, which is what is distinctive about Making that brings out the possibility to express the intelligence of feeling and especially when doing it in groups? My distinction resides in the fact that the intellectuals I quote tend to start from the position of craft or art and then find the related feeling whereas I am starting from the desire to release the ideas through Making. However, I argue that because the link can be identified in their writing means that it can be interpreted in this different way. Frayling moves on from his question to make the following observation:

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Head and the hand have made a deep impression – when everyone seemed to be treating them as separate spheres (Ibid, p. 31).

There are those who do see them as connected. Rousseau, in his treatise 'Emile', says:

Instead of making a child stick to his books I employ him in his workshop where his hands work to the advantage of his intellect – he becomes a philosopher while he thinks he is becoming an artisan (Habermas, 1995; Rousseau, 1991, p. 98)

I like the idea that the child becomes a philosopher through his or her Making and therefore the Making generates their own philosophy. Also significant in this text is that the child may be Making in the workshop but cannot be the expert craftsman – this critically implies that the quality of the thinking is not impaired by the lack of expertise or the quality of the model.

The third example I would like to draw on is that of John Ruskin, who in 1873 from his position of Professor of Art at Oxford University commissioned an effort to build a road at North Hinksey. His extraordinary band of labourers included Arthur Toynbee, William Morris, William Collingwood and Oscar Wilde. Morris commented, referring to their efforts:

A Man at work, making something he feels will exist because he is working at it and wills it, exercising the energies of his mind and soul as well as his body, memory and imagination help him work (Gaunlett, 2011, p. 41).

The quote underlines the connection between the efforts of the hands and the connection to the mind, where the produced object is both the product of the hands and a physical representation of what emerges from their past, their context and what they might aspire to.

Ellen Dissanayake, an anthropologist specialising in aesthetics, distinguishes art from just Making by suggesting that aesthetics would include:

Proportion, colour, and spatial relationships over and above sheerly informational and purposeful aspects (1995, p. 55).

Her definition raises a number of critical elements to Making in my inquiry. First, she places art and Making in a certain context, where she says:

It is dependent on and is intertwined with ideas of commerce, ownership, history, progress, specialisation and individuality (Ibid p. 40).

This context is essential for my idea of Making in that it comes from the person or the person's context. Next, she calls on play and ritual. She identifies play 'as where novelty

and unpredictability are actively sought whereas in real life we do not usually like the uncertainty' (Ibid p. 43).

She comments on the metaphorical nature of both art and play, the make-believe aspect 'where something is something else was the salient core feature'. In my Making, the ability to express something metaphorically and for an object to be a metaphorical representation of something in real life is critical to objects made in my inquiry linking back to the participants' reality.

When she looks at ritual and art, there is a similar strong parallel. She evokes ritual to be something that 'structures the viewers' response and gives form to feeling' (Ibid, p. 46) – it is exactly this type of response that Making sessions seem to create. Indeed, the Making process is a form of ritual.

Richard Sennett determines what distinguishes a craftsman (2009, p. 52):

> Skill is a trained practice… and modern technology deprives its users… of repetitive, hands-on training.

In my inquiry, people are skilled in their understanding of the world and are masters and mistresses of the knowledge and experience to intervene to improve it and to march it forward with great insight. Supporting this ontology is David Gauntlett, who accesses the heritage of Ruskin and William Morris as he discusses Making philosophies (Ibid). He discusses the 'power' of Making – taking the example of embroidery where he quotes Rozika Parker where she says:

> The embroiderer sees a positive reflection of herself in her work and importantly in the reception of her work as others (Ibid, p. 68).

Significantly though, Gauntlett does not make his ontology craft and skilful Making he, as in my inquiry, takes Making and its impact as revealing potential from the person and the desire to put something out in the world – as he says:

> Creativity [and Making] is heartfelt – it does not need expert verification (Ibid, p. 79).

The ontology I seek does not come from the craft and Making itself, it comes from the possibilities that person has and the Making is the means of expressing this. Chris Seeley captures this very well when she says:

> Working to create spaces which are transformative for ourselves, those we work with, and the systems of which we are an intrinsic part. I include this framing as a route to a better quality, deeper, more satisfying and influential Action Research (Seeley, 2011, p. 86).

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My belief is in the capabilities of people and the notion that craft, Making and art can help release ideas and agency – it is not craft as an inquiry per se.

The current Maker movement speaks to the potential of Making very well. All through 2013, I followed the making of a book called 'Zero to Maker', which is the story of David Lang, a redundant software engineer learning to be a Maker. In his case, it was the Maker of Open Source (so that everyone could share his designs) undersea Remotely Operated Vehicles. He plots his learning within the Maker community of California (Figure 47).

Figure 47 David Lang's Manifesto – note emphasis on collaboration

He talks about the movement not being DIY but DIT – Do it Together – where those who have skill pass the knowledge on and train others – the learners quickly going on to reinforce this knowledge through helping others (2013, p. 17). Rather than craft, or Making, being an individual pursuit, he shows it is a joint effort where knowledge becomes the currency that is traded openly – he describes how he learned welding skills by undertaking to use his digital skills to advertise his teacher's abilities to others. He talks about reaching a point of knowledge and then moving on to learn and master new skills. He offers a simple but important equation (Ibid, p. 63):

Buying = thing, Making = thing + learning + story.

My equation would read:

Working without expression = soulless doing,

Making = (identity + ideas released) + learning + story.

I consider myself to be part of the Maker revolution – as it is called. I am not in the game of making useful objects, rather I am making new possibilities for people through the opportunity to exploit and release their ideas and perspectives through Making. I want to harness this potential by applying 'the magic formula of DIT development and the tremendous power of collaborative people' (Ibid p. 194) directly towards people.

All these theory insights paint the backdrop to my inquiry. I would like to introduce a series of writings that help me frame the system of Making and art to organisations I am trying to create.

Taylor and Ladkin determine that there are four different approaches to 'arts-based methods' (2009, p. 57). In my practice, you will find three of these – namely:

- Projective techniques – that are designed for the participants to 'reveal inner thoughts'.

- Illustration of essence – which is located in their writing as understanding of something outside the participants. For me it is also about Making being a way of understanding impressions and ideas within a person.

- Making – They say, 'The very making of art can foster a deeper experience of personal presence and connection'.

The connection between their thinking and my practice is added to by their aspiration that (ibid, p. 57):

> Art making can facilitate a process of becoming more holistically aligned within ourselves as we learn to reflect in an embodied way.

They comment that their research has focused on the individual and that they see possibilities for group and organisational practice. I hope that this study accepts that invitation

Two studies have caught my attention that illustrate the possibilities of second-person inquiry that involves Making. First, Kim Berman's work in South Africa (2017), described in her book 'Finding Voices', is with people in the townships. She says they have long been shorn of a voice in their country's affairs. The focus of her work is the scourge of Aids so she asked people in a community to write prayers on homemade paper to those who had lost their lives, accompanied by portraits of them (Ibid p. 74). The community that undertook this work received counselling before they started and agreed to undertake HIV blood tests as part of their involvement. Berman writes about the way this exercise

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brought people together and allowed them to be able to talk together about their loved ones and their own experiences.

In Hong Kong, Making was used to help immigrants improve their living conditions (Ku & Yan-Chi, 2008). The researchers were seeking to work with families who had newly arrived from mainland China and were attempting to establish themselves in a new environment. The participative inquiry involved photovoice (with the participants taking photos of their experiences and living conditions) and Making workshops that allowed the immigrants to build their ideal living and public spaces. What is important for my study is that the Making seeks not just to design accommodation improvements but also to understand the challenges of their new lives and the values that they carry into a different environment. The study sought to influence policy and then to create change for this group of people.

Both examples are inspiring because they seek to use art and Making to understand and develop new perspectives and they want to influence policy and thus the culture of the environments in which action is conducted.

It is with this thought that I now move on to my Making practice – seeking to bring creative means to generate artefacts for change.

My Practice

To some extent my enthusiasm to ally Making to the craft movement is dangerous because there is an underlying sentiment that the amateur and slightly gawky outputs of people who are not skilled crafters means that their work is somehow irrelevant. However, I do not agree with this. I contend that, with interventions, the skill and dexterity of the people involved with the Making lies in their experience of life, their business or social skills. This view is supported by Miettinen and Virkkunen, who, in their study on objects and change, say (2005, p. 458):

> The construction of epistemic objects or objects of enquiry… is becoming an ever more important part of any expert work. These objects are not things that not exist, or to what we do not know for sure.

The challenge is that in life the combination of power and sense that is made of the system represses the evident truths that people have about what needs to be done and how it might be carried out. Grayson Perry said that 'I decided to become an artist at about the age of 16 when my art teacher saw my unconscious leaking out on to the paper' (Perry, 2013a). Most people don't leak their unconscious but they do have that untapped

creativity and many ideas. Some people can release this through the 'Outsider Art' or some sort of craft – very few get the chance to leak their creative unconscious on their lives through Making so I want to make a hole to let it all flow. In 2013, I wrote:

> The act of Making, and Making together, causes the genius of those insights to emerge. Therefore, while the objects that emerge – in the shape of handwritten drawings, Lego models or child-like drafted maps – may not have the feel of the Grayson Perry tapestry or the Thomas Heatherwick structure, they do have the beauty and utility of expressions of a current state that can now be collectively offered to others and worked on to generate change and sustainable action to avoid those fires or explosions or simply to make a matter of a shared concern.

'Mappa Tuesday'

It was the first time I had conducted a Making session with another, my first voyage into second-person practice. The practice in this session set up the pattern of those that followed.

Mappa Tuesday was, in the words of my collaborator, intended:

> To recreate the story of my inquiry up until that point and then to see what images came to be created as a bridge into future lines of inquiry. This exercise was carried out on a Tuesday at the office of my organisation and hence came to be known as 'Mappa Tuesday'.

The humorous play on words belies a real connection in our minds with the Mappa Mundi. When looking a little deeper in to the history, there proved to be a significant relationship to the inquiry. The *mappaemundi*, were drawn up, writes Peter Turchi, 'by Christian mapmakers to locate heaven and hell' and have been described by the historian Alfred W. Crosby as 'a non-quantificational, non-geometrical attempt to supply information about what was near and far – and what was important and non-important' (2004, p. 35). This definition turned out to be a fine reflection of what we did. At the time of the practice, I wrote that the exercise was a 'specific intervention on his practice to go deeper and to see new insights which gave another field for me to try my practice ideas'.

The method of doing this work was to take occupation of a vacant floor in the office of my collaborator, Alan, in Sheffield and then to lay down a four metre square base made of strips of paper tablecloth, on to which we placed a large-scale three-dimensional installation made up of objects that were playing their literal role, like a computer, a metaphorical role – like the model railway that represented the journey of Alan's inquiry – or representative, such as the stick people that were the others in Alan's work life

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(Figure 48). Interestingly, the curators of an exhibition of large maps at the British Museum wrote that 'these large maps were not primarily intended to provide geographical or locational information but instead served broader cultural, political and personal purposes' (Barber & Harper, 2010, p. 9).

I suggested early on that we were not making a map but laying out the territory and this declaration seemed to make the activity easier. I have now come to realise that this reference to Bateson's work fits into the mapmaker's creed as it would 'prematurely limit our exploration' (2000, p. 14). In this phase, we added layer upon layer – my co-inquirer at the centre, the people around him, the impact of power, the journey of the inquiry, the sword of power and justice and the heart-shaped bunting. At each stage, we explored what had been made. One of Alan's wise moves was to relate to the 'blanks' – their location and what was missing and unsaid. Turchi writes 'we must gauge what to leave blank, and why. We must choose our blanks rather than simply omit parts of the fictional world' (Ibid, p. 47). We spent time discussing what was missing and why and whether the gap was to be filled or left.
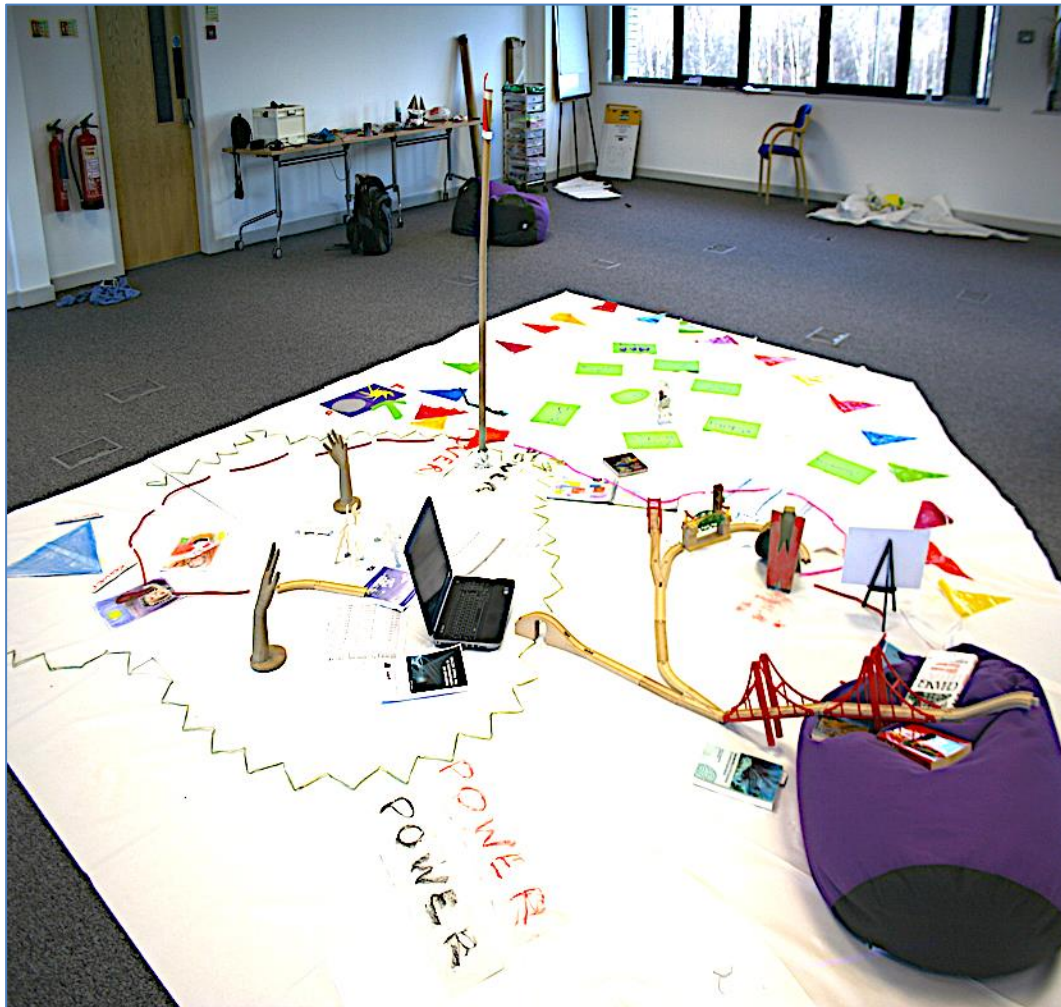
Figure 48 Mappa Tuesday

I am fortunate to have some of my co-inquirer's reflections to share. Here he describes the overall picture:

> I was the centre of my world and the world starting to be created was one which was 3-D, not just flatly produced on the page. At the centre of the world was 'AW' followed by the epiphany. That was where the inquiry started. All of this was recorded by video and still photograph.

Key to this inquiry was an epiphany experienced at Schumacher College. He describes this below together with the revelation from seeing it laid out on the map

> The storytelling included the theatricality of extending a tape measure to the edge of the kerb where the walk stopped to show us the immense age and knowledge of the earth compared to human existence. I now realise that for far too long I have listened to the authority of others and not been aware of my own authority that I now know belongs to my body.

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While we reviewed and reflected throughout the Making process, reading the record of what happened in the video Alan made at the time was very important. He said:

> Upon reviewing the documentary video that I made I can see that power is a theme which runs through my inquiry because of the issues to do with my both real and perceived power as CEO. What is noticeable as I produced the Mappa Tuesday six months ago was that I did not equate power with my body.

Through the Making process my role was to bridge – to make Heidegger's 'fourfold' come together, to suggest how the installation might grow, to listen, to help with the Making and then to help with the Curating of the 'territory'. Working with my co-inquirer was very easy because of his knowledge and competence with Action Research but I enjoyed drawing him out and pushing him forward. It is interesting because at the time there seemed to be less of the power dimension in the model-making itself. However, the structure of the approach and then the retention of the material through video and pictures meant that the power perspective grew for Alan over time. Joyously, the Making has set him on a new route for his inquiry. As he writes:

> What I have done is turn away from constructing big 'showstopper events' to engaging my body, my artful self and the capacity these both have for change to all my work situations

Graham Greene wrote: 'if this book of mine fails to take a straight course, it is because I am lost in a strange region; I have no map' (Ibid, p. 13). Alan, on the other hand, has a territory and a map and by all accounts a course for his inquiry.

Quilting

Figure 49 Quilt Making

At our first student-led workshop in February 2013, I was part of a group that presented an event on co-inquiry. While it was important to represent the oral tradition of co-operative inquiry through the work of Kate McArdle (McArdle, 2002) and John Heron (Heron, 1998), I had led one theme that projected this extended epistemology one step further into the physical action of quilting and Artful Knowing. This was my first significant Making project with a group (Figure 49).

Quilting has a long and distinguished heritage of co-operative creativity with women sewing together – either for the sake of the company and the need for warm bedding or to serve special occasions such as weddings. It has been represented as a means of creating identity and sharing ideas, the strongly feminine tradition of the craft sits behind this quote from Judy Elsley who quotes Doll-Vogt as saying (Torsney & Elsley, 1994, p. 73):

> The quilt is first of all a speculum by which a woman looks into herself and when she finds her unknown and disregarded beauty she can find also the courage to prevail along with others for her share in the world.

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I wondered if it would be possible to embrace this tradition and tap into the emotions and power of crafting and to direct it towards co-inquiry through Making. The session was set up to merge oral co-inquiry with the physical action of creating. What follows is my account of the Making:

> We started off sewing squares together in pairs and then we joined and made larger squares in groups and finally the pieces were joined into a single quilt (Figure 49). For the first and second stage the conversation flowed as the sewing went on. Although everyone took part, it was clear from the feedback that the rhythm of the sewing helped the more experienced – who noticed how the creativity and conversation grew with the quilting.

One participant noted:

> I particularly enjoyed working on my squares, the choosing of them and working in silence at first letting my thoughts ramble, thinking enough about what I wanted to create not to get hung up about what I should be thinking about, just letting my thoughts run free.

I have to say that the experience was inspiring and quite wondrous through the things that happened on that morning. First, I was delighted by the way everyone engaged in the project and all but one became fully engaged. While there was no set agenda for what was to be produced from the exercise, a number of interesting outcomes did emerge from the Making. Another of the participants recorded:

> Another thing I gained from the quilt making, it enabled 'bonding' to happen, in our group our 'methods' of putting the pieces together were all different. That was interesting and I wondered (afterwards) where our individual ideas, skills, techniques came from?

A number of people recorded that they had found the rhythm of the sewing and the parallel discourse very productive and positive, even for those inexperienced with the needle. Recorded on one of the group's blogs was the following comment:

> I'm not sure that my own 'output' could be taken seriously but the conversation and sense of community as we assembled the 'final' quilt was compelling.

Others reported that it inspired them to start to use the Making process in their own work. The impact of the Making element in the quilting was different from others that I have conducted – especially as there was no common objective. However, the impact seems to have been new discourse, new ideas developing and the common experience of the activity generating new trust and awareness. The blog I referred to earlier recorded:

What became clear in the ADOC quilting process was that a story was being selectively told and represented, parts held together or separated, some 'fitted' here, others there. It felt like an aesthetic as well as narrative process.

Figure 50 The Finished Quilt

I learnt a lot from the Making session with the quilt (Figure 50). I found how important it is to record and document in the session and after the session. The artefact that is created is strong but all the stronger if people's comments go with the Making. I learnt how ripples flow from a Making session and the consequences of people Making produces ideas and actions that will live for a long time after the event itself has finished. The physical action of Making, accompanied by the artefacts produced and then overlaid by the dialogue, generates a powerful creative cocktail that triggers ideas in the individuals and great

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fellowship in the participants. Additionally, the rhythm that came to the group formed a cadence that promoted the attributes of dwelling. What we did may not reach this level described by Susan Bernick but it certainly reflected the main elements of our work:

> Quilting is a reassembling process, which in itself may embody a solution to a human problem. It is inspiration, a connection with self, the dogged will to make something extraordinary in the midst of family routine, a sense of wholeness and knowing the power of Making (Ibid, p. 143)

Resource Planning

This practice carries on from the Bridging story in Sweden with the transport planners. This Making session was our first workshop with all the planners together.

Before getting under way, I need to put the material we used for the Making into context. The makers of Lego themselves have a product – and indeed consultants – who work with teams in what they call 'Serious Play'. I do not want to claim that the use of Lego is unique in this practice, however my adoption of it as a part of an intervention to impact power and to create agency is not directly in their portfolio. They speak of 'four purposes of adult play that are especially relevant to Lego: social bonding, emotional expression, cognitive development, and constructive competition' (LLCLego, 2002). I have used Lego as a storytelling tool, a way of creating common language and the means of influencing the future through disturbing the current situation by having a shared common view of a different future.
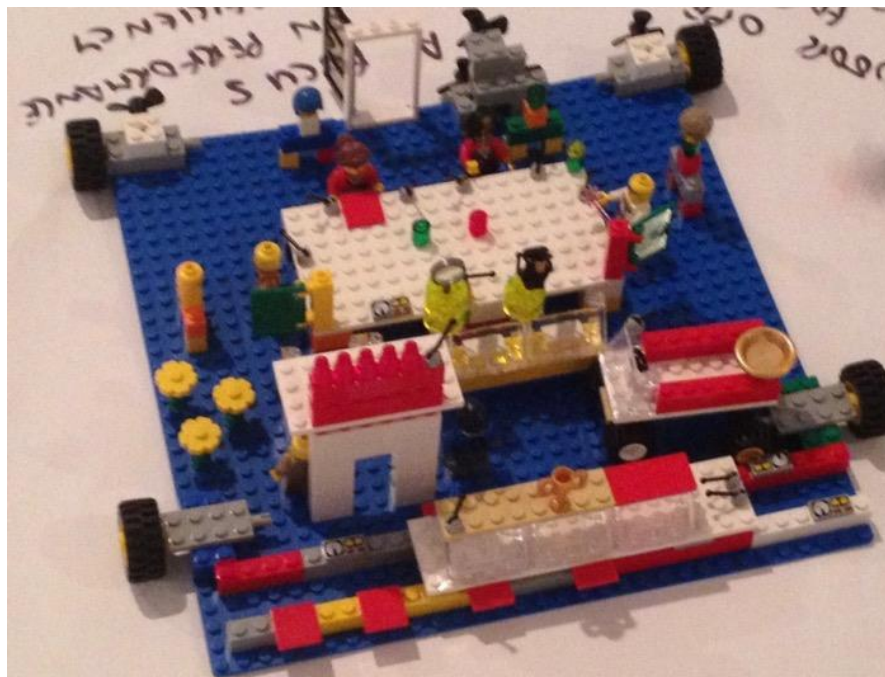
Figure 51 The Model of the Planners' shared future

All the joint activities before Making with Lego had a strong element of crafting, in which everyone was quite happy to participate (Figure 51). I observed – and had reported to me – that there was trepidation in carrying out these activities (because they did not fit in with the usual way of doing things and did not seem to be business-like). However, the impact was to bring the group close as a new community. From the work came joint

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insights and a common discourse – in fact, we created a new common language. What was also clear was that the impact of the Making was to subvert the power/language norms that existed in their usual country setting to stretch in to new and challenging territory (Figure 52).

The session featured me in several important roles. First, I acted as creative coach to the sponsors of the session. Second, I served as designer of the overall plan and, third, I acted as the guide through the Making. The whole episode made me feel more confident in my ideas and myself; it gave me much to consider on how the approach might develop and a lovely sensation of excitement when I led the group through the intricacies of the Making and encouraged them to be part of the discovery process through their own creativity.

The Making session with Lego was introduced by me as a creative session and was matched by a very clear question asking each individual to build a model that 'describes the transport planning situation in your country as it is now'.

Figure 52 Italian and Hungarian Transport Planners working together

The level of energy among the participants was very high and inhibitions were lifted and the models became an instrument through which to tell a new truth. The results were revealing. From shy backroom people, they used Lego to describe very openly the political and organisational issues at work. Once the models were shared, it was clear where the contrasts lay and what the common issues were. Although there was some self-promotion, most of the work got right under the skin of what was going on.

From building a picture of the world as it is now, the group combined their models as they moved towards creating a view of the future, working together as one (Figure 50). At this

point an interesting event occurred. The more senior managers in the group broke away and started to negotiate together working on flipcharts to come up with a view while the rest of the group carried on Making with Lego. After the allotted was up, the 'negotiators' had nothing to offer – their attempt to find words to build a future had failed. However, the Lego builders had a model and a way of explaining the opportunities for them as a group. In the form of a Lego model, they showed how they would work together and what their priorities would be. The power of the construction and the succinct nature of what it described and the whole group were able to commit to the future in the model as well as the way the model described they would work together.

The success of the Making element was captured very succinctly by one person from Sweden who said: 'I have been approached for projects such as this one before, none of which have worked – this one is different.'

This comment referred to the fact that the Making was as very different to normal business and so changed the conversation. The Making of the transitional objects became a common language in its own right, and became a way of communicating and sharing what had been achieved. This referred not just to the content of the models but as expression of challenges and creative solutions.

This quote summarises the workshop:

> The sessions with Lego worked very well in helping build the team and getting them to articulate their ideas and views. Impact is the word – it was different; and they didn't expect this stuff. It really got things moving along in terms of both creativity and dialogue.

Of the three practice examples I have used, this one is most dear to my heart because it specifically addresses the issues of power – in that the group in question had very little at the start – and agency – in that the Lego Making was about giving them that common agency. I remember revealing the Lego bag for the first time and hearing the gasp from the group as they saw it. They had the ideas and the potential in their heads and the Making provided a way of linking this together and creating a new possibility for the future.

Concluding Thoughts

This part of my inquiry is about how 'Making' can produce objects that relate to an issue and are made by a group or an individual. The Making has generated insight for individuals and teams that has provided a platform for understanding and action.

The practice confirms the skill of the participants in the knowledge and familiarity with their world and that the Making is the means of bringing out their ideas and identity.

The release of these skills through the Making seems to come as surprise. It is that very surprise that motivates people to action.

With the Bridging undertaken and the models made, I turn to the next stage – sharing the inquiry and joining others into Making change in the inquirer's world.

Section 3

Chapter 8

Curating

Overview

This section is about the third leg of my approach – Curating. Curating is the important, novel element of my approach. My practice follows the theory and activities of formal Curating practice and theory from the fields of art and exhibition Making, and **not** the common contemporary wide use of the term that is framed as (Bhaskar, 2016, p. 7):

> Curation answers the question of how we live in the world where problems are often about having too much.

The element covers the practical matters of organising artefacts, displaying them and igniting conversations about them. In philosophical terms, Curating stands for a distinct intervention that brings together participant-made artefacts with cycles of participation and interaction.

This element is not limited to its position as third in the list of elements; it has a connection with all phases of the method. Curating emerges right from the beginning of the Bridging element with participants, as the artefacts from the initial discussions are gathered, discussed and maintained. Work continues through the Making phase, as time is spent gathering and presenting the made objects; to the 'Curating' itself when the artefacts and their story are presented to others. In my practice, Curating is the primary place where insights occur and the possibilities for change emerge.

I have developed the practice of using Curating in three different ways; first as a way of individuals using the technique to bring meaning and depth to their own work; the second is for groups of people to work with Curating to provide their own new insights into their material; finally, using Curating to present sparkling insights as a means of enrolling and inspiring others who are invited for the first time into the exhibition. Participation and involvement have become a dynamic and generative part of the approach.

Practice and Possibilities

The novel nature of my practice is illustrated by the lack of Curating practice in the organisational change literature, particularly linking Making and artful activities to Curating activities. The two examples I have found are from Kevin Power, who inspired me to research this area, and the work of Kathryn Church.

In the first case, Power limits his reference to Curating as an 'analogy and a metaphor' (2014, p. 115) while Church's work refers to her exhibition of her late mother's dressmaking as focusing on 'the activities of exhibiting and how that work extended and complexified my relation to objects' (2008, p. 421). I hope my inquiry will serve to link artful practice to Curating.

On the other hand, there are studies that illustrate the possibilities of where such practice might be used. I have found two.

Jenna Ward and Harriet Shortt (2012) undertake a study among students, where the participants draw images representing their university experiences. The authors recognise the importance of the 'Making' of the simple drawings and the significance of the images in providing insights for the teachers of the courses that are both 'emotional as a well as intellectual'. In concluding their research, they point out that for all the strength of the drawings, they have a reduced impact because it is not clear how they might be shared in a manner that is 'not a comfortable experience' (Ibid p. 15). They ask how this might be done. This would be the perfect opportunity to display the curated artefacts to a wider group. The practice of the curator would allow material to be displayed in a non-confrontational manner and for it to be seen and reflected upon without direct challenge. I would contend that the reaction of the researchers indicates that a way of presenting qualitative research is missing from the methods available to social scientists. The application of exhibition practice guided by the skills of the curator might answer the question that Ward and Shortt pose.

The second references the 'Making' practice of Kim Berman (2017). She talks about the challenges of influencing society, and the government and academia in particular. She quotes Stuart Hall, describing her approach (Ibid p. 126):

> The transformative conversational process really rests on a few basic principles
> – we listen carefully to others, allow their perspectives to denaturalise our own
> assumptions, engage with enthusiasm in explanation of our own lives and

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perspectives and learn to work with that process of dialogue towards understanding and mutual tolerance of abiding issues.

This paragraph perfectly covers the possibilities of Curating, with the artefacts to be the centre of that conversation for change to occur. However, in Berman's work, all the ingredients are present and yet they never come together in this way in her practice. She refers to the many socially provocative artefacts that her co-inquirers make relating to Aids and contemporary society in the townships. She talks of the struggles to have generative conversations with government and academia and she talks about exhibitions that have been mounted to display her work (Ibid p. 88). Despite this, the possibilities being presented to bring together her work through Curating do not appear in her writing. There is no evidence of her taking the many powerful objects and images and telling a curated story with them. Indeed, the exhibitions that she does take part in focus on showing a picture of endeavour rather than being the centre of the conversations and interaction that might create the possibilities indicated by Stuart Hall's quote (Ibid, p. 44).

A third reference comes from Chris Seeley and Ellen Thornhill in their treatise on taking art into the boardroom (2014). In this case, it is about extending their ideas into the practice of Curating. Their research on art facilitating change provides important practical steps and inspirational motivation into how Artful Knowing can be taken into the workplace. They discuss a four-step process for Artful Knowing of which the third and fourth provide a strong cue to Curating and Exhibition Making. They talk about 'bodying forth' – which refers to the whole body being open to the body's physical response to art and materials, and they discuss being 'in-formed', which:

> Means becoming a being whose living and actions form and are in-formed by rich experiences, provocations and evocations of presentational knowing, both as a perceiver and a creator (Ibid, p. 34).

They do not explicitly talk about Curating but both these elements of their process could be borrowed to also be part of the practice I am describing.

Definitions

Before starting with practice examples that bring to life the possibilities of Curating, I need to establish some definitions and theories that create a context for my inquiry in this area.

I started with some understanding of where the word originated. I found the following statement very helpful:

> The word curator means 'overseer, guardian, agent'. In Latin law the curator was appointed guardian of a person legally unfit to conduct him or herself, such as a minor or lunatic. However, the curator in the Middle Ages is known specifically as somebody in a clerical position, a priest for whom the exhibition would be crucial to the organisation of religious spaces and beyond. (Thea, 2009, p. 60)

This gave me the origins of the word yet I still sought a definition – a way of describing Curating that brings to life current practice in the context of my inquiry. Here I think I have found it in the words of art critic and curator Jan Verwoert:

> The art of Curating resides in the capacity to grasp the potentials inherent in the magic of social encounters and the power to activate those potentials in the act of facilitating cultural manifestations. The medium of this art is communication. To curate means to talk things into being. (Verwoert, 2010, p. 20)

The third quote relates to the critical role in my concept of passing the power of Curating to the participants. It shows how affairs are moving on to integrate the artist and the Curator.

> Curators do not prioritise the exhibition as the one-off moment of display, or its event as exhibition. Instead they allow for open-ended, cumulative processes of engagement, interruption and possibility. (O'Neill, 2012, p. 128)

These three quotes explain how I have – and want to continue – to use Curating in my inquiry. First there is the role of guardian – the keeper of the artefacts that emerge in the Bridging and the Making, through suggesting the insights the artefacts offer and then there is the wonder of bringing those to life in the context of the organisational setting in which I am working. Then there is the facilitating of 'talking those things into being' with the participation of the people involved in the organisation in which they work and encouraging the participants to discuss and enlarge those possibilities. For example, with the transport planners I arranged their early models into an exhibition. The impact of viewing the exhibition was for a discussion that led to an understanding of common threads and joint possibilities. The next phase of Making came easily as the ideas had already been talked into a common understanding. Third, there is my additional role of leading the conversation – bringing together the collected artefacts and the potential to change and influence through the participation of the group. All this entails ensuring the discussion continues to be generative and cumulative through the production process. Carrying through these roles is all part of my first-person inquiry, working with others to bring it to life is part of my second-person inquiry.

Talking to Curators

During my research, I had the chance to talk to practising curators.

The first area of practice that they highlighted was the role of 'The Keeper'. In my conversation with the curator of Southampton City Council's Museum collection, she explained that the curator had once been called the 'keeper' and that this term still figures large in her role. She explained that when she took an item into the collection, she was undertaking to preserve that item for ever, committing to look after it and treasure it and then preserve it **for ever**. She referenced the collection of newspapers the museum had recording the sinking of the Titanic, where a key 1912 edition of the Daily Mail was on display and the Curating staff know that it would deteriorate. So, to ensure continuity, she explained there were three identical editions stored away in a cool, dark place that would preserve the artefact and the story it had to tell.

A curator at the Bodleian Library reiterated this, view adding that the key role of the library archivists was to understand the collection. A conversation with a curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum stressed this even further, giving the clear view that knowledge of the collection far outweighed the importance of considering the audience who saw the works. I admit that this focus surprised me. However I learned the significance of the curator being fluent with objects and their provenance.

What really struck me was the lack of focus on what the audience or visitors made of the curated works. One of the curators told me of a fascinating and insightful exhibition she had worked on. When I asked how the visitors had received it and what they had made of it, she was nonplussed. Quite clearly Curating in its traditional form does not even consider the audience response and certainly does not invite interaction. The two significant learnings were to focus on keeping and being fluent with the artefacts and at the same time to question the opportunities of interaction.

Quite by chance I experienced the joy of interaction at the Alexander Calder exhibition (Figure 53) at the Royal Academy in 2013. I was wandering around the wonderfully coloured mobiles enjoying their spectacle when one of the guards leant over to me and whispered: 'Blow on them – waft them with your newspaper – and they will come to life.'

Carrying out his suggestion, the mobiles sprang into life, adding the grace of movement to their form. While this was still interacting with someone else's work, this powerful personal experience inspired me to wonder how I could make similar invitations in my inquiry.

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Figure 53 A Calder Mobile that moves with a waft from a newspaper

The attendant's intervention was a simple act yet it added significantly to my experience and understanding of the artwork and the method. It was certainly the beginning of my curiosity with the possibilities of interaction in my practice.

Curating a message

In a paper from April 2013, I wrote how Curating has the ability to produce a message that might create a platform for change:

> Physical objects, as well as written documents, that are not fashioned in convenient PowerPoint form need to be looked after and cherished, which means that there is an important 'janitorial role' to be performed of documenting, transporting and presenting. I have found this to be an important task, albeit not as important as the broader more provocative role of Curating. Terry Smith in his book 'Contemporary Curating' describes the role as 'reflect[ing] on circumstances, wrestl[ing] with ideas and spark[ing] insights' (2012, p. 17). He distinctly moves the idea of the Curator from being the carer of exhibits to a producer and interpreter. This move is developed in the writing of Paul O'Neill who places the role as 'the potential nexus for discussion, critique and debate' (2012, p. 43).

I want to illustrate this with an example of a curator in action, importantly for my study this curator is not a professional in the field, where I aim to make all participants curators.

The example illustrates Curating's ability to narrate points of view, to draw insight and to stimulate. This is considered to be very much part of contemporary Curating practice as evidenced by the points shown below. Eva Diaz, a curator, writes of this:

> This sense of experiment, as a central way to organise thinking about the present and the future, yokes the project of curators and art historians in a united pursuit; parlaying the knowledge of history into a better-informed horizon for the future (2011, p. 99).

A practical example of this was offered to me by the Koestler Trust's annual exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall (Figure 54). The trust promotes art from offenders, patients and detainees and stages an annual exhibition curated each year by a different person. In 2013, the curator was the rapper Speech Debelle, whose connection to the material is declared to be her 'own experience of homelessness and hostel living and her subsequent interventions' (Meadows, 2013, p. 8).

I was lucky to be able to attend the opening presentation given by Speech at the exhibition entitled 'The Strength and Vulnerability Bunker'. She described the title as coming from her music and life and wanted to seek expression of this in the artwork. She sought to project her message about the transition from vulnerability to strength. She organised the exhibition (Figure 55) into three zones: – challenging and emotive, clinical, and a warm place for regrowth. (Debelle, 2013, p. 3)

Figure 54 The Entrance to the Exhibition

Figure 55 Speech Debelle selecting her exhibits

Through these three sections, she builds a story, tells it, generates emotions and gets a message across.

When she described the effort put into choosing the pieces from the 8,000 entries, it was clear that her drive to curate was matched by the energetic and provocative pieces she selected. It is interesting to note that she did not really consider or understand the term Curating in what she was doing – telling the story was more important to her.

Two Practice Stories

I would like to offer two practice examples that show this storytelling come to life.

My first example is my work with a fellow student, Paul . He was investigating his personal archive and the various exploits that have shaped his life, career and aspirations. The first stage of the process was to make a gallery of the different elements that made up his story (Figure 56). These were actual artefacts – like an early video telephone and documents, items he made from Lego and drawn representations of certain episodes.

Figure 56 Paul Curating the story of his career

Once the items were made, I invited him to curate the items into an exhibition (Figure 57). He decided to arrange the items in a semi-circle and in chronological order in the context of his life story.

Figure 57 The Curated Story – with cords showing links

Figure 58 Paul indicating the link between past and present

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He placed the key item (a simple box as a transitional object), representing when he changed the direction of his life to pursue his environmental goals (Figure 58). Once the items were arranged, we stood back and discussed what we had seen and heard as the items were curated.

Paul came to realise that a significant part of what he now advocates was something he went through himself some 15 years ago. From the Curating process, he realised that instead of advocating this course of action he could quote from his own experience. Without the juxtaposition of the different elements in his exhibition, the insight would not have occurred. Paul wrote of this process:

> I am greatly indebted to Chris Goscomb, who assisted with 'mapping' my inquiry. Through this process one consequence emerged above all others. I wrote that day:
>
> 6 June 2013:
>
> 'Who knew, the Citizen to Business communication I advocate for others now is what I did myself 25 years ago...?! The link is strong.'

Paul's participation in the Curating of his own Making realised the emergence of an insight that would simply not have arisen in the hands of others. It an excellent example of 'Curating talking things into being', except the Curating that I am using goes beyond the curators' own view of their role. Which Sarah Cook, curator of new media describes as:

> The role of curator has become a collaborative one – working together with the artist (and patron and audience) on the aesthetic process of making, and exhibiting on behalf of works of art and the evolving practice of the artist (2003, p. 174).

This is an account of the second practice example carried out with my colleague, Mihirini de Zoysa. In April 2011, she declared herself to be lost in her studies and searching for a route for her inquiry. I offered to help her using my approach as the basis for helping her explore her study territory to seek new avenues. After an initial 'Bridging' session in April 2013, when we laid out the existing territory and gave Mihirini material to reflect and consider, we reconvened in September with the express desire to curate an exhibition of the possibilities for her inquiry.

The project represented something of a first for me as Mihirini was at home in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and I was at home in Southampton, United Kingdom, meaning we were going to try out virtual 'Making' and 'Curating' (Figure 59).

Figure 59 Reporting for Curating Duty

From the Bridging phase we had determined that Mihirini would prefer to make with familiar tangible objects rather than abstract, made ones. In fact, she decided that she would like to use the books she has been reading to be the artefacts. While this saved time in the manufacturing of individual objects, it gave us the opportunity to make some large-scale layouts en route to the final exhibition. Our first step was to build a timeline of when she had come across her readings – and how she integrated these into her studies.

Figure 60 The timeline

We laid the timeline out on a large piece of brown paper and joined the key events with tape – annotating the key events with Post-it notes. Once complete, we recorded the layout in photographs (Figure 60). With this map completed Mihirini felt she had some sense of her journey and was ready to move on to examine new territory.

Figure 61 The texts divided into genres

The next phase involved clustering the books into themes – we had the intention of identifying what these groups might be, their prominence – or lack of prominence in Mihirini's mind – and how one cluster was grouped relative to others (Figure 61).

From this investigation, there was a clear prominence of literature on gender – particularly that examining the male in society and the emergence of texts relating to Buddhism. We then moved on to blend the Making into the Curating and to mount an exhibition of the texts – with the request that the exhibition reflected the emphasis and focus that had emerged in the earlier work. The first exhibition mounted all the books in a semi-circle, with the imagined entrance to the room located at the camera lens, showing the clusters of titles and the focus of the exhibition at the bottom of the arrangement.

Figure 62 The Final Exhibition – with the message prominent

The second brought forward the texts that emerged from the Making discussion in an order of preference and prominence, emphasising the authors and themes that Mihirini had discussed in her commentary of earlier phases of the Curating. The resultant display (Figure 62) had two impacts – it ordered the key artefacts of the texts Mihirini had used, emphasising the chronology and focus of her reading and then it offered a reconsideration of themes that had been pushed aside in the volume of new reading and restored them to the prominence that Mihirini sought in her writing. The impact and benefit of the Curating is best reflected by Mihirini's own words:

> The Making of the exhibition gave me an opportunity to reflect on my literature in a visual and interactive way — the act of collating, arranging and rearranging and Curating the books, especially the act of choosing the main exhibit to build the exhibition around, gave me insights and different perspectives to my inquiry that I otherwise may not have had.

The Participants as Curators

The next step in my inquiry was to undertake Curating with a group. To prepare, I considered how to maintain the same level of participation as working with one co-inquirer. My first step was to investigate practice in the art world.

What doubles the importance of the need to maximise the participation and the role of Curating in my practice is the fact that the artefacts emerge right from the beginning of the Making process, so participants can build a relationship with them stronger than the traditional 'producer' curator. They can then use these artefacts to build an interactive

exhibition in real time as part of their inquiry that can produce real insight. This was the type of practice I was seeking.

There is a very strong, and growing, tradition of participation in the Curating world. I will illustrate this with two examples. Do It Exhibitions have been a significant feature of the Curating calendar since 1993 (2013). Conceived by the leading Swiss international curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, the exhibitions are essentially open spaces that contain instructions for pieces from artists (ibid 2013, p. 227 & 234). Each location has unique set of instructions. Shown below are examples of these instructions (Figures 63 and 64).
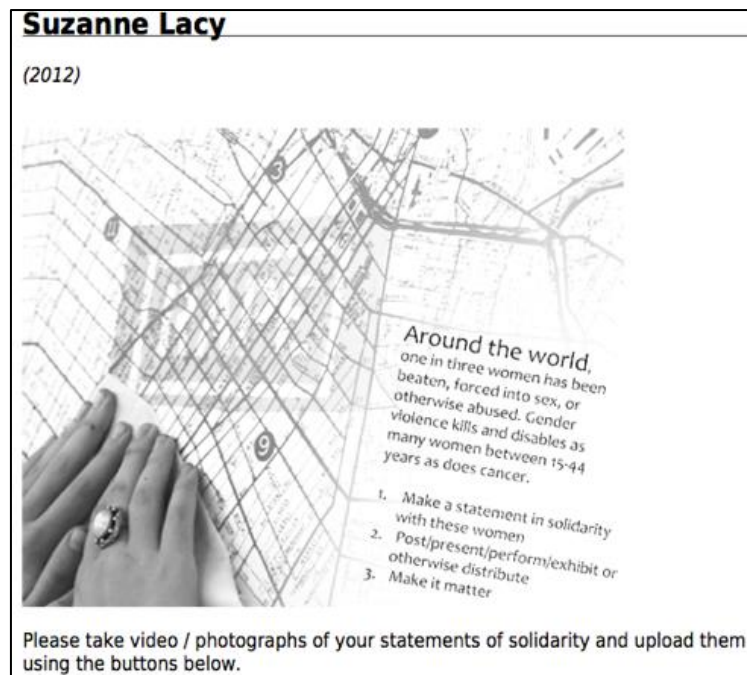
Figure 63 An instruction from a participative piece at do it 2013

Alison Knowles
Share:
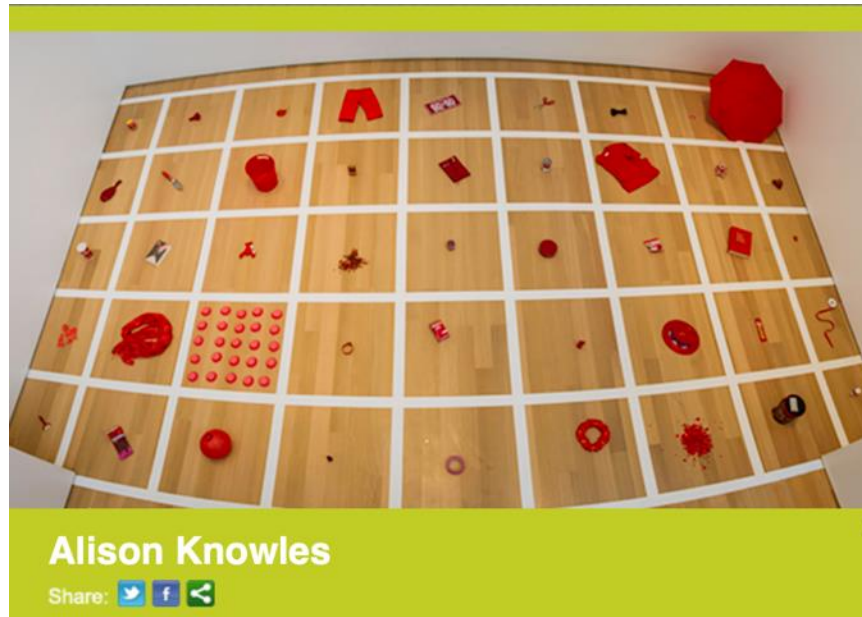
Knowles, Alison
Homage to Each Red Thing (1996)

Divide the exhibition space floor into squares of any size.

Put one red thing into each square.

For example:

· a piece of fruit

· a doll with a red hat

· a shoe

Completely cover the floor in this way.

Figure 64 Gund Gallery, Kenyon College PA. do it exhibition

Obrist spells out his intentions (Obrist, 2012 section 3):

> *Do It*'s ongoing presentations are less concerned with notions of the 'reproduction' or materiality of the artworks than with revealing the nuances of human interpretation in its various permutations and iterations.

These exhibitions may not start with artefacts but they do start with the artist's intentions and directions to the participants. Although the audience is invited to contribute physically and electronically, they do not always see how their contributions add to the exhibition. For me there is an irony in what Obrist has written:

> I felt [Curating] was a very master plan orientated field. The curator was always expected to deliver a master plan. To decide what is in and what is out. It was very top down. (Obrist, 2013, p. 426)

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Because I think 'do It' exhibitions are still run by a top down master plan. The role of the audience and local creators is to respond to the instructions – not to contribute, not to pass comment and not to curate what they have created. Although they participate the audience could participate more and make more editorial decisions.

The second example works for my practice. Group Materiel established the People's Choice in an empty storefront on 13th Street in New York. The first phase, which lasted for about a year, saw the group establish relationships with the local community, local artists and 'like-minded cultural producers. The Curating started on the 1st January 1981 when an open letter was sent to all the local residents inviting them to join the 'People's Choice' Exhibition. The invitation said:

> We would like to show things that might not usually find their way into an art gallery. The things you personally find beautiful, the objects you keep for your pleasure, the objects that have meaning for you, your family and for your friends. What could these things be? (Ault, 2011, p. 32)

The exhibition was slow to get going but soon gained popularity with the competition to be exhibited being an important driver of people's interest. Every item that was brought to the shop was displayed. While Ault writes that 'the exhibition was meant to be a portrayal of the block through common objects' (Ault, 2011, p. 33) and clearly the exhibits did belong to the people of the block and items were their choice, they were still curated by others. Therefore, the exhibition could well have missed relationships, juxtapositions and social dynamics that the providers of the artefacts could have brought if they had curated the display.

The practice I discovered certainly suggested that the art world involved the audience by participating in exhibitions. However, there was still a line drawn between the curator, the audience and the artist. The audience still had to follow the instructions of the artist and the objects they brought were still organised by the curators. I just wondered if they could do more. What if they made their own artefacts, what if they curated their own exhibitions? The next section describes my first attempt to do this with a group.

Curating Practice with a Group

The earliest example of me putting Curating into practice was the 'Insight Exhibition' that I worked on with the transport planners from Arriva in March 2013. Following the on-site interviews and before the first workshop got under way, my collaborators, guided by myself, Curated the output into the form of an exhibition.

Figure 65 Preparing the insight boards

They took items from the interviews; a mix of photographs, written evidence and items collected on the visits and posted them on to a series of boards (Figure 65). Each of the boards had a title – which in turn represented one of the project leader's insights from the visits that they chose to confront the group with. The favourite of these 'insight boards' was the one that said: 'We have too many buses' (Figure 66). This was the one that provided the project leader with his greatest learning and the one that caused the most controversy and discussion.

Figure 66 There are too many buses – the completed insight board

The boards were displayed in the form of a gallery (coincidently in a gallery in a café) to the gathered transport planners. They viewed the boards in silence (Figure 67) and then added their feedback on to the boards prior to a lively debate.

Figure 67 Reviewing the gallery of insight boards

This explains my current thinking, where Curating is part of my approach, my own

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intervention with others and the creation of new futures. This practice launched me on my inquiry into Curating. I led the design of the intervention and then the people I was working with doing a large part of the Curating to make their point and tell their story. This in turn caused incitement to debate through the artefacts of the exhibition and to start to draw new conclusions.
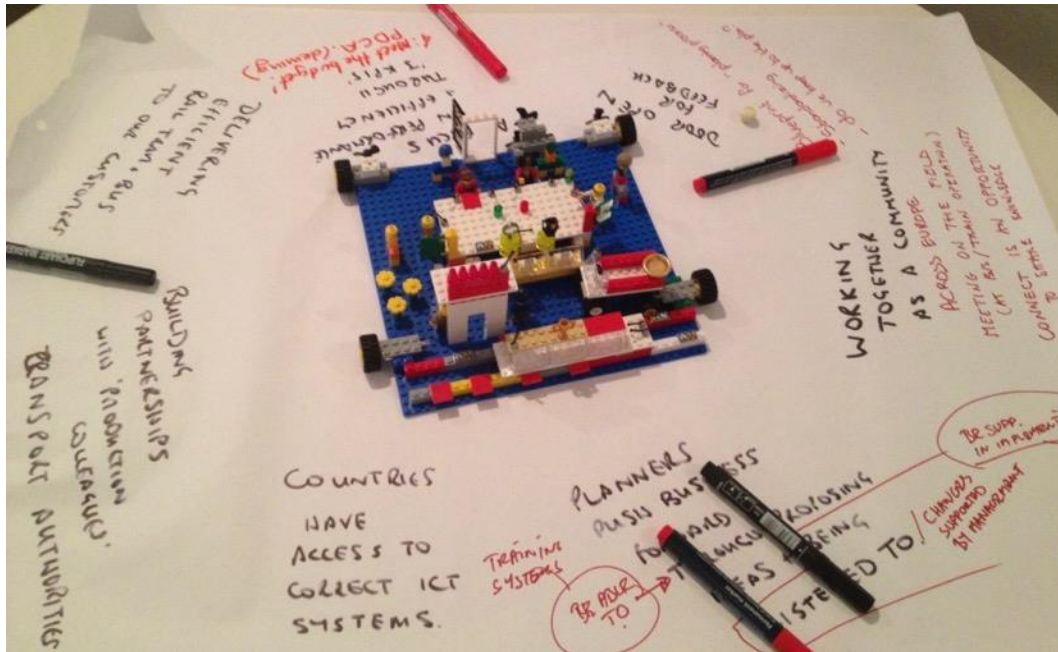
Figure 68 The curated model – cared for and preserved

Another aspect of my current practice, the role of keeper, means making sure that the artefacts that are produced during the Bridging and Making are carefully looked after. It is a role that I have adopted personally. I would like to illustrate this with an example.

When I was present at the transport planners' meeting, it was my role to ensure models and words were carefully preserved so they could be used in the dialogue and then that the models that explained the work were kept for later use. To this end I show above the artefacts on display in the workshop room (Figure 68).

The relation between the keeper role and Curating of a story back into the organisation is illustrated by this model and this PowerPoint slide (Figure 69). Following the workshop, I had taken the role of keeping and preserving the evidence. My collaborators then wrote a curated story for others to share the outcomes and to join the conversation. They created the artefact, the slide, into the organisation with a story that was intended to

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initiate change. They kept the role of 'allow[ing] for open-ended, cumulative processes of engagement, interruption and possibility' (Ibid 2012, p. 128). This was part of the presentation that won the group a voice at the highest level and opened up the chance to have an impact that took account of the knowledge and experience of the team. When the material was displayed and the insights accepted, the director-level sponsor became a particular supporter of the approach in advancing the project saying: 'It looks like Lego is useful stuff!'

Figure 69 A page from the presentation to the board – showing the curated models

Reflecting on Curating

This element of my approach has come a long way since I first heard Kevin Power talk about Curating. I have moved from using Curating for my own work to giving the role of Curating to those I work with. My question is, Were they able to: 'Reflect on circumstances, wrestle with ideas and create sparkling insights'?

I want to give people working with me the power and opportunity to use Curating to illuminate their own artefacts, inviting others into the conversation. Participation is part of the contemporary Curating practice and it is an element that I want to use to the full. For me this means involving everyone involved in the Bridging, Making and Curating

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process and specifically inviting them to curate the material they have shared or produced. In all the examples of my practice, the direct and explicit involvement in Curating has created insights, understanding and at some level has generated change. This contrasts with traditional Curating practice where there is participation for artists and curators – but the audience are held away from the actual Curating process.

This critical guiding role might be associated with that of the mediator or docent. People with this role educate people in the exhibits in a museum and point out some of the insights in real time. The curator Sheikh writes (2010, p. 63):

> [The docent] is not a creator of art or a producer of knowledge but a mediator and, as such, situated in a specific relation of time and space. [The mediator] comes in after the moment of creation and after the moment of engagement, between the artist and curator.

You will have seen that I very much distinguish between the Curating roles I adopt. I work as the mediator and keeper of the material; the guide through the process and inviter of people into the interaction along the lines Peter O'Neill's description of the 'curator (and mediator) as carer' (2012, p. 9). This means the participants have the role of finding those insights, wrestling with the ideas and reflecting on circumstances.

I will expand my understanding and practice of participation in the next section.

Section 3

Chapter 9

Bridging, Making and Curating as a System

A Practice Example

This last part of this section treats Bridging, Making and Curating as a single system, with one practice using the whole approach.

The context for the inquiry was a means of understanding the impact and conclusion of a project. I wrote of my practice in April 2013.

> For the last 11 months I have been supporting a major business transformation project. By the middle of January, the whole edifice came crashing down, driven by power issues and a weak business performance. The project was ended brutally quickly without realising the potential of all the effort. An 'independent' investigation was undertaken as the primary decision vehicle for ending the programme but it did not provide a means of closure for the team who had undertaken the work.

In my role, I initiated a different sort of inquiry to provide this closure and to provide insight to the business. What I tried to do was to bring my Bridging, Making and Curating process to what would traditionally be called a business survey.

The first step was to act as a 'bridge' to members of the team so they understood what had happened and the request that was being made to them for help. It meant that they were not being questioned by others, rather they were part of a joint inquiry. Everyone agreed to take part.

Of course, we had to undertake oral interviews – 20 in total – using a common script and additional follow-up questions but at this point we departed from the norm. Led by me, we then embarked on a process where we made an oral wall of the interviews (Figure 70).

Figure 70 Working on the Oral History Wall

Each of the interviews was transcribed – point-by-point and quote-by-quote on to Post-it notes. We then affixed the 1,200 notes to A3 sheets grouped into themes. It was really interesting to do this task – where the words seemed to have the same quality as potter's clay between the fingers or wood as it is made into an object. We now had the biggest wall in the office covered in these quotes and comments.

At this stage, we started to curate the quotes. My role was the keeper and mediator and I handed the postmodern Curating role to my senior colleague who had the role of making the quotes speak as part of the insights that they developed into.

Three of us stared at these words and started to draw insights from the themes. These were classed as the big linking issues that characterised the statements that people had made about the programme and the company. We then wrote the first view of the insights on sheets of paper and placed those on a big table. Our Curator Sarah then entered the fray. She moved the sheets around like leaves on a collage, adding sense to their position. We rewrote the insights – added notes – and then rewrote the notes and the insights (Figure 71).

Figure 71 The curator working on the initial insights

I reflect now that this work had the quality of Curating the best exhibitions, with Sarah as a participant and as the Curator. At the time, Sarah said 'calling the work we were doing Curating brought an extra quality to the work that meant extra precision and care from me to ensure the words of my teams were valued with the same care that they were given'.

The work really did have the quality of crafting a fine table or making a series of pots, doing and redoing the work and refining each word to tease out the best meaning and the full weight of the discourse. After six sessions, we had it finished. We had added by this stage what we called our 'So what's?' – our suggested interventions to overcome some of the issues we had described.

Before we exhibited the finished and curated piece, we took the artefact and explained what we had done to the contributors. I remember very clearly one of the team saying: 'I would never have thought that what I said in my interview could have been so powerfully presented. The way you have done this adds so much to my views and the feelings of the team.'

Then we took the artefact to a presentation for the organisation's new chief executive. I had insisted that the insights were presented as a gallery and displayed as images together (Figure 72).

Figure 72 The Insight board in situ ready for unveiling

We had now decorated each of the insights with their supporting quotes. We briefly described our methodology to the new CEO and then let him read the insight gallery alone – being available for comment but not offering a commentary. I did not want my colleague to say too much as I wanted the energy to come from the people's words and the insights.

Looking back at what we did now, with my more advanced thinking on Curating, the Curator had done such a good job in teasing out the essence of the quotes as she constructed her insights. She had very cleverly added her voice into the Curating through the structure of the insights and the architecture of the 'So what's?' However, the weight of the voices of the group still shouted out from the insights, giving the piece of work presence and a ghostly verisimilitude.

The CEO was visibly affected by the presentation and the way we had curated the material. Essentially the discourse from the shop floor had come right into the boardroom in a powerful yet modest manner. It showed what worked and did not work in the culture and exposed failings of senior leaders while at the same time showing possibilities that stretched beyond the end of the programme. Our 'So what's?' provided the final piece, offering our insights in a generous and generative manner.

Looking back now, it is significant the ways that the messages from the insight boards were absorbed by the CEO; to start with he read the insights, agreeing with much of the content; he stepped out of the reading to check with us on how the insights had been put

together and whose voices featured in the quotes. On his second or third reading, he started to register his shock at the force of the message that came from the way that the Curating had grouped the messages and had so starkly portrayed the comments of the team. By the time he came to read the 'So what's?', he was fully engaged and was ready to do something having seen the artefacts.

He said it was more than he could have imagined we could have done and that it had stretched his thinking beyond his expectations. The best bit of all is that the large sheets of paper – banqueting table clothes – were still on his wall three weeks later, there for all to see. The gallery, the discourse and the Curating continue.

The story went on beyond the time that the Curator and I stayed with the organisation. I learnt that the insight boards (Figure 73) were presented to the leadership team (at the time the Curator was a member of the group) by the CEO at an early stage in his role as leader of the group. This is a quote from one of the leaders sent in an email to me.

'I understand that the CEO played back to MET some of the comments from the wall chart legacy you prepared with commentary along the lines of, 'This is what your people think of you ... Pretty 5h1t isn't it? So, it was worth doing methinks.'

These two examples of practice conjure up how Curating can offer the means of getting a message across that stretches beyond merely presentation or dialogue. The Curating comes with a series of layers of meaning and participation. The artefacts have been crafted through the participation of the individuals or groups involved and then those people stand back and apply a new eye to consider how the output can be communicated to others. It is very much as the quotation I used earlier suggests (Verwoert, 2010, p. 20):

> The art of Curating resides in the capacity to grasp the potentials inherent in the magic of social encounters and the power to activate those potentials in the act of facilitating cultural manifestations.

In both the examples I have described the Curator has taken the potential of the made objects and has added an additional context that has brought out form, meaning and insight that has added considerable meaning to the message that lay in the raw made artefacts.

The abiding memory is the way the quality of the words changed as I fixed my crafting metaphor in my mind and the power of the discourse flowed between our fingers as we dwelled and refined and made and then curated.

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The curated material has gone on to create opportunities for further dialogue and reflection beyond the project itself – be it the continued influence on my inquiry or that the insight boards have gone on to directly enter the dialogue of the leadership team.
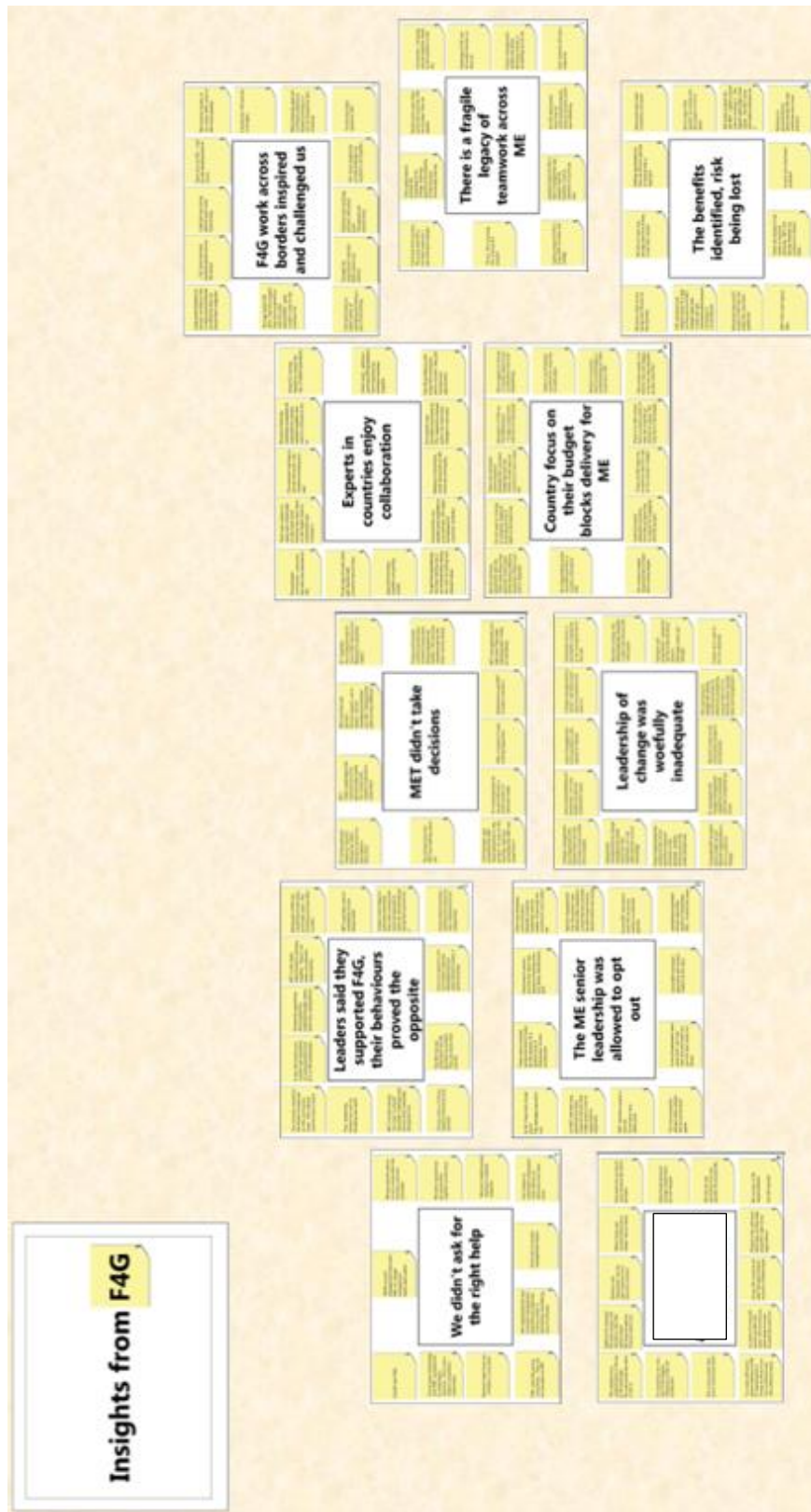
Figure 73 The insight board

How to Apply Bridging, Making and Curating

Following the inquiry that I have described in this section, I decided it would be beneficial to create a guide in order to replicate the approach. The guide serves as a reminder to me and, perhaps, others of the order of events as well as some of the little details of operation that I have learnt.

The full guide is shown at figure 74 and an excerpt is shown in figure 75.

This guide provides the framework for all the examples of practice that now follow.

Figure 74 A Guide to Bridging, Making and Curating

Figure 75 A small section of the guide to make reading easier

Section 4 Interaction

Chapter 10

Building on Curating

Figure 76 The Headless Lego Man

Preamble

This picture of the headless Lego man leads into the story of the next stage of my inquiry. It is a masterpiece of Making, that once curated and presented within the group, told an extraordinarily insightful story that was confirmed by others. The artefact was made by a wind farm commissioning technician to describe his concerns about the safety culture in his place of work at a 'Bridging, Making and Curating' workshop.

The session was notable because it was my first chance to work with front-line technical people who work in a safety-critical role. The outcome had a very important consequence

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for my inquiry. The most powerful model – and the session that produced it – confirmed the power of the Making element in the method and at the same time illustrated the weakness of the Curating element I had used up until this point. It showed how easily tentative voices could be lost and because of the weakness of organisation change and Action Research practice. Because my starting attempts at Curating were top down I missed the chance to tell the story of the very powerful little Lego man to the right audience. Essentially, I was imitating Obrist, who said:

> I felt [Curating] was a very master plan orientated field. The Curator was always expected to deliver a master plan. To decide what is in and what is out. It was very top down. (2013, p. 426)

This chapter tells the story of how this 'headless Lego man' came to inspire the development of the Curating element of the method with the inclusion of a practice of 'Interactive Curating' and 'Social Exhibition Making' (Figure 76). The insight was that while voices could be stimulated and people could speak out through artful means, there was a need to create a way to help others listen and to develop ideas further. Essentially my experience was that the Curating practice that I adopted early on in my inquiry could be deepened and extended.

This episode is the first of a number of cycles of inquiry of my practice that I build on to establish Interactive Curating suggested by Edmonds (Edmonds, Bilda, & Muller, 2009, p. 142) which:

> is part of an ongoing process of dialogue between artist and audience which the Curator manages and develops

and 'Socially Engaged Art' (Birchall, 2015) as an extension on my method of 'Bridging, Making and Curating.

> When viewers become participants in a work of art, or co-producers, there is a transition in the aesthetic considerations. It could be said that socially engaged art is the neo-avant-garde; artists use social situations to produce de-materialized, anti-market, politically engaged projects that carry on the modest call to blur art and life.

This chapter covers the four moments of epiphany that reshaped my practice. These have moved my practice to a position where 'Bridging, Making and Curating' can operate comfortably in complex organisational settings. The consequence of the change has meant

deeper conversations and sustainable actions have emerged through people interacting with the products of the Making and Curating in consciously convened exhibitions. I will come to talk about 'Bridging, Making, Curating and Exhibiting' as the core of my method.

The first is the story with the headless Lego person – when I realised the weakness of the presentational form of Curating reported by Obrist and my first attempt to develop something stronger. The second was putting the practice of Interactive Curating into action in an organisational setting and seeing the way that the method supported both the development of new ideas and unexpected harmony and consensus. The third emerged from the insights of being a curator of an exhibition that was put together to celebrate the life of Chris Seeley. While doing that, I was able to design and realise different levels of interactivity that could go on within an exhibition and to learn about the possibilities of social exhibitions. The fourth was the opportunity to put into practice the full potential of social exhibitions and to see not just the immediate results but also to understand the sustainable change that was possible.

By the end of this chapter, I will be able to show my practice in a deeper, more testing and revealing environment for inquiry. This will be seen to have established interaction and interactivity as an important means of releasing new ideas, a deeper understanding of my role as a curator and the explicit use of exhibition theory and practice that together create further conversations that suggest insight and instigate interventions.

A Change in the Field of Practice

The Emergence of the Headless Lego Man

When I explained to my fellow student that I wanted to experiment with my method in the safety are in high-risk organisations, I had no idea what was to follow – nor could I have predicted the considerable benefits. Through a friend of his, I found myself on a bright cold February morning in 2013 in a Portakabin in the North Wales port of Mostyn on the Dee Estuary coast. I was looking across a yard filled with the battleship-grey components of massive offshore wind turbines ready to be installed, about to start a 'Bridging, Making and Curating' session with a group of electrical and mechanical technicians with a focus on the safety culture where they worked. This was very different to what I had done before. In my early work establishing and experimenting with Bridging, Making and Curating, l had worked in familiar 'white collar' environments or alongside friends and colleagues. In this case, I knew no one and the context of an offshore

heavy engineering industry was very new to my work. The work seemed to be akin to Schön's (1995) description of this field of an organisation inquiry as 'the swampy lowlands' and the idea reinforced by David Coghlan (2013) in terms of action within organisations as 'messy, iterative groping in the dark'.

I found myself in a strange mental state – it was the expectation of trying something new and unexplored. I felt like I was about to jump off a cliff into the unknown. What would the reaction be to the request to build a model? Would the question be treated with levity – as a joke not to be taken seriously? Would anything come from asking a question that directed them to be curious about their safety culture? I just did not know. I remember the physical impact of summoning up my courage and asking the question of the room of men clad in overalls and then being amazed as people leapt into action and started building representations of the safety culture in their workplace. Of course, there were the jokes about wanting to ask their three-year-old to do the task as they would be better at it or that Danish colleagues in the group should be naturally good at building with bricks, however the task was tackled with earnest application (Figures 77 and 78).

The Making process produced models that illustrated the strong aspects of the culture, particularly around the provision of tools and personal protective equipment (their orange suits and other safety gear). They talked about the weak provision of documentation and how contractors were treated less well than they were as employees. A consistent element in all their stories was the way in which their suggestions and observations fell on stony ground and there was no reliable receipt of the idea or indication whether an action had been taken – and how the way that this process was conducted was a measure of the leader's real commitment to safety. In most cases, the stories were illustrated with vivid examples.

Figure 77 Presenting a finished model

Figure 78 Building and discussing

All this took me a back – could this idea of making models of representation of organisational cultures be this easy? So far it had been. Curator's practice is to show (Hetherington, 1997, p. 202) the one piece that makes an exhibition and this notion of a stand-out item was echoed in the Making. A young commissioning technician (acknowledged to be the best problem solver in the group) picked up a little Lego figure and pulled its head off. This little figure became a representative object at the moment (Winnicott, 2005, p. 116) and fits perfectly with Denzin's idea of performative ethnography (2003b, p. xi):

> In showing how people enact their cultural meanings in their daily lives, such a discourse focuses on how these meanings and performances shape experiences of injustice, prejudice and stereotyping

The technician's words fill my head as I write this:

> 'The trouble here', he said, brandishing the little plastic figure, 'are the people with no heads'. And he pulled the head off the little figure. 'These are the people who have just arrived and are new to our work and are not getting the right guidance – who are a danger to them and us. They are also these other people – the people who are very experienced but choose not to follow process – to cut corners – to leave off their heads. Their worst characteristic is that they tell the new people their way is right. It is the headless people we have to do something about'.

There was a silence as he finished, and then a more enduring quiet. Yes, I thought to myself, the power of getting such a simple message said so powerfully shows this part of the method works. It was the stand-out exhibit of the Making session and the most discussed item in the Curating session between the group. The model and the dialogue exceeded my hope for participation in the session.

So now time it was time to curate these powerful models and their associated stories to a bigger audience. Faced with the imminent arrival of the team's managers and no format for Curating in this set-up, I found myself falling back on a well-tried 'change process' I had used many times before to put the stories forward. This seemed immediately at odds with the looseness of the Curating I had used in my earlier work. In this strange and more complex environment, my instinct failed me and I could not think how to Curate so the voices would really come to life. What happened did not match the alchemy of the viva session and lacked the aspirations of 'the storyboard'. Struggling to find a framework, I asked the group to build a model of how they would like their culture to be in the future and then to examine what would need to be in place to link together the possibilities of the future with the good and bad of the present. The curated exhibition was then to be

introduced to the managers of this team of technicians so they could explain their representation and their ideas about the safety culture. My plan was simply to line up the different elements of the made objects and for the technicians to tell their stories. What I realised I had done was to interfere in the flow that had emerged. Rather than Curating their artefacts and their words, I had imposed my power on to the setting. When the two managers entered the room, because I had not set up the conversation for success using Bridging, unsurprisingly the mood changed and there was an awkwardness that had not been there before. Thankfully, the head of the project listened well but there was something clumsy and gawky about the Curating element. Like a teenager trying to be a grown up, I had not given the right environment for the stories to be best represented and for the technicians to have the agency to express themselves – at best it had been a presentation. Not all the stories were told because of this environment – sadly including the tale of the Lego man – and there was something that made the session staged and set-up rather than natural. Those stories that did emerge, I was informed, represented an unusual frankness in content and there was a directness in the ideas that would not normally have been heard. People thought the session had gone well. However, I missed a two-way generative conversation with ideas springing out of the exchange. What was missing was a framework that held the relationships and still provided a certain looseness for mutual discovery. I wondered how I could find something in the Curating element of the method that would work better to serve those passionate and committed voices that had been stimulated and would explicitly develop the interaction and involvement that I had created before in less taxing circumstances.

Reframing the Curation

Lizzie Muller and Interactive Curating

After my disappointment in not making the most of the opportunities that I was given in Mostyn, I committed to myself to bring the theories and practice of Lizzie Muller and 'Interactive Curating' to my work. Dr Muller advocates an ongoing interaction – a stream of artful action, dialogue, reflection and reframing, each step generating new ideas, potentially with new people, that advance the value of the voices that have spoken and in turn develop and create new possibilities for action. Her work very explicitly links together these conversations between the artist and the audience and the Curator. She says (2011, p. 94):

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> This approach created a framework for understanding and describing the new knowledge produced through my practice-based Curational experiments. The focus of my experimentation was audience experience.

This contrasts with my early attempt where I focused on the Making and had not really got a framework to go beyond the theoretical possibilities of Curating. The key idea here for me is to link Curating to participation.

I had been inquiring into different forms of Curating prior to the event in North Wales and had discovered two examples that pointed the way.

The most influential insight came by chance. Several months before the situation I described at Mostyn I had a moment of idle Google research when I punched into my keyboard 'Interactive Curating'. I was searching for something that went beyond the precocious Curating advocated by Hans-Ulrich Obrist. He advocates the participation of the audience as the servant to the curated art, keeping the artist and the audience apart, still privileging the role of the artist as creator and the Curator as god-like presenter of the work to the world (Jeffries & Groves, 2014). He writes of this involvement as something for the Curator, which worryingly takes me back in mind to my Mostyn experience, where I had held apart the dialogue in the Making element from the dialogue in the Curational presentation of this work to others. It does not link the artist, the curator and the audience as a single equal group. Examples of Obrist's work are, firstly, 'DO IT' which is a series of curated events that move to a new city every year (Obrist, 2012). Obrist creates an event where the artist sends instructions to the audience via the curator who in turn acts on them. The audience perform in the art but they are not expected to gain from the experience. The second is entitled 'Laboratorium', which honoured the 400th anniversary of the Flemish artist Anthony Van Dyck's birth and looked at how to bridge the gap between the 'scientist' and the interest and participation of the audience, bringing laboratories and art together (*Laboratorium*, 1999). Once again, this format still could not bridge the link between artist and audience because the exhibited artwork and the participation of the audience were separate – there was no feedback and no opportunity for dialogue or feedback. It fell into the same trap I had in Mostyn, where I had no framework for drawing together the artist and the audience and then linking their reaction into a joint dialogue and then action.

Some contemporary artists have taken control of the Curating themselves. Artists Ai Wei Wei and Carsten Höller demonstrate the desire to link their art with the audience.

Examples of this have been Ai Wei Wei's exhibition in 2014 at Alcatraz, called @Large, where he had the audience sending postcards to those who had been incarcerated for their political views (Spalding, 2014) or Carsten Höller's 'Two Roaming Beds' exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, where he invited audience members to lie overnight on his slowly moving bed so they would wake up in a different location to where they started (Höller, 2015). However, in both cases there is no direct connection between the artist and the audience, who are participants in the art rather than shaping its form. In my view, it is a way of holding the artist-curator in a position of power rather than holding an interaction between the participants and the originators of the art. A third very different case is the series of installations Banksy planted in New York. He presented his art to the people of New York in a series of pop-up pieces that gradually gained press attention. Banksy could announce that a piece was now on show and the media and social media attention would lead to it being hunted down by New Yorkers. This caused a whole series of different reactions. In some cases, they moved the work from its original location and put it up for sale. In others, shutters were erected over the work so people could be charged to view it. In one instance, Perspex was placed over the work to ensure it could be viewed for free. In one further case, the art was painted over and tagged by graffiti artists as they showed their disapproval. The reactions to each was captured by a film crew on behalf on Banksy. I remain convinced that Banksy's work was not the art itself but rather the curated action of the people of New York's reaction to the art (Mock, 2013). Once again, the audience were in the art but they were not being asked to be part of the work, they were just part of it.

Somehow, I judged, it must be possible to bring the audience closer to directly engaging with the art and the artist. In my method, this step is very important because the Makers – the artists – need to be closely in contact with their audience because they are the people that might hear the voices that are offered with the objects and can then enter into a continuing dialogue. Norbert Elias's work in the field of power and balance is helpful here. He talks about creating balances of power, even just for a short time, when the power is equalised in a system. This describes what I am seeking in my practice. That is to say, those involved in a Bridging, Making and Curating inquiry have the power to make what they want to say, for the curated output to hold their images and words and for there to be participation when it is presented and further discussed. At this moment, they hold similar power to traditional authority so they can be involved in a discussion and not just heard (Elias, 1998, pp. 114-116).

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To my request, Google magically responded with 'Interactive Curating – Lizzie Muller'. Putting those two words together had found an Australian researcher whose doctorate had been centred on the notion of putting together the artist, the curator and the audience into a virtuous triangle of reflection and generative shaping, where the three were connected; the artist offering and receiving from the audience, the curator leading and being involved in the conversation and the audience looking at, discussing and adding to the piece of art concerned.

Quickly evident in Muller's writing is the heritage that has led her to research the Interactive Curation of computer-enabled art. She starts with the changing role of the museum. Lizzie indicates that Making and Curating, when placed together, are a matter of reflection and dynamic action. She references Alfred H Barr, the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (known as MoMA), who wrote as the current building was opened in 1939:

> 'The Museum of Modern Art is a laboratory: in its experiments, the public is invited to participate' (Barr 1972, original work published 1939).

Her work goes on to describe the challenges of making artwork, and in particular computer-driven art, accessible to an audience (Muller et al., 2006). I was particularly drawn to the idea that the artwork was not just the stimulus for conversation but was also a place where new possibilities could emerge. Her work emphasised the role of the curator in preparing the territory for both the audience and the artist, such that there was space for the exchange to take place. Indeed, she goes further to describe her interest in not just an interaction between Making and audience but an iterative approach where the audience actually influences the art (Candy, 2011, p. 43). Linda Candy, one of Muller's teachers, illuminates another key part of the interactive practice with regards to reflection (Candy, 2011). She points out that reflection is not a problem-solving tool in this field:

> Making artefacts while adopting a consciously reflective mode of research leads to the emergence of questions and issue almost 'naturally' from the practice.

For my work, the two ideas of engaging the audience closely with the art itself and then the iterative, reflective process that generate critical insights into 'context and method' are profoundly significant for my inquiry.

Finding out about Muller's work has changed my ambitions for how my method is

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deployed to change the way that the voice is heard and its words included and interacted with. It is one thing for models or art to be made and for the Curator to display them as I have previously practiced [see examples], it is quite another thing to consider that the artist and the audience might be brought together for a generative conversation. The attraction of the work of Muller and her supervisor, Edmonds, in combining Making, Curation and audience interaction (Edmonds et al., 2009) is that it offers me a framework to transfer this thinking from the field of art, museums and curation to the world of organisational change. Edmonds defines his area of study thus:

> Art becomes interactive when audience participation is an integral part of the artwork. Audience behaviour can cause the artwork itself to change.

For my inquiry, the implications are significant. What if I can create this interaction – going beyond the clumsy 'presentational' Curating that I deployed in Mostyn to a deeper interactive relationship between the made objects, their Curators and those who view them? What if the artists become the audience and the audience can become the artists as they interact and build and shape a new form of shared context that can become their new joint reality? That is what this theory and practice allows me to explore.

It became my intention to reframe Muller's work and her thinking from the world of art and museums into my world of organisations and change, and in particular to transfer the key notion of interaction and generation of ideas within the triangle of artist, curator and audience. I think that this clarity of intention was missing from my rather directionless intervention in Mostyn, where my instinct to travel this way was lost under the sucking challenge of the 'messy and swampy' world of front-line practicalities and my reflex to return to previous practice.

To return to my Action Research, it creates the opportunity to create and participate in line with Marshall's testing criterion. With this in mind I wonder whether it unleashes the possibilities of freedom and participation coming from dialogue, as suggested by Paolo Freire (1996, p. 71). He writes:

> Dialogue further requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human.

Bringing Interactivity to Life

A Winter's Day on the Beach in Prestatyn

I was given a further opportunity to work with a group of technicians working at sea in the early days of the offshore wind energy business in 2014. It was my intention to use the ideas of Interactive Curating with them. I wrote this account of my inquiry with them:

> My approach was now explicitly orientated around the 'Interactive Curating' of Lizzie Muller and colleagues. I interpreted their work for my context in organisational settings as setting up conversations over the made objects, the artwork if you like, as they were made and treating this as a critical part of the method, where the interactivity would take place. This meant that I would first spend time with the group talking about their own models and then broadening the discussion into a wider one in the room to create the environment of interaction. I would meet the Making on its own terms and not try to force a particular process of analysis. Additionally, a number of managers had been invited to join some of the groups. On their arrival, they were asked to make their own models and to join in the conversation as fellow participants rather than standing as a separate audience. From the outset, I worked on my Curational activity to be focused on the interaction over the made objects and then on the subsequent conversations. The models were each individually described and then there were discussions that followed. From the event, I had undertaken to report on what I had found.

These discussions meant that the style I adopted for this exhibition, using 'catalogue' rather than the report – offering ideas, possibilities and reflection on the interactions rather than recommendations. Finally, I was pressed to mount an exhibition at their next safety meeting, when participants from the session would have the chance to discuss their work with colleagues and their managers. I would explicitly encourage the generative interactive conversation that Muller had advocated. That might both change the nature of the artwork and also the discourse.

The vivid nature of the Making sessions and the Interactive Curating that took place in the session is well captured by the catalogue (Figures 79 and 80).

Figure 79 The making under way

It covers the first three iterations of Curating. The first came with the Making of the objects themselves. The catalogue shows some of the models with their individual stories. They revealed many insights to the strengths and the weaknesses of the safety system. The most striking was the box of buttons, which described the lost safety reports that never get acted upon and the simple model of a wind turbine that was about the deliberate rule infractions of the Maker's colleagues.

Figure 80 The impact of people not following the processes

The next iteration was the discussion in the groups themselves. These meant that the other Makers were able to add their context to the stories of others – normally reinforcing and enriching the stories. However, there was one notable case where one group had built non-descriptive models and seemed very disinterested.

Figure 81 The model from the
independent subcontractors

The curated conversation revealed much about their world as independent subcontractors, who felt detached from the safety system. They talked about how they managed their own safety environment (Figure 81). Their reluctance to make a model did not stop the iterative flow generating such a strong voice. Also, of note was the involvement of managers in the sessions. Initially there was some reluctance by technicians to open up with managers present. However, the Making process, which everyone took part in, created some equality and then the storytelling and Curating meant there was an openness to share stories and perspectives. For me, at least, these sessions added another layer of texture. With the stories told and the models recorded, the next iteration was at a project safety board involving employees and managers alike. At this meeting, I put together an exhibition of the models and the conversations and invited the participants to visit the display. Some of those at the meeting had attended the initial sessions and so shared their experiences in their own words. The conversation that occurred at the meeting was not a presentation – as I had created in the first episode – rather it was a further iteration between the artists and the audience with me as the Curator. What I found was that those who had been in the conversation now became part of the inquiry. From these iterations emerged a new artefact – the reflection on what had been seen, discussed and shared.

There was a new understanding of the critical role that the responses to 'safety cards' had on the workforce. The Making, the Curation and the iterative discussions revealed that the whole effectiveness of the management team was being measured by the responsiveness to these ideas or calls for help. The iterative conversations revealed the

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relationship between these 'safety cards' and safety system that they were part of.

The final element of this inquiry was to visit the accommodation ship on which these technicians lived, to engage with them on how their voices had been heard and the call to action the management team had heard – and with it an undertaking to act. This experience illustrated to me the value in the explicit use of putting alongside the Making, the Interactive Curating and reflection that Muller and her colleagues had described. It had changed so much from my first experiment.

Now I had come to realise that each conversation at each stage was part of this interactive accumulation of context and understanding. It was evident that at each stage more depth and understanding were built. Essentially, each interaction and the subsequent voices built another set of artefacts that were owned by those in that particular conversation. This was very reminiscent of the hermeneutical spiral (Figure 82) by Wängelin (2007, p. 4).
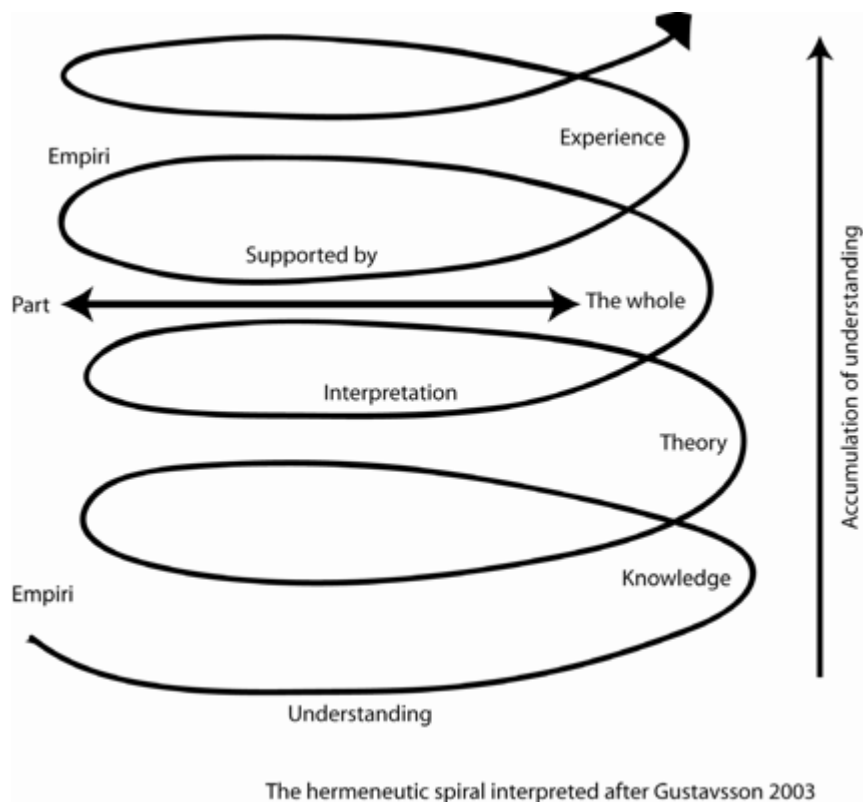

Figure 82 From Wängelin-Bricolage and Hermeneutics

Now it was not a question of Curating and presenting at each of the stages. Now it was about creating a shared conversation that drew people into the inquiry and that allowed action to be proposed that was itself an artefact and became the subject of further Curational interaction. This inquiry was still very experimental and had nevertheless placed interaction fairly and squarely into my practice.

Curating a Celebration

In December 2014, my wonderful doctoral supervisor, teacher and friend, Chris Seeley, died after succumbing to a brain tumour. I spent some time with her two weeks before her death. It was lovely to see her and to be part of conversations about the work she was still deeply engaged in. Through the veil of sadness, her determination to continue her inquiry shone through. As I listened to her exuberant description of her work and her desire for it to persist after her death, I found myself offering to curate the celebration of her life and work that she wanted to author. I cannot tell you about the sadness of talking to Chris about an event that she knew she would not be able to attend. While it was hard to think of her not being there, I offered to curate the 'Celebration'. What then transpired was a very formative experience for my inquiry and indeed for my life. Her husband, Geoff Mead, described the intention: 'Chris had asked me to arrange a bang-up celebration of her life and I was determined to create a memorable happening,' and more specifically in the invitation to her many friends and colleagues he wrote (Mead, 2017, p. 55):

> We will be coming together for two days of exhibitions, installations, food rituals, music, clowning, storytelling, conversation, artful activities, sharing memories, poetry, quiet contemplation and whatever else we can come up with.

For me it was a very personal experience – living in Chris's life after she had died and being with existing friends, colleagues and those I had not met who were so close to Chris.

I write about this event in this dissertation because it was a unique opportunity to live the life of an 'exhibition creating art-based curator' outside of my organisational change practice. What I discovered are the considerations in mounting such a celebration; the way that the interaction I experienced between the audience and the artist and the curator took place, the creative cycles of immersion and reflection I saw during the preparations and the event itself and the way the celebration offered stories for people to take and share and for something rather magical to emerge at the culmination of the

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event.

At the same time as I was putting together the exhibition, I was discovering a parallel field of practice from the art world that I wanted to apply to the celebration together with the Interactive Curating I have described. Known as Socially Engaged Art, it encompasses Curating, interaction and participation (Birchall, 2015). What was most interesting for me was the manner it created an exhibition to be fully participative and this activity provided the chance for artists, the curators and the community associated with the subject to work together to make something completely new and fresh, something that carries a further degree of meaning beyond the work originally established or even conceived by the artists. These ideas resonated with the plans and the experience of the event itself.

What I learnt as we put the exhibition together were the intricacies of where artefacts should go, what they should be next to and how the interaction between the artefacts themselves was a matter of sensitivity and attention. Below you will see the outputs of an early planning session (Figure 83).

Figure 83 An early planning session

Figure 84 The plan of the event

The process for putting together the event was led by her husband Geoff while I played the role of curator. I drew up the first map of where the exhibits were to be placed. In considering this I had to bear in mind Chris's wishes to create a series of locations that carried elements of her life rather than trying to tell a story. The celebration was a mixture of bringing together the older and familiar and creating and building the new. We thought long and hard about what to place at the entrance – as that would set the scene. There was the matter of the quiet reflective areas not being too close to the music makers and the clowning; how to place Chris's own art alongside her academic writing, her fragile journals and her wonderful clothes against the spaces for others to contribute and to make and to play (Figure 84).

Most important was how we reflected Chris's own artwork, which captured her illness and death, among the exhibits and how this related to the space that Chris and Geoff had been married in December 2013. It needed to be present in a prominent position to respect Chris and it needed to be sensitively located to pay respect to those who attended the wedding – held in the same premises. At the same time, there was something about putting some of the exhibits, installations and artefacts in a place where they surprised or challenged by being in juxtaposition.

At the event itself, I found myself with a new role. With the preparation complete Geoff wanted to be part of the event and not its keeper, so I had the pleasure of keeping the flow of events going and standing back and watching the way people interacted with the exhibits. The fixed elements – artwork by Chris, her clothes and her bears (Chris had a phenomenal collection of teddy bears) – all played their part in creating the atmosphere but it was the interactive exhibits that drew the audience most closely to being a part of the event.

Below are some pictures from the event (Figures 85, 86, 87 & 88)

Figure 85 Reading Chris's notebooks

Figure 86 Dance and song

Figure 87 Poetry Reading

Figure 88 The Memory Board created during the celebration

The journals, the poems and the paintings let us experience something from Chris's life or reminded participants of an activity they had enjoyed with Chris. This manifested itself with people reading the journals that Chris had kept through her life and stopping and smiling when they noticed some point of connection; an intimate group sharing poems about Chris that she had particularly loved; a choir turning into a joyful community of singing and dancing for all and a group of clowns leading what I can only call mass clowning. Sometimes this was more intimate, with people stopping to tell a story or share an experience as they passed by or made an object. The event culminated in everyone there singing and dancing – everyone seeming to come together in a joyous moment of energy.

The celebration became a transition to new energy for all our lives. What struck me was the form of the exhibition – some items created a context and others created the opportunity to be drawn into a community and to leave feeling that they were part of something where they would continue to carry Chris's life and work. What seemed to create these moments were an engagement, a reflection and being able to share a social relational moment with others.

My moment of social connection was realising that, through helping at the celebration, Chris had given me the chance to put my inquiry into a bigger context. The celebration confirmed that Curating was more than facilitating a single event or conversation, it was about creating an experience into a multi-faceted exhibition that served not just to be experienced but to be taken part in. The points of reflection (and there were many at the celebration) are so important for changing the artist or the relationship with the artist's memory. However, it was the multiple points of contact with the broader exhibition that could really draw the audience and artist together and become the means of carrying the art, the reflection into further action and social change. While I came to this event having been part of Chris's life, through this event I had become part of a movement for deeper change in the world where I felt held by others to support me and to hold me to account.

This revelation about exhibiting and its part in bringing to life a social engagement beyond even reflective Interactive Curating drew my attention. I wondered how to explore this further and embed it directly into my own practice.

Something More on Socially Engaged Art

Socially engaged art takes the idea of interaction with Curating into a broader sphere. In describing its characteristics Michael Birchall writes (2015, p. 13):

> When viewers become participants in a work of art, or co-producers, there is a transition in the aesthetic considerations. It could be said that socially engaged art is the neo-avant-garde; artists use situations to produce de-materialised, anti-market politically engaged projects that carry on the modest call to blur art and life.

Early projects in this genre challenged the power of the curator – for example a project from 1993 in the Netherlands where veterans, who had always had their belongings curated after their death into a museum, demanded a say, allowing them to create and display their own cabinets while they were alive. The curator Valerie Smith wrote: 'The work must create meaning for and from the place in which it exists.' (Ibid, p. 14)

Held in Chicago in 1993, 'Culture in Action' is held to be the breakthrough event in this field. The curator Mary Jane Jacob wanted to shift the 'the role of the viewer from passive spectator to active art Maker' (Ibid, p. 15). Memorable exhibits included staging a multi-ethnic parade, a chocolate bar that was made by union members and a working hydroponic farm. Through these events Making art that had an impact on the political and social affairs of their community. Jacob was quite clear in her intentions, saying (2013, p. 174):

> I thought there has got to be a better way – a better process that can lead to serious contemporary art... in the idioms of today and still have room for the public. Instead, why not invite members of the public to come into the thinking, to inspire and to provoke it, give it purposefulness and be in continuous dialogue with the artists throughout the process.

Other examples emphasise the way that artists use Making and then Curating to cultivate dialogue and material for change and then to have it heard and seen. Suzanne Lacey's 'The Crystal Quilt and Mother's Day' in Minneapolis from 1987 is a case in point. Birchall writes that this project empowered the participants to write and say what they had not spoken of before and that it – alongside other projects brought together marginalised groups. Nabeel Hamdi is quoted by Kersten Mey in a reflective study by Lacey. She says of the impact of Lacey's work (2010, p. 338):

> Practice disturbs. It can and does promote one set of truths, belief systems, values, norm, rituals, powers and gender relations in place of others. It can impose habits, routines and technologies that may lead to new and unfamiliar ways of thinking, doing, organising, locally, nationally and even globally,

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Pablo Helguera, who wrote an 'Education for Socially Engaged Art', makes an important point that directly links to my own inquiry. He writes (2011, p. 81):

> The very distancing that some collectives take from art and the blurring of boundaries between disciplines indicate an emerging form of art-making in which art does not point at itself but instead focusses on the social process of exchange.

Learning from my own experience with the Celebration, I entirely see this practice; the art, the participation and the interactivity actually create these emergent ideas. Socially Engaged Art offers the practice of artists letting the public participate as legitimate contributors. It is applicable to my approach.

Socially Engaged Art certainly fits with my approach and also integrates with Interactive Curating. Interactive Curating and its emphasis on reflection and conversation fits into the broader combination of fields in Socially Engaged Art. In any event, the two theories and their practices can combine in my approach. I have been able to show the benefits of staging interaction during the Bridging phase and the positive consequences of bringing Making together with Curating. I think that Socially Engaged Art offers the opportunity to bring the artistic elements together with a greater emphasis of direct participation in producing artefacts by those without artistic skills. It then uses the exhibition as a forum for bringing together ideas and objects to produce something even stronger, which emerges from the interactivity and further discussion. This can be of greater consequence for the group and the context of the work.

Working in Nottingham

A chance to integrate my approach with Socially Engaged Art and Interactive Curating came in the middle of 2014. This practice example shows how my inquiry is extended beyond Bridging, Making and Curating to include these two theories from the art world. It shows how the whole concept can be applied to the world of work as part of a change intervention.

The Request

This most significant intervention in my inquiry came from a simple request.

> Can you help us with understanding our culture?

The business concerned had been subject to a chain of changes, reaching back into the early part of the century when their business model started to evolve. It started off selling electro-mechanical gas meters and providing a mobile workforce who would read them. Then with electronics moving the manufacturing of the meters to the Far East, the possibility of remote reading started to revolutionise the business model. Now the business was faced with changing in a most profound way – needing to move from a low-tech, labour dependent organisation to one that was a seller of digital and information services.

The managing director **told me** (my emphasis) that his vision for the organisation was very clear to him but for some reason the middle managers had not understood it and were resisting the changes. He was clear that the potential offered by the organisation was for the leaders to take ownership of their destiny – he just could not work out why they did not want to take it. The director of strategy was rather less strident. In fact, he had a question – he wanted to know what could be done to inspire those middle managers and their teams to commit to set off towards this new world.

My Offer

Into this inquiry and challenging environment, I offered to use my approach together with the growing practical and theoretical framing from the art world to inquire into the culture and the questions that the managers had posed.

The summary of my proposal centred on an adaptation of the method I have described before – therefore, this was something of an experiment. I proposed to run a series of

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Making sessions and interviews for people to express their views on the business – where all the sessions were launched with the phrase, 'Tell me about the culture around here.' With the Making complete in each of the groups, I encouraged them to start an initial curation in the room to discuss and share notes on the models that had been made. Notes were taken from each of the sessions and interviews and these were then curated and exhibited to a group of middle managers to gather their further thoughts about what had emerged as a whole. I then determined to draw from these local exhibitions the insights and systemic views that had emerged. At this point, the commissioning team and I would curate the outcome for further conversation and action.

The rough plan at this point was to bring together the stories and the insights into an exhibition for the whole of the management to participate in. This would give them a chance to view the exhibits and to reflect together on how what was there might affect their business and what opportunities might emerge. I promised to help curate all these stages and to leave the business a catalogue of the exhibitions and the possibilities that had emerged from the interaction and participation, the curation and the exhibitions. My offer was accepted and the inquiry got under way.

Early Works

I remain in touch with the strategy director and when he tells the story of the inquiry, he always starts with a smile. He smiles because he tells the story of the first meeting with the group of managers who were to be the co-inquirers.

> 'What we asked was rather unusual – actually it was just plain odd – given the organisation that we were,' he remarked. 'It was not usual to ask senior managers to work with Lego or for that matter to tell stories.'

Building with Lego and telling stories was just what we did. For one week, I worked with four groups of managers and conducted 12 interviews. The model-making sessions were characterised by the outspoken voices and the striking models that were made. However, through the Making element, everyone had an equal chance to contribute. Many said that it was a relief to be able to speak out and to be able to contribute. Highlights of the sessions were the discussions Curating the views and interacting on the different models. Some of these models are shown below.

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Figure 89 The culture described by a model

For all of their power the models and conversations had been the products of small groups – or just the individual voices from the interviews. The next task was to curate these artefacts into an exhibition for a larger group to see and to interact with. Each of the models had been photographed (Figure 89) and these images were mounted with an account of what had been said by the builder and had then been added in to the exhibition. The first exhibition was to the 'trailblazers', a group of managers who had stepped forward in advance of my inquiry to help with business change.

I staged the exhibition just like you might find in a gallery, except this was set in a meeting room of the business. The handwritten images with the photos of Lego models were juxtaposed with corporate posters describing the company's values and corporate images representing the business's view of itself.

One of the major insights that emerged from these early stories was directly related to the MD's loaded question about the cadre of middle management. What emerged from their models was the idea that they had been told about the strategy; however, they felt strongly that they had not been engaged or involved in its creation or deployment. Many

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of the models featured images of the MD as a monster or a witch doctor. A challenging moment was the first exhibition, which involved showing this senior person some of the images and challenging his view of his world. We drew a picture of the stories we had heard and I told it as the independent voice (Figure 90).

Figure 90 The Storyboard prepared for the Managing Director

I remember his reaction very clearly. He was obviously emotional about what he saw and the colour rose in his cheeks. He did not say very much as the conversation closed and he got up to leave. The door closed behind him and the three of us in the room looked at one another. Before we had a chance to say anything more, the MD returned to the room and said: 'I cannot say I am happy with what you have told me but it is important and I accept it. Please carry on and see where it leads.' He left again and the inquiry continued.

I invited the group to visit the exhibition with a partner and asked them to read and absorb the material in silence. Once this was done, I encouraged a discussion on what they had seen and what they had observed. In the end, we followed this cycle three times. Each time, what they had seen and the interaction pushed the understanding and the conversation – moving from what they noticed to insights that were laden with the images and quotes from the models and the text. With the material that they had offered, I took my Curational hat and proposed that I would represent back to them the ideas I had heard and to mould a picture of their insights.

The insight discussion was most interesting – essentially, they took the words and phrases that I had suggested and then interacted with this new exhibit to make new

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material work. The final step in formalising the words into a piece of art was carried out by one of the team. She took the statements – the insights as they became known – to a graphic designer who produced a series of images primarily in a deep burgundy with the statement in the centre and the quotes from the inquiry around each of them. A sample of these insights is produced below (Figure 91).
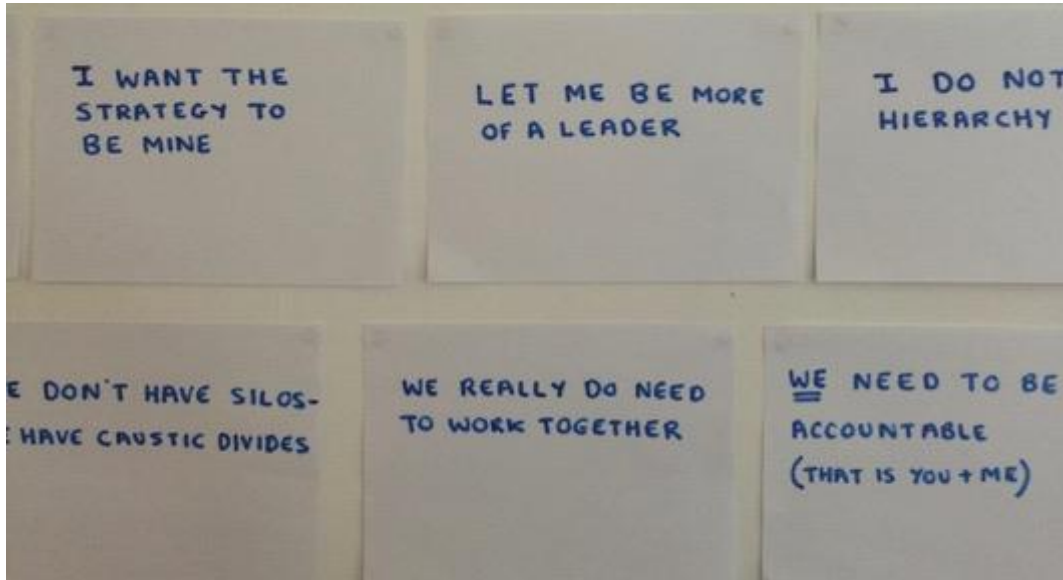
Figure 91 A sample of the insights

This activity seemed to bring this phase of the inquiry to a close. We had made strong and insightful models of the organisation and had added stories from the interviews to give an image of the organisation. We had introduced the story to the managing director and had received his support to move the story forwards. We had curated and exhibited the stories to a group of about 20 managers in the organisation who had validated the overall picture and added to the material with their overview of the message from the Making sessions. What we decided to do next took the inquiry a dramatic step forward. Instead of presenting the finding to others – to the directors – for action, my sponsor agreed to the idea of taking those who had said they were not involved to become those who would choose the course the organisation would take.

Exhibition of the Future

The strategy director had heard me talk of exhibitions and Curating and decided to mount the meeting where the story of the inquiry would be displayed in an operating arts centre – in its exhibition space.

With a group of helpers, we mounted the exhibition. The exhibits that we displayed were posters talking about the context for the inquiry, the display of the models with their accompanying texts, the transcripts of the interviews, the insights and a number of recreated models with the text next to them. In this actual exhibition space, the artefacts took on a bright and alluring personality that seemed to draw me to look and to read and to think (Figure 92).

The plan for the 60 attendees was to look and reflect on the exhibits, to spend time reflecting on what they had seen and then to reconvene in smaller groups to reflect again. As we had done in the past , I invited them back from the discussions into the exhibitions to reconnect with what they had been discussing. I remember at this point the MD approached me, asking: 'Will we get anywhere or will we leave with nothing decided?' I reassured him that something would emerge and that that would be progress – I had my fingers crossed.

After the second round of interaction with the exhibition and discussions, I requested a summary of the conversation they had been having from each table. I remember wondering what would emerge with some nervousness. As we went around the room, a similar theme rang out:

> We want to do something about the way we work together – 'caustic divides' is where we are and this must change.

So, with a flick of a sentence, there was the common goal, with ownership taken by the team. They agreed the organisation's lack of co-operation and collaboration would be their point of departure for their own inquiry.

Figure 92 The Nottingham Exhibition

Further Work

With this commitment from the management team, there was an agreement to involve the whole organisation in the inquiry. In the weeks that followed, the full exhibition was taken into meeting rooms and working areas for others to see the picture of the organisation that the managers had painted together, with the first seed planted to change the culture. At each event curators were there to guide visitors around the artefacts and at each event the audience was asked to talk about the elements that they wanted to come true and what they would do to help.. Each person's contribution was recorded which in turn was curated to become part of the living exhibition.

With this done, there was a deepening understanding as to how the organisation would 'become one'. About 100 volunteers were enrolled and started working on the topics that they had described. I went to a further meeting of this management team some six months after the original exhibition. Here I saw people from deep in the organisation sharing their ideas to their senior colleagues and asking for their help, itself in the form of an exhibition. I heard the MD declaring that he wanted to move to a culture of coaching from his leaders to support rather than to tell the organisation what they should do. I heard the culture change so that 'how' was being given equal priority with 'what' in determining how the business needed to change to be successful.

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I know that the work continues now – three years after the first Lego blocks were pressed together. Of course, there have been ups and downs but the exhibition in the gallery continues to inspire and to be the source of progress. What now follows are some reflections from the sponsor of the original inquiry. The first couple of paragraphs address the initial impact of the exhibition itself:

> Looking back at 'The Inquiry' and the 'watershed' moment that was the exhibition, the resultant volunteering – people across all levels taking ownership of problems, issues and opportunities actually caused the culture to shift significantly from a command and control to much more of an empowered culture of ownership.

> What makes our change continue is that the exhibition and the fact that real change and actions came out of it allows the organisation to use any method to engage with people and let them tell their stories.

> We continue to use the learning from the initial work we did with Chris, particularly around the generative nature of modelling and framed conversations. We have found simple ways of letting people tell their stories through interviews, 'back to the floor' and leadership tours, and often simply by dedicating time to have conversations.

The sponsor goes on to describe how these more recent conversations take place:

> While these might take place in quite traditional settings, i.e. a room with chairs to sit on or work shadowing, these gatherings and conversations are not at all traditional in nature, in that a) true listening takes place and b) meaningful changes are generated/initiated straight away and c) the participants get involved in making these changes.

> We decided to refer to these ongoing cycles of inquiry and action as 'The People Plan', as Culture is ultimately all about the people and 'Plan' simply suggests there is ongoing commitment to it all.

He also describes how the inquiry has developed from the original themes of collaboration:

> However, the organisation and its people ended up running out of ideas as the focus had been so much on collaboration. We simply realised we needed to

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broaden the perspective of the work we had done to enable a more constant 'feeding' of great ideas that people would a) generate and b) implement. Partly this could easily be done by looking at the other insights from the inquiry, which indeed is what happened, but partly other 'topics' came out of frequent and diverse conversations.

Figure 93 shows the voyage of change the organisation has been on since the first inquiry took place.
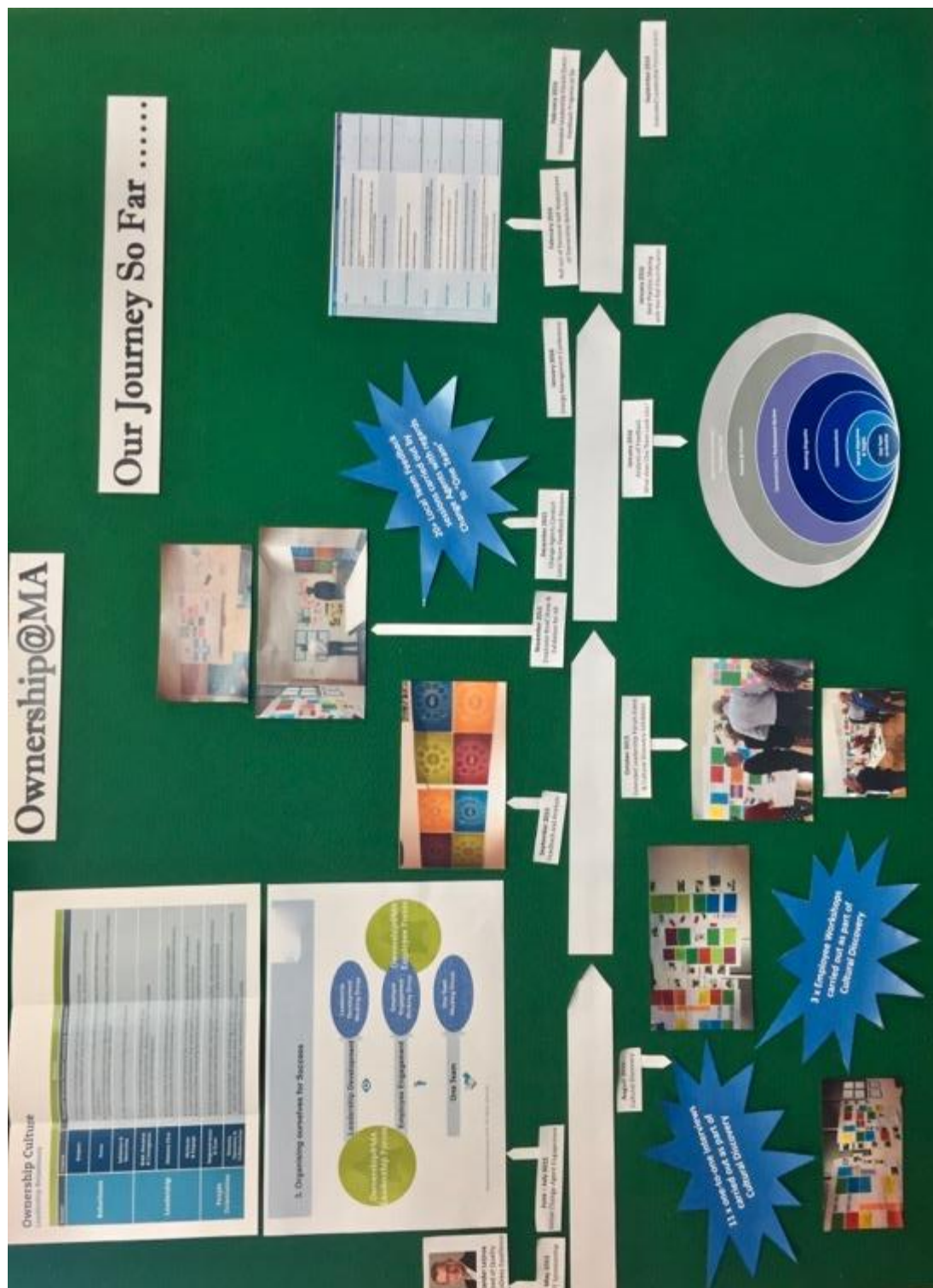
Figure 93 The Exhibition board describing the Nottingham Inquiry experience

Closing Reflections

My reflections on this intervention are that through applying the approach I have developed – and through the listening to and acting upon voices – there has been significant and sustainable change within this organisation. What I think is most telling is the voice from the organisation itself who names the 'exhibition' as the formative moment when those voices turned into collective action. Furthermore, through the legacy of that exhibition, related activities emerged inside the organisation that allowed the change to deepen and for the voices to be heard more loudly.

Wrapping Up the Chapter

The experience of my inquiry with my colleagues in Nottingham cemented the method for my inquiry.

I moved from the basic approach of Bridging, Making and Curating – which in its own right seemed to increase the way that voices were expressed and heard – to place a greater emphasis on how the method presents and encourages the conversations to continue towards action and sustainability.

It was clear from the practice I describe at Mostyn – where the less familiar ground of the circumstances of the technicians and their world exposed that I had not got the means of carrying out the interaction. What I learnt and then put into practice was to give the practitioners the ability to carry out their own Curating and for their important themes to develop. It was my role as Curator to provide the means for these conversations and reflections to take place around the artefacts they had made.

The adoption of the practices of Socially Engaged Art moved this new idea further. As I was able to demonstrate with the inquiry in Nottingham, the application of deeper participation throughout the approach resulted in greater involvement and commitment to change. This is developing the exhibition further along very participative lines. It had the impact of changing the nature of the engagement of the people in the organisation so that it became more of a free dance than a regimented process. The outcome is that the approach has led to a more sustained and deeply participative change in the organisation.

Section 5   Exit

Chapter 11

Bringing the Inquiry home

Introduction

At my final viva the examiners pressed me to 'bring my inquiry home'. By this they meant for me to 'elucidate and present my methods and practice insights that gives access to practitioners' and to 'show how my research builds on understandings of Action Research thus outlining the contribution [I am] making to Action Research Scholarship' (Adams, 2020; Sartre, 1946). I have decided to respond to those requests through an extension to this chapter.

This chapter was always about understanding my method and practice better. It was born from a conversation with a friend who was curious about my doctoral work. He asked a simple question.

> 'Chris' he asked, 'so what does happen when people work with you?'

In this chapter you will read a description of how my method and practice are used in a number of inquiries to understand how it is used, what participants gain from the experience and how it compliments and adds to Action Research knowledge.

Therefore, rather than a single question this chapter aims to ask four:

- What are the elements that make up the method and practice?
- What happens when you apply the method and practice?
- How does this approach build on understandings of Action Research?
- What are the influences of power and politics?

This will be a practical guide to my method and practice and its place in scholarship.

Map of the chapter

The chapter draws on the resource of some of my most recent practice. What is distinctive about these stories of my method and practice is that they return to reflect on my research in the context of Action Research rather than continuing to explore new practices and methods from other fields.

The first section aims to show what it takes to put the method and practice into the field using practice examples. It starts with a view of the comprehensive system within which the method is situated and then describes the individual elements in practice and theory.

Using examples of inquiries within organisations, the second section describes what happens when 'Bridging, Making and Curating' encounters participants and co-inquirers. It includes a consideration of the 'dance' that characterises my practice in action, as it responds to their specific context and the developing outcomes of their inquiry.

The third section places the inquiry back into Action Research scholarship. I discussed my relationship to the field when I was establishing the context and theoretical basis for the early phase of my inquiry, 'An Intervention on Myself' in Chapter 4. I then carried out Action Research method as the basis of the research in subsequent cycles of inquiry. Now it is about showing how my research builds on my understanding of Action Research and expanding on where the contribution of the method and practice might lie.

The final section covers what I call the 'shadow lands' of my inquiry. Hitherto, I might have named these moments as failures, however I now see the silences and responses in these circumstances as points of learning. I highlight the political dynamics I have encountered. Reflecting on these episodes has informed me as much as the learning from where my inquiry has gone well.

Part 1

What are the elements of the method and practice?

Considering the whole system

My method and practices are not about a series of ingredients that go together in a set way, rather the elements operate within an organic system that flexes according to the context of the inquiry and the responses that arise.

The first thing to do, therefore, is to explain the system that my method and approach operates within. I want to do this with representation of a mobile, which is influenced by the work of Alexander Calder (Figure 94). I have chosen this form because I want to reflect the movement and interconnectedness in my method that goes with the dynamic movement of this art form[2].

The shape of mobile in the illustration contains the elements of the practice. On the left you can see the three elements of the method. The elements of Bridging, Making and Curating are connected together and yet move separately (including the three elements of Curating). On the right are represented the cycles of inquiry that take place once the practice is underway, again these all move independently and are linked together as the inquiry progresses.

The cycles of inquiry that take place within the method use the elements of Bridging, Making and Curating together. All of them are connected and interlinked, however, critically there is a freedom of movement between them. This implies that while there is a structure for the method, the exact form of any inquiry will emerge from the events developed by each stage of the interactions between the participants.

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[2] One of Calder's objects is like the sea and equally spellbinding: always beginning over again, always new. A passing glance is not enough; you must live with it, be bewitched by it. Then the imagination revels in these pure, interchanging forms, at once free and rule- governed (Sartre, 1946).

I have shown that there is a guiding architecture for the method (with the intention of leading towards action) and that the actual path of the different steps will be as the result of a response to what has emerged in a previous cycle or the interaction between several different cycles.
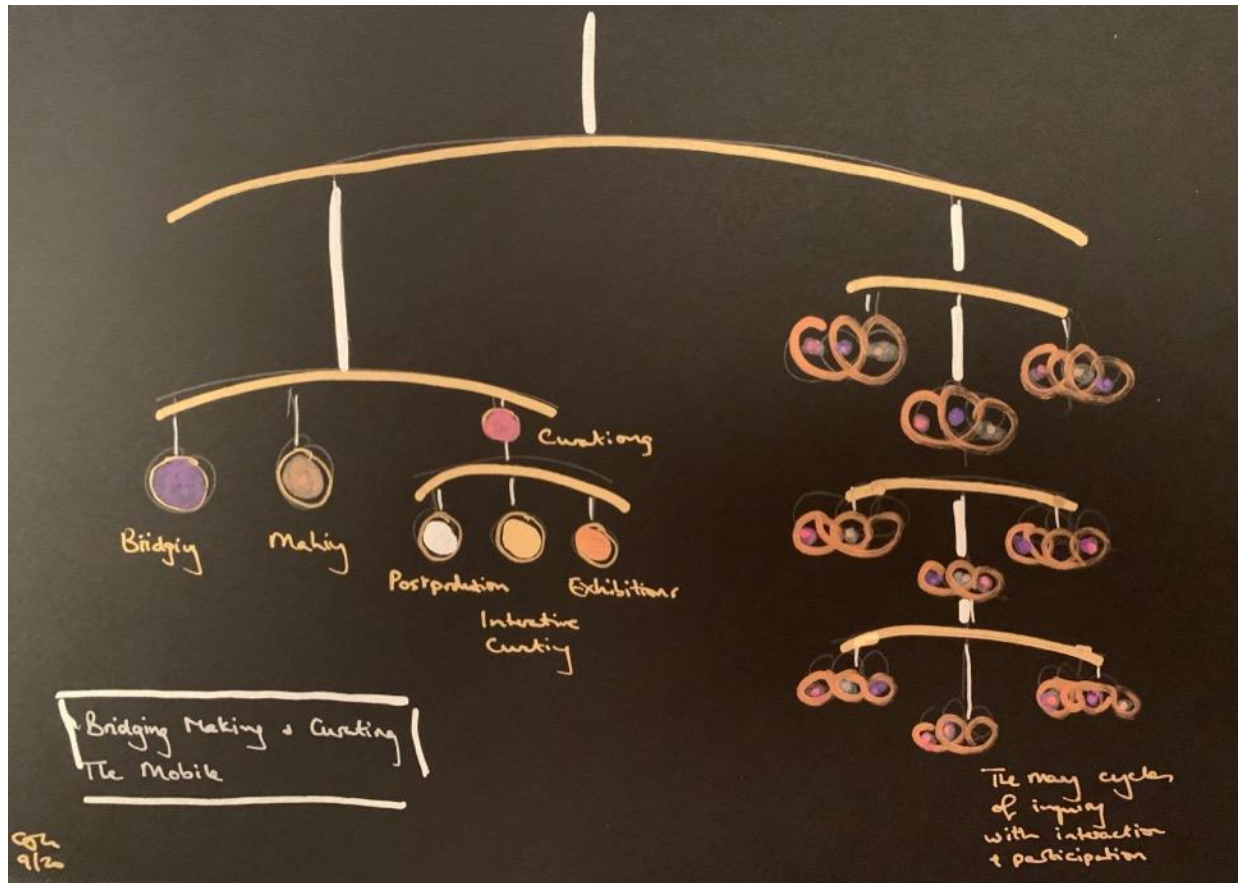
Figure 94 The Bridging, Making and Curating Mobile

To underline this sense of movement I introduce a second example of my Making practice (Figure 95). This model represents the progressive cycles of inquiry (moving from left to right); each one opening up previously unspoken dialogue by breaking through the layers of enforced silence to have it expressed and each one contributing to the richness of subsequent cycles of inquiry. The progression of these cycles culminates in the new information bursting into action and change.

Figure 95 'Bursting Through'

It is not only the building blocks of the method and the interaction that are important, it is also the state of mind that I have carried into my work. Richard Buckminster Fuller (Bucky) writes about the all-encompassing 'Comprehensive Approach' that welcomes different thinking, different styles and different perspectives (2008). To a large extent, the system that carries my thesis is just that, it is an amalgam of a collection of different theories and practices from across different fields and disciplines. In the context of my work this also represents my openness to challenging points of view, different perspectives and the world views that come with working in the modernist industrialist world.

To further illustrate this comprehensive inquiry approach, I turn to Bucky's' World Game' (1981, pp. 198-226). The 'World Game' was a means of bringing a group of people together to explore the significant topic of living within the world's resources and developing new ways of humankind living and thriving with new and experimental environmental approaches. Even taking account of Bucky's methods, which were rather

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prescriptive when compared to my own, the important point of reference is that his work is extremely participative. Further, the participants arrive at their conclusion through conversation and by building images of their imagined future. All of which accumulates their insights to the subject and their connection to the outcome.

The other really important part of my position is in stark contrast to Bucky's practice. The accounts of the 'World Game' have him constantly lecturing to the participants and asking to check the development of their work

> Fuller returns. Bucky speaks for two weeks. (excitement, the frontier, revelation, mindflying), Bucky leaves for Europe…(Buckminster Fuller, Schlossberg, & Gildesgame, 1969, p. 3)

I, by contrast, take a liminal position and stand back while the participants work out their own response to the inquiry question. I hold the position of 'I Don't Know' (Tuttle, 2014) when it comes to the subject matter and only step in to help when necessary. These two features; creating opportunities for deep participation from the participants, and being present and in the background to allow them to develop their own way forward, characterise my work. I characterise my method and practice as a comprehensive, participative and organic system.

Bridging Making and Curating

This section looks at what happens in the individual elements of Bridging, Making and Curating. The outcome will be to give practitioners access to my methods and practice, to the extent that they can be adopted by the reader. The practice of each element is explained followed by setting it in the context of the relevant theories

This explanation is set in the context of an inquiry in a major multinational company on the subject 'What it is like to be over 50 in this organisation?'

The inquiry was initiated by the Human Resources Policy Lead and sought to look into this area in a different way - avoiding the pre-set quantitative questionnaire originally intended - and aiming to inquire openly into the ideas, concerns and challenges for this group of people. The inquiry took place through six Making workshops with groups of employees who participated totalling some 70 people. There were then two Curating sessions that involved some of the original participants and finally exhibitions to the Company's HR Board and back to the original participants.

Bridging

The Making and Curating elements of the thesis depend on the engagement, involvement and openness of the participants. The contribution of the Bridging element is to set up the right environment for the later exchanges to occur. It is where a connection emerges that encourages listening and creativity among all the participants. When I started my experiments with second-person inquiries, working with other people, I rushed to action and did not take the time to initiate and to dwell with the participants before the Making commenced. This resulted in some disruption and misalignment showing itself in unspoken issues popping up in conversations, a lack of common understanding of other participant's goals and contexts and a discordant rhythm emerging for the inquiry. I learnt a different way into an inquiry at my Transfer Paper Viva – where the benefit of understanding context and tuning in together with those involved was so significant. The Bridging element in the 'over 50s inquiry' was consistently important in helping the participants describe and develop their context for the reflection and sharing that would follow. It establishes common understanding and for a beat and tone to be set for the inquiry conversation.

The Delivery Process

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There were three key tenets of the Bridging element in this inquiry. The first was to encourage the participants (and this includes me) to slow down and to dwell on the inquiry – if you like, to find a different way of being. The second was to introduce context and to understand shared context and the third was to establish the pattern and the rhythm for the work ahead.

Without exception, I started with a Bridging session in each of the Making workshops. I asked the same question for the opening round– 'Please tell us who you are, what you do and share with us what brings you to this session?' Participants commented on how the opening round took them from their normal life to think in a different way. I remember clearly a session in Cheshire where there was a room of some 25 people and as we went around the room the pace slowed and the stories got a little deeper and a little more open with the cumulative effect of the listening, the uninterrupted speaking and the calm in the room. The net effect was for peoples thinking to slow down.

The question that is asked in this Bridging phase is so important to setting the context for the session. The impact of this simple question showed itself in a very memorable workshop in Lincoln where a group of six people shared their stories – they were widely different each entering into very personal territory, in one case the person's fears about how their ability to support their young son as he grew up without the support of a salary, another person sharing their disappointment on how they felt they had not been asked to fully contribute their technical experience because of assumptions about their age and a third person reflecting that their understanding of these different contexts had completely changed their view of their place in the business as an over 50. These examples, along with the contributions from the rest of the group, meant that a shared context was formed for the Making that followed. This meant that issues were less likely to pop up unexpectedly, derailing the generative Making or the Curating process.

In all the sessions in this inquiry I used a preferred method that deepens the response to the question. I use sets of book cover postcards to bring a different texture to the Bridging. I ask participants (including me) to choose two or three cards and to be prepared to tell a story on the subject of the questions I have asked. In this case, the postcards and their simple images and the words brought the stories I have mentioned to life. The cards that these people chose are shown in an accompanying picture. The cards seem to provoke people to tell a little more, to link together ideas in their heads and give permission to reveal a little more of what is behind their presence in the group. In keeping with the

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quality of the made objects the group referred back to the cards throughout the session – indeed the cards and the stories that went with them became part of the record of the event as artefacts (Figure 96).
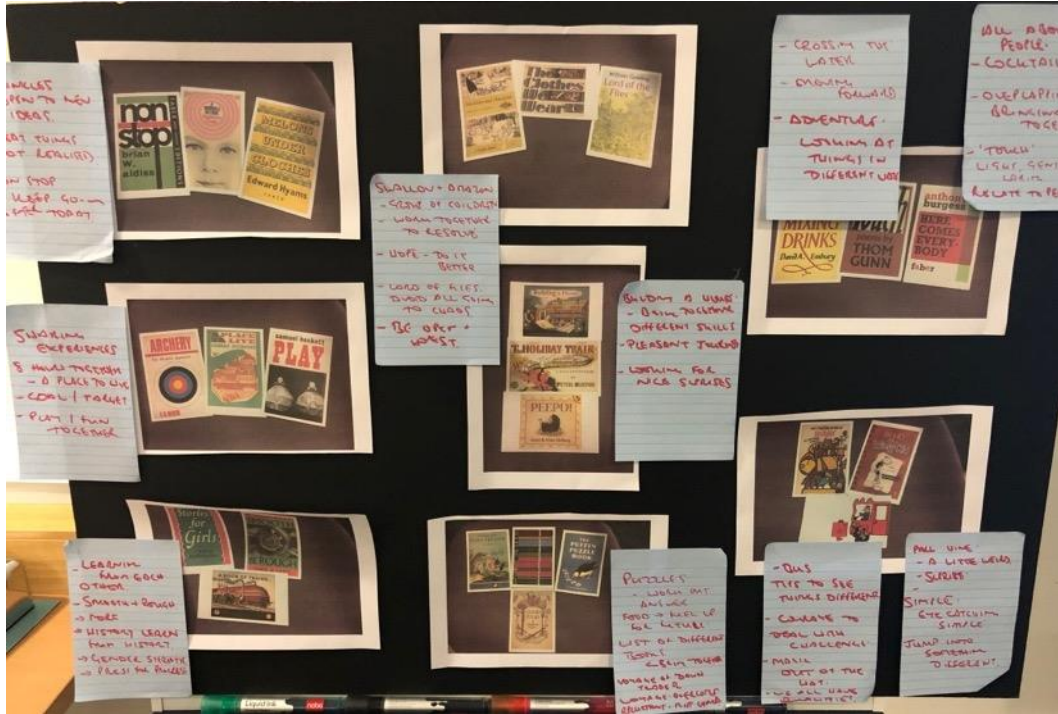
Figure 96 An example of the curated book cover post cards

This device has a profound effect on the conduct of what follows. It lays down a pattern; a clear invitation to speak, an inclination to listen and respect others in the group and the possibility of being creative – thinking about current subjects in a different way. Throughout this inquiry the Bridging session created a rhythm for the session that the participants responded to. I think of the Bridging that took place prior to one of the Curating sessions, where following a period of reflection on the context of the Making, people were drawn to the content had been created and to respect the display boards with reverence and attention. The effect fits in with my earlier explanation of liminality – it allows to me stand outside the circle of inquiry and to focus on creating the rhythm and intimacy that creates a different pattern and environment for the inquiry.

Theories

Getting going in an inquiry can pose challenges – with participants not understanding or being open to different ways of thinking. That is why the first step in my approach names this very explicitly. The Bridging element calls on Heidegger's philosophical thinking on bringing people together – on bridging gaps in understanding and creating common links of understanding (1962). This Bridging element is also written about by Donna Ladkin (2006), where she links the ability to dwell and to bridge across social gaps as a key part of a strong leadership portfolio. I add to this philosophical and academic perspective to the simple practice of Nancy Kline's 'Thinking Environment' (1999), which offers the practice of linking groups of people through simple open questions and inclusive rounds, founded on 'brilliant listening'. The result of using these methods introduces the group of people to each other, to the challenge of the inquiry and to possibility of using their creative talents.

In addition to these references there are two to add. The theoretical underpinnings of these elements come from a set of different influences.

The use of the postcards crosses into Making practice and are associated with the theory used there. I certainly refer to the 'transitional objects' of Winnicott, and the way that the cards are used to tell a story about themselves without making it personal (Winnicott, 2005).

Sitting in the background is my reading of Paolo Freire (Horton & Freire, 1990). The influence in this section is his quiet mantra of 'I do not know'. I take this to indicate his openness to learn from what emerges from people's discourse and creativity. That is my stand in relation to Bridging – I lead the curiosity of others through role modelling the environment that I want to create.

Making

Making is the spiritual heart of my approach and my method. It was Making that lifted me from my illness to a new way of being well, it was Making was at the heart of the epiphanic viva and it is Making that has been key to my pursuit of the idea of moving ideas to objects and then objects to action. Simply put – no Making, no artefacts, no input.

Once the participants have had been enrolled in the inquiry through Bridging the Making comes next. It is where the contributions turn into artefacts and the first sharing of ideas occur. When the environment is right Making is no slavish registering of a spoken story

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into an object. Rather it is a thoughtful, creative and generative and deeply participative session. Participants tell me that their models enrich ideas that they had thought before and that the discussion on the models adds to their understanding of others' views and leads to generative postproduction.

The Delivery Process

The inquiry into 'what it is like to be 50' used Making in all the workshops that were held. For the purposes of this description I would like to take you to a rather dark, rather small meeting room in the corner of a factory in Lincoln. Eight of us were in the room sitting around one of those faux wood meeting room tables. The sponsor of the inquiry accompanied me. The materials for the Making elements are provided by me and live in six coloured metal boxes which were around the edges of the room on smaller tables. The boxes contain Lego – with many minifigures, card and pens, wool and string together with all sorts of objects like plastic cups, straws and various toys. I invited the participants to use whatever they wanted to build their models (Figure 97). Most of the models were built with Lego. In the setup of the session we asked permission to record the conversation to ensure that we could transcribe the stories and to make sure that all the nuances of the stories were recorded. We undertook to destroy the recordings once the transcriptions were complete.

I started the Making session by presenting a small model of my own, showing a faulty production line and describing the relationship of people in the model. I try to avoid choosing a topic that puts words and Lego bricks into mouths and hands respectively. I heard people say, 'that's for my kids (or grandchildren) and not for me' (although in the end everyone joined in). I then invited people to build their own model through a question asking the participants to build a model that represented 'what it is like to be over 50?'. I asked each person to build his or her own model. What followed is my favourite time of the workshop. After the first flourish of comments about not being creative, or how the

Figure 97 The Making Paraphernalia

participants should bring along a five-year old to do the work for them a hush descended on the room as they faced the challenge. In this series of workshops whether the group consisted of four or twenty-five, people would work silently. Some people rushed straight to the boxes of materials, some doodled a plan or a list of issues for their models and sometimes they simply sat and reflected. I stayed at the side, ready to help people finding a piece or helping to think about how to represent an idea. After about ten minutes the models start to emerge and after about twenty the rattle of Lego bricks subsides and the models get completed. People stood back and looked at others' models – smiling generously and saying 'Oh, that's creative' or 'I wonder what the story is for that model?'. My experience is not to set a specific time for the Making, that could be restrictive. The activity plays out in and around the twenty-minute mark without a time being set.

The final step of the Making is for all the co-inquirers to tell the story of the model. This phase brings the Making of the models to life. Through my many examples of practice people tell me that they will reveal more through a model than they would ever offer in conversation. At a session in Lincoln such a moment occurred. A lady built a model of a

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house and a garden – which she went on to describe highlighting the challenges of bringing her young son up alone and the impending wall of her retirement meaning that she worried how she could maintain her life and lifestyle for her son (Figure 98).
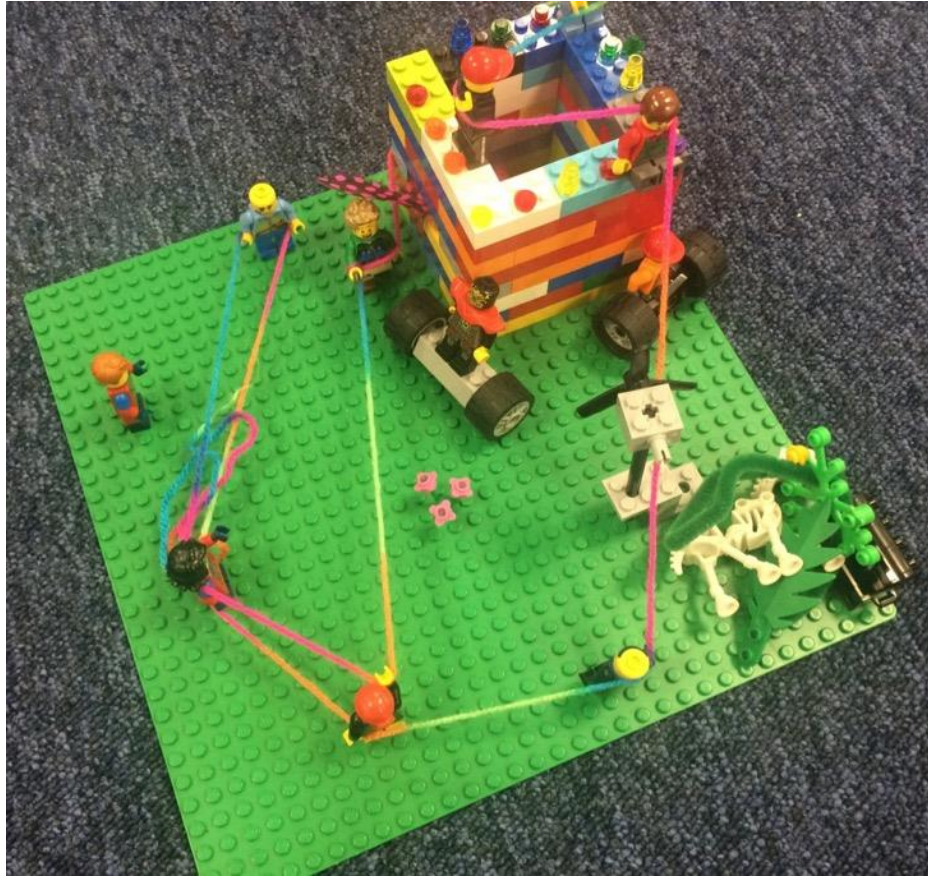

Figure 98 The Model from Lincoln

This story brought the people in the group to a halt. They heard a soulful story so different to their own, with an insight to a life they had not understood that this person was living or worrying about. I witnessed connections being made and help being offered immediately after the tale was told.

Theories

There are high level theories that paint the backdrop to the Making element. I would draw on Dewey's writing on art and how its production points to giving insights to the artist as well as an object that points to the world we live in (2005). I would reference Winnicott and his theory of representational objects that suggests that children use an object to tell a story about themselves (2005) I have no reason to doubt that adults will do the same. I would call on references from Peter Reason and Chris Seeley around Artful Knowing where they draw the above elements together to represent the power and significance of artful representations (2008).

The Making process honours a number of perspectives. Not the least that of Grayson Perry, who gives permission to all of us to become artists and make representations of our thoughts and our perspectives into the world (2013). I have encountered several examples of 'Outsider Art' in my inquiry (where the artwork is created by 'Non artists') – visiting exhibitions at the Hayworth Gallery, the Wellcome Foundation and the Royal Festival Hall where people, specifically with mental health issues, and prisoners in UK institutions have made art to represent their thinking and their mood (*Outsider Art from Japan*, 2013) (*The Alternative Guide to the Universe*, 2013). These exhibitions present outstanding art from outside the traditional world, however the work elbows its way into public attention and shows its wonderful legitimacy. With permission granted for us all to make and create I want to direct it into the possibilities of changing the world for the better.

The writings of Chris Seeley, as mentioned below, lend themselves to working towards this purpose. The paper, 'Artful Organisations' explores how creativity through artful endeavours can play a significant role in changing the perspectives and direction of individuals and organisations in a corporate setting through the use of Making (Seeley & Thornhill, 2014). Why Making is so useful in this endeavour is described in the writing of makers like Christopher Frayling (2011)– who calls on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'Emile' to describe how Making can shape thinking, or the writing of the artist Kara Walker who describes how the process of making her art develops her thinking which in turns enriches the objects she produces (Szabo, 1997).

Curating

This section on Curating deals with the four aspects I have covered in the thesis on this topic. Namely: Curating as the overarching element, with the associated postproduction, interactive curating and exhibition making acting as parts of the whole. I shall pair them off for the practice and method description and then bring them together to discuss the associated theories.

I discussed the practice of Curating earlier in the dissertation, here I present one reference that stands out in illustrating the political power and drama of the curational act. The object is a simple piece of decorated pot formed in the shape of an owl. Kevin Hetherington writes about this owl and its journey from being discovered on the Antiques Roadshow to taking a powerful place in the eighteenth-century gallery at the Stoke-on-Trent Museum (1997). Having been found by chance on a television programme the significance of the object was identified by curators who took the object and determined how it could be displayed to best aesthetic and power impact. The owl stands alone in a case and is labelled to describe how it was made in the late seventeenth century by artisan potters in the Trent valley, close to Stoke. Innocuous in its simplicity, the owl faces the cases that describe the early industrialisation of the china industry in Stoke-on-Trent and the images of Josiah Wedgwood and his documents; where he claims to have single-handedly created the industry in the area. The curated owl just looks on knowingly, undoing the carefully staged reality created by Wedgewood. This single object and the way that is presented and positioned encapsulates how Curating can present a story and offer a challenging different point of view.

My practice and method suggest through thoughtful Curating; with postproduction organising the objects such that the presentation challenges norms and allow the objects to tell their own provocative story, interactive curating to ensure participation and development of the story, and the exhibition displaying the work to influence a wide audience, this element can have a significant part in generating change.

Curating and Postproduction

Curating has been an important principle of my work since my first-person inquiry. It is all about taking the images and word that have now been expressed and moving that point of view and its perspectives into an arena where it can be considered and built upon by many others. This means these opinions are heard and become part of the world. I now add a way of describing the early stages of the curational process. This is the notion of postproduction – which is, as Bourriaud describes, the mixing deck DJ or the programmer

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making more of individual objects through replaying and remixing them (2002). Postproduction takes place immediately after the Making process and is the mixing and ordering process that then brings exhibitions to life.

Postproduction is used more than once in any inquiry. I use it to stimulate new cycles of inquiry as the work progresses.

The Delivery Process

Almost as the last moment of Making is complete then the postproduction and the Curating starts. As a matter of course, I want to hear each of the stories that people attach to their models. It overlaps with the Making element. This is a form of postproduction as when the stories are told the ideas are mixed and blended, themes and conversations emerge in the group. These are new artefacts based on the coming together of ideas.

People in the room sat back down around the table and I asked people to describe their models. This is the first element of creating – or postproduction – as I call it in this phase. I will use an element to illustrate the product of the Making session. We went around the room with each person describing their model. To illustrate this, I remember one particular model. The lady who had built it held up the small plastic base plate and started to explain:

> this model shows my frustration with the privileges that graduates and apprentices get. This is me [pointing to a figure peering through a gap] I watch these people on this fast track, always getting attention from the bosses' [pointing to a dark figure sitting on a raised chair] with me just being passed by when I have so much to give. I know that many of these people will have left in two years and shall still be here.

I remember the effect it had on the other people – a little stunned and quiet. People added comments of agreement or support. I asked whether the model made sense or whether the group had questions or further comments, many of the group announced that they shared such an opinion - some pointed to elements in their models. With those answers in mind we carried on around the room. Once all the models had been shown and the stories told I asked everyone to step back and reflect on the many stories and to share their reaction to what had been heard and seen. In this particular case, the group discussed how they rarely mentioned how they felt about work at this stage of their career and they commented just how in spite of this so much was similar and views were held in common. This meant that model and the story were not just strong in their own right:

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through postproduction their validity was confirmed and with the additional views of others something more had been built.

We now had eight wonderful models laced with stories and context – oozing with creativity and ideas. The postproduction had added context and connections to the raw models and their stories. To ensure the models could be kept each had to be carefully pictured from many angles before they were taken apart and replaced in the boxes. The stories have to transcribed and to be preserved. My intention with the pictures and text is that they will be used in the exhibition element and that they could be used as a guide to rebuild the models should there be a need.

The Curating continued away from the Making sessions where the leaders of the inquiry took the many models and stories and started to develop the story of what they had heard. They focused on the big themes that emerged from the stories, they looked at the nuanced stories that stood alone and they started to curate the artefacts into a story. The artefacts had now become photographs and blocks of text and the curated output was a series of boards that captured the overall story. I was with them as they did this to add my own experience on how to consider the output of the curation.

The 'over 50s' inquiry illustrates how postproduction and Curating is not one continuous process. After the initial postproduction and Curating, the outcomes were displayed to an audience of organisational change professionals for them to understand what the voices had said on the question in hand. They were, in turn, asked for their thoughts on what they had seen and read. Their comments and observations were added into the next iteration of the curation.

The gradual layering and building of views as the Curating is undertaken is most important. This interactivity means that the artefacts never remain sterile and are always being brought to life by considering the different points of view that they encounter. Indeed, in this particular case a version of the curated material was brought back to a group of the original participants for them to consider and to comment on the insights being developed and the story being told.

The final element of the Curating was to bring together all the elements in preparation for the exhibition. They contain references to the original models and their accompanying stories. The Curating has created themes and stories from the original Making that

capture the curator's views on what needs to be heard. The output has been adapted and amended as a result of the layers of interaction and participation.

Figure 99 An Interactive Exhibition underway

Interactive Curating and Exhibitions

Interactive Curating

I have incorporated one more step into the method when it comes to Curating; while Hetherington illustrates the impact of the intelligently curated object with the story of the owl, we still do not know the reaction of the audience to the object and the curation. Also, we do not have a conversation between the curator (or/and the artist) and the audience. I have introduced Lizzie Muller, an Australian academic and practicing curator, who brought my attention to a way of considering this degree of participation and engagement (Muller et al., 2006). Her consideration of 'Interactive Curating' changes the linear relationship from artist to curator to audience with little interaction to one of a triangular relationship with conversation and participation built into the presentation and engagement of the curational experience (Figure 99). She describes how the natural extension of this is for the audience to change the artwork through conversation with the artist. This notion of interactivity stems from the field of electronic art where the feedback can be built in to the object and participation can be part of the artwork (B. Graham & Cook, 2010; Grobler, 2014, p. 57). My deliberate placing of interactivity into my practice – and my thesis – is to underline that this is not the norm in the curating world. Indeed, talking with one curator I asked what people had made of her exhibition and she looked

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blank – agreeing at that point she had no interaction at all with her curated work and the audience. This participation and interactivity are built into my practice.

Having interactive curation as a part of my method gives me a way of presenting and engaging material, the next element is to challenge where the approach can take place. For this I turn to an artistic movement called 'Socially Engaged Art' which challenges the location where art, Curating and exhibitions can take place. Michael G. Birchall writes an account of this movement in curating.org, he describes the movement (2015).

> 'It could be said that socially engaged art is the neo avant-garde: artists use social situations to produce de-materialized, anti-market, politically engaged projects that carry on the modest call to blur art and life'

Of course, some practitioners moved beyond the modest call and adopted radical methods to use the social engagement to create social change. Suzanne Lacey (2013, p. 110) and Lucy Lippard (2014, p. 110) adopted radical artistic and curational practice in their work with feminists, gay activists and AIDS sufferers for them to produce curated art that moved the curators, artists and the co-creators work into the public light for wider discussion .

Socially Engaged Art and Exhibitions

You have read about the moment when, with Alan curating my picture back to me, (in Chapter 3) I realised that Curating was important. However with its quality of looking inwards, I realised that performance of the outward-looking exhibition must be specifically named in my method. The 'Over 50s' inquiry is a perfect case in point. Although the leader of the inquiry worked hard to enable interaction though the process of design and discovery of the story it was the exhibition – the moment that the inquiry was offered as a meta artefact – where, as artist and curator Richard Tuttle comments, you lose control of what you have done and in it is seen through the eyes of the new audience. As he says it is the moment where 'I do not know' and where new revelations and insight will emerge (2014, p. 11).

The Delivery Process

For the inquiry in question there were three exhibition opportunities; the first was to exhibit to the senior HR team that had sponsored the work and shape policy; the second for the 'Diversity and Inclusiveness' group who hold the received knowledge on this

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subject matter, and thirdly taking the exhibition back to the locations where the original work was carried out.
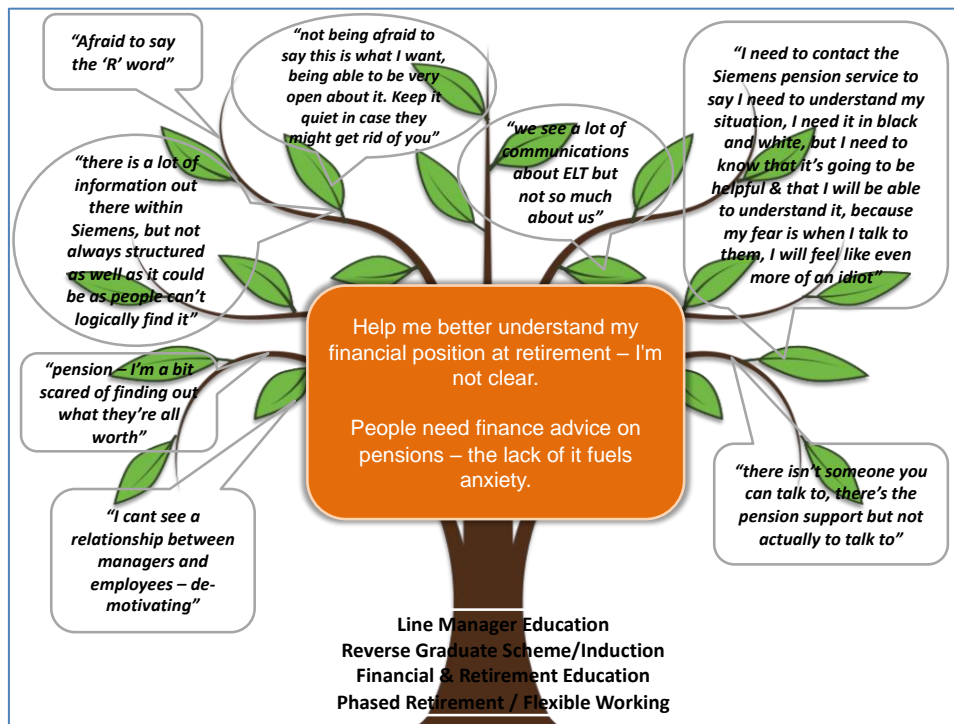
Figure 100 Insight board from the Over 50s Exhibition

I was at the first of these events and it took place as follows. The exhibition was made up of a series of boards that were displayed together as a single display (Figure 100). The leader of the inquiry invited the HR Board to view the inquiry in pairs – being invited to read and reflect as they went. We became part of the exhibit by adding stories that described particular models or recalling particular conversations during the Curating process. Once they had a chance to reflect on what they had read we led a discussion reflecting on the content. boards that were displayed as a single exhibition. Once again there was interactivity with the material and the audience.

The discussion came in two parts. The first addressed the content, the insights and the presentation. There were comments on the novel approach, the clarity of the voices and the different perspectives. In particular there were questions about the interest in 'pension policy' and then there was conversation around the insights of the inquiry. Namely they were interested in how people had designed and created their own flexible plans for the later periods of their careers; what information people were seeking with regards to the end of their careers and particularly the question of how employees over

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50 were seeking to redefine their contribution and underline their commitment to the organisation. All of these features were built into the models. This latter element being hitherto outside HR's thinking created the most interest.

The interactivity of the exhibition and the value that held in the discussions meant that there was not a classic demand for the actions, rather there was a move to draw the change organically from the discussions. Change in policy did follow the exhibition.

The other two exhibitions followed the one I attended. In my absence colleagues shared with me the responses to the exhibitions and their material. In both cases, there was strong interaction with the material and the insights. I have been told by attendees, that perspectives were changed and that particularly with the local exhibitions people recognised their voices and were pleased that their stories and models were directly included. With my practice counting on exhibitions, with their displayed material being the platform for social change, I need to explain what happened as a consequence of the work. Policy changes did emerge that matched more closely the expectations and needs of the over 50s in the organisation. There was a better shared understanding of the motivations for this group in the organisation. Most significantly there was a reconsideration of what this group of people might be able to offer the organisation – with their desire to contribute and to use their experience better recognised.

Theory

There are five branches to the Curating theory that enable this element to come to life.

First there is the notion, described by Paul O'Neill, that curation is a form of artful representation in its own right and that the messages attributed to a curated set of artefacts can be as powerful as the artefacts themselves (2012) .

The second is postproduction and the idea that processing and building on the original work can develop and enrich what was made in the first place (Bourriaud, 2002).

The third is the frank, powerful storytelling that goes with curation. I recall the exhibitions mounted by Ai Wei Wei that I visited on Alcatraz and at the Royal Academy– which examined the quieting of voices through incarceration (Spalding, 2014) as examples of this. On Alcatraz he used the cells to place exhibits, he made large Lego portraits of political prisoners incarcerated around the world and he gave the audience the chance to write to the subjects of the exhibition. At the Royal Academy he brought work that described his own experience of imprisonment (Wei Wei, 2015).

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The fourth is Interactive Curating – where the presented outcome of the Curators and the artists view can be offered up for comment and for change. In my research this has been most strongly represented by the work of Lizzie Muller and her pioneering work with electronic media art (Muller, 2011). The interaction draws in the wider audience – and those with power - into the conversation so their voice is added into the material. In my case the art, the individual artefacts, did not change but the story and the insights did. Such that the final curation included those inputs that had been part of earlier exhibitions.

The theory and practice that supports my approach on exhibitions comes from 'Socially Engaged Art' (Helguera, 2011). This movement took the exhibition from the White Cube and took it to the audience in their communities. Examples of this approach from Lucy Lippard and Maria Lind took the artistic practice with a high degree of interactivity to the local communities (Lippard, 2014). They engaged and developed new expressions of the art with the local communities and these, in turn became part of a positive reassessment of the community place and role.

The exhibition is not a neutral presentation of information. It is a lively interaction and discussion with material that excites discussion between the participants. The exhibition can itself be part of social change or at least the stimulus for change. Where my practice differs from the literature is that the art – the stimulus for change – come from pieces of work generated by the community itself and not from professional artists. This, I think, makes the outcomes all the more likely to cause and sustain change. It is reminiscent of the outsider art discussed elsewhere in this thesis (*The Alternative Guide to the Universe*, 2013).

There is one other reference to mention here and that is Norman Denzin's thinking on Performance Autoethnography. He challenges himself on how to construct performance and performance texts that can be used ethically for the greatest contribution to social justice and social equity. I would like to propose that the Curating cycle in my method might be one way of doing this. The models and the transcripts are available to read and to experience. The Curating does not just report these, through Interaction and Making in response to the artefacts, further insight emerges. These can be the origin of change through the consensus that builds and the engagement that follows (Denzin, 2003a).

Some lines of conclusion

The insights from the 'Over 50s' inquiry surprised those that heard the stories. What was expected were concerns about pensions. Whilst these did feature there were new insights about how they felt excluded from the 'interesting work' which they felt was the reserve of the graduates and the apprentices. They were concerned about establishing their legacy to the business should they have to retire early. This changed the discourse as before it was not thought career and contribution was a concern to this group.

The outcome has been twofold, the HR community have had to reset the view on what this group have on their minds and reconsider the type and style of their interventions. For the group who took part in the Making workshops there seems to be a much greater take up of retirement advice and support.

The material from the inquiry is now an exhibit which showed these perspectives and this different point of view. The exhibition – which is wonderful artwork in its own right – has been a method of showing the story, and gathering further views on the subject through interactive Curating. Through this process, that has merged Bridging, Making and Curating, new insights have emerged for individuals and the business concerned.

Part 2

What happens when you apply the Method and Practice?

For this section I share three stories that illustrate what can happen when my method and practice is applied.

I had the opportunity to work with to with a group of Architectural Engineering doctoral students. It was a first-person inquiry to explore what might be next for their doctoral work. I was told that they would find approaching my method and practice difficult as their logical and scientific approach would make creativity and lateral thinking difficult for them. Bridging provided a platform for them to view the world differently and to open up to new perspectives and different possibilities. The outcome was that these students started the inquiry open to being creative and curious where their explorations might take them. The particular story I want to tell is about the Making and Curating of one inquirer.
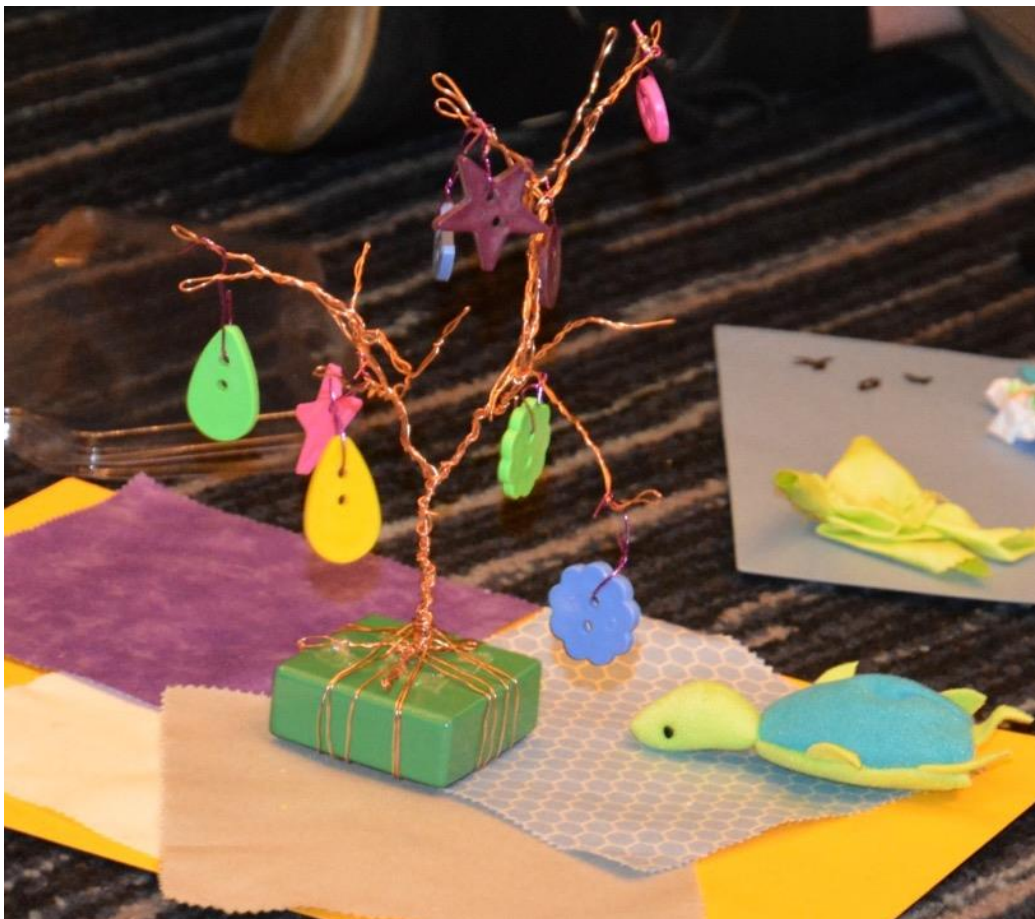
Figure 101 The Button tree with the shark

The woman made a wonderful and rather beautiful model of a tree made from wire and buttons, sitting on an island in a lake (Figure 101). There was a shark circling the island. The story described the tree as her doctoral endeavours; featuring the innovations and new thinking she was researching. The shark represented the constraints and limitations she felt her academic institutions were imposing on her. It was clear that she felt resentment and frustration on the impact of these predators. She left the session with the model and a new clarity as to what was limiting her research. By chance I bumped into the woman concerned at an event. I asked her how she had reflected on what had occurred at the session. Actually, she did not tell me about her reflections rather how she had used the model to change her perspective and the trajectory of her studies. She had taken the model home and had put it on a shelf. After reflecting on what she had portrayed she realised that the model showed her as a victim. She simply took the shark away from the model and decided to take control of the destiny of her research. She explained that the making of the model had helped her understand the constraints she was experiencing and the chance to reflect on how she could influence her own future. Her action of taking the shark away gave her the agency to change her perspective on what she could achieve.

This story shows the development between the cycles of inquiry, first making – and the representation of ideas, then curating (in the initial postproduction) of telling the story out loud and connecting others with the material, and then the impact of exhibiting the work and reflecting, and then finally interacting with the artefact to create change.

The second example describes the experiences of a curator. This focusses on the impact of the cycles of learning experienced in an inquiry undertaken to understand the views of people in an organisation towards employee flexibility. The curators story explains how the progressive cycles of inquiry helped her understand the full dynamics of the topic and helped her move to action.

The curator had been part of the Making process, undertaken by a number of facilitators, and had seen all of the models and their stories. She then was central to the postproduction of all these many models into a series of themes and insights. We had many long discussions about how the models and the themes might help with a turn to action. I suggested that we might hold this thought lightly until she had experienced the

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exhibition. We went on to produce a full-scale exhibition attended by many visitors. We asked the visitors not only to view the exhibition but also to respond to what they had seen and experienced by making models to show their own response and discussing their own insights (Figure 102).

Figure 102 The 'Flexibility' Workshop underway

This culminated in a new set of artefacts. When we discussed the process after the exhibition had concluded the curator reflected that she that was not sure about the impact on the individual visitors, however, she was certain on the impact it had on her. The impact of the multiple cycles of inquiry; the making, the postproduction, the creating of the exhibition and then seeing and hearing the impact of the material on others and sharing her perspective with colleagues had given her a very strong view of the next steps to take with the inquiry. She was able to unite all of the elements to propose a strong course of action the business because of the insights the experience had on her. The cycles had an accumulative effect in increasing her understanding and social experience of the exhibition had brought them all together. The consequence was that armed with what she had learnt she launched a new 'flexibility' approach into the organisation that was marked by its openness and ability to accommodate the different contexts in which people found themselves.

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The third story is of the impact of an inquiry into the culture of an engineering and manufacturing organisation. Undertaken in 2017 the positive impact of the inquiry continues. I want to emphasise the sustainability and persistence of that study. The form of the original inquiry was very reminiscent of the Nottingham inquiry, with a number of making sessions, a number of postproduction sessions that culminated in an exhibition to which many of the original participants were invited. Out of this exhibition and the interactive discovery that took place within it a picture of the culture emerged (Figure 103). This picture emphasised the system of interconnected factors that made up the culture, including many positive features; it emphasised people and behavioural issues. This system map was then set up as part of the exhibition as it moved onto be examined by teams in the organisation culminating in the leadership team. At each stage the exhibition was fully interactive, allowing the participants to add and build on what was shown.

Figure 103 Material from the Inquiry

There were three significant outcomes for the organisation. Firstly, the four main insights of the inquiry became integrated into the organisation's strategy; these people-based elements have been introduced alongside the technical and commercial activities, and remain there, in a modified form to this day. Secondly, the organisation is now open to more inquiry-based learning. I have taken part in three where leaders are now open to inquire with their teams rather than assume outcomes. One in particular, around women's

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role in the organisation, has dramatically changed the understanding of the challenges faced by them and has established a development programme for them to gain confidence to fulfil their potential. Thirdly, some of the elements of my practice have become everyday methodology. The best example is a senior leadership group, which was conceived as a series of PowerPoint presentations, and is now a forum for listening, jointly initiating action and for conversation. Finally, I would say that the managers in this organisation are now more open to inquiring themselves. Many of them now want to understand what people are thinking and saying to include other perspectives in their own planning and action.

My intention here is to show the impact of my method and practice both within inquiries, into the long term and then reaching beyond the inquiry into the fabric of people and organisation's lives.

Part 3

How does this approach build on understandings of Action Research?

My inquiry set back in the context of Action Research

When I started my inquiry in 2011 I was so excited to discover Action Research because of its insistence on participation, its demand to be connected to what is actually going on in the world and the expectation it would result in meaningful changes. My early experimentation with those theories and methodologies is recorded in Chapter 2. Now, as this thesis closes, I have the equally invigorating chance to return to that material as an experienced practitioner to share how my research has built on those theories and practices. Most exhilarating is the chance to offer where my work might have a contribution to the Action Research field.

To bring the energy of my inquiry into this section I shall use examples, primarily from my inquiry in Nottingham, to provide evidence for my remarks (Chapter 10 pp.197-205), reinforced with three photographic collages to serve as a reminder of the images from the inquiries concerned.

Key elements of Action Research

I should start by confirming that my practice and method respond to the descriptions of the key elements of Action Research. I turn to the definition established by Reason and Bradbury (2006) to be my starting point. They write: -

> Action Research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities (p. 1).

My work in Nottingham certainly met the opening criteria, as right from the beginning of the inquiry the exploration was participatory. I was influenced by Freire (1996) and his fundamental stand on participation, which he lays out in 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (p. 47). I find the educational Action Researcher Orlowski's (2019) framing of Freire's stand very helpful: -

> For Freire, social research must investigate the ways that people are *thinking*, especially within a community, in order for them to become conscious and

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therefore able to collectively change their living situations. [Freire writes] "Producing and acting upon their own ideas – not consuming others – must constitute that process". For Freire, Knowledge is a social construction created by *all* participants, including the researcher (pp. 32-33).

The original design for my work in Nottingham was conceived to involve people in the organisation in creating their own future. This started with a group of fifteen co-inquirers designing the inquiry, the making and subsequent postproduction involved a group of twenty people. When the work moved onto the initial exhibition some 30 people were invited and all of them also took part in the subsequent decision making about where and how the first intervention might take place. Once this first set of cycles of inquiry was complete the exhibition went on tour throughout the organisation, many hundreds of people were invited to participate and to engage in playing their part in the change.

A further criterion to consider is whether the inquiry was for worthwhile purposes (Reason, 2007, p. 188). This company concerned was in a new business cycle where a great deal of technological change was underway, where the working population were not well engaged in the change. The inquiry I helped conduct was intended to bring the perspectives of the employees into the change process, so that their concerns were taken account of, and their involvement in interventions to create change were established.

The process itself was action orientated, looking towards initiating interventions in the system within the organisation. This very much followed the philosophy of John MacMurray (1957) who states that: -

> "I do" rather than "I think" is the appropriate start for epistemology. In acting the body is indeed in action, but also the mind. Action is not blind. ...Action, then, is a full concrete activity of the self in which all of our capacities are employed (p. 84)

Furthermore, the action in my inquiry incorporates reflection, Freire (1996, p. 90) calls this duality 'conscientization'. Blackburn (2000) explains this concept as: -

> Two inseparable, mutually enriching and authentically human capabilities – action and reflection, or action based on reflection, and reflection based on action (p. 7)

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Figure 104 The Nottingham Collage

This figure shows images from the Nottingham inquiry. The central image is from the exhibition. The three models were made in the Making sessions and are shown with material that emerged from postproduction.

As the inquiry progressed "cycles of action and reflection" (Marshall, 2001, p. 236) created insights towards the "practical solutions to issues of pressing concern" that Reason and Bradbury mention (Ibid); through making models that described the culture, reviewing what they had made together, then actively using what they had made to generate further discussion along with the development of specific insights, and eventually change. I remember the dynamic conversations that came from the examination of the models and hearing the stories that went with them, this was followed by the movement and energy created by the interactive exhibition as what the organisation might look and feel like emerged from the interaction with exhibits (p.198). At the same time the practice gave people time to reflect on what had been created and to consider how it might be further developed, both for individuals and for the group.

The practical solutions for the organisation emerged from the interactive exhibition (p. 202). They came slowly and then at a rush. During an early stage of the interactive exhibition the head of the organisation was certain that the inquiry was failing because the discussions had no sign of a move to a conclusion. However, the move did come and the group decided that their single focus was to work as 'one organisation' and to move aside the internal walls that had prevented communication and collaboration. Much as the organisation benefitted from the inquiry so did many individuals. A group of people became closely involved in the change, as they could see opportunities to develop themselves, using the inquiry methods and practices that we had established together. Along with the individual changes there was also a change for the way they did their work. From the inquiry a much stronger feeling of community emerged in the organisation and the ability for decisions to be made deeper into the organisation without calling for senior agreement (p. 203). My co-inquirer told me of an example of this where supervisory staff rewrote the management guidelines themselves, without asking for permission, because they could see the opportunity for greater independence in making decisions.

What I have shown is that my inquiry evidently follows the principles of Action Research, which in turn have provided the context for my research to flourish.

Action Research Underpinnings

Two theoretical underpinnings of Action Research have provided a universal framing on how to practically approach my inquiry and how to engage with the dynamics that are at play.

First Underpinning

The first underpinning is about talking with different audiences, originally described by Marshall and Reason (1994, pp. 112-113) as being 'for me, for us and for them' with the indication that good research speaks to all three. This highlights a participative and integrated approach rather than research being done *to* people and then being reported *to* others. Subsequently the "first-, second- and third-person distinction was explicitly introduced into this context by Torbert" (Reason & Torbert, 2001, p. 16). Their importance for Action Research practice is indicated by Reason and Torbert (Ibid) who argue that: -

> A complete vision of a transformational social science…needs to encompass and integrate first-, second-, and third-person/research practice concerns (p. 16).

Before getting to my own research there are some lovely examples to illustrate these different dimensions of inquiry in the broader Action Research field. First-person practice is about deeply personal reflective inquiry within the individual's world, often undertaken with the involvement and support of others. An example of this being Rippin and Gayá Wick's (2010) inquiry with the making of dolls to represent their life experience ; second-person is about work with groups, like the work of Ward and Shortt (2012) their students and their making of art work to represent their undergraduate experiences ; and third-person inquiries: -

> aim to create a wider community of inquiry…that attempt to create conditions which awaken and support the inquiring qualities of first- and second-person inquiries in a wider community (Reason & Torbert, 2001, p. 23).

Reason and Torbert (Ibid p. 24) give the example of the Urban Health Partnership's work in engaging large numbers of people from within a large single system to explore the improvement of care of elderly people in UK inner cities as third-person practice.

These three examples are intended to help define the transformational strategies in general, now I will explain how they have featured in my work.

In my work I take the view that the different dimensions of inquiry are each involved across and between the cycles of inquiry. This paragraph describes where the dimensions of inquiry in separate cycles. In the Nottingham inquiry this manifested itself as the

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individual first-person reflection during the making of the models (p.198). Then the second-person inquiry began with the group of makers sharing their individual stories, towards their jointly created story of the culture, and then with the postproduction work that led to the creation and display of the interactive exhibition (p. 202). Subsequently the third-person inquiry was then about how to implement the interventions, having first agreed them at the exhibition, then how to involve the whole organisation. This wider involvement was led through the widespread display, engagement and participation of the majority of employees (p. 203).

Coughlan indicates not just how the different dimensions of inquiry can feature together through the course of an inquiry he also talks about the movement between first, second and third-person inquiry within phases of a single inquiry (2013, p. 130). Inquirers in my practice move between the three dimensions of inquiry in each of the Bridging, Making and Curating elements in the same way. Through each cycle of inquiry all three had a place. This worked, for example, within the group's encounter with the initial Making process. Here the inquirers spent time making their individual models in first-person reflection, then sharing and discussing their models and their stories together in the second-person. Subsequently considering the application of what they had discussed to the organisation in a third-person voice before returning to a second-person inquiry reflecting on what might be the common insights that they could frame together as the outcome of this initial part of the inquiry. A second example is the lead up to the exhibition; with the group organising the event undertaking their own first-person reflection of their hopes and expectations, then the group's second-person inquiry as they made the editorial choices that brought together the material for the staging of the interactive display, This then led to creating the third- person interaction of many people with the material that in turn led to understanding the opportunities for the organisation. This distinguishes my inquiry to be in the same, whole organisation, multiple step approach described by Coghlan (Ibid, p. 131).

Second Underpinning

The second underpinning is what Heron (1998, p. 53) refers to as the Extended Epistemology with its four Ways of Knowing . The Extended Epistemology is associated

with Cooperative Inquiry; however, it does not always need to be as is indicated by Reason and Heron (2008, p. 367). The four Ways of Knowing form an inquiry cycle within my research (1998, pp. 52-53). Heron (Ibid p. 53) calls them "a systemic whole". The four Ways of Knowing express themselves in my inquiry as shown below.

Experiential knowing, which Heron (1998, p. 52) describes as "creative shaping of the world and communing with our inner experiences", is the participant's experience of their world brought to the inquiry in the form of perceptions and ideas. The Bridging element in my practice opens people's minds to explore these experiences of the world. It is where participants are enabled to rehearse and develop these thoughts, for example through the use of the sets of postcards (p. 218).

Presentational knowing, described by Heron (Ibid) as "a grasp of the significance of patterns", comes through the Making process, through the postproduction process and the participating in the interactive exhibiting as part of the Curating element. It is where the perceptions and ideas are made tangible through creative and 'artful knowing' and can be expressed out loud, for example, the representation of the Nottingham CEO as a monster on a pedestal (p.201 figure 89).

Propositional knowing, defined by Heron (Ibid) as being characterised "with statements 'that something is the case'", comes through the individual stories that emerge from the model making when 'how it is around here' is firmly stated by individuals and is then followed by the broader story that comes with the joining together the many stories after the postproduction process.

Through the Curating element, including postproduction, and then through the interactive exhibition, the presentational knowing and the propositional knowing come into dialogue in a series of "circuits of knowing" (Ibid, p. 53). In the Nottingham story the original models were discussed together and through the presentational form and the propositional interaction the insights emerged (p. 201). These insights then Curated together into exhibits for the interactive exhibition, where they had become artefacts and examples of presentational knowing in their in their own right. The interaction with the exhibits by the inquirers, sometimes introducing new presentational knowing as they made models in response to what they had experienced, resulted in newly formed propositional knowing.

Practical knowing, described by Heron (Ibid) as "knowing how to exercise a skill", is gradually built through the Nottingham inquiry. During the first discussions a "practical belief" (Ibid, p. 54) emerged about the nature of the culture and the interventions that might be made. Through the postproduction phase this was tested and explored. At the interactive exhibition the practical belief was further tested, now with a larger group of people (p. 204). At that point practical knowing emerged through a further cycle that brought into focus a plan for a first tentative intervention to work on bringing the company together. The continuing inquiry at Nottingham, which has now lasted more than three years, has seen that original Practical Knowing tested and explored further through new "circuits of knowing" with a whole series of further interventions developing.

Through the Nottingham inquiry each of these moments of interaction, between the four Ways of Knowing in the "circuit of fourfold knowing" (Heron, 1998, p. 53), accumulated and interleaved knowledge through the statement and restating of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowing to produce tangible and applicable outcomes for the team and the organisation as a whole.

Action Research Approaches

I am now going to present four particular Action Research approaches that are evident in my work.

Cooperative Inquiry

Heron's "Cooperative Inquiry" (Heron, 1998), is the exemplar of a structured method, with clearly laid out stages of inquiry that incorporate the essential elements of Action Research (p. 36). The approach considers the logical 'Apollonian' and the more creative 'Dionysian' perspectives. My inquiry also brings these together by researching in industrially orientated logical organisations with creative and emotionally orientated methodology.

My approach has been influenced by this method. Heron (1998, p. 73) advocates a multi stage inquiry process that starts with a reflection cycle where the co-researchers design the practice for the individual approach, he moves onto a first action phase exploring and recording the first encounter with the inquiry focus. The next stage is a "state of mind", following the initial immersion in the focus area, where assumptions are shed and there is an openness to explore what follows. The final stage is a further reflection phase to

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consider what has been discovered in the earlier cycles and then a move to a further cycle that includes revised areas of focus and intention (1998, p. 49). My description of the approach I used in Nottingham broadly follows these cycles.

A key point of difference is that whilst Heron's Cooperative Inquiry helpfully suggests that all types of creative methods, (like poetry and dance), can be used with the methodology according to the nature of the inquiry (Ibid, p. 90) he restricts their application to presentational Ways of Knowing (Ibid, p. 55). I go further in my inquiry and build the whole method on the creatively inspired Bridging, Making and Curating, with practical examples of where all four ways of knowing are supported throughout the inquiry with tangible evidence from practical research. Heron does not provide strong evidence in the account of his methodology as to how these approaches might feature even in a presentational form. My practice does provide the evidence of how these 'other methods' might be incorporated in inquiry. I do hope that, whilst acknowledging the importance of Heron's work, my research builds on his methodology by really exploring how such methods might be more broadly applied to the full range of the ways of knowing in a very practical sense.

Whilst my practice and method are clearly associated with the multi-cycle, reflective and generative approach that Heron advocates, there are two further variations. Heron lays out a theory which is a very ordered and formulaic process. By contrast my method is rather more flamboyant, and certainly messier. There is a structure to my approach however the exact direction of the phases emerges from the action that takes place and the mood and sentiment of those who are inquiring with me. This fits in with the thinking of Freire (1971) who is clear that there must be theoretical underpinnings behind participative research, however, once in the work the researcher should "invite people to believe that they have knowledge" (p. 71). Jack Whitehead's (2017) practice around 'Living Theories' also adds understanding. He says that: -

> A living process can integrate insights from propositional and dialectical theory that provides a continuously evolving framework for action (p. 391).

Therefore, in my practice if people have the knowledge then they can guide the direction of the method with their own energy and view of the world.

Figure 105 The Offshore Collage

This figure shows images related to the Offshore Technicians inquiry. I have placed to images of the actual offshore environment to give an impression of the world they were discussing. The other images are from the workshops.

I offer two different examples of practice that illustrate this messier, co-inquirer led perspective in my practice. First are the offshore wind independent subcontractors who insisted on taking in the inquiry in their own way, pushing past the method I had planned (p.188). They determined that what I was doing had little value for them so I followed the direction that they wanted to take. Letting them take the lead meant that they could consider the world in their own terms. This resulted in greater reflection and stronger insights from them than if they had been forced to follow what I proposed (I also suspect if I had been insistent they would not have taken part at all). The model that they made and the stories that they told were very insightful (p. 188 figure 81).

The creative, generative and participative elements follow this same path. I refer to the architecture student and the story of the tree (p. 233 figure 103). At the time she made the model there was something different about the way she told her story – suggesting that the model had more to give. The model itself had a different quality, it was not a simple Lego model as it had an air of aesthetic permanence. Against all my normal practice it seemed right to let her take the model away from the session. It was the consequence of letting her take home the tree and the shark, where it became a permanent presentational object, that she was able to curate the model and dwell with the story she had told. In turn that allowed to her to develop her own practical knowledge and to challenge and change her assumptions about her studies and to regain her confidence in her research. As Freire (1971, p. 71) said, "she had the knowledge" and my invitation to use it meant she directed the method away from my usual practice to her and this inquiry's benefit. Both examples illustrate the benefits of taking the lead from the participants rather than following a fixed formulaic path.

Heron's work centres on a single group following the whole set of stages. My approach allows for a number of potentially different groups or individuals being associated with the input through Making and the interaction with the curated Exhibition. This has the result that more people can directly participate in the same inquiry. I certainly identify with Heron's Cooperative Inquiry methodology; however, I call on the differences of my approach where I work to a predominantly creative, strongly participant guided and practically orientated method.
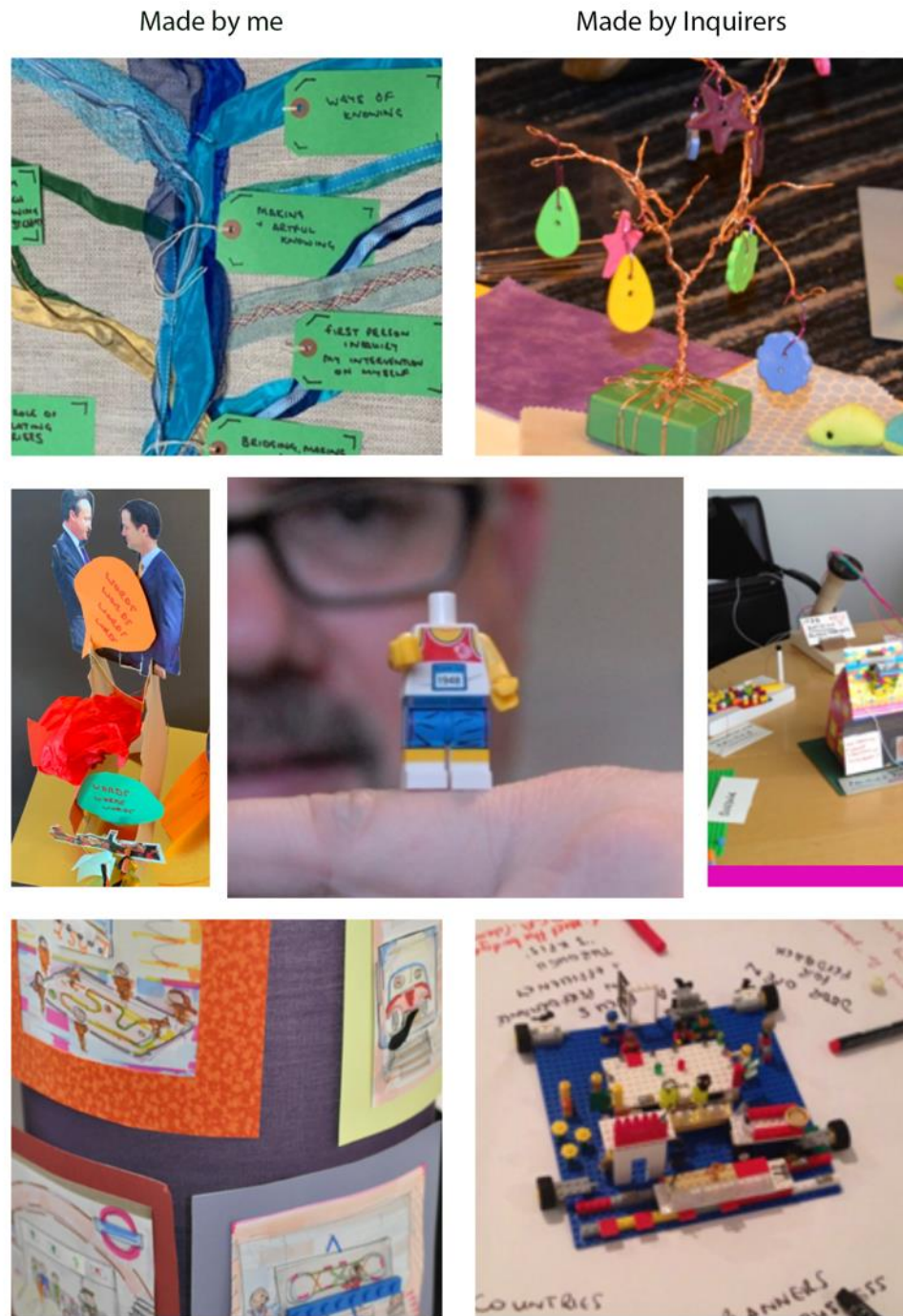
Figure 106 The 'Made Objects' Collage

This figure shows seven objects made during the course of the inquiry. On the left are objects I have made and on the right objects made by co-inquirers. The central object is the headless Lego man that features in a story on p.174.

Artful Knowing

Artful Knowing privileges the use of creative, representational techniques as part of Action Research inquiries. The approach, described by Seeley and Thornhill (2014, p. 27), connects us to inquiry through using artful means in order to generate new connections with the world. She gorgeously demonstrates that painting, poetry and clowning can all inspire us to generate rich material to guide inquiries in their presentational form, having explored experiential and propositional Ways of Knowing to get there. Artful Knowing, inspired by Chris Seeley (2011, p. 85), gives me permission to think differently, explore new territory and to be willing to play with new ideas. With Grayson Perry's (2013, p. 18) invitation to make marks and produce my own art I was able to overturn the label that I was not able to 'Do Art' or to make creatively, that came from my experience at school. My illustrated 'Claim to Making' (p.47 figure 8) revealed that I am a maker that I am creative and I can do art. Inspired by this I have embraced the artful and the artistic as part of my practice. Through this dissertation you will have seen many examples of my made objects and pictures, like the 'Guide to the Exhibition' (p.18 figure 1), 'The Squiggle Model' (p.103 figure 35) and 'The Taxonomy' (p.105 figure 36). However, this is not art for art's sake, I have taken the lead from Chris Seeley (Seeley & Reason, 2008, p. 36) to use it as part of a practice of Artful Knowing. She describes her multimedia practice of painting, poetry writing and clowning as a means to work through her conscious intellect and to process her thinking in a different way – allowing her to think generatively and to create insights. An example of the same outcome occurring in my practice is my painting of the 'Red Bridge' (p.94 figure 28) which took my first-person inquiry outside its original limitations. It enabled me to think beyond what I had previously conceived for my inquiry and enabled me to involve others at my viva in further shaping my thinking for my research.

Elaine Thornhill and Chris Seeley (2014, p. 20) consider Artful Knowing as a legitimate inquiry method for application in the board room and on the shop floor. My inquiry extends the use of Artful Knowing to second-person inquiry. It reveals itself in the Making and Curating elements. I have many examples of where Artful Knowing has been the stimulus to new knowing and significant insight. I refer to a small number of them now for reference; I think of Paul realising the connection between his previous work and his contemporary practice (p.151 figure 58), I am reminded of the Transport Planners realising the potential of them working together for the benefit of the business (p. 138 figure 151), I think of the headless Lego person and the powerful safety story (p. 174

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figure 76) and the change of perception the Over 50's study brought (with the HR team realising the Over 50s were as concerned about their contribution and legacy as much as their pensions) (p.229 figure 100). The method I have adopted and applied to my practice fully subscribes to Artful Knowing as an Action Research approach; where drawing, making and display are all means of expression, which in turn give energy to reflection and moving to action.

Appreciative Inquiry

David Cooperrider's Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is 'about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organisation and the relevant world around them' (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p. 614). It has much in common with my approach, the major difference is the framing around the positive and the appreciative. Whereas Cooperrider set this out as the starting point I want it to emerge through conversation around the postproduction and joint discovery at the interactive exhibition. The positive outcome that I seek is the end point rather than a starting point. The questions my approach asks are neutral to allow the current situation to emerge and not to be squashed by the need to be positive. The example of the Nottingham inquiry shows that the flourishing came from the interactive discussion of the findings displayed at the exhibition. The reality of people's experience needed to be expressed for the individuals and the organisation to move forward. Looking at method there is much in common, with wide scale information gathering (in AI's case through interviews) and display of the interview results and creative material at conferences. The conferences (like the exhibitions) are where the decisions are made on the action that might follow the inquiry (Cooperrider) .

Learning History

Learning History is described as: -

> Means of capturing learning from a project, initiative or an event in a way that draws on the human experiences of those involved and emphasises a participative process that is devised to stimulate wider learning from those experiences.(Gearty & Coghlan, 2018).

There is much in common between my method and practice and this process. At the heart of Learning Histories is the production of an artefact, the history itself. This is created by the historians based on the direct words of the participants. The document is then offered to the participants for discussion and 'whereby the learning history is continually open to new perspectives, rebuffs and negotiations' (Gearty, Bradbury Huang, & Reason, 2015).

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This means that the history is grown through constant review and reflection from participants and historians. Gearty develops a picture of reviewing and interacting with the history from first, second and third-person perspectives. I identify strongly with this multiple cycling of the material that is presented in the form of an artefact and an exhibit. This builds on my approach of Making and Curating and would suggest that there are some natural links to develop.

Now I turn to identifying the contributions my research makes to this field of scholarship.

Contribution

There are four areas where I see a contribution to existing knowledge and the scholarship of Action Research:

Curating as an addition to Action Research Practice

In other studies (Power, 2014) the role of curating in Action Research is seen as a metaphor for a style and a different means of reflection. I want to go beyond this and name Curating as a specific method and practice that can be extended into Action Research. This starts with the basic role of the curator which is to keep and present artefacts, to work with artists and audiences, and to host exhibitions (O'Neill, 2012). I advocate Lizzie Muller's framing of Interactive Curating; to balance the engagement of makers or artists, the creation of interactive exhibitions and the facilitation of the conversation that emerge to be adopted into Action Research (2011). My practice suggests that including these basic elements of curating practice would add to the wider possibilities for Action Research as they extend the resources available to the researcher. More specifically I would like to see postmodern curating practices adopted. These are the activities of postproduction – mixing and reconfiguring information after it has been produced (Bourriaud, 2002); the practices of interactive curating to engage with co-inquirers and audiences in productive ways; and the skills of the socially engaged exhibition maker to involve audiences in joining Action Research projects through their explicit engagement in making and reflecting on studies underway introduced into Action Research practice (Lippard, 2014). I consider my work evidences a contribution to existing Action Research method and practice.

Further consideration of practice from the Art World.

Curating practice is only one element of what I have learnt from the worlds of art and curating. This includes considering the Making element of my practice being seen as an artistic response to a situation, as Helguera describes in his writing on Socially Engaged Art (2011). Additionally there is the permission that the artist Grayson Perry gives to us all to take part in art and creating our own objects (2013). This absolutely falls in line with Seeley's 'Artful Knowing' but extends beyond presentational knowledge. When Chris Seeley talks about 'Bodying Forth' (Seeley & Thornhill, 2014) she is writing in the context of 'Artful Knowing'. I see a connection to the practice of Curating, extending the artwork into postproduction, interactive curating and exhibition making. In the post-modern art world, the production of the artefact is only the first step in creating impact and change, as Muller describes (Edmonds et al., 2009). The adoption of the theory and practice of the art world offers tremendous opportunities for Action Research. Above all it offers somewhere to go with inquiries, beyond the creation of representative objects, with Curating practice offering new fields to reflect and build on the work from the initial inquiry, such as the processing and mixing that comes with postproduction (Bourriaud, 2002). The art world also offers language and practice to generate new thinking. The concepts around interactive curating and postmodern exhibitions specifically invite the participants or the co-inquirers to make and then change and reconceive the original artwork, like the experiments I describe from South Africa (Berman, 2017). In Action Research all of the approaches tantalisingly suggest that they will do this but do not have the methods (but for reflection and reflexion) to do this. The adoption of these participative practices would add to Action Research; to build on the ability of Cooperative Inquiry to draw out actions from its second phase of action, for Appreciative Inquiry to energise the learning conferences, Learning Histories to have new ways of exhibiting the history and for participants to interact with them. I would like my work to contribute to these methodologies through practice from the Art World extending more directly into Action Research practice.

Bridging as a broadly applicable practice.

The first element of the triad in my approach, Bridging, has got less attention than Making and Curating. However, I believe Bridging is the basis for success with the other two and the method as a whole. The activity of enrolling participants or co-inquirers is rarely

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mentioned in any account of Action Research practice; Kate McArdle's account of her cooperative inquiry practice is one of those unusual examples (McArdle, 2008). I want to declare this step of reaching across from the researcher to the co-inquirer's perspective to be a contribution to Action Research scholarship. My practice particularly adds depth and form to current method, using the theory and the vision of Heidegger as its basis (1978). The specific practice of dwelling, of holding back, before starting the inquiry to ensure that all those involved are tuned to the expectations has been very beneficial (Ladkin, 2013). Furthermore, the fact that I am able to add specific method and practice to this claim, namely the use of the postcards as a minor making process and the application of the Thinking Environment highlights the possibility of adding it to existing practice (Kline, 1999).

The Dance

I have referred to this idea at several points through my inquiry. Its contribution is to add to the approach taken in other Action Research methods where a prescribed order of practice is given. I have found that the ability to step between Bridging, Making and Nottingham practice as an example, we moved from first-person making to second-person postproduction to first-person reflection and then to considering the third-person implications for the organisation and then back to second-person inquiry as to the nature of the exhibition to come even before the exhibition had taken place. The ability to step in with additional interaction, or making or reflection has deepened a number of inquiries that I have conducted, through matching the mood and the desire of fellow participants. I propose that the agility to dance between steps and territories of experience would give a freedom to offer greater participation between the participants and the subject of their inquiry and builds on the multistep processes described by Heron (1999) and Coghlan (Coghlan & Brannick, 2004).

Part 4

What are the influences of power and politics?

Power and Politics

Judi Marshall writes that creating knowledge is a political act, she builds on this by suggesting that living life must therefore be political too (1999, p. 157). Two examples of this emerge from my research. In the lead up to the King's Cross fire the views of the station staff were ignored and as a consequence the risks inherent on the station were not understood from their operational perspective. It was a cultural and political act of omission. By contrast, asking frontline wind technicians how they viewed their safety culture was a political act of inclusion. The organisation wanted to know what they were thinking and was prepared to act on the insights that emerged. In the first case politics created a silence which did not disrupt the status quo. In the second the political move presents a culture ready to be challenged and contradicted. It is the degree of readiness to that seems to be at the heart of politics in my inquiry.

My work has therefore exposed me to political dynamics in the organisations I have worked in, with different degrees of readiness present within the same organisation or team. Fortunately, I have not been exposed to the level of challenge described by Peter Reason, where lives have been threatened as a consequence of Action Research inquiry (2007, p. 194). This is due to the insights I have adopted from Nobert Elias (1998) and Bill Torbert (2010), where they say that power balance can be achieved in Action Inquiry, just for short periods, such that the normal hierarchy can be changed long enough for insights to emerge and for different outcomes to be established. This balance has occurred in my inquiries during the curating phases, particularly during the interactive exhibitions. The fact that this balance occurs at this stage in the practice is a political act in its own right and is important for insights to be adopted and for changes to made. In other types of studies people outside the field work will stand in judgement of the results, where the act of 'presentation' highlights the receiver as being a superior position. However, the involvement in the postproduction and interactivity of the exhibition means that people in power become part of the inquiry and that they see the results from others in the context of their own.

However, this does not make me or my work immune from political dynamics. I think of the moment with the Nottingham CEO when I offered him the early postproduction results of the inquiry we had conducted which dramatically challenged his view of what was happening with regards to the strategy he was leading. Essentially, he left abruptly, only for his openness to new ideas and his trust in his team enabling him to come back and reinforce his support for the work. I reflect on an inquiry, which has not been covered

in this thesis, on the role of women in that organisation where I asked an all-female group to 'Tell me about what it like to be a woman in this organisation?'. The incredibly vivid and deeply personal accounts that the co-inquirers built into the models were challenged by the leaders of that organisation in the exhibition where they asked 'Why did you just ask what was wrong? Couldn't you have asked for positive examples?'. Which, to me, showed the political system rejecting a picture of inequality that did not match the male leadership team's view of how things were.

One of the features of my approach is that it does present a version of the truth directly to an audience without filter or interpretation. Whilst there can be the sort of challenge or rejection of the curated material, as shown in the example above, the rawness of the information can cause change to be initiated. The clearest example of this is shown in Chapter 9, where the CEO was presented with the insights of a team from a terminated transformation project. It was a very frank assessment of how the organisation and its leadership had managed the process. In this case the information was welcomed and was used by the CEO to communicate the story more fully and hold the example up to his colleagues for discussion. Whilst as incoming CEO he may have found the insights to his advantage rather than a threat this does show how this type of intervention can create impact.

Politics and the issues of power live in my work like in any other setting. Sometimes this appears as a negative force that detracts from my contribution, however, the construct of my method and practice draws people into being part of the inquiry. This seems to result in people becoming part of the work and the inquiry thus opening them up to altering their usual perspective and being more open to change.

The Shadows and the Silences

This section touches on the moments in the inquiry and individual inquiries where the situation has not followed the approach or where the outcomes do not match an expected pattern driven by silences or decisions to step away. Early on I would have said these have been the moments when things went wrong. Now I appreciate them for moments of maximum learning and for being hugely insightful to a how an inquiry might develop.

I have three cases to discuss, all of them are from different inquiries. Of the three individual cases two involve a negative reaction to the idea of Making and are in industrial settings. The first was a group in a warehouse environment who point blank refused to engage in the Making process. They strongly declared that they thought the whole idea was stupid. However, I did not react or respond – in fact I just listened. The outcome was for that the group of six to calm as they were not being pushed to do something they did not want to get involved with. The dialogue that followed had not got the nuances and the deeper insights of the Making process, however they did set about revealing their deepest concerns about work and how they felt about it. What resulted considerably helped the overall understanding of the system and politics going on in the place of work. As often happens the manager revealed afterwards that they were the 'difficult group' and he was surprised that they had spoken at all. In fact, in spite of their resistance they played a very important role.

The second was a group involved in the windfarm industry. The inquiry was about safety and these technicians were the people at the most risk – putting together the huge parts of a wind turbine at great height and on the open sea. In this case, they turned their nose up at the Making and said that they did not need a session in a hotel to understand the challenges of the work that they did. One person spoke for the whole group while the others toyed with the Making materials – amusing themselves making profane models. His discourse was immensely revealing – including a story that I have recounted many times. He said –

> It's quite simple really if someone won't put on their safety harness then we always get them to work lowest down. We don't stop them working – we can't. But if they fall then they won't hurt anyone else.

Frankly he spoke for a renegade group that had placed themselves outside the correct rules and procedures. He also explained that there was no one to enforce the rules so they had simply made up their own.

In the beginning, I thought that these were failures – where my method had not engaged. On reflection, I realise that these non-engagements still elicited what I was seeking. Both groups had placed themselves outside the system so they did not want to take part in a 'management activity'. They were exerting a form of power and politics themselves. However, the structure of the Making element was flexible enough and open enough to accept those voices speaking in whatever form they wanted to use. So, in fact neither were failures,

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rather they showed that the underlying openness to fully hearing the participants thinking was the most important part of the practice.

The third case was a single person in a group of fifteen at an industrial site that simply declined to take part. Right from the beginning of the session he uttered only the minimum number of words. When it came to the Making session he folded his arms and said nothing. Indeed, he maintained this position until the end when he left without a word. The silence that this individual maintained must have taken a significant effort. I know at the time I did not know what to make of this behaviour, however, I now realise what a strong expression of power these actions carried. Whatever had happened to the person must have been so significant within the politics of the location. In an inquiry where the question was about safety culture, his silence spoke volumes. I wished I had listened to the silence more strongly rather than simply feeling I had failed.

In all three cases I am now pleased that the method is strong enough to hold these radical expressions of power and politics and that even those that choose to express themselves in different ways can be heard.

Closing Words for the Chapter

This chapter has allowed me to explore the nuts and bolts of my practice and method, looking at how to deploy the approach for real, some examples of what happens when the method and practice are used, how the approach adds to Action Research scholarship and reference to allusions of power and politics. I believe this chapter demonstrates the depth of my research and the applicability of my approach to Action Research practice.

Section 5

Chapter 12

Concluding the Dissertation

Summary of inquiry

This inquiry offers an Action Research led participative methodology situated in a modernist industrial world. It has shown that it can generate stories and narrative from people who are held outside the traditional hierarchical power system, people who would normally receive the memos where they are told what to do rather than be asked to

participate in designing the action. This can mean their perspectives are expressed, heard and acted upon with those participating taking part in the change that emerges. The dissertation illustrates that Bridging, Making and Curating involves the participants and a wider group.

My inquiry started off with tentative Action Research experiments that turned into my first inquiry question 'Can I use the theories and practices of Action Research to help me regain my ability to speak out?', as I started the doctoral programme after a breakdown that caused me to lose my voice. In response to this I developed an experiential, presentational, first-person practice that involved Artful Making. I discovered that the Artful Knowing presentational form could support generative and creative conversations that could shift my ideas and create change for me. The outcome of this phase of my inquiry was to restore my place in the world and to allow me to find a new creative energy.

My findings show that the first-person reflection and learning, where individuals determine whether they can contribute to change themselves (as is indicated by other Action Research based inquiries) is not lost, such as Kate McArdle's Cooperative Inquiry (McArdle, 2002). I had toyed with growing this first-person practice into a second-person practice. However, just asking people to make artful representations in response to a particular question did not replicate the personal connection I had to the subject matter or provide the ability to connect the made object with others for the generative conversation to emerge. So, my next question became 'How can I develop the personal success of my first-person inquiry into a second-person field of practice?'. My first attempts in this practice saw me adopting a practice of Bridging, considering how to connect the participants to the inquiry, Making, the creation of representational artefacts, and Curating to enable the objects to be shown together, and for conversations to emerge. I have shown evidence of how this early second-person practice did enable different conversations to emerge and for change to be initiated among the participants. My concern was that the results of these first tentative inquiries were not getting from the participants to the inquiry sponsors in such a way that they were sufficiently connected to the desired outcome. As a result, they could not act in participative concert with the Makers to create more challenging outcomes and a notably different and joint aspirational future.

I am concerned with the way that discourse is presented and then joined, and the power inherent in this means that perspectives of the inquirers are not heard. I have shown

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examples of where those in power are often conditioned to privilege the written text and to manage data to explain and justify how the system is working. In this scenario, getting a message across to managers often means translating it into 'managerial speak' weakens the perspective being shared. Therefore, engaging these managers in the inquiry rather than just presenting it to them is vital for the newly activated ideas and perspectives to be heard. Therefore, the next stage of my inquiry was to ask, 'How can all people in an organisational system be enrolled into being open to see their shared world in a similar way?' I sought a way of Bridging the presentational & propositional divide. My vision is to link voices that offer representations of their worlds through artful means – which shows the messiness and complexity of people in the 'low lying ground' - with those who occupy positions of power so that joint action can be convened (Coghlan, 2013). My intention is to make the made artful representations of organisational life into a common language and basis for discussion and action.

I have developed a practice that is not just about the beautiful creative models that participants make but also about the activities that the artful representations can generate. Making the models, building the stories and uttering them for the first time is only a step. That is the product of each participant's first-person inquiry. To start with there is the act of Bridging and dwelling for a moment to understand the human relationships and the question in hand. After the Making comes the postproduction – recording, presenting and reflecting on the stories that have been told (Bourriaud, 2002). This shifts the inquiry to second-person, alongside each individual's first-person perspective. This is an exercise in making sense of, and building on the artful presentational insights and then preparing them for others to see. This is the act of Curating. This includes the exhibition where the curated and presented material becomes part of a continuing work. The exhibitions that I advocate are Interactive Curating that originate in the world of new media (B. Graham & Cook, 2010). The intention of the exhibition is to engage others from the organisation in the work, and then together with the original participants, determine the possibilities for change in the organisation. Once this has been done, the entire exhibition, including those original artefacts, those developed and extended during post-production and those that emerge from the exhibition can be used to explain, enrich and develop the way that change might arise. What is certain is that the change comes from a common understanding of the organisational field of play and from the different perspectives that are in the discourse. Holding these stories in the form of curated exhibits and dialogues means that the voices

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can persist and, as I have shown, the contributions, the joint discourse and the move to action can be sustained.

Quality

I have feared writing this section knowing the fierce determination of Action Research scholars to prevent 'sloppy Action Research work' (Bradbury Huang, 2010, p. 104) from damaging the reputation of research in this paradigm. I have chosen 'Quality' to be the criterion by which I judge my work after my own experience of trying to stretch social science outcomes with inappropriate scientific measures. While there is much written trying to establish validation principles for Action Research such as from Heikkinen, Huttunen and Syrjälä (2007) or Whitehead (Newman, 2014) I prefer to adopt the stance of Reason who says 'Nothing less than a complete rethinking of validity [for it to be useful as a criteria to judge Action Research] is imaginable' (Reason, 2007, p. 188). I shall use the common elements from the writing of Reason, Denzin and Lincoln, Coghlan and Bradbury to identify four main quality criteria. The four are Ethical Questions, Pursuing Worthwhile Purposes, Democracy and Participation and 'making a Contribution'. I address each of the criteria with my reflections on how this inquiry matches them. My hope is that through this I can identify the 'craftsmanship of my inquiry' as a mark of its quality.

Standing back for a moment

I am immensely proud of the inquiry that you have read about in this dissertation. It grew out of small beginnings helping me recover from my illness and has gone on to have positive outcomes for most of those individuals and groups who I have had the chance to inquire with. Because of the length of time I have spent conducting this work I have had the benefit of developing my method through many cycles of inquiry, this has developed and refined the method and approach that I use, while gaining confidence about using the method to intervene on more significant challenges. I believe the chance to reflect (following the approach of Muller, (2011, p. 94)), while using my approach of Bridging, Making, Curating which includes exhibition making, has brought quality to my inquiry. This has partly come through persistence, learning from mistakes and epiphanic moments. Mainly it has come through the participation and feedback of hundreds of people that has challenged and improved my work.

Ethical Questions

Throughout the inquiry I have undertaken, I have learnt to be gentle. This started because I needed to be gentle with myself when I was unwell. I had to be careful what I exposed myself to, and particularly thinking of where the particular work might take me.

As a consequence, I have been determined to see this through into second-person inquiry. This has been hard at times with so many people involved and potentially (and actually), many others seeing the exhibitions and the dialogue and the artefacts. I have made sure that everyone who has been involved in any inquiry or event has been aware of how the work will proceed and where the outputs of any sessions might appear.

At all times this has meant ensuring that the people's identity is never associated with writing and artefacts., In fact I have learned not just to leave names off but to rigorously examine potential exhibits to make sure no unintended clues are given. I have learnt this through practice. Part of this has meant allowing people to break with my intentions to ensure they can say what they want, how they want to say it. This might mean silence, and although no-one has taken the option leaving. I have offered participants invitations to the post-production process and to the interactive exhibitions. Those who have accepted, have relished the chance to be involved in the discussion with their insights, and developing plans to incorporate the inquiry work they have undertaken.

This work is conducted in a political and power-laden environment so keeping a constant watch around the borders of the inquiries has been important to ensure ethical standards for the work.

Pursuing Worthwhile Purposes – research engagement with real life issues

My research has engaged with real life issues. The inquiry question is about generating involvement and ideas that might be otherwise remain hidden and has brought me close to real life issues. The inquiry question started from my recollections of my experience at King's Cross – where I saw individuals who had not been able to express themselves, a team that could not communicate among itself and an organisation that could not hear nor then act comprehensively.

My research set off with the intention of reversing these negatives. I have continued to apply my practice to worthwhile purposes. I started with my own illness and the matter of regaining my lost ability to express myself. My research work continued with other individuals, who sought an alternative means of expression to find a way of listening to their own story in a different way, like with Paul and Mihirini. I have then gone on to work with small teams, such as the timetable planners who sought to understand their professional identity or the offshore technicians who craved a voice to express the reality of their safety environment. These teams shared their narratives and those in the teams learnt from each other to realise their collective influence. Through early demonstration of my method, they gradually had their perspective raised more broadly in the organisation. However, despite all this participation and the significance of the raised voices, the challenge remained for the voices to be heard beyond their immediate sphere of influence – that question of having the voices heard and acted upon and still being able to participate in the developing conversation and extending their agency.

My desire to explore this took me to larger scale interventions at an organisational level, examples such as Nottingham, at a railway business and in the road traffic organisation, where the Making and post-production of many people became the Interactive Curating and exhibition attendance of even more. I learnt that sustaining the conversation at a presentational way of knowing actually sustains the agency of many and for the actions to intervene on the real-life issues to grow and develop and involve the participation of many. In all three examples, I know that the dialogue about the inquiry, the implications of the outcomes for those teams continues to persist after two to four years.

What I have noticed in the inquiries and the broader doctoral inquiry are the layers of reflection and action. These work in three dimensions. First there are the cycles of inquiry that move through time, experimenting and building through the temporal acquisition of knowledge. Then there is the hermeneutical inquiry that dives into the nature of objects asking what they mean, how people see them and comparing the different perspectives, and looking for the opportunities for action. Finally, there are Bateson's 'Levels of Learning' where each experience is processed and adjustments are made. The concurrent use of these three dimensions has meant great depth has emerged from the inquiries.

While I am compelled to highlight the tangible real-life examples of my practice, there is also the worthwhile aspect of my overall inquiry. I have been inspired by Freire with his pursuit of inclusion, Denzin and his desire to be part of creating a liberal and democratic society, and Buckminster Fuller's vision of a comprehensive world where different knowledge is welcomed equally. Their perspectives and their practice offered an encouraging context for my work; being open to listen and to use different perspectives in new action.

These intentions seem worthwhile purposes to me and I have tried to seek ways of creating these characteristics in my practice. The Making and showing models – with the narrative that allows people the voice to express themselves; the post-production and the Curating that encourages a society to be open to new ideas and the Socially Engaged Art that allows actions to be incorporated into the prevailing system. This is my method and I have demonstrated in the practice accounts you will have read that my experience shows that these activities can achieve the results I describe. Building on and promulgating my approach and method to a wider Action Research audience are, I believe, worthwhile purposes.

Democracy and Participation – collaboration

This inquiry has demanded participation right from the start. While the early part of the work was first-person, as the inquiry was about having my voice heard, I found myself working with others. Their involvement in conversations based on my curated reflections helped me to move on and my inquiry to develop. Indeed, I have recorded at least one epiphanic moment that came from my curation of the artful thinking generated by my very good friend Alan. However, as my inquiry has progressed the level of participation has grown from one or two people towards hundreds. As my inquiry has evolved with

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many people Making and then a further wave of involvement through Curating and being part of the Social Exhibition Making and interaction.

Thanks to the time that it has taken to complete this doctorate, I have had the chance to undertake refinements of my inquiry process. I have worked hard to offer the co-inquirers and sponsors of each inquiry a clear indication of the direction that my approach will take; this is for the individual voices to be shared at the point of Making, the outcome of those conversations to be shared and then further dialogue generated during post-production; and then the full impact of the models and the narrative being shared in the exhibitions. Essentially this is a democratic approach – there is no advance sharing of the content of the Making sessions or interim reporting of outcomes to managers. I have taken the view that while I understand the approach we will be taking, I do not know about the content or organisational context. This is led by the participants and sponsors.

An important part of my approach is to maintain all of the pictures, models and narrative in an open and accessible format so that all the contributors can join in the conversation throughout the intervention. I want the material to stay in an artful and presentational form to maintain accessibility. I have been inspired through the exhibitions that I have visited – like 'Sensing Spaces' at the Royal Academy (Goodwin, 2014), and the Interactive Curating work of Lizzie Muller. I have learnt that translating the output to the format of a management report or PowerPoint presentation detracts from the inclusion by privileging a certain way of thinking. The 'What is it like to be in your 50s here' inquiry is an examples of my practice that have benefitted from this perspective.

Creating 'cooperative space' has been a big part of how I have engaged in this participative and democratic work. This space has normally started off as being physical, where the work of Making and Curating has called for an area to use for the activities. Sometimes this has been ideal with large rooms where there has been space for the individual Making to come together for the storytelling and initial Curating or even actual art galleries where the Nottingham and the Transport Planner's exhibition were displayed. Creating the right space can be physical and it can also be spiritual. I have used the 'Thinking Environment' (Kline, 1999) to encourage listening and reflection in the groups that I have worked with.

Peter Reason raises the topic of power and politics in the context of democracy and participation – very specifically warning of the dangers of carrying out the work (2007, p. 194). I certainly recognise the significance of power and politics in my work. Within the Making groups examples of the power within the groups – where someone has taken a

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spokesperson role – or how the group talk about their leaders and supervisors has been a consistent theme in the inquiries I have led. I believe that organising the exhibitions has allowed these often strongly-held views to be placed before those in power has had a significant effect in encouraging moving to action. Like Norbert Elias (1998) and Peter Torbert (2010) suggest it is possible to create moments of power balance where hierarchy is diminished and those in power are more open to listen and the voice of the less powerful can be heard.

I have seen this emerge in several of my inquiries. I recognise Reason's fears however being alive to the tensions and struggles can often be the most revealing part of the Interactive Curating activity – as shown in the Nottingham and the Road Traffic inquiries.

It is interesting that the manner in which the 'ways of knowing' are held – all democratically accessible – artfully orientated – and open access. They are not buried in reports for managers and are kept accessible to all.

Contribution

In this section I respond to the simple request 'What did I learn from this project that was new?' with the intention 'to bring reflection to action and more action to ungrounded theorizing'.

I can unequivocally say that the element of my inquiry that is new is the method I have developed in pursuit of a response to my inquiry about unheard voices. 'Bridging, Making, Curating is the way that I have come to approach my inquiry question. The major contribution is to have a method that not only finds a way of initiating the sharing of individual perspectives of the participants but also to sustain the narrative such that it can be created to be repeated and built upon at many levels. The sustaining of the narrative is achieved through bringing to bear the methods of the art world and tools of Post-production, Interactive Curating and Social Exhibition Making. I realised the step of having the voices of the participants emerge was significant, however that did not mean that those insights would be heard or acted upon. I discovered that these art world methods can help me create a system that allows for participants' insights and ideas to be represented, worked with and then incorporated into action. In many cases the participants in the original narrative are continuing to build and develop new actions. In the best cases it was not just having the voices raised or heard, it was the route for a new democratic discourse to emerge.

Within this overarching claim to knowledge there are a number of elements that need to be peeled open.

Bridging is an important part of my inquiry method. I developed it after consideration of my first-person experience where I was encouraged to spend time Bridging beyond my first thoughts and to spend time dwelling on the ground from which I was starting my inquiry. This became a matter of lifting my head up and looking around rather than rushing headlong into 'work' and new territories. I decided to name this as part of my second-person approach and is now the starting point for any inquiry with my fellow participants. This is embodied by a question, introductions and even a discussion on how the group come to be together. What has been distinctive about the element is that it is the starting point for creating the unique space for the group to work with. At one level I say to myself that this is so obvious that it is not worthy to call out as a contribution and yet I note that John Heron's Co-operative Inquiry has no such starting point. He suggests going straight into 'Focus and type of inquiry' without such a simple human moment of connection (Heron, 1998, p. 74). Therefore, the distinctive naming Bridging as a specific element of my approach has value and builds on Heidegger's theory (1962) and the 'dwelling' practice of Donna Ladkin (2006).

Making has become synonymous with my practice, I have been called the 'Lego man' more than a few times. The contribution from this element of the approach is within the layers of the Making approach. The first step is to ask people to make a model based on a common question – for example 'tell me about how safety is managed around here?'. I ask people to build the model individually, which invokes a first-person inquiry as the participants consider their responses and then put together a model privately and then one by one each person tells their story. I have been overwhelmed by the creativity of these models and how they have been able to convey complex and strongly personal issues. This puts each individual story into the second-person as the narratives are now in the shared arena. The second round of model Making – responding to a question like 'how would you like the safety culture to develop in the future?' is often done in groups continuing the discussion in the second-person. There is never enough time in this session – once people have started to discuss matters it is hard to end the conversation. The contribution comes in the combination of the first- and second-person activity in the same session, and the creation of space in the round of listening to one another's stories. Two significant remarks from participants that frame the possibilities are 'I said things openly

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that I would never have dreamed I would say publicly' and that 'I had not realised how much we share in our views that we have never said to one another'.

The elements of Post-production and Curating are features taken straight from the art world. These are not metaphors these are practices that borrow heavily from the art world equivalents. Their place in my inquiry is a vital step in taking the artefacts and the dialogue into places in the organisation where they are heard and acted upon. That is not to say that actions do not emerge from the inquiry groups themselves, or that people with authority to act on the suggestions cannot attend the session, however in pursuit of the democratic goals of hearing those voices for the benefit of the group or organisation they have an irreplaceable role. They offer Action Research practice a set of tools that do not explicitly exist in the literature or, in my experience, practice. They bring the organising of outputs from multiple sessions and convert the material into such a form that others can understand and engage with the material. The Post-production phase brings together participants and sponsors. This treats the output of the inquiry groups as art and artefacts and the phase demands reflecting on the content with a view to exploring the bigger themes and insights – the output of which becomes an artefact in its own right. The Post-production and Curating are conducted in an artful form – staying away from proposition – holding the ideas lightly for others to see and develop. The Curating of the material means thinking about how and where the models and art work is displayed and how people will be invited into the exhibition that will emerge. On no account are the models or the transcriptions of the narrative altered, only the audience view is different. The outcome is a new group of inquirers who have developed deeper knowledge of the material and who are prepared to take part in the next phase.

When I talk about my inquiry and this thesis, I get most excited about the Interactive Curating and Social Exhibition element of my method. Interactive Curating is normally associated with digital exhibitions however I have adopted the idea for artefacts – in my case the curated art made in the first participant-led workshops - being open to interaction through facilitation and conversation. The interaction can be as simple as the audience's response to the question 'what were your thoughts when you saw the material in the exhibition?' This then leads to a facilitated conversation which is the human power interaction. The idea of tying this practice to Social Exhibition Making is new. Social Exhibition Making tends to be led by artists – often presenting their own art work to the participants which leads to social action in what is often community-based outcomes. I

want to build on the idea of art and exhibitions leading to change, however I have used the art of the participants to be the stimulus for the conversation and the change.

While the approach of Bridging, Making and Curating is in itself a contribution to knowledge I would also like to offer the outcomes of my significant practice-based inquiries as an area of curiosity. I discuss ten significant pieces of work in the dissertation. What comes across from all of them is the degree to which people are happy to open up to discussions with the stimulus of first-person Making and then are interested to use the curated original artwork as a means of having action-based conversations. What is different is the impact of power on these outcomes. In my view the inquiry in Nottingham had and indeed has the most impact because of the continuity of the sponsors and the early involvement with the power related insights that the Making process produced. The commitment to letting the inquiry just run has resulted in the high degree of change and very high levels of participation. On the other hand, the Railway Story, despite the very high levels of early participation stuttered because the key sponsor moved on at a critical moment. My reflection is that the lack of connection that emerged between the managers and the stories from the shop floor could have been managed better by me and that the missing sponsorship role and the potential unifying power of this role left the overall outcome weaker than it could have been. This contrast offers a contribution in learning about the framing that might be necessary for inquiries of this type to succeed.

For all of the responsibility I feel for the inability of the powerful information that emerged from the first wave of inquiry to initiate significant cultural change, it has left another critical learning about this method – and the sustainability it offers and the ability to persist with the original messages. I have lived through two significant changes of management in this organisation and I have noted the impact of the exhibited material and the interactive presentation as it has been re-exhibited. Because the exhibition comes through original input of the staff it keeps its initial vibrancy. Through the mediation of a curator, inviting interaction, the words and the images can live again. The original exhibitions did not have the impact intended, but their revivals have elicited a strong positive reaction and a move to rekindle action based on the insights that the original inquiry elicited.

In my pre-Action Research days, I struggled to carry the complexity and messiness of the world in my attempts to describe what I was seeing and experiencing. My reflection on the images and words generated by the participants, using the approach is that it is

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possible to see the complexity very vividly. When I have stood back from the exhibitions – looking at the original material and the curated reflections - the layers of insight and the web of different perspectives is awe inspiring. However, what makes this really interesting is that participants reflect on how accessible the curated material is to understand and how it generates better and different conversations.

To summarise the contribution of the thesis. I have found a way to raise voices, have them heard and to have joint action emerge from the Curating and exhibition Making. I have found that there is not simple chain of practice that will achieve all them. Rather I offer a comprehensive, system-based approach that combines different person inquiry and many ways of knowing. I have found examples where the approach comes to a successful and democratic outcome, however there have been others where without the right sponsorship regime the voices can be heard, they can be exhibited but the move to action can be blunted.

Reflections and a self-critique

Once I had moved from the very deepest and darkest phase of my first-person inquiry, my work started to engage others. My first tentative steps to experiment with the method I have developed started with working with just one or two people, then to small groups of people numbering ten to fifteen and has gradually extended to working alongside hundreds of people. I worry that my work does not involve the deep association of a single group that is found in, for example, Kate McArdle's Cooperative Inquiry (2002) or the single organisational focus of Margaret Gearty's work on the uptake of low carbon technology (2015). However, I believe that working with many different groups has allowed me to develop and update my approach in a broad and comprehensive manner. At the same time my association with individuals that I have worked has continued over time and that I have sustained many relationships and at the same time.

Looking back at this document I think there are three areas of missed opportunities. These are: a deeper consideration of the broader consideration of power, a wider input from the contemporary 'biennale' Curating world and a reflection on how this inquiry and thesis stands up to the critical 'qualitive' position of Martyn Hammersley, among others.

What is next?

The first thing to say is that this inquiry has only just started for me. I am pleased to be able to express the niggle I have had for many years about what worries me in

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organisations. I can now express my passion to have people heard through Artful Knowing in a participatory, creative and interactive manner that adds to the democracy of the place of work or where communities arise.

I think I have three points of attention for the immediate future. Firstly, I want to find ways of talking about my method to wider audiences, I want to encourage others to try out the approach and I want to learn more about what happens when they try it out. I am curious and hope that the positive outcomes that I have found might be replicated elsewhere. I have found that some people have taken the experience I have shared with them and used the approach themselves. I want to grow the number of Bridging, Making and Curating conversations that are going on and the influence that they might be having. I want to grow the pool of Action Researchers trying out the approach to extend my own learning and understanding.

For my own practice, I would like to build on from my corporate work and start to work in more community-based settings – perhaps in the work related to the Grenfell Fire – where views could not be expressed and were not heard. I am also interested in exploring this work with groups within our society who are often not heard and may have other people seeking to find solutions for them, for example in relation to sexuality, gender or social exclusion. I believe the inclusion and interactivity of my approach could help in these fields.

To help me extend knowledge of my work and to help others try it out I would like to put together a way of communicating it more broadly. I have written it this way to avoid saying a book because I want it to be more of an experience like the Turner Prize nominated Forensic Architecture (Romero & Plascencia, 2017) from Goldsmith's, London have achieved. I would like to learn more about their digital Curating techniques.

Interactive Curating and Exhibitions have given me such significant inspiration and opportunities for my practice that I would like to go further into the field to offer what I have learnt in the form of a joint inquiry. Just how this might happen I do not exactly know yet. My initial thinking is that I should mount my own interactive exhibition and invite fellow practitioners from the organisational change world to participate.

What about me?

My final thoughts return to how this inquiry has changed me – falling in a period when I was so open to influence. I want to start with the obvious; my inquiry helped me become

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well and functioning again after my illness. However, it did not just make me better. Artful Knowing and the methods around Interactive Curating have given me a new outlook on to the world and a new set of skills to work with.

Through the reflections on the individual inquiries I have conducted, I have a newly sharpened outlook on the power and politics of our society. I now look to find the opportunities for balance and to mount the creative and generative interactions that might create collaborative change.

What I have come to know about myself is that I am creative and innovative, not just to make objects, and can create environments to listen and play and dance with new ideas. This hands me the chance to flâneur my way through my inquiry, just bumping into opportunities and seeing where they might take me and also knowing that being a bricoleur gives me the chance to use what I find.

I realise that through Artful Knowing I can use my enthusiasm, if not through any skill, to make, draw and map my way through planning and setting up new inquiries. Frankly, I have been given a gift to use these methods to express myself, to share ideas with others and to use my artefacts with others to generate further thinking. I do this all the time!

I spend much time reflecting and my first-person inquiry has become like Judi Marshall suggests, an integral part of who I am (2016). What is most significant is that my artful response to the world and my desire to curate, involve and for others to interact in stories around them has become a reflex. There are many choices about what to do in the extension of this thesis. I do hope that I can grow and develop these new parts of my consciousness.

I will close with a picture. This was a gift from a co-inquirer from whom I sought feedback on what it was like to work with me (Figure 104). Maybe this beautiful object carries messages about what I have learned about myself and that I carry into the world.
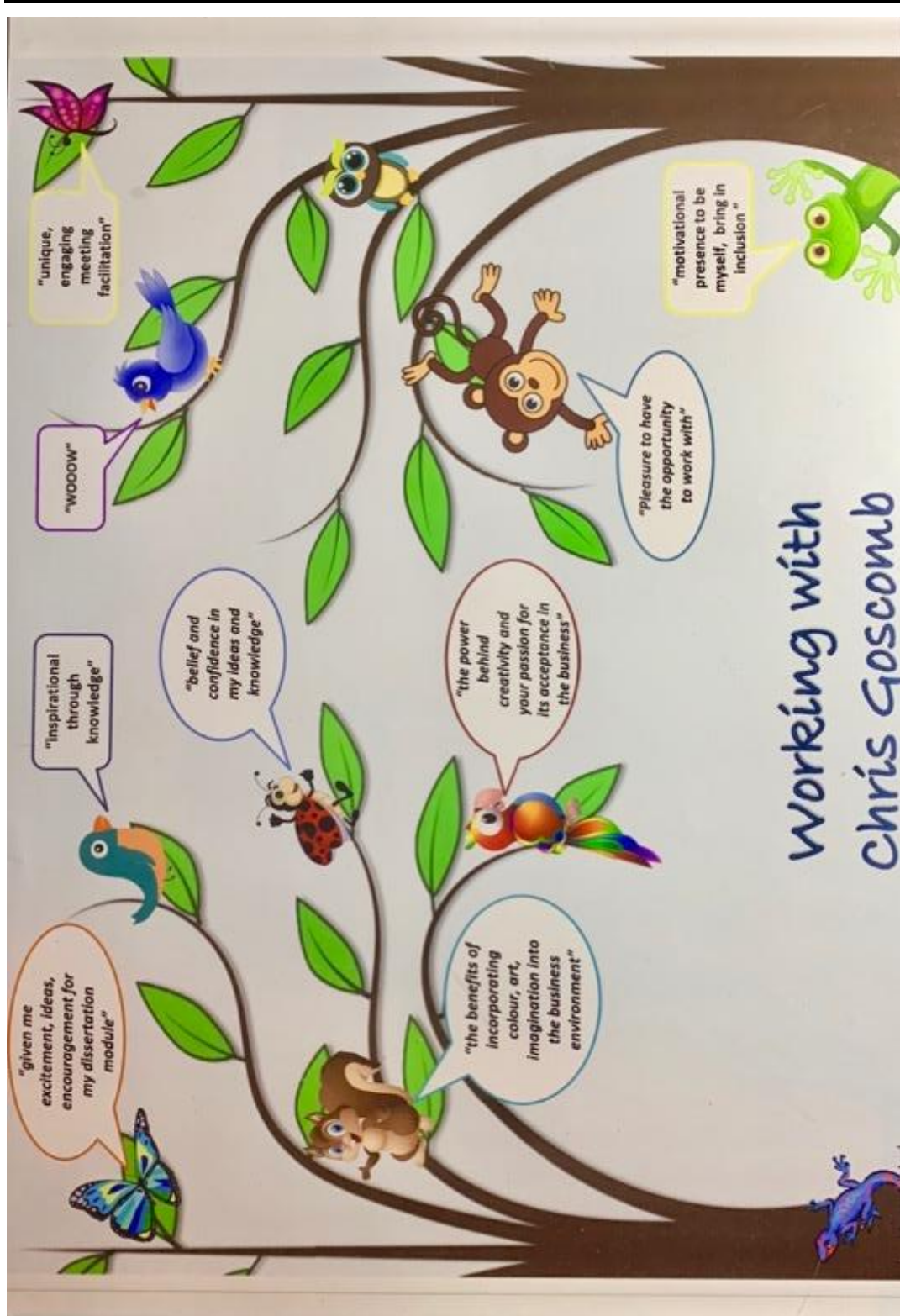
Figure 107 Feedback on my conduct

Epilogue

Leaving the Exhibition that is my thesis

I was asked to reflect on my final viva conversation and to consider writing an exit from my thesis that considered how the viva became an example of my method and practice itself. These are my reflections.

With the mention of a clear exit from an exhibition, an example immediately comes to mind. At my final viva on the 2nd April 2020 I told the story of the first exhibition that I visited with my developing research at the front of my mind. I went to the George Bellow's exhibition at the Royal Academy in 2013, not knowing what I would see or what insights that might arise (Brock, 2012). George Bellows was an artist from the 'Ashcan' era of realist paintings set in New York of the early 1900's. His work captured the vibrancy, the excitement and social strains of this period. Little known today, in his heyday he was more famous than his friend and contemporary Edward Hopper. I was moved by the exhibition but came to a complete stop as I reached its exit. There were two pictures there that helped me understand the impact and power of curating. They were placed either side of the exit door; one of the paintings was a gentle and touching picture of his wife Emma and their two young daughters and the other, probably his most famous, of the Argentinian boxer Fibro knocking Dempsey out of the ring at a fight. Close examination of the text revealed that they were both painted in 1924, the year before he died aged 42 from appendicitis. So, there they were; his most famous sporting work, full of physical movement and with figures shining in sweat, representing the peak of his terminated career, and then there was his family, beautifully represented as demure close knit and much loved, who would soon lose their father. The curator had said everything about his death just by putting those two pictures together. At that moment I realised what a curator can do and tried to think about how work is shown and juxtapositioned to tell a story and to leave an impression. I told this story at my viva to illustrate the power the curator can give to made objects. I tell it now as part of the epilogue of this thesis, representing the events of that final viva and indicating the impact Curating can have on the exit from an exhibition.

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I had always planned to mount an exhibition as part of my viva, however, I had not expected the Covid-19 pandemic to come along and to make the whole event virtual. This meant that I had to adjust the presentation of my exhibit. The medium of the viva meant that I had to present my story in a much more concise manner and that the audience would have to be guided by me rather having the chance to view the material themselves (Figure 105). The form of the exhibition was always going to be an example of display, as I wanted to tell the story of my inquiry and to state my theory by reconstituting a series of exhibitions into a single new entity. The model in my mind was the Van Gogh/Artaud exhibition I had visited in Paris. This exhibition recreated an exhibition of Van Gogh overlaid with the comments and critique of Artaud, a French poet. Furthermore, as declared by the curators, the exhibition was explicitly framing these creations of the 1940s into the world of 2014 (Cahn, Allet, Bakker, & Denis, 2014). This type of exhibition is referenced in a series of articles which refer to 'Exhibitions on Exhibitions' (Haines, 2013) and 'Curating histories and the restaged exhibition' (Coates, 2014). The authors discuss how the staging of such exhibitions allows the curator (in this case me) to reposition their thinking. It also allows the audience (in this case the examiners) 'to bring their cumulative experiences, knowledge and values to their encounter to the exhibition' (2013, p. 277). The impact of the context brought out the essence of my thesis in the exhibition even more clearly. The artefact I had made and then presented became the physical object from which the interaction and participation grew.

Figure 108 Exhibition set up in my study ready for the viva

During the period of lockdown when I was preparing for the viva the artist Grayson Perry popped back into my conscious gaze. Grayson Perry ran, what he called, his 'Lockdown Art Club' (A. Marshall, 2020). Picking a lockdown related theme for each week and then calling for his audience to make art on that topic and then accompanied by him making his own work and hearing from friends from the amateur and the professional art world he selected pieces that will form part of a future exhibition of our experience from lockdown. The flow with which he led these conversations as the curator of that future exhibition was particularly notable. I believe it is the perfect example of interactive curating, where each turn of the conversation brought more to the objects under discussion and insights that stretched beyond what the objects themselves carried. What he was doing alongside my preparations perfectly matched the practice that emerged from the viva.

The last of this series picked out in the forty minutes of broadcast just what I aspired to do – and largely took place in my viva. He started by setting the context of what he was intending to achieve, talking to the artists as he enrolled them in his intentions, 'Bridging' between his idea and their limited experience of curating an exhibition. Grayson Perry would then look at the pieces of 'Making' that the member of the viewing public had produced, examining each one virtually and asking the artist about the context for the work and the style and technique that had been used to create it. Through this interaction he conducted a dance between the amateur artists pieces of art, the comments from the audience and the making of a piece of his own artwork

Through this dialogue he would start to curate the art. Initially with A4 print outs stuck on his wall, forming a point of conversation and a chance to have contact with the pieces. This would be followed by the art being sorted and categorised, he used the voices of others to do this, normally guest artists. This would take the form of asking opinions about the nature, the method and the subject of the work. He commissioned a small number of artists to do further work. For example, a photographer who he asked to prepare a portfolio of images of her impressions of the health system through the covid-19 lockdown. All the way through this process he would return to his own work – large pots, decorated with words and symbols and iconography that referred to his faith and hope for recovery from the situation being experienced.

What I want to pick out and then reference through my own practice in the viva are three elements that Grayson Perry pursued. First the dance he conducted, moving deftly from

topic to topic, from conversation to conversation; with each of them being held as a new moment of discovery and insight. Secondly, he would use tangible physical objects to discuss and curate and at the same time he would post produce and then exhibit the words and conversations that emerged alongside the physical objects. Thirdly he established them more deeply through cycles of inquiry and lots of interactivity, engaging people in conversation to develop them and then displaying those discussions as if they were objects that could be treasured and revered. What I was particularly drawn to was the way he worked his way through a very carefully conceived method; referring to the artwork and leading conversations. He interactively curated a story, that originated with artwork for others to participate in, to be connected to, and to develop new thinking and insights.

When it came to my Final Presentation Panel I was faced with the novel challenge of a virtual viva. It was led over 'Zoom' with six people; two examiners, my supervisor, an exam board chair and me. Like Grayson Perry, I wanted to bring together people for a conversation that had the intimacy of face-to-face contact. One of my concerns was how to connect my viva panel to the physical work which is so important to my story, I would have ideally chosen to have the conversation face-to-face with the artefacts of my inquiry all around me. What I decided to do was to stage an exhibition from a number of inquiries and material reprising actual inquiry exhibitions. I led the audience through the material using my phone as a mobile camera feed into the zoom call. Using the example of the George Bellows exhibition I tried to put together material that would tell its own story. Thinking about the way I juxtapositioned and joined the objects I hoped to create the sort of impact that the Bellow's exhibition achieved. Above all I wanted to move the conversation from the small zoom window onto a bigger stage more representative of the exuberance and physical nature of my inquiry. This went well. However, it was only represented the initial step in the curation of my inquiry and the exhibition of my work in the dissertation document.

What followed were the questions and probing of the examiners. The responses I was giving were framed in terms of stories, or as examples of practices that linked back to the exhibition we had all participated in. As the viva progressed, the stories and examples merged together with the areas the examiners wanted to discuss in my thesis. The cycles of discussions, insights and development in the viva mimicked the method and practice I have been using in my research.

The cycles of inquiry were particularly important in the development of the outcome. The curating of material resulted in a phase where ideas were shared and reformed, leading to the development of a new sense and meaning for the topics. Then followed the interactivity with examiners to probe, discuss and then jointly develop the points that they were making. The topics that emerged from the discussion subsequently transformed themselves into the amendments I was requested to make.

I believe the subconscious use of my practice, with the stories and examples being the artefacts, and then the working of these into a deeper more insightful meaning that came with the interactivity between the examiner's questions and my answers. Once the ideas had been further developed they were presented, as if in an exhibition, where further conversation took place. By the end of the viva the concerns and questions of the examiner had been curated together with my participation into a clear set of actions. This move to action characterises the last part of interactive curating where joint identification of insights led to action.

My own conclusions about the use of the Bridging, Making and Curating method and practice being the framework for the viva, were echoed in the comments of the examiners. It is recorded in the written outcomes letter where the chair of the panel writes 'you may wish to work with the insight that emerged during the viva that the viva itself was an exercise in interactive curating' (Adams, 2020). I am pleased that my final viva demonstrated my method and practice in action.

Two significant insights came from the experience in the viva. The first insight is that with the clear framing of the method and with the sharing of artefacts with the co-inquirers it is possible to work through a topic without having to make new physical objects. By using material from previous exercises, the necessary prompt for the conversation was provided. In a virtual context the words and the stories become the artefacts and the cycles of discussions and representations of the developing ideas become the subject of interactive curating. The second insight is that using the practice that emerged from the viva it that it has been possible continue my practice in the virtual world. I now have the framework for conducting an inquiry as a series of questions and moments of reflection that add up to the same method and practice as I have previously used face to face.

Since the viva I have been translating my method and practice to the virtual business world. Using the mobile phone to capture images and a variety of applications to create

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the participation, I have been taking the virtual form of my method and practice developed in the viva and applying it to workshops in pursuit of specific inquiries.

It seemed right to leave the 'Exhibition that is my thesis' with a significant image (Figure 106). I return to the collage that Alan made from my writing and my photograph that was the first moment that the combination of Bridging, Making and Curating came together. It demonstrates the participation and interactivity that has become an essential part of my work. It carries the spirit of creativity, friendship and positive outcomes that I intend will be the continuing hallmark of my work.
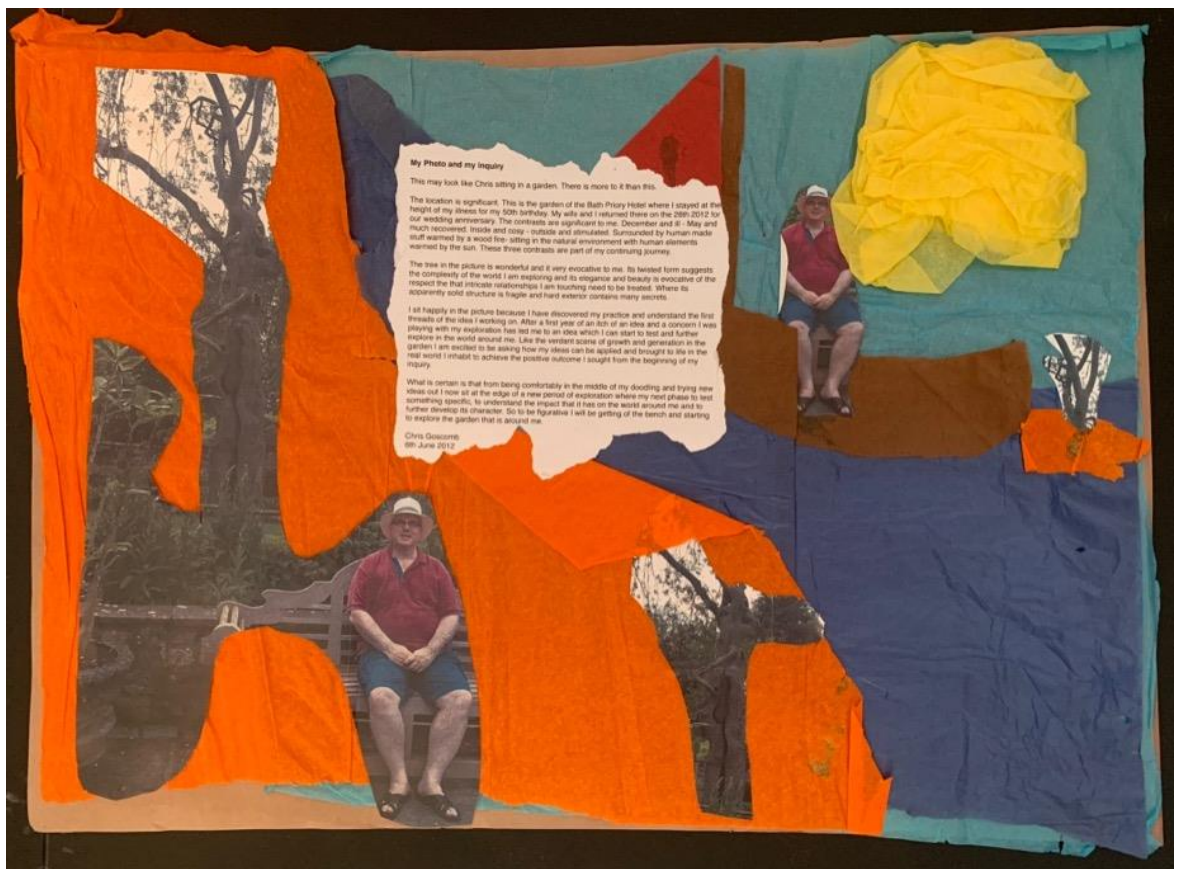

Figure 109 The Making and Curating that started it all off.

In memory of the kind and curious Tony Davies, the late husband of Mihirini De Zoysa, who left us on the 28th July 2020 after bravely fighting illness for eleven months.

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