Our Here: Crafting Imperfection and Collective Practice in the Interactive Documentary

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

Leeds Trinity University

School of Arts and Communication

September 2018

Intellectual Property and Publication Statements

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

For Felix and Hiro.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I wish to thank each of the incredible sixty-five co-creators who made *Our Here* possible. Our conversations, creativity and workshops have entirely shaped this research and the findings and impact discussed in this thesis. It has been an honor to collaborate with so many empowering women and girls to celebrate our wonderful international city.

I wholeheartedly thank my supervisors Professor Graham Roberts and Dr Stefano Odorico for their belief and encouragement in this project. I can still recall your enthusiasm for my early ideas during our first supervision meeting in 2014. Since then you have both continued to support, empower and celebrate my achievements as the project has developed into more than I ever imagined possible.

I would like to sincerely thank Leeds Trinity University for the scholarship I was awarded which has enabled me to undertake and complete this PhD.

I also thank the staff in the Research Office at Leeds Trinity University who have supported me, including Deanne Sharpe, Helen Morris, Sarah Najeri and Elaine Page. A very special gratitude is extended to Sue Jack and Zoe Marsden for their support. Thanks also to Sharon Hooper, Marvina Newton, Dr Allister Gall, Dr Steve Presence, Dr Kate Lister and Dr Helen Kingstone for their mentoring.

I thank my friends and colleagues in the School of Arts and Communication for supporting the development of my research, practice and teaching. I also thank the incredible PhD community at Leeds Trinity who have provided a much-appreciated community of support.

I thank Geoff Gibbs for his volunteer website design work.

I thank my friends, family and especially my parents for always listening to my ideas with love. Dad, you remain in my thoughts each day.

I thank my husband, Louis Zarins-Brown for his unwavering support and love each day. For giving me the hope that this achievement was possible and within my reach.

Abstract

Interactive documentary is considered by practitioners and scholars to be a form which facilitates meaningful and socially impactful collaborations with citizens and communities. However, the majority of interactive documentaries continue to proliferate ethnographic documentary filmmaking methods. Projects are authored by interdisciplinary teams of filmmakers and media professionals, with only some stages of production designated for collaboration with the citizens and communities which these documentaries represent. This practice-based research asks the question: can a disruption of the dominant documentary film production methods used in interactive documentary expand and further sustain community co-creation partnerships?

Through participatory action research methods, this research has developed an inclusive new community-led production methodology. The sub-questions used to unpack and expand upon the central research question are:

1) What new methods can a community of co-creators develop when they are empowered to look beyond broadcast production standards and traditional documentary filmmaking methods?

2) Can auto-ethnographic accounts, reflections and critical analysis from community co-creators and creative practitioners contribute new

knowledge to shape future production practices and praxis in the form?

3) Is it possible to transcend the dominance of bespoke single websites and platforms?

Through a critical review of the current methods and literature of the form, followed by practical interventions to develop new, community-inclusive production methods, this thesis culminates with the guidelines for a new production toolkit for communities and practitioners.

This thesis details the workshop practices of the Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective and the production journey of the co-created, transmedia interactive documentary project *Our Here*. The digital media and material-based elements of the submission directly address explorative practices which grapple with the key question and sub-questions of this practice-based research. This research project engages in transformative dialogues with Allister Gall's (2016) *Imperfect Cinema* project which investigates the emancipatory potential of imperfect practice, and David Gauntlett's (2011) scholarship on everyday creativity as a method for connection and social capital.

Through the development of a community-inclusive *conversational production* method, this research contributes new findings which illuminate how citizen co-creators can craft and re-interpret the interactive

documentary form through their own methods and collective practices. In exploring community-based conversations as a platform for an interactive documentary, this practice also impacts the form: offering DIY production and collaboration methodologies for both citizen co-creators and creative practitioners. This research establishes how the interactive documentary as practice-based research can be developed inclusively, using collective workshop methods to convene cross-cultural communities during times of social change and political crisis.

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One person making a documentary film is not important; what is important [are] many people working together for its sake.

Wu Wenguang, *DV: Individual Filmmaking*, 2006

Preface

This PhD considers the methods through which interactive documentary can be further developed as a transmedia (see Hancox, 2017) co-created form for communities and media practitioners. Aiming to expand the possibilities for collaboration further in the stages of conception, design and content. Through investigating the potential of crafts-based and 'imperfect' (see Gall, 2016) production methodologies, the central aim of this research is to breach the dominance of traditional documentary practices in interactive documentary production, in favour of new inclusive modes of expression and collaboration.

The central site of practice was the co-created interactive documentary project *Our Here*, which was developed via the ground-up formation of a collective film and zine making workshop. This workshop practice outlines and explores a collective imperfect iteration of the interactive documentary form, through the inclusion of DIY filmmaking, multiple commercial and community transmedia platforms and arts-based methods. Alongside the complex organisational processes of the practice: this thesis, the WordPress platform for *Our Here* and the two material-based zines: *Zine in a Day* and *One Day Without Us* form my PhD submission.

This multi-faceted submission explores practice-based research as a method for convening a community to create connection through the processes of 'everyday creativity' (Gauntlett, 2011) in interactive

documentary production. Complex relationships between the

communication, organisation and development processes of *Our Here* are

integral to the investigation and findings which are discussed in this thesis

as *conversational production* and form my contribution to knowledge.

Revealing the limitations of professional documentary filmmaking and stand-

alone platforms[1] on the interactive documentary form, *Our Here* explores the

impact of how an openness to transdisciplinarity and conversation as

methods can offer co-creators autonomy and manifest connectedness (see

Gauntlett, 2011). Via a ground-up[2] approach to the development of creative

social and transmedia environments for a convened community of co-

creators, this practice-based research seeks to stimulate new cross-cultural

spaces, conversations and connectedness: collectively.

The practice has been developed via production methods which address the

convergent possibilities between imperfection (in filmmaking and material-

based crafts) and non-fiction transmedia storytelling as tools for generating

and sustaining collective conversations. 'Qualitative stories' (Hancox, 2017,

p.50)[3] have informed an evolving workshop practice, developed from the

ground-up, in recognition and celebration of local international communities

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[1] Early examples include: *Journey to the End of Coal,* 2009 and *Gaza Sderot: Life in Spite of Everything*, 2008. More recent examples include: *Echoes of IS*, 2017 and *Radio Right or Left*, 2017. Anandana Kapur (2017, p.33) has also made the case for the ''inclusive' interactive documentary … [which] take[s] more varied forms' and 'necessitates conceptualisation of an alternative to the web-based i-doc'.

[2] Graham Roberts (2011, p.3) has reiterated that production studies could be expanded through a 'ground up approach' (Caldwell, 2008, cited in Roberts, 2011, p.3). Suggesting that scholars should consider taking 'a position/perspective from *within the production itself*'.

[3] Donna Hancox is drawing here on Andrews, M. et al. (2013, p.2) *Doing Narrative Research*.

and individuals. Through a commitment to workshopping collectively-led co-creation as a method for practice-based research, I have welcomed many variable contexts to enter and inform this contribution to knowledge.

Our Here is a transmedia interactive documentary project. This practice-based research project is comprised of the following components:

1) **Online Hub**

The media materials produced during the project are housed within an online hub, available at: https://leedsinternationalwomensfilmmakingcollective.wordpress.com/workshops-events-archive/. The workshops and all media[4] produced during the project lifespan and the hub are the key practice outputs.

Our Here transcends the dominance of single platform interactive documentaries through the innovative deployment of transmedia methods. The media materials and narratives created during the collective workshops are distributed across the internet on well-established social media and community research platforms[5]. Workshop outputs and methodological innovations are layered and disseminated across varied platforms, such as Vimeo and Yarn. Each of these platforms allows *Our Here* to reach a broad and established audience, beyond the limitations of single-platform

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[4] Media includes: unedited film rushes, edited short films, hand crafted zines, digital interactive zines, photography and multi-vocal narratives.
[5] Links are provided below in the next paragraph.

interactive documentaries[6]. The design direction to combine interactive

documentary and transmedia methods for sharing content was a collective

decision reached during one of the founding workshops of the project[7].

The project hub brings together all of the links to *Our Here's* transmedia

outputs, including; short films on Vimeo (available at:

https://vimeo.com/user10370034); multi-vocal narratives on SoundCloud

(available at: https://soundcloud.com/user-283551605); interactive zines on

Flipsnack (available at: https://www.flipsnack.com/leedsintwomfilmcol/); a

photo community on Instagram (available at:

https://www.instagram.com/our.here.leeds/) and digital stories at Yarn.org

(available at: http://yarncommunity.com/partners/LeedsIntWomFilmColl).

The hub also serves as an archive of the nineteen workshops which took

place during the project lifespan (available at:

https://leedsinternationalwomensfilmmakingcollective.wordpress.com/works

hops-events-archive/.

2) Thesis

The final component of my submission is this thesis, which details my

innovative methodology *conversational production*, developed through the

iterative workshops and collective praxis of *Our Here*.

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[6] Such as: *Journey to the End of Coal,* 2009. *Gaza Sderot: Life in Spite of Everything,* 2008.
[7] This discussion is documented in *Conversation Club*, Available at:
https://vimeo.com/266096234

This thesis will:

-Outline the key practice-based outputs and my contribution to knowledge.

-Provide a survey of existing literature and methods, in order to illuminate the avenues for innovation and disruption within the form of interactive documentary.

-Develop a critical conversation surrounding *Our Here's* praxis in order to critically analyse the stages of activity, innovation, and development of my *conversational production* methodology.

Conversational Production

Through the iterative process of workshopping interactive documentary co-creation and production from a ground-up approach (Roberts, 2011, p.3), I have developed a new production methodology for communities and creative practitioners. This new methodology is my contribution to knowledge. *Conversational Production* was developed in response to the unique challenges of *Our Here's* workshop praxis. The methodology offers a more accessible production environment, addressing the following challenges facing community co-creation methods within interactive documentary projects:

-Sustaining an active, multi-layered conversation between large numbers of co-creators via digital storytelling and arts-based methods.

-Overcoming and transcending borders by addressing the physical and digital barriers faced by co-creators from migrant backgrounds.

-Providing flexible options for co-creator involvement in projects by creating multiple entry, exit and, most crucially, re-entry points for co-creators and empowering them to maintain an active authorship contribution throughout the lifespan of a project.

-Disrupting the paradigm of media professional authorship and broadcast production values in favour of collective community-authorship and DIY workshop production methods.

-Overcoming funding and technology/platform barriers for community groups and fledgling creative practitioners.

My research marks a radical departure from the focus on large-scale projects, developed to broadcast production standards with professional authorial control retained[8]. I am instead concerned with how community co-

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[8] The i-docs project based at Digital Cultures Research Centre at UWE Bristol was established by Judith Aston, Jon Dovey, Sandra Gaudenzi and Mandy Rose. The project is central to the academic debates and projects developed under the interactive documentary umbrella. The i-docs team have a shared background in documentary film and television.

creators, with little or no previous experience of media production can make an entrance into interactive documentary authorship. During my initial research into existing literature and methods, I quickly identified that there were little to no testimonies or examples of community co-creators shaping entire projects, developing their own production methods or remaining an active partner in authorship throughout the lifespan of a project.

While co-creators have previously been offered opportunities to collaborate on interactive documentary production, my thesis demonstrates that these opportunities are limited and come with "entrance" and "exit" points (Gaudenzi, 2013, p.210). This production paradigm enables the directors and media professionals of interactive documentaries to retain authorial and aesthetic control of their projects, ensuring that industry production standards are upheld. In analysing current production methods and approaches at the opening stages of my PhD, I became interested in how my research could instigate a disruption of this paradigm of single/practitioner authorship. I surmised that a project, collectively authored and designed by community-based co-creators could challenge dominant production values and methods.

Thesis Outline

The introductory chapter of this thesis sets out the research problem, research question and the sub-questions which connect the research within key areas of practice and scholarship. The introduction also establishes the context of the research within the interactive documentary form, whilst

making suggestions as to where and how my contributions to knowledge and practice could be impactful. I go on to describe the research background—how I have arrived at this area of practice-based scholarship and the intentions, experience and autoethnographic positionality which have brought me to this unique set of questions. Moreover, this chapter introduces the reader to the key theoretical and practice-based frameworks which underpin my research. Concluding with an outline as to how this research proposes an expansion of the form through working towards an *imperfect interactivity*.

The second chapter of this thesis contains a literature review of the scholarly debates and methods which have framed my research question and the practice that has developed from it. Spanning three sections, the chapter firstly details the auto-ethnographic and community-based research contexts of the theoretical frameworks and methodologies which underpin the research. The second part of chapter two sets out the central scholar and practitioner concerns which surround the interactive documentary form. This section locates the possible areas where the form can be developed through practice-based research, and where contributions to knowledge and practice could be impactful. The final part of chapter two outlines the imperfect and radical antecedent histories and film cultures which have informed my practice-based research methods and methodologies.

In the third chapter, I chronicle the production methods which have been explored, both in my first interactive documentary *Closures* and through the collective interactive documentary project *Our Here,* which is central to this

research. The chapter uncovers the processes of collective everyday

creativity and connection which have informed the progression of practice in

Our Here. Providing detailed descriptions of the workshopping and

production techniques through which this project has evolved.

Chapter four traces the practice outcomes of *Our Here* through the central

method of *conversational production*. In this chapter I mark out the

distinctive phases of production, via analytical reflection and accounts of

how collective conversations have shaped the development of the project.

The concluding chapter discusses the main outcomes of this practice-based

research, outlining the key impacts which have manifested during the

project. In this chapter I discuss tensions and problematic elements which

have arisen within the research routes and methods which I have

investigated. In addition, I also set out the avenues for further development

and impact which this practice and research is continuing to expand upon.

Interactive Documentary as a Form

Interactive documentaries conventionally take the form of singular web

platforms. Located within one domain, designed to fully house the data and

media which the documentary is based upon. The form is characterised by

the option for an audience of interactors to select their own navigation path

through the media content[9]; in some cases with the added option to upload

their own user generated content as an additional form of interaction. Whilst

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[9] Sandra Gaudenzi's (2013) taxonomy for interaction and navigation can be found in her
PhD thesis *The Living Documentary: from Representing Reality to Co-Creating Reality in
Digital Interactive Documentary*.

it is standard that an interactive documentary will have corresponding social media accounts, offering further interaction: such as a Twitter feed or Facebook page, the content and central narrative of the documentary will remain housed within one bespoke website.

Our Here takes a transmedia approach: straying from the normative unified interactive documentary form, instead choosing to disperse narratives and artefacts across a multitude of pre-existing web platforms. In an expansion of the form from a singular enclosed iteration, *Our Here* has developed as an interactive documentary *across* commercial and community platforms. The overarching method of the practice is *conversation* (both on and offline). As such, the form which *Our Here* takes, weaving across platforms, manifesting narratives in different tones, visual styles and formats is very much a mimesis of our flurry of conversations.

Background to the PhD

The motivation to undertake a practice-based PhD with the focus of developing an imperfect practice was seeded during my Master's degree. I was studying the DV (digital video) revolution in East-Asian cinemas, with a growing interest in the filmmaker Wang Bing. Engrossing myself in analysis of his 2003 *Tie Xi Qu: West of The Tracks*, I became conscious of the potential to combine DIY production methods and auto-ethnographic reflection to enter into filmmaking from the ground-up, using domestically available equipment. This period was to form my ongoing research and

practice into the visual representation of workers (often migrant in

background) and their relationships to the places in which they live and

work.

Figure 1. 35mm colour photograph from Built to Last (2006) (Source: Kelly Zarins).

As a transdisciplinary practitioner working with lens-based media in

convergence with material-based methods, I have experienced the

emancipatory affordances of remaining open in my practice. This openness

has enabled me to connect with contexts and people at ground level[10];

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[10] The first project which allowed me to work in this way was *Built to Last* (2006) (see Figure 1), which comprised of a series of 35mm, colour photographic prints mounted on sheet steel. The body of work marked a reimagining of everyday steel structures and objects as monuments to the people who created or worked on them. Situated in Newport, South Wales, this early project allowed me to immerse myself into industrial sites; meeting the workers and sourcing installation materials from local steel yards. Later in 2009, I created *Haggarts*, a body of photographic work depicting Huddersfield's final tailoring workshop as it closed down. I also engaged a local museum to enter the workshop to preserve a number of historical artefacts. This led to an industrial heritage exhibition and a series of oral history narratives (see, My Yorkshire, 2009a and My Yorkshire, 2009b).

developing project-specific methods, without the barriers of being restricted to only one medium of expression. Early on in my practice, I uncovered the potential to synthesize new visual methods, eliciting convergence points between previous and emergent technologies. Through my practice-based research on *Our Here*, I have used this strategy to unpack the evolving methods of the interactive documentary form. Experimenting with suggestions as to how the form can be developed further, through an engagement with transmedia storytelling and imperfect practices.

Early Questions and Intentions

Our Here was seeded from a creative desire to chronicle my experiences of life within a diverse international community. I felt compelled to develop a practice and research which compounded the significance of locale-based citizenship, through the convening of international communities. On a personal level, I wanted to express my own celebration of cross-cultural conviviality and belongingness within such a community, during a period when migration was (and continues to be) increasingly under scrutiny by the mainstream media, right-wing groups and the Conservative government[11].

My network of friends and colleagues had always been transitory, the given rhythm of life within immigrant communities. The fluctuation which came from old friends leaving the city and new friends arriving had me pondering: could I bring these impermanent experiences of temporarily convened

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[11] For illustration of this point, see Anderson, B. (2017) on immigration and "otherness" in the media context; see Treadwell, J. (2012) on public order threat and the Far Right; see Skapinker, M (2017) on the Conservative government's clampdown on international students; also, see Gilroy, P. (2012) on the 'race politics of citizenship'.

citizenship and friendship together in some way? Along with that, I wondered

if our loosely intertwined network of international students and immigrant

workers really felt part of a collective narrative? Did my friends and

colleagues experience the same connection of citizenship to an international

community that I did? And if so, how could we explore the collective

narratives of living, working and studying within an international community?

Connecting this auto-ethnographic context with the interactive documentary

project of exploring social capital[12] and visibility for marginalised

communities[13]; I wanted to develop a new forum to discuss, perhaps

overcome some of the marginalisation felt by women from diverse immigrant

backgrounds in Leeds[14]. Our project began with collaborations amongst the

women I had met through my work and study at the University of Leeds[15].

Over time and though an openness to conversational and creative

interactions within the city, our project attracted new co-creators from a

multitude of varying migration, socio-economic and generational

backgrounds.

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[12] See Kate Nash's (2017) discussion of the role of the interactive documentary in realising participation, citizenship and social capital.

[13] Examples include *Question Bridge* (2014) a project which has built a dialogue surrounding a redefinition of black masculinity in America. The *Awra Amba Experience* (2017) shares the story of a marginalised rural village in Northern Ethiopia (Awra Amba) that has been built on the foundations of gender-equality and sustainable enterprise. Sharon Daniel's *Public Secrets* (2007) is a multi-voice narrative interface which reveals the testimonies of women who are inside the American prison system.

[14] John Dovey (2014, p.20) describes this approach as 'micro-networks of solidarity…that prefer to mobilise publics at a local level and build audiences in a gradual and painstaking process'.

[15] Anandana Kapur (2017, p.28) similarly takes this approach in her interactive documentary work in Delhi. Referring to it as the 'snowball technique' via the 'leveraging of … personal networks'.

Building Collective Practice from the Ground-Up

This research seeks to assess if the collaborative methodologies of

interactive documentary production can be expanded further: through the

emancipatory affordances of imperfect (see Gall, 2016) and transdisciplinary

creative practices. Imperfect practices in this instance, signify the move

towards a DIY, collectively driven iteration of the interactive documentary

form: away from both singular authorial visions and stand-alone platforms.

This collective practice is situated within a workshopped approach to co-

creation: via the collaborative development of creative expressions and skills

from the ground-up.

The premise and conditions of this research also mark a somewhat radical

departure from previous participatory, practice-based projects. Community

storytelling and co-created research projects from within the academy are

normatively authored by teams of inter-disciplinary practitioners and

academics. These teams work collaboratively to pool their prior experiences

of project management for alternative research designs (such as co-

constructed research)[16]. Such projects are undertaken with considerable

funding allocations and expertise at the helm, in order to deliver the required

impactful outputs[17]. In contrast, this thesis provides an account of my

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[16]Examples of such inter-disciplinary teams can be found within AHRC funded projects such as the *Red Tales* interactive documentary project, which brought together a conservation organisation with academics and practitioners from the Computer Sciences fields and a previously formed community of co-creators. (see Green, et al. 2017). *Red Tales* is discussed further on pp. 66-67.

[17] For an illustration of the frameworks, key findings and impact of such projects see the 'Creating Living Knowledge' report (Facer, K. and Enright, B., 2016) which provides an

experiential findings, as a singular PhD researcher embarking on an auto-ethnographic project, with no prior experience of interactive documentary production or co-created, practice-based research.

Figure 2. Co-creator Marvina Newton photographs me through a handmade lens filter during the Our Here Celebration, 2018. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

My roles in *Our Here* are multiple and interconnected as a creative practitioner, designer, educator, researcher and workshop co-organiser (see Figure 2). My own rudimentary experience of digital practices placed me in a

overview of the three-hundred plus projects within the AHRC Connected Communities programme.

unique position to engage in a collaboration, through which I too could

experience interactive documentary production as a relative newcomer.

Approaching the practice via this route afforded me the positionality to build

a first-hand, reflective account of co-creation from the ground-up. Thus,

establishing a body of practice-based research which has the potential to

suggest how untrained co-creators can re-appropriate the available tools of

digital interactivity for themselves.

This research straddles the practices and scholarship fields of interactive

documentary and community-based research. Offering a contrast in scale to

substantially funded, multi-teamed interdisciplinary projects, such as those

which have emerged from the National Film Board of Canada (NFB)[18] and

the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Connected Communities

programme[19]. Through the exploration of DIY, imperfect approaches

towards collective workshop practice, this research represents a discussion

of the aforementioned fields and form through the lens of a stand-alone PhD

project, within an emergent research centre for interactive storytelling[20].

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[18] See *Bear 71* (2012) and Katerina Cizek's multi-project *Highrise* series (2010-2015); see, *The Thousandth Tower* (2010); see, *Out my Window* (2010); see *One Millionth Tower* (2011); see *A Short History of the Highrise* (2013); see *Universe Within: Digital Lives in the Global Highrise* (2015).

[19] See Online Orchestra (2015); see Connected Communities (2011) for further information on the project 'Media, Community and the Creative Citizens'.

[20] The International Research Centre for Interactive Storytelling (IRIS) was launched July 2016 at Leeds Trinity University. The centre has identified several key research areas, with PhD researchers and academics producing research outputs on marginalised communities, DIY/imperfect practices, analogue and digital points for convergence. For websites which document our research projects and events: see International Research Centre for Interactive Storytelling (2018a) and International Research Centre for Interactive Storytelling (2018b).

Co-created developments of technical and creative skills from the ground-up

have led to the exploration of a dialogue between material-based crafts

(zines) and transmedia storytelling. All from within the context of workshop

practices as interactive documentary production. These unique conditions

have given rise to the opportunity to take a detour from the formal

filmmaking practices and high-end bespoke platforms which dominate

interactive documentary. In turn, opening up divergent creative possibilities

and methods which seek to fuse readily available tools and platforms with

workshop practices. This approach has stimulated an evolving process of

connectedness and community-convening, via co-creation.

Theoretical and Practical Frameworks

Making is Connecting

David Gauntlett's connections between everyday creativity and social

meaning inform the underpinning philosophies and values of this research.

Gauntlett's scholarship charts the course of craft history, practices and

philosophies, to illustrate the social capital of everyday creativity[21] in relation

to personal happiness and engaged citizenship. In *Making is Connecting*

(2011) Gauntlett weaves an enlightening dialogue; drawing connections

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[21] Gauntlett (2011, p.76) has defined 'everyday creativity' as 'a process which brings together at least one active human mind, and the material or digital world, in the activity of making something'. Highlighting the significance of the process over the outcomes, he adds the significance that 'the activity has not been done in this way by this person (or these people) before' (see Figure 4).

between the works of John Ruskin[22] and William Morris[23] and the emancipatory capacities of DIY creativity in online communities[24].

This theoretical underpinning has served as the foundation for my developments on how interactive documentary can be expanded via the processes and practices (ibid., p.17) of everyday creativity, existing across multiple platforms. Moreover, on a structural level, in terms of seeking to generate sustainable collaboration from the ground-up, Gauntlett (ibid., p.64) highlights that people get more out of a project when given the option to shape it from start to finish. With my initial aspirations for this research to convene a community of co-creators, *Making is Connecting* has provided much needed theorisation and guidance for developing engaged citizenship in both physical (ibid., p.2) and online environments. The philosophies and concepts highlighted in *Making is Connecting* offer frameworks for understanding participation, digital craft work (ibid., p88), materials-based and digital crafting as citizenship (ibid., p.24) and social capital (ibid., pp.128-161).

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[22] In discussion of Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1997), Gauntlett (2011, p.31) cites a chapter in the second volume 'The Nature of Gothic' as being of key significance to his discussion surrounding crafting as a source of personal fulfilment and autonomy. In consideration of imperfection and crafting, Gauntlett (ibid., p.30) suggests that Ruskin 'welcomes the collaborative mish-mash…a celebration of imperfection…and 'do what you can'.

[23] Of particular relevance to this research, Gauntlett (ibid., p.35) discusses William Morris' combination of theory and practice via transdisciplinarity (painting, drawing, embroidery, woodcutting, calligraphy, booking printing, tapestry and textile printing).

[24] Gauntlett (ibid., pp.80-114) talks about digital forms of crafting (HTML coding, blogging and DIY filmmaking) and online community platforms (YouTube, Flickr, Wikipedia, online craft communities such as Ravelry and forums for social connectivity online).
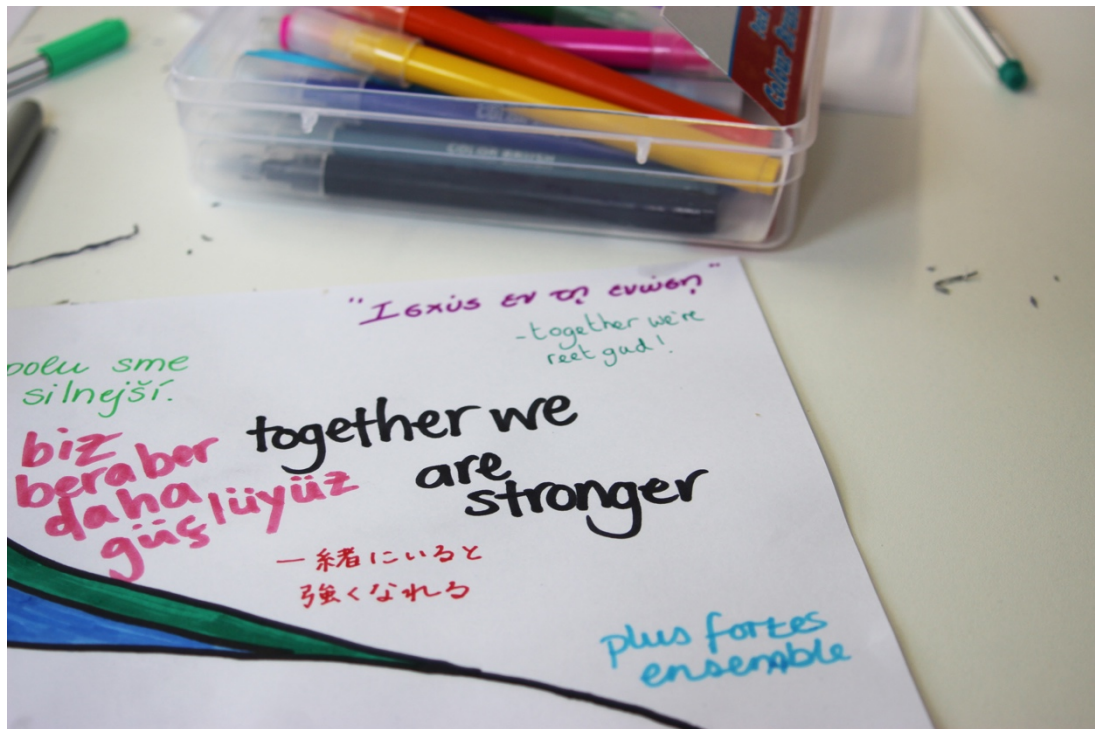
Figure 3. A collaborative hand-drawn zine page in progress during our first zine workshop in 2016. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

To craft is to create something which is uniquely shaped by the maker(s). The crafted artefact reveals the process of its creation, its development from one form to another: from idea to fruition. Through the rough sketch marks on a drawing or via a sudden jump in levels on the soundtrack to a DIY film, the viewer can trace the imperfect path which is carved by everyday creativity. Gauntlett's work on creativity and social capital leads him to discuss Ruskin's notions of imperfection[25], raising a line of thinking surrounding how the gestures and imagination of the individual carry the ability to distinctively shape an object or form, outside of the pursuits of perfectionism and professional design.

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[25] In *The Nature of Gothic* (1907, pp.236-240)*,* Ruskin details his admiration for 'humanity's imperfection' (Gauntlett, 2011, p.29) witnessed in the work of craftspeople in Gothic architecture. Ruskin (1907, p.240) writes of 'the Gothic builders' whom 'never suffered ideas of outside symmetries' and were' utterly regardless of any established conventionalities of external appearance'.

Imperfect Cinema

Allister Gall's (2016) *Imperfect Cinema* practice-as-research project fuses punk with participatory filmmaking. Through a convergence of Rancière's connections between politics and aesthetics and Julio García Espinosa's essay *For an Imperfect Cinema* (1969), the project develops an emancipatory 'open access micro-cinema collective' (Gall, 2016, p.6). With a focus on creating social spaces and forums for DIY filmmaking culture, Gall's project is located away from online platforms, instead prioritising open-access cinema events. His project marks an illuminating investigation into the contexts and methods through which participatory filmmaking experiences can be opened up to people via in-person interaction in workshops.

Through the formation of an imperfect praxis, Gall posits pertinent explorations into how to communicate imperfection as an accessible concept. Outlining that it is challenging to create a 'contested negotiated space' (ibid., p.22) via an emancipatory social discourse whilst 'popularis[ing] an academic practice' (ibid.). I can identify here with the inherent tensions which arise in producing a single-authored PhD thesis which discusses the experiences and findings of a collective workshop practice.

Imperfect Cinema is both academically and socially impactful. With its roots in sub-cultural DIY micro-cinema events in Plymouth, the workshops and screenings emanated into a number of 'all-ages workshops' (ibid., p.84).

With the outreach of the project culminating in a transnational iteration in New York and transdisciplinary deviations in the formation of the Imperfect Orchestra. The project also saw Gall develop his own personal DIY filmmaking practice alongside the micro-cinema events (ibid.).

Gall's practice-as-research provides testimony to the strength of context which results from situating research from within an emancipatory auto-ethnographical premise. Generating micro-cinema and workshop practices from within a sub-cultural community which had provided him with the support and encouragement to participate and create in a DIY music scene, Gall both affirms and develops upon his own antecedent emancipatory experiences:

> The 'no expert' ethos of punk rock music gave me permission to participate despite my lack of technical virtuosity. This experience formed the foundation of my research, and led to the consideration of punk as an emancipatory idea. I then identified the particular qualities of punk, which made it such a liberating platform, distilling them further into the concept of imperfection, which can be applied to many forms of cultural production. (Gall, 2016, p.17)

Our Here: *Imperfect Interactivity* as Co-Creation

Interactive documentaries often find room for what can be considered as pertaining to imperfect practices. Making spaces to *contain* the vernacular forms of user generated content, or *gesture towards* a DIY aesthetic within

the framing of high-end bespoke platforms[26]. *Our Here,* alternatively

provides a test-bed for an entire imperfect interactive documentary

production. Through which emancipatory spaces for individuals and

communities are created and remain open throughout all stages of

production. Expanding upon these spaces, *Our Here* seeks to extend the

emancipatory potential of the form, bringing in Gauntlett's thinking on

everyday creativity and Gall's findings on imperfection, workshopping and

collective practices as transformational theories and methodologies to build

upon.

The unique purpose of *Our Here* has been to examine collaboration on

interactive documentaries through the lens of small-scale, ground-up

approaches to co-creation during the stages of conception (Gaudenzi, 2014,

p.144), production and platform design. An engagement with participatory

DIY filmmaking methods and material-based craft workshops also tie this

research into current thinking and practices surrounding citizenship[27]. The

early research design and participatory methods for *Our Here* were informed

by the co-constructed research frameworks which have emerged from

AHRC-led, Connected Communities projects and resources (see

Pararchive, 2015; see Light and Millen, 2014; see Horner, 2016).

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[26] Examples of this approach can be seen in *Out my Window* (2010), which originally included a 'participate' menu option, in which interactors could upload their own high-rise views. *18 Days in Egypt* (2011) is a crowd-sourced interactive documentary assembled from citizen media of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. *Welcome to Pine Point* (2011) uses a DIY aesthetic to assemble low resolution footage and images with hand drawn animation.
[27] See Lina Srivastava's *My City Istanbul* (2016) project.

Practice Outline

This thesis contextualises and discusses the experiences and findings of the practice which I have established and developed during my PhD. Alongside the thesis stands the practice which comprises of an interactive documentary[28], *Closures* which I developed on the Klynt interactive editing and publishing application. *Closures* is housed within a WordPress site which I built to provide a contextual grounding for the interactive documentary. The work comprises of ten essay film chapters which are assembled using the layering of footage and sound from the films under discussion. One of the chapters titled *to Huddersfield…* is constructed from a body of my own photographic work (see Figure 4), chronicling the final moments of Haggarts, Huddersfield's one remaining tailoring workshop.

Figure 4. Photograph from Haggarts (2009). (Source: Kelly Zarins).

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[28] I am the solo author of *Closures* (2015).

The main practice output of my PhD is the co-created interactive

documentary project *Our Here*. This work is the culmination of nineteen

workshops with sixty-five co-creators. The media in *Our Here* comprises of

twelve films; four handmade zines which have also been digitised with

interactive content added and one multi-vocal narrative sound work. I

additionally gathered interviews with thirteen co-creators, many of which are

still rushes yet to be edited[29]. The media artefacts of *Our Here* are situated

across five commercial and community platforms online. The digital assets

of the entire project are routed through one hub: an interactive documentary

platform developed on WordPress which brings together the media and

offers two navigation routes for interactors. 'The *Our Here* WordPress

platform can either be explored from the homepage which provides a visual

timeline of our workshops and conversations. Interactors can also navigate

through the media archive to view our separate forms of media under the

categories of film, zines, photography, Yarn and audio' (Our Here, 2018).

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[29] As a collective we prioritised editing films which captured our workshops over co-editing each individual co-creator interview. However, sound from several interviews has been included within a number of our films. The interviews were filmed during 2016, this was the period before the collective expanded into new practices and larger numbers of co-creators. It is my intention to continue developing the content on our Vimeo channel after the submission of this PhD to include the interviews.

Chapter One: Questions and Context

Research Problem

Interactive documentary is considered by practitioners and academics to be a form which facilitates meaningful and socially impactful collaborations with citizens and communities (see Nash, 2017; see Rose, 2017). Moreover, projects of this nature gravitate towards the representation of, and collaboration with, marginalized communities and stories that are either not represented in mainstream broadcast media, or perhaps misrepresented or under represented. There is a wealth of academic discussion surrounding collaboration with the marginalised communities that these projects seek to represent, yet there remains a need for a specific production methodology through which to progress from community collaboration towards co-creation. As my literature review demonstrates, the majority of interactive documentaries continue to proliferate ethnographic documentary filmmaking methods, whereby media professionals retain authorial and aesthetic control of projects. Projects are authored by interdisciplinary teams of practitioners, with only some stages of production designated for collaboration with the citizens and communities which these documentaries represent.

Over recent years there has been an increase in projects which seek to represent migrant voices and stories from within the refugee crisis (*Refugee Republic*, 2014, *My City Istanbul*, 2016). There has been much discussion surrounding the potential of this format and how it can be utilised to create vast interactive archives of testimony; leading from the antecedents of the public video movement (see Rose, 2014) to democratise documentary media authorship and empower the subjects of documentary narratives to tell their own stories. Although, rather than being provided a safe space to develop an autonomous use of their own methods for storytelling and documentation, community collaborators are more commonly handed filmmaking equipment adopting the same methods used in the aforementioned public video movement. In certain cases, there is a promising movement toward a progression from these earlier methods. There are some projects (see Kapur, 2017) in which community collaborators are encouraged to use their own personal digital capture devices such as smart phones to engage in auto ethnographic storytelling practices.

The context of my own background as a multidisciplinary visual artist has positioned me to launch an iterative investigation into how the dominant production paradigms of this format can be questioned and disrupted via a ground-up, community-led approach. There is a rich opportunity within the form to explore and expand methods further; to determine what a fully community-authored interactive documentary looks like; and to discover the divergent production methods which arise from empowering and co-creating

with the community who are representing themselves and their collective testimonies.

An Auto Ethnographic Approach

My accounts of practice in this thesis are written, in part as my own auto-ethnographic reflection and analysis, from my positionality as a creative practitioner and newcomer to interactive documentary. This thesis and the practical submission also put forward essential auto-ethnographic accounts from community-co-creators surrounding their experiences of migration to and life in Leeds, and their experiences of co-creating an interactive documentary. Auto-ethnography has been described as involving 'highly personalized accounts where authors draw on their own experiences to extend understanding of a particular discipline or culture' (Holt, 2003, no pagination). This style of reflection and analysis 'links the world of the author with the world of others' (Khosravi, 2010, p.5). Although far removed from the ethnographic "othering" of documentary "subjects", I have chosen an auto-ethnographic approach to enable me to empower community co-creators to share their experiences of taking an integral role in interactive documentary design and production. In order to put forward a phenomenology of previously unheard voices through polyphonic conversations surrounding both migration stories and experiences of co-creation: auto-ethnography in the context of this research enables 'displays [of] multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.739).

At i-Docs 2018 symposium, there were substantial calls from academics and filmmakers for further investigations into methods which can transgress the ethnographic documentary practices seen in the current production paradigm, in favour of fuller iterations of co-creative production ecosystems. This research signals the possibility for community voices to enter research and practice debates, becoming key stakeholders and innovators in the evolving practices of the interactive documentary form. Of most significance is the development of a new phenomenology of the citizens and communities which the form seeks to not only represent, but give voice to and collaborate with. In addition to deploying community storytelling practices, which are already prevalent in the form, my research is also concerned with holding space and empowering communities to join the conversations and innovative practices surrounding interactive documentary design and production methods. I have developed a methodology which can be used in community-led projects to empower co-creators to develop and put into practice their *own* bespoke production methods: in a disruption *and* evolution of the form.

In addition to the reflection and analysis of co-creator production experiences, this thesis also incorporates critical analysis of my own auto-ethnographic positionality. As I was already a member of the community of international staff and students at University of Leeds (from which the initial group of co-creators was formed), it has been crucial for me to reflect upon the dynamics of my prior experiences in this community and how this has informed the initial conception of the project. In addition, in a 'questioning and unveiling the self' (Hughes and Pennington, 2017, p.6), I ask what I

experience as a newcomer and relative outsider to the established i-docs community. I reflect in more depth on this at a later stage in this thesis where I analyse how my own family migration heritage, socio economic and cultural background inform my positionality as a creative practitioner and co-creator in this research.

Research Question

This practice-based research asks the question: can a disruption of the dominant documentary film production methods used in interactive documentary expand and further sustain community co-creation partnerships?

Through an engagement in iterative workshop practices and auto-ethnographic analysis, my research establishes a new inclusive community-led production methodology. The sub-questions used to unpack and expand upon the central research question are:

1) What new methods can a community of co-creators develop when they are empowered to look beyond broadcast production standards and traditional documentary filmmaking methods?

2) Can auto-ethnographic accounts, reflections and critical analysis from community co-creators and creative practitioners contribute new knowledge to shape future production practices and praxis in the form?

3) Is it possible to transcend the dominance of bespoke single websites and platforms?

Through a critical review of the current methods and outputs of the form, followed by practical interventions to develop new, community-led production methods, this thesis culminates with the guidelines for a new production methodology for communities and creative practitioners.

Research Methods

David Gauntlett (2021, no pagination) describes practice-based research as 'work where, in order to explore their *research question*, the researcher needs to *make* something as part of the process. The research is *exploratory* and is embedded in a *creative practice*'. This description also lends itself well to research that is arts-based, and is concerned with a privileging of the creative *process* to explore a research problem over that of a *finished product*. In this section I will describe how practice was the main research method in my project, and how I approached practice-based research to investigate my research problem and question.

As my research question above sets out, I sought to disrupt the dominant production paradigm of the interactive documentary form, in order to develop a more inclusive methodology so that communities can co-create as key stakeholders on projects, or indeed have some guidance on how to create

their own projects from the ground-up. As such, it was crucial to engage in production practices, in order to explore tested, and previously untested, methods to locate areas for possible disruption and the creation of a new inclusive production knowledge. The exploratory and experimental nature of my research led to me using an arts-based research approach in combination with complimentary methodology taken from participatory action research. I will now describe how these two approaches were entwined to inform my practice-based research methods and research design.

In *Method Meets Art*, Patricia Levy (2020, pp. 3-4) describes the broad range of traditional, analogue and digital mediums which are used by artist-researchers to create 'new tools' and 'knowledge' in a merging of the 'scholar-self' and 'artist-self'. Levy (ibid, pp. 8-11) delineates the shift from quantitative and qualitative paradigms, and how 'arts-based practices have posed serious challenges to methods conventions, thus unsettling many assumptions about what constitutes research and knowledge'. As a creative practitioner, hailing from a traditional photographic art background, I identify with Levy's (ibid. pp.12) assertions of how artist-scholars can disrupt traditional research practices to posit new critical approaches to social science and ethnographic practices, therefore creating an expansion of methods.

During this research project, a diverse range of audio-visual and handcrafted pieces were created by co-creators and myself, including: film rushes, edited short films, photography, film scripts, poetry, multi-vocal narratives, zines, and digital interactive zines. These audio-visual and handcrafted pieces

formed the body of primary data generated by practice-based methods during the research project. In addition to using audio-visual arts-based strategies during the workshops, I also brought in some qualitative methods (Levy, 2020, p.24), using online surveys as a way to generate further primary data and assess the iterative experiential process of the workshops. I also employed less formal methods to gather co-creator feedback data and create a space for ongoing production conversations using online messenger applications and email.

In her discussions surrounding place and auto-ethno-cartography, Cristina Grasseni (2012, p.97) suggests that 'place-identity and …belonging are increasingly associated with practice-based representations of locality'. Community storytelling and conversations were the foundation for the iterative workshops in my research project. Conversations on identity and belonging were a key component in my research methods. In each workshop, space was held for co-creators to share their stories of life in Leeds and their home countries. There was also a section of each workshop where I introduced new co-creators to the interactive documentary form, followed by conversations in which we discussed how to move our own project forward in terms of production methods and design.

Discussions of this nature enabled me to cultivate a collective project design and production process, and to gather data on co-creator experiences and ideas via audio-visual and arts-based methods. Analysis, key themes and learning derived from the data of each workshop by co-creators and myself was then implemented to inform practices and design of the following

workshops. Conversation threads often began during workshops and were then continued via emails, group messages, video/phone calls and meetings. Throughout the lifespan of the project we held ongoing conversations surrounding production methods and how to harness and capture collective creative practices. This open and conversational culture empowered co-creators to bring their own creative methods and tools to the workshops, alongside the various audio-visual methods which I introduced from my own creative specialisms.

The introduction to my iterative workshop process described above is closely aligned with the methodologies of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is defined as a 'cyclical process of exploration, knowledge construction, and action at different moments throughout the research process' (McIntyre, 2008, no pagination). Alice McIntyre (ibid.) suggests that PAR encompasses the following key elements:

'(a) a collective commitment to investigate an issue or problem,

(b) a desire to engage in self- and collective reflection to gain clarity about the issue under investigation,

(c) a joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action that leads to a useful solution that benefits the people involved, and

(d) the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process'.

I return to these elements in my conclusion to critically assess if PAR

methods were fully realised to this extent in my own research. In my analysis

chapter I draw on 'the recursive processes of PAR' (ibid.) as a framework to

critically analyse the primary data gathered from our workshops. In doing so,

I highlight the themes emerging from the data: in order to demonstrate how

new knowledge and methodology surrounding production and co-creation

was developed through the research.

Approaching Documentary Production as a Conversation

Our Here was conceived as a project about cross-cultural conversation. My

original questions and intentions were based around how I could visually

interpret the layering and richness of cross-cultural dialogues amongst

international staff and students at the University of Leeds. I had a desire that

the conversations which I would facilitate and record would overflow a

traditional documentary format. I hoped that they would be able to flow[1]

unabridged and did not feel the need to contain or constrain them from an

authorial position. I envisaged that this approach would require time and

space. Time for the conversations to begin, to then build and expand into

embodied[2] spaces in the community and virtual spaces online. An approach

which I hoped would be impactful, both on the form and of a personal value

for co-creators.

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[1] In *Virtual Ethnography*, Christine Hine (2000, p.85) describes the internet as 'a way of connecting distant places, [which] seems an ideal medium for the space of flows".

[2] Helen de Michiel and Patricia R. Zimmermann (2013, p.355) have described the shift towards 'embodied…'open space' documentary' which emerges from a 'responsive environment for encounters'.

I began to look at the interactive documentary as a flexible form, through which I could gradually develop cross-cultural dialogues. Generating new spaces in which the conversations could both take place and be recorded, both in-community and online. This notion of approaching documentary production as a conversation - as an open dialogue between multiple people, with many possible routes - led me to consider embracing imperfect practices as an open methodology for sustaining flexible and accessible co-creation.

During the early stages of the i-Docs project at the Digital Cultures Research Centre, University of the West of England, co-founder Sandra Gaudenzi's 2013 PhD thesis considered the form as 'Living Documentary'. She discussed the 'modes of interaction' (ibid., p.3) which were available to interactive documentary audiences. Finding that interaction could be 'transformative, responsive and adaptive', characteristics which the human-computer relationship shares with living entities (ibid.). While Gaudenzi's thesis does explore co-creation, her modes of interaction are intended as taxonomies for user-interaction with the final published form.

The 'conversational' (ibid., p.244) mode of interaction is said to stimulate 'a seamless conversation between the user and the computer' (ibid.), in which the user experiences a simulation of 'limitless' (ibid.) navigation through the content as opposed to the 'hypertext mode' in which 'the interface is more static' (ibid.). It is helpful in a way to discuss this early appearance of "conversation", viewed as a navigational mode within the interactive

documentary. However, Gaudenzi's iteration of conversation in this case is in essence a mimesis of the act, as she goes on to observe 'the author of a conversational documentary decides the rules on which this world will be based, what "can be done" by the user, the limits of their agency and the goal of the journey' (ibid.).

Figure 5. A co-creator immersed in paper crafting during an Our Here workshop. Image is taken through a handmade lens filter. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective, 2018).

My practice-based research explores and expands upon collective practice within interactive documentary production, emerging from in-person social and workshop situations which flow and shift in response to conversations and the development of everyday creativity (see Gauntlett, 2011). This approach seeks to develop production practices for the 'living' (ibid.) interactive documentary form, which are:

- 'Transformative' (ibid., p.3), breaching the traditional methods of documentary filmmaking which have often created inaccessible (Wu, 2006, pp.136-137) production standards.

-'Responsive' (ibid.) to the cultures, narratives and requirements of the people whom the documentary is representing.

-Most importantly the form should be 'adaptive' (ibid.) to the ideas, designs and the development of the everyday creative practices of its community of co-creators, across all stages of production.

Therefore, I am suggesting that interaction within the production stages of the form can be broadened via what I am referring to as *conversational production*. This is undoubtedly a challenging approach, one in which imperfection will manifest as a result of emancipatory (see Gall, 2016) DIY iterations, as documentary production is diverted through the ebbs and flows of everyday creativity (see Figure 5). This new collectively driven, conversational approach to interactive documentary production leads to what I will set out in this thesis as a manifestation of *imperfect interactivity.*

Part One- Methods in Context: Convening Conversations

The preface introduced the areas of practice and theorisation which are investigated and developed upon in this thesis. I also described the complexities of my PhD submission, choosing to include not only practice (two interactive documentary projects and two paper-based zines) and theorisation (this thesis) but also the processes of communication,

organisation and development which have underlined the research. During the first section of chapter one, I follow on from these earlier outlines of the practice-based research. I discuss the context of the methods which have been explored through the practice, in order to draw out the methodologies which underpinned the research project.

Auto-Ethnographic Context

In 2013, a climate of resentment towards immigrants and forcibly displaced newcomers to the UK was building[3]. Little could I foresee that during the production of *Our Here*, Leeds would be shaken by the hate-motivated murder of local MP Jo Cox. Only to be followed by the EU referendum result, which was announced just a few weeks later. A further blow came with the steep increase in hate crime, fueled by a rise in nationalism—stirred up by the Brexit outcome and right-wing media outlets[4].

Running parallel to this increase in hostile attitudes towards immigration and intercultural unity, I had felt for some time that I wanted to record my own personal experiences of life within an expanded and transitory international community. I felt compelled to reflect on how migration had and was

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[3] At this time the Conservative government, under increasing pressure concerning immigration from the UK far-right party UKIP, revealed a draft bill to hold the EU Referendum vote in 2017 (see BBC News, 2013) and (see Osborn and Faulconbridge, 2013). In addition, Briant, 2013 highlights the increasing tendency towards the "scapegoating" and misrepresentation of refugees by the UK media.

[4] The period immediately following on from the EU Referendum result in June 2016 saw an increase in hate-crime (see Khaleei, 2016). For a report on 'racial violence' and Brexit (see Burnett, 2017). One month on in July 2016, Hope Not Hate (an anti-fascist organisation working in and with communities to dispel the rhetoric of hate politics) revealed that Leeds had been identified as one of the UK "hotspots" for post-Brexit hate crimes (see Townsend, 2016). In September 2016 Leeds Labour councillor Alison Lowe formed part of a panel at a public meeting after a Polish man was attacked in Armley (see Bluman, 2016).

continuing to shape my life and my own understanding and enactment of citizenship within a convened community[5]. As a white, British-born woman from Yorkshire, I manifest little indication of my migration heritage. I have been made very aware of this during instances where people have deemed it acceptable to take an anti-refugee or xenophobic stance around me, with no concern of rebuttal. Without the fear of offending someone they register as being from the same perceived origin as themselves. Indeed, the only outward factor that reveals the migration heritage of my family is my Latvian surname.

My doctoral research has provided me with a forum through which to analyse my own feelings of belongingness and citizenship within a wider intercultural community. Until I began this project, I had rarely stopped to reflect upon the underlying reasons for my capacity to relate with women who also have an immigrant heritage. My interest in intercultural conversations started from a very young age. For example, I can still recall that many of my school friends were not accustomed to such enthusiasm and interest in their religions and cultures, outside of their own families and communities. Carrying out this research has enabled me, on a personal level, to meditate upon, represent and celebrate the impact that interculturality and migration have had on my own life, alongside my fellow co-creators.

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[5] In the interactive documentary *A Polish Journey* (2015) Julian Konczak also explores his own immigration heritage. Choosing to focus on his family history as a vehicle to discuss the wider issues faced by immigrants who are displaced from their home countries.

As a female academic from a working-class background, I also feel a kinship amongst fellow academics and students who have needed to adapt to a different way of culturally and socially presenting themselves. I am inclined to agree with Diane Reay here, when she posits that we working-class women are 'unlikely ever to feel at home in academia' (Reay, 2005, p.22). Reay (ibid.) touches on the working-class impetus towards 'collective' and 'community-based' social structures, and how these earlier experiences can make the 'competitive individualism' of academia appear devoid and distant from our learnt, more holistic modes of connection. British academia can feel like an inhospitable arena to navigate for those of us who are from economic and cultural backgrounds which eschew the traditional academic paradigm[6]. This too goes some way towards explaining why, on a deeper level, I have always felt a sense of connection with the international students I have studied, worked and socialised alongside during my career at the University of Leeds and to this day. As a Master's student, and even now in my doctoral studies, I have, at times, felt irrationally "out of my depth" questioning "should I really be here?" whilst presenting my research to peers and senior academics. In the same way that I appreciated being part of an international community at the University of Leeds, I have, likewise joined in a sense of belonging, shared by the encouraging number of fellow doctoral students and academic staff from working-class backgrounds at Leeds Trinity University.

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[6] John Gill (2016) has written on the imposter syndrome in the Times Higher Education. Gill (ibid.) references the comments of Ruth Caleb, Chair of the Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education Working Group: 'students coming from a low-income or minority ethnic background [can be] more susceptible' to the imposter syndrome, which manifests as feelings of inadequately in relation to an individual's position in comparison with their peers in an academic setting.

Crafting Connectedness

It was this feeling of connectedness with non-traditional peers within academia, that I initially wanted to explore. David Gauntlett (2011, p.131) discusses social capital[7] in his work on how connection is fostered through both digital and embodied acts of making and sharing. In his exposition of 'the social meaning of creativity', and in particular 'everyday creativity', Gauntlett (ibid.) relates crafting (both online and offline) to the enactment of citizenship. Following the early philosophy of crafts, from William Morris to John Ruskin, Gauntlett traces the connections and significance through to DIY and digital crafting, then onto personal happiness and social capital. Charting the convergences between embodied and online crafting as everyday grassroots practices, *Making is Connecting* represents both a central text and philosophy for the contextualisation of my own co-created practice-based research.

Gauntlett (ibid., p.31) highlights the potency of crafting as an eschewal of Marxian 'alienation', whereby the maker fulfils their personal desire to render an entire artefact for their own pleasure and development[8]. Through my own readings, I saw a connection between the Marxist theories under discussion by Gauntlett with those which were appropriated in the practices of the Situationist International. On reflection of my own desire to produce research

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[7] Gauntlett (2011, p.131) defines social capital research in his own terms as 'the value of people doing things (making and connecting) in communities'.
[8] Gauntlett does this through his discussion of John Ruskin's (1997, p.83) *The Nature of the Gothic*, and Adam Smiths' (2009) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*.

and practice which reflected my auto-ethnographic positionality, I considered how research projects can potentially proliferate participant 'alienation' and how I might challenge those pitfalls. Here I was mostly thinking of the linkage between alienation and the propagation of the "performance of victimhood"[9], in contrast to research which seeks to celebrate and bring about visibility for marginalised communities and narratives, via collective terms of engagement and methodology.

There is an inherent liberal tendency to seek out and problematise via social categorisation (i.e. "the refugee"). This often denies research participants from marginalised[10] communities any true autonomy over research processes which directly relate to them. I agree that it is justified and with good intention that there is a current surge in research projects which are focused on representing the narratives of those who have been forcibly displaced. However, there are still multitudes of separate communities which are being, and still should be enabled in the sharing and exploration their own narratives via university-community and practitioner-community collaborations. It is from this stand point that *Our Here* opens and enables the co-creation of powerful, often celebratory narratives[11], directed via

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[9] Alison Jeffers (2008, p.127) has referred to the re-enactment of victimhood in participatory research projects and makes suggestions as to 'different approaches to the presentation of personal narrative in performance' in order to 'undermine the figure of the refugee as a victim'.

[10] Here (and throughout this thesis) I am referring to participants and co-creators involved in interactive documentary and storytelling projects who face societal marginalisation. This marginalisation could include, lack of authentic voice or misrepresentation in mainstream media channels; marginalisation on the grounds of race, gender identification, sexual orientation, economic background, physical/cognitive ability, citizenship status, education (access to) or social-class background.

[11] A prime example of this can be found in the multi-voice narrative on the *Our Here* SoundCloud playlist. Through a series of tracks, co-creator Magda reminisces with her friend Felicity on how their friendship was her first upon arriving in the UK from Poland.

collective conversations: leaving the door open for women to represent the diversity of their experiences.

Transdisciplinary Practice-Based Research

Within this thesis I have chosen to define my practice-based research as transdisciplinary. However, I wish to unravel and make additions to this choice of definition, to reflect the breadth and depth of the research process which I have undertaken. Firstly, research which crosses disciplines, forms and methods has an umbrella of adjectives with which to align itself. Personally, grappling with definitions for this practice-based research has provided me with further opportunity to meditate upon its origins, its methods and its outcomes.

I had initially envisaged that the practice element would take the form of documentary film exclusively. In terms of my own previous practical experience and skills, I imagined that I would perhaps introduce elements of photography, the essay film and non-linear editing into our workshops: expanding upon my pre-existing areas of practice. In fact, one of the main reasons I had been drawn to explore interactive documentaries was that, it did not appear to be such an unimaginable leap to progress from my previous transdisciplinary methods of practice into a form that was based around the exploration of diverse practices and platforms. Hence the decision to define this practice-based research as transdisciplinary, draws a

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Together they discuss their engagement in community-centred volunteering and social activities. Available from: https://soundcloud.com/user-283551605 .

linearity from my previous experience of practice and crosses into the transmedia realm of the interactive documentary itself.

Emerging from the 1970's, the concept of transdisciplinarity was introduced to describe the work of scholars such as Piaget, who were seeking to combine systems theory and educational policy (Osbourne, 2015, p.5). Transdisciplinarity also seems an appropriate conceptual camp with which to align *Our Here*, given the disciplines' humanities-based origins in the radical theories of Existentialism and Post-Structuralism, presented through texts such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1988), (Osbourne, 2015, p.14).

In the context of *Our Here*, transdisciplinarity spans both practice and theorisation within the project. The theoretical underpinnings aid the search for new approaches to community co-created research and interactive documentary. Whilst the collective practice has developed durationally, through an explorative engagement with workshop methods, DIY documentary filmmaking, digital photography, analogue and digital zine making and analogue and digital crafting.

Transdisciplinarity also relates strongly to the ethos of crafting a collective practice over time. Allowing practices to (trans)ition from one into the next. Thus, informing the next set of workshops or conversations. This was a ground-up process where by our praxis grew organically— based on the creative routes which the collective chose to explore and my research

interests. For example, in 2016 we expanded our practice towards the development of zine workshops, led by a new co-creator Mishka Lesayová, a Slovakian artist living in Leeds. After crafting our first zine, we explored methods through which to digitise our analogue zine and invite interactions with the work through an online platform (Flipsnack). In this sense, *Our Here* sought to breach the previous transdisciplinary iterations of the interactive documentary form, through open experimentation with imperfect practices. Rather than sticking with the previous paradigm which had centered around documentary filmmaking, web development and digital media, the practices of *Our Here* readily utilised crafts-based forms, DIY filmmaking methods and collective workshop practices.

Conversation as Concept and Method

At this point I wish to further unpack the connections between *conversational production* and imperfect practices. Conversations are rarely preordained, uniform or neatly contained. They shift track, take diversions, sometimes end abruptly and are uniquely generated between people, according to the situation as it presents itself and their own beliefs and life experiences. Conversation, at its purest and most instantaneous, is not pre-designed to fit a singular personal vision or narrative flow. Real-world conversations are inherently imperfect in their nature and formation. When we use conversation as a method for creative flow, as a foundation for DIY production in documentary, a narrative can be formulated and sustained, building from one conversational encounter to the next. I will argue and demonstrate that this methodology can be used to enable multiple co-

creators to enter and leave (or remain) in the production of creative projects. All the while, sustaining an involvement and influence throughout production and beyond.

Figure 6. Aala Ahmed discusses her early experiences of life in Leeds during the Conversation Club Workshop in 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

In her discussion of community mapping, Cristina Grasseni (2012, p.99) suggests the importance of what can be interpreted as *conversational production* in practice-based auto-ethnographic mapping projects. Grasseni asserts that projects 'should not be primarily about achieving a representation of a landscape, a community or a territory', that they should alternatively 'be a process during which material culture, intangible cultural heritage, seasonality and sociability come to the fore according to their proper local expressions, rooted in conversation, routines, social environments and rituals'. Grasseni here puts forward a process through which imperfection will inevitably arise and in-turn is not to be discounted as a mere lapse in conventional academic and production standards.

Grasseni's hypothesis draws attention to the divergent and imperfect

potential of the auto-ethnographic premise and the significance of remaining

open to a multitude of ephemeral methods, practices and social evocations

through which to inform the processes of co-creation with communities. In

his discussions of Illich's *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), Gauntlett (2011,

p.167) also echoes the emancipatory possibilities of meaningful

communication and everyday creativity. Of 'having the capacity to

communicate yourself directly [conversations], and to create the things of

your world yourself [openness to imperfection]'.

Working *conversational production* and an openness to wider iterations of

imperfection within the production process of interactive documentary is a

step further towards answering some of the questions posed by John Dovey

and Mandy Rose. In their discussions of interactive documentary production,

Dovey and Rose (2013, p.34) have questioned the contexts and methods of

'staging a conversation' through interactive documentary collaboration with

individual and community co-creators. They identify the following key

considerations and 'responsibilities' (ibid., p.35) for practitioners and

authors:

-'how do we design the stage?'

-'do our co producers even know the stage is there in the massively long trail

of online media abundance?'

-'do they understand its terms of entry ?'

-'what are the pre-existing discursive formations that determine a public's

attitude to the stage in the first place ?'

-'what are the constraints on our action once on this stage ?'

-'what kinds of utterance and linkage does the stage afford ?'

In the interactive documentary *Question Bridge* (2014) we quite literally see conversations as the method used to develop a stage upon which cross-generational black men discuss their identity in America (see Figure 7). Anandana Kapur also discusses conversation as a method for interactive documentary co-creation. The manifestation of conversation in her work is discussed later in this chapter.
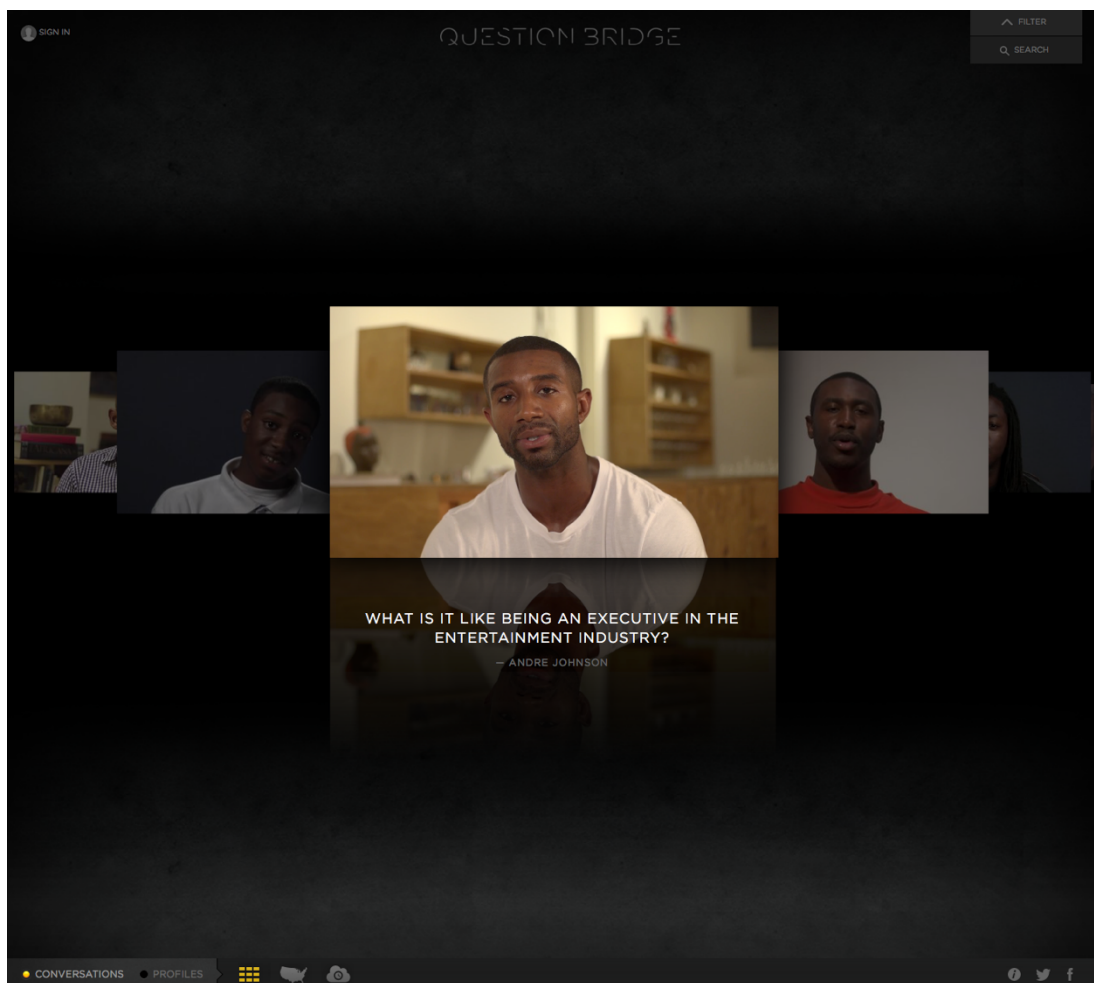
Figure 7. Question Bridge (2014) interactive documentary interface. (Source: Question Bridge).

Convening Communities

Active communities, be they political, creative or otherwise are often formed via ground-up approaches to establishing and building momentum, surrounding shared interests and actions. That is to say, communities are often formed over time, building and also declining in numbers as their premise and intentions are negotiated and reworked. The framework and sustainability of communities is formed from both initial and ongoing 'small every day actions'— the 'communing' of 'micro-sociality' and a developed sense of 'communal being-ness' (Walkerdine and Studdert, 2013, p.3).

To engage in research and practice with or from within a community, we must first consider and understand the specificities of the community:

-what stimulus formed (or is forming) the community?
-what are the barriers to participation?
-what are the collective hopes and needs of the community?
-how can the community sustain itself (should it?) and what does it need in order to do this?

These are amongst some of the initial questions which can inform an early methodological framework for community co-created research projects. In a way, just as communities themselves are established from the ground-up, so must any viable research project which aims to convene a community to shape its central design and practice. Walkerdine and Studdert (ibid., p.8) attest that uniting methods and theory based upon the micro-level of actions

taken by the community, allows for an investigative and creative approach to practice-based research via 'hybrid methods'.

Co-Creation and Documentary Ethics

Our Here was developed during a period in which questions were being posited, seeking to further a dichotomy between professional and co-creator content within interactive documentary (Rose, 2014, pp.206-207). In an evolving form, founded by filmmakers and academics seeking to expand their own scholarship and practice in the areas of UX (User Experience)[12] and socio-political mediamaking, there has been somewhat of a lack in engagement with broader transdisciplinary experimentation, through which to open up the field further via methods *chosen by* co-creators. Moreover, there appears to be a void in the representation of co-creator experiences which could offer valuable perspectives on how effective collaborations are, from the point of view of the citizens and communities whom contribute content, direction and volunteer their time (ibid., p.7).

The ethics which bind representation and production methods in documentary have always formed a prevalent discussion[13]. The role which people enact, or are enabled to enact in the conception, design and/or production of documentary narratives which are based on their lives is of

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[12] In 2014, Sandra Gaudenzi launched a collaborative research project The UX Series to investigate user's engagement with interactive documentary. Proposing that 'this does not give them the full control of our stories' but a way where user experience could inform design decisions. Gaudenzi was interrogating whether UX design methodology could help to create more 'inclusive and immersive interactive documentaries.

[13] Lúcia Nagib (2011) has taken a polycentric view of representation and production in world cinema. Uncovering an 'ethics of realism', eschewing the 'traditional oppositional binaries' of 'fiction versus documentary films' (ibid., p1).

vast ethical significance. Bill Nichols (2010, p.43) has linked the principles of representative democracy to those of the documentary filmmaker, who takes the role of speaking for others, on their behalf. Through this approach, the documentary subject represents an essentialist value to the filmmaker: that of the everyday 'social actor' (ibid., p.45), revealing their life, "as lived"—to be transmitted via the lens of another.

Seizing the opportunity to transcend the aforementioned model: documentary's relationship with transmedia multi-platform interactivity has broadened the practices and discussions surrounding ethics, into fresh considerations of how citizenship can be realised via co-creation. This is the primary foci for the opening of the recent edited volume *i-Docs: The Evolving Practices of Interactive Documentary* (2017), in which Kate Nash (ibid, p.9) discusses citizenship and the possibilities for cultural capital, gained via collective practice. Nash (ibid., p.10) marks out the opportunities for interactive digital media to move away from being purely informative—in a progression towards preparing citizens to take political actions of their own. The current iterations of practice and scholarship surrounding co-creation in interactive documentary are challenging previous perceptions of how documentary is made, how it looks, and perhaps of most importance, its value, in both public and private spheres of democratic participation (ibid., p.12).

Open Conversations and Collaborations

The workshop methodology of *Our Here* has evolved from the previous

experiences I had during my career supporting international students.

Informal conversations and gatherings are the central point for sharing

perceptions, knowledge and experiences within many international

communities. I took part in many conversation clubs over the years at the

University of Leeds, where international students and staff would meet to

share their experiences of daily life in the city and beyond, sharing

photographs to illustrate their stories. These experiences provided me with a

strong initial methodology for our early workshops and for my formation of

the *conversational production* method[14].

Workshop methods are employed across many community practice-based

research projects. The AHRC Connected Communities project Pararchive

developed Yarn: a digital community research platform using a ground-up

approach, facilitated and designed via consultation and planning workshops

with community groups (The Pararchive Project, 2013). The *Imperfect*

Cinema project also empowered a collective dialogue through micro-cinema

events and creative conversations which emanated from a pre-existing DIY

music scene (Gall, 2016, pp.106-107). These examples, like many

university-community collaboration projects find their initial strength within

groups and scenes that were already formed and active before the research

and practice began.

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[14] *Conversational production* as a method for opening spaces for cross-cultural interactive
story-telling in *Our Here* reflects de Mitchel and Zimmerman's (2013, p.355) discussions of
the 'open-space documentary' as an 'analogue', 'digital' and 'embodied' form.

It is common practice for academic teams to select and work with established community groups. A participatory model which offers project security as some of the sustainability, in terms of participation and commitment, is already factored in to the co-creator's personal time, prior to involvement with a research project. The time that co-creators volunteer to projects has a huge bearing on how impactful and successful the resulting research can become. Attending events showcasing AHRC Connected Communities projects has provided useful insights into frameworks for co-creation and co-research[15]. Speaking about the large-grant project Understanding Everyday Participation, Abigail Gilmore (2016) described the challenges in engaging participation, outside of participants who have a pre-existing desire to be involved in community projects.

This void in participation from those who are not pre-disposed towards engagement in community projects or are perhaps too busy in their personal lives to participate, presents an avenue for academics to investigate and potentially nurture. There is an impetus implied by the requirement to show impact within research, which drives academic attention towards marginalised communities. However, there is an even larger challenge present in acknowledging the marginalised individual and equipping them with the confidence and tools to engage with a community project, should

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[15] On 27th and 28th March 2015 I attended Connecting Communities: Storytelling & the Digital Archive Conference & Community Showcase. On 18th May 2016 I attended the University of Leeds, School of Media and Communication Research Seminar *Understanding Everyday Participation in Manchester-Salford – Articulating Cultural Values Locally*. At which Abigail Gilmore presented on the AHRC Connected Communities large-grant project Understanding Everyday Participation.

they so wish. The methodological problem then becomes: how can we, as academics and practitioners, attempt to empower creative confidence, in a bid to engender new iterations of belonging and citizenship in a community where this was previously unexplored? Furthermore, how can we, and *can* we engage the unequivocally marginalised?

The context of *Our Here* seeks to address this methodological problem to some extent. Differing to the aforementioned examples, in that no firmly established group or cohesive social scene existed, prior to our launch event. Undoubtedly it was a risk to base my research project upon the aim of forming a collective where no semblance of one previously existed. However, this method also afforded an opportunity to produce research findings on how collectives form, based on the experiences of co-creators and the commitment they chose to show (or are not able to show) towards the project and the collective itself.

The formation of our collective from within the establishment of the project itself was also my rationale behind keeping the methods (workshops, conversations, socials, mediums, media forms) as open as possible. This allowed co-creators who chose to remain within the collective practice to locate their own methods through which to create media artefacts and explore their experiences of citizenship. I was cautious that I did not want to limit the possibilities through which my fellow co-creators could build their creative confidence and develop collective modes of expression. Hence, I did not turn people away from the project when they did not have the time/confidence to make films; instead I endeavored to open up alternative

routes to participation for them, and with them. My desire to generate a

feasibly sustainable conversation and project, was also a reflection of, and in

reaction to the context of the co-creators' often transient immigration status.

Part Two- Literature Review

Interactive Documentary: A Site for Evolution and Impact

The first section of chapter one set the premise for the methods which I explored in my practice-based research. Auto-ethnography and crafting as a transdisciplinary method for convening a community led to the utilisation of conversation as method through the development of *conversational production.* Following from my discussion on co-creation in practice-based research projects and documentary production, part two of chapter one provides a critical contextualization of existing methods and literature, in order to unpack potential areas for expansion and impact.

The New Documentary Form in Context

The development of new digital documentary forms which are situated and navigated online has opened up a profusion of transdisciplinary collaboration routes for practitioners and scholars. This part-migration of documentary onto the social web has furthermore created an arena for co-creation between experienced practitioners (filmmakers, web developers, creative practitioners, etc.) and citizens/communities who may have no formal experience of media production.

Whilst the technological progression towards interactive visual languages and scopic regimes has been developed gradually over the past three decades, it is during this most recent decade, that the interactive documentary has been recognised through scholarship and industry as a

definitive (Gaudenzi, 2013, p.14) and later, evolving (see Aston, et al. 2017)

form. Scholarly debates and conversations have taken place around these

developments, in a bid to provide taxonomies and develop literacies

surrounding the form. Publications have focused on navigation (see

Aufderheide, 2015; see Castells, 2012); applications (see Soar, 2014; see

Hight, 2017); co-creation (see Kapur, 2017); authorship (see Danylkiw,

2012) and activism (see Rose, 2017).

Moreover, the launch of commercial, user-friendly social media platforms

between 2003 (release of YouTube) and 2010 (release of Instagram), also

saw the public enter into the parlance of digital interactive storytelling and

self-documentation, via first-person video blogging and photo-sharing.

Citizen journalism and media have now firmly entered mainstream news

broadcasting. Viewed as an authentic testimony through which to punctuate

traditional, professionally complied broadcast media. Factual media has

entered a point of convergence during which, the distinctions between

professional and citizen-made media have become increasingly fused. New

dialogues have emerged, and since evolved surrounding citizenship, co-

creation, interactivity and storytelling.

In 2013, Sandra Gaudenzi opened her PhD thesis by putting forward the

case that it was non-professional collaborators and non-linear documentary

forms which, at the time of writing, were creating 'a radical new form' (2013,

p.14) in the interactive project. Gaudenzi (ibid., p.14) suggested that digital

media provided an 'alternative' to video and film and that the documentary

form was transitioning towards the non-linear 'collaborative', as opposed to

'authored' linear it once was. Gaudenzi was writing at a time when the interactive documentary form was being defined, in search of taxonomies. Around this time, Stefano Odorico (2014, p.138) was also discussing new documentary forms and how they were transforming previous spectator roles via the fluidity of transmedia platforms[16], with the new invitation to act as 'fully participant users…co-producers'.

However, in the time which followed, central authorship, design and the production of interactive documentaries has remained, for the most part, within the hands of professional media practitioners (see *the Awra Amba Experience*, 2010 and *Question Bridge*, 2014). The traditional documentary form has been combined with web advancements and technologies such as VR (Virtual Reality), producing independently designed platforms which people can interact with, but not wholly shape the design and production of. This contextualisation chapter will critically examine and uncover the largely unexplored potential of interactive documentary as a site for community-led authorship and design, alongside arts-based production interventions. Through a critical review of existing scholarship and practice, I will consider how the form can be disrupted when it is shaped almost entirely by the 'vernacular' (see Jenkins, 2006, 132; see Dovey and Rose, 2013, pp. 2-3) creative practices of community co-creators.

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[16] For an expansion of this point and on how transmedia has transformed spectators from different generations into co-producers see Henry Jenkins (2010) blogpost *Transmedia Generation*.

The i-Docs Project, Ecology to Evolution: an overview:

The first i-Docs edited volume *New Documentary Ecologies* (2014) provided insights on projects from established broadcasters such as NFB (see Nash, 2014) and ARTE (see Gaudenzi, 2014) alongside similar outputs showcased on the i-Docs website. Moving forward a few years, the i-Docs symposium in 2016 provided a platform for application developers (Florian Thalhofer, Korsakow), transmedia directors investigating VR (Adela Muntean), and filmmakers addressing social change and co-creation (Amir Husak and Anandana Kapur).

There are several chapters in *New Documentary Ecologies* (2014) that discuss topics which are pertinent to the issues that I have raised in my research problem and research question sections. Alexandra Juhasz (2014, pp. 33-49) provides a critical discussion of the contested relationship between social media platforms and activist documentary. Juhasz (ibid. p 33) provides real-world examples of how activists and communities working with the digital documentary form can 'better [manage] how to get on- and-off of media by knowing when to both seed and cede the digital'. This chapter provided useful case studies which highlight the dilemmas *and* affordances of publishing community-made media on social media platforms. Juhasz (ibid.) champions DIY documentary practices, speaking to 'the emancipatory potential of self- and community expression through committed low-end media practices'. This chapter provides an insightful overview of how to apply critical consideration when placing community-made documentary media on social media platforms. In addition, Juasz's

discussions of Kate Nash's (2012) work on theorising documentary content

on Facebook, brings to the fore how social media can be an effective

platform from which to facilitate and expand 'collaborative content creation'

(ibid. p.40) amongst specific communities of interest.

In her 2014 chapter in this volume, Nash sets out the grounds for a critical

approach to interactivity in relation to how audiences navigate and

participate via interaction with published interactive documentaries. This was

around the same time that Gaudenzi (2013) was also discussing

participation in relation to audience interaction and navigation. My own

research is concerned with expanding participation towards fully realised co-

creation with communities. As a creative practitioner and visual artist, with a

different background and objectives to Nash and Gaudenzi, I am seeking to

move beyond viewing participation as audience interaction and navigation,

in a move towards a fully realised co-creation throughout all stages of

interactive documentary production. In her chapter, Nash (2014a, 63) does

speak to the significance of citizens playing a key participatory role in 'the

process of realising documentary as a media form.'

Nash's focus on how audiences can shape the form is peppered with

research findings which suggest that audiences are *not* taking up the

opportunities to participate which are built into interactive documentaries.

Nash elaborates on this further, stating that:

> 'While it is tempting to read the presence of a discussion forum as an
>
> invitation to participate, audiences may not experience it as such, perhaps

feeling confused by the invitation or intimidated by the participatory dynamic. In my own research with interactive documentary audiences I have unsurprisingly found ambivalence surrounding participation, with audiences reluctant to engage despite feeling technically capable (see Nash 2012b; also van Dijk 2009). Nevertheless audiences may attach meaning to the ability to participate even when they choose not to. As one audience member of the Facebook documentary Goa Hippy Tribe noted 'I can also participate (I haven't done much) but I can' (Nash 2012b, p. 38).' Nash, 2014a, p.54

Despite so much of the early scholarly debate being devoted to participation, viewed predominantly as audience participation in published projects, Nash highlights that her own and others audience research is illuminating a low uptake in audience participation, and how there is a 'current absence of any comprehensive audience research' (ibid.p.55). It is interesting that so much scholarship was devoted to thinking through how we could theorise audience participation, without foremost fully researching *if* indeed anyone was viewing interactive documentary online, let alone taking up the opportunities to participate.

Part two of *New Documentary Ecologies* is dedicated to production practices. I this section of the edited volume, Kate Nash (2014b) interviews Ingrid Kopp, Director of Digital Initiatives Tribeca Film Institute. In their discussion surrounding funding, audience interaction and storytelling, Kopp also remarks that for interactive documentary 'the audiences aren't quite there yet' (Ibid. p.125). Kopp voices a frustration surrounding the tendency

for a multitude of debates surrounding interactive storytelling, rather than ground being made via actual production practices (ibid.). The discussion gravitates towards issues of funding and the lack of commercial opportunity which interactive documentary was facing. I would suggest that this junction of the interview posed an opportunity for the mention of crowd funding and crowd sourcing as alternative funding and content creation methods. Although these methods are picked up by Sandra Gaudenzi (2014, 131) in a later chapter during her discussion of 'the roots of…participation in digital culture'.

It is important to summarise here that throughout this edited volume, there is an evident binary in the priorities voiced in terms of community participation, motivations, funding, and production approaches. For example, comparing the motivations of Alexandra Juhasz and Ingrid Kopp demonstrates the completely different approaches and priorities between broadcast industry professionals and activists, scholars and media-makers concerned with affecting social change in their work creating and researching with communities. There is a gap in academic and practice debates exploring *if* there is a balance between these contrasting motivations and approaches which are represented in the practices and scholarship of the form. From my own attendance and participation in symposiums and industry events, it has become apparent to me that there is a dominance of broadcast standard motivations and voices. This predisposition towards projects that are initiated and produced by media professionals is also peppered with an academic commitment to investigating how to make the form more open and democratic for community collaborators. There are some academic and

practitioner voices which are situated in-between the motivational divides of retaining industry standards, expanding and prioritising community collaborations and developing DIY methods. I discuss examples of this later on in this chapter.

In her discussion with Kate Nash (2014b, p.126), Ingrid Kopp raises another interesting point for discussion: her department 'only fund social issue non-fiction'. I find this point very useful in validating the significance of my own research aim, which is to prioritise the development of a new production methodology for communities and creative practitioners seeking to represent their own testimonies and the issues affecting their communities. I think it is crucial to be critical here of the emphasis placed by media professionals and existing scholarship on proliferating traditional documentary and broadcast approaches to production and commercialisation in the form. Many of the early academic debates on the form touch on advocacy, social change and the potential to represent and collaborate with marginalised voices: therefore, there is a real need for this to also be reflected in production approaches.

To some extent, I agree with Kopp when she talks about project authors overestimating the interest which citizens have to participate directly in interactive documentary (ibid. p.127). Uptake to co-create collectively on *Our Here* was not a deluge to begin with. However, leading from the first workshop, there were a good number of attendees who became long-time co-creators for the duration of the project. This was also the case with the other workshops we ran, as each time we welcomed a promising number of

new co-creators. Some would join the project for a one-off workshop or method/subject we were covering, whereas others would become project-long co-creators, having a high level of authorship and significantly shaping the design of the project in a number of different ways.

Kopp appears to overlook the participatory and collective filmmaking methods which were pioneered in the 1970s and 1980s in her remark that 'a difference between working in film and interactive is that when you want users to do something they have to become part of the production process' (Nash, 2014b, 127). In addition, as was the tendency during the debates and scholarship at this time, Kopp goes on to suggest that audiences playing a role in the production process relates back to considerations of 'interface' and 'UE' (ibid.) I would argue that this standpoint unnecessarily restricts potential audience participants within a means of participation via navigation of the published, finished project alone, rather than envisioning that audience participants can play an integral role in the whole production process, including pre and post production. Kopp does discuss collaboration; however, it is stipulated that this takes place between digital agencies, programmers and more traditional filmmakers, rather than communities or creative practitioners from more diverse practice backgrounds.

Notably, and of most relation to my research, Gaudenzi's (2014, pp.129-148) chapter 'Strategies of Participation: The Who, What and When of Collaborative Filmmaking' further emphasises the need for practice-based research into co-creation experiences and the development of a theoretical

framework to offer example-led definitions for what she refers to as 'strategies of collaboration' (ibid., p.130). Her chapter on web-based documentary suggests that 'when deciding what sort of participation will be possible in a collaborative documentary, three points need to be considered: 'who' is participating, 'what' can be done, and 'when' is this intervention possible' (ibid., p.142).

Seeking to breach the monological imperative of earlier documentary representations and work towards an 'ethical collectivism' (Thompson, 2002, p.1), Gaudenzi (2014, p.143) encourages practitioners to interrogate the 'agency of collaboration', through which the co-creator can engage in both self-representation and critically challenge the voice of the author. She puts forward these provocations as having the potential for 'a visualisation of change, within an online world that has its own rules and constraints-normally set by the author.' (ibid.) Problematising this, she posits that 'conceptual authorship has not yet been challenged' (ibid., p.144). Here, she suggests that documentarians should collaborate during the founding stages of a project, pushing collective interaction with narratives beyond the borders of production and audience interaction alone.

In a similar approach to Kopp, Gaudenzi (ibid. p.129) appropriates consumer-related theoretical language to describe potential co-creators, using Tapscott and Williams's (2008, p. 127) definition of the 'prosumer'[17] to

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[17] Gaudenzi (2014, p.129) states that 'prosumers 'treat the world as a place for creation, not for consumption' (Tapscott and Williams 2008, p. 127); They don't just browse, they want to collaborate.'

describe the transition audiences can make from being merely consumers of documentary, to being collaborators via the inclusion of User Generated Content. As I have stated above, I find the use of consumerist language problematic in the discussion of a form which is predominantly aiming to affect social change and represent marginalised narratives and communities. Secondly, I find it rather limiting to view pre-existing documentary audiences as the main demographic for developing collaborations amongst.

Gaudenzi (2014, 129) asks 'when a prosumer of a participatory documentary sends content to an online production, is the prosumer becoming a co- producer, a co- creator or a co- author?'. My response would be that in order for this to be considered as co-creation, it would seem reasonable to expect that there would be some form of dialogue or active collaboration between the project author and "prosumer". Merely uploading content in response to a published project, I would argue, appears to be quite a passive production role. When audience members answer the call of the documentary maker, rather than joining the authorship team, can this really be considered co-creation or co-authorship? Gaudenzi (ibid.) follows a similar line of thought, suggesting that 'contributions of content lead to co-creation but not to co- authorship, since the latter require a degree of intervention in the overall concept (i.e., form) of the product'.

David Green (2017) and his team from Northlab at Northumbria University developed useful definitions for critically assessing the levels of participation in interactive storytelling. They defined 'executory participation' as the act of

interacting with content via "liking", "following" or uploading user-created content (ibid., p.3). This definition fits the level of participation which Gaudenzi (2014, 129) is describing. Green (2017,3) and his team go on to define further democratic and expanded levels of collaboration as 'structural participation', in which participants share authorship over the concepts and design of an interactive documentary.

If potential participants are to be viewed as prosumers from existing documentary film audiences and digital natives with the necessary knowledge and technology to gain access to interactive documentary, those who don't fit this privileged demographic should be considered. Digital migrants, for example. Do marginalised citizens and communities feature in this new language surrounding participation? Or does this approach broaden the divide between privileged professionals and those from the marginalised communities which they are seeking to represent and "collaborate" with?

Gaudenzi raises some further questions surrounding the limits of participant agency (Gaudenzi, 2014, 129), methods and definitions for sustaining collaboration (ibid., p.130), and how participants can shape the 'interactive architecture' (ibid., p.134) of interactive documentaries. These areas of questioning evidence that there is a requirement for further research into production methods in order to disrupt single authorial control, in a bid to expand and sustain collaborations with marginalised citizens and communities, throughout the production process.

At the opening of the production practices section of *New Documentary Ecologies* (2014), Elizabeth Coffman provides an essential overview as to how collectives have pioneered participatory methods in the history of documentary. In harmony with my own research aims, Coffman (ibid., p.105) calls for 'a more collaborative theory of authorship and understanding of the documentary project'. Contrasting Gaudenzi's (2014, p.129) reference to interactive documentary as a 'final product', Coffman (ibid., p.106) highlights how film scholars have undervalued the affordances of 'researching process rather than final product'.

Coffman speaks to the significance of evaluating 'outreach' (ibid., p.109) and the potential for participation to be a 'transformational process' (ibid., p.111). The concept of participation in documentary production as a transformational process shares similarities with transformation through participation in co-created research and participatory action research. In *Co-constructing Research: A Critical Literature Review*, Lindsey Horner (2016) places *transformation* at the core of participatory research. In her discussion of pragmatism, theory and praxis, Horner (ibid., p. 20) describes the 'integrated way through employing a method of cycles of re-action and action which are concerned with material and social transformation in a given context'. It is this iterative cyclical process that I have employed in my own research methods in a bid to discover methods to disrupt current production paradigms and expand co-creation. Heewon Chang (2008, p.53) also discusses the *transformational* impact of 'doing, sharing and reading'

autoethnography and how it can manifest unexpectedly during the process of collaborative research.

Coffman's raises important questions regarding the mainstream academic undervaluing of collective and participatory methods of film production. This prompted me to consider if alternative production methods could be adapted to expand co-creation in interactive documentary production. I also began to consider if social and personal transformations been documented as the result of interactive documentary participation and production. There is scope for Coffman to expand on this discussion via the inclusion of more recent accounts of participatory methods in interactive documentary production.

The second edited volume *The Evolving Practices of Interactive Documentary* (2017) reiterates in its opening, the i-Docs open definition of projects which intend to engage with the 'real'; embracing the 'breadth of lived experience' (ibid., p.1). This latest output from the i-Docs project sets co-creation at the forefront of the volume, engaging with issues surrounding citizenship (see Nash, 2017), domestic technology and cross-class collaboration (see Kapur, 2017), and activism (see Rose, 2017).

The editors of volume two interestingly place co-creation and production methods in separate sections, perhaps signaling that co-creators are not intrinsically linked to the core production methods of the form. The methods

chapter is heavy with familiar discussions of User Experience, industry-level Hackathons and platform design, which have remained ever-present in academic discussion of the form. Whilst the co-creation section contains much needed accounts of some of the methods being deployed to develop collaborations which affect social change. This separation of the two sections illuminates that in 2017, the binary between projects which employ traditional broadcast standards and more radical projects, which embrace community-made media, is still very much in place.

Open Transmedia Collaboration

Interactive documentary defines a new documentary modality. Encompassing its own micro-areas of knowledge and application (social impact, activism, platform navigation, audience, emerging technologies, immersive environments and so on). However, interactive documentary is also positioned within wider definitions of storytelling[18] practices and social research. Nested, one could say, within the knowledge production surrounding transmedia platforms and, even broader to describe, digital storytelling[19]. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the evolving definitions and possibilities of interactive documentary, from within the context of these

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[18] Here I am referring to storytelling as method, through which the public can create and share their own non-fiction narratives as a form of testimony. These practices can take place independently, or within university-community based research activities and projects.
[19] In a recent interview with the International Journal of Communication, Jenkins put forward that: 'Digital storytelling could include stories generated via digital tools, stories that involve various forms of networked participation or interactivity, stories that are distributed via digital platforms, or stories that are consumed on digital platforms (Lashley and Creech, 2017).

larger descriptors of scholarship and practice. For this research, in particular, transmedia modalities and platforms are especially relevant.

Jenkins first spoke of our entrance into an 'era of media convergence' and transmedia storytelling in relation to the fictional arenas of gaming, Hollywood film culture and TV franchises back in 2003[20] (Hancox, 2017, p.50). However, Jenkins' work on media convergence[21] is also useful in discussions surrounding nonfiction storytelling which employs transmedia methods and platforms as a methodology:

> There is no transmedia formula. Transmedia refers to a set of choices made about the best approach to tell a particular story to a particular audience in a particular context depending on the particular resources available to particular producers.
> (Jenkins, 2011, no pagination).

These descriptions may remain broad and originate from a very different form of media practice, yet as Donna Hancox (2017, p.52) has outlined, this 'contemporary complex and hybrid version of transmedia storytelling…has its origins in that history but also maintains strong traces of digital storytelling, documentary film-making and interactive design. This evolution disrupts the most common definitions of platforms or mediums…'.

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[20] See Jenkins, 2003.
[21] Jenkins (2006) delineates 'convergence' as the 'flow of content across multiple media platforms' and acknowledges the fluidity of the term: 'Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes, depending on who's speaking and what they think they are talking about'.

The transmedia and interdisciplinary forms of interactive documentary and storytelling are now major sites[22] for scholarship and practice (Zarins, 2017, no pagination). Interactive documentary allows digital storytellers, filmmakers and academics to collaborate with marginalised communities[23], collating underrepresented narratives into transmedia online projects. In a progression from the traditional linear documentary, this new iteration holds the capability to enable un-trained and fledgling film and media makers to utilise this new documentary form as *their* tool for collective representation and reflection. John Dovey (2014, p.20) speaks of the potential of such collaborations to transform 'public space [into] networks of solidarity, education and intervention'. Referring to the cultures of DIY filmmaking and skills development which take root from these collaborative practices, Dovey (ibid.) refers to the movement away from 'large scale mass media methods' towards the mobilisation of local citizens through what is undoubtedly a lengthy and 'painstaking process'.

Frameworks and accounts are needed from within the practice and theorisation surrounding interactive documentaries to chronicle the experiences of citizen participation and collaboration throughout each stage

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[22] The i-Docs project was founded at the Digital Cultures Research Centre at UWE Bristol. The first symposium dedicated to interactive documentary was convened by Judith Aston, Jon Dovey and Sandra Gaudenzi in March 2011. In 2018 the bi-annual symposium was in its 5th year. *Collabdocs* (Mandy Rose) and *Interactive Factual* (Sandra Gaudenzi) are amongst many of the international blogs which now cover interactive documentary. Other notable global research centres and festivals invested in collaborative, interactive and immersive storytelling include: The MIT Open Documentary Lab (Massachusetts), National Film Board of Canada (Montreal), The Tribeca Film Institute and festival (New York), The Sundance Institute and festival (Utah), the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam's (IDFA) DocLab, ARTE (Strasbourg) and Northlab (Newcastle). The MIT Open Documentary Lab also curates '_docubase', a dedicated, interactive database for digital documentary forms.

[23] Donna Hancox (2017, p.49) has written about how transmedia storytelling as a methodology has ushered in 'the narrative turn in qualitative research'. Offering an expansion of 'the methods through which we gather and share the stories of groups who have traditionally been written about by others rather than telling their own stories to reveal the complexities of their experiences'.

of production. Notably, and of most relation to my research, Gaudenzi's

(2014, pp.129-148) chapter[24] 'Strategies of Participation: The Who, What

and When of Collaborative Filmmaking' further emphasises the need for

practice-based research into co-creation experiences and the development

of a theoretical framework to offer example-led definitions for what she

refers to as 'strategies of collaboration' (ibid., p.130). Her chapter in the first

edited volume on web-based documentary suggests that 'when deciding

what sort of participation will be possible in a collaborative documentary,

three points need to be considered: 'who' is participating, 'what' can be

done, and 'when' is this intervention possible' (ibid., p.142).

Seeking to breach the monological imperative of earlier documentary

representations and work towards an 'ethical collectivism' (Thompson, 2002,

p.1), Gaudenzi (2014, p.143) encourages practitioners to interrogate the

'agency of collaboration', through which the co-creator can engage in both

self-representation and critically challenge the voice of the author. She puts

forward these provocations as having the potential for 'a visualisation of

change, within an online world that has its own rules and constraints-

normally set by the author.' (ibid.) Problematising this, she posits that

'conceptual authorship has not yet been challenged' (ibid., p.144). Here

suggesting that documentarians should collaborate during the founding

stages of a project; pushing collective interaction with narratives beyond the

borders of production and audience interaction alone.

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[24] This chapter is published in *New Documentary Ecologies* (2014, Nash et al. eds.)

'DiWO (Do it with Others)' The Entrance of DIY Methods

In 2014, Rose identified the key links between new documentary scholarship and DIY culture. Setting out the case for a 'DiWO [Do-it-With-Others]' approach to documentary, acting as a 'stage for the performance of citizenship' (Zarins, 2017, no pagination, citing Rose 2014, p.206). Contextualising DIY documentary within radical historicity, Rose's (2014, p.202) framework draws on protest filmmaking during May '68 in Paris and the Canadian *Challenge for Change*. Antecedents to the later Community Access TV movement which put cameras into the hands of Native Americans, amongst many more globally, whom had been previously underrepresented.

At this time Rose (2014, pp. 206-207) was also working through the dichotomy of DIY and collaborative examples from interactive documentaries made around this period. Giving examples such as *Mapping Main Street* (2008) and *Hollow* (2013), Rose (2014, p.206) problematises the lack of distinction between the 'amateur/professional' content on board such project, making it difficult to locate 'self-direction' which is an essential proponent of the DIY approach. I would like to suggest here that 'self-direction' could be evidenced and expanded upon through an openness to the transdisciplinary approaches and interests of the co-creators themselves. With this I am signaling towards an open production process: one through which co-creators are supported in selecting their own methods and tools for creative production. This could significantly expand the

methodological and visual approaches which are explored through interactive documentary, beyond the persistent traits of non-fiction filmmaking. Therefore, projects which are established as tools and platforms for communities could take more diverse, imperfect forms. Moreover, approached in this manner, projects could move towards prioritising co-learning and co-authorship, in a bid to muddy the water between media practitioners and citizen co-creators.

Taking a critical look at one of Rose's examples, *Mapping Main Street* (2008) reveals a project that *does* expand beyond documentary film paradigms; instead opting to use public radio broadcasting methods. Funded by independent and public radio broadcasting associations (Ardalan, 2009, no pagination), the project uses Google Maps technology on board it's platform to put forward a 'counter-narrative to political rhetoric about [diverse American] "Main Street" [culture]' (ibid.).

A video clip of an academic presentation given by the producers showcases how the main project platform is navigated and designed (The Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, 2009). In the clip, the producers describe how the platform houses three separate types of media: the 'Broadcast Series' (ibid.), comprising of expert produced public radio interviews with the Main Street citizens they met during the road-trip period of the project; the 'Citizen Produced Photos and Videos' (ibid.) feature User Generated Content, in response to the project calls for participation; and 'Commissioned Songs' (ibid.), from the four musicians that wrote music for the project around the theme of American Main Streets. One of the

commissioned musicians, Higher Place, also filmed DIY-style video footage of the Main Street they captured in LA (ibid.).

With diversity at the forefront of the project, there was potential here to expand participation methods beyond tried and tested user generated content towards more inclusive in-person collaborations with the communities which were being represented. In addition, the project team are largely from privileged Harvard backgrounds with careers in broadcasting, journalism and academia, and so there is an inherent in-balance in the lived-experiences of the producers and the documentary subjects. In this example, participation does follow the user-generated content paradigm. However, the Google Maps algorithm on the main project site (available at: http://web.archive.org/web/20180805004430/http://www.mappingmainstreet. org/) causes the user generated content to drive how the map appears. In what can be described as an "unknowing way", participants *do* shape the aesthetic appearance of the project platform. However, participants are not given the forum to actively challenge the conceptual authorship of the project (Gaudenzi, 2014, p.144).

It is also crucial here to consider how the digital divide impacts the potential for inclusive participation via user generated content. Without using community-based workshop or participatory media methods, the diverse and often marginalised communities that appear in the expert produced public radio stories of the project cannot access the digital equipment required to make and upload their own autoethnographic accounts of life on Main Street. Instead, Main Street residents are represented on the project

platform via traditional ethnographic documentary interview methods. Mandy

Rose (2014, p.2) has highlighted how traditional social documentary

methods afford the documentary subject no agency in either the production

process or the representation of their lived-experience. As this excerpt from

a blog advertising the project on the National Public Radio website

demonstrates, the representational methods of the 'Broadcast Stories' (The

Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, 2009) content appears to sit

firmly within the methods of traditional ethnographic storytelling:

> 'The Mapping Main Street team started exploring Main Streets this summer,
>
> driving more than 12,000 miles throughout the United States. Every Main
>
> Street was a little different--from the discovery of autographed photos of Ella
>
> Fitzgerald and Miles Davis in a dilapidated house in West Virginia to
>
> conversations with a transvestite prostitute in Chattanooga to breakfast
>
> truck owners serving up menudo on the Mexican border.' (Ardalan, 2009, no
>
> pagination)

Workshopping Co-Creation

Community-based co-creation methods do not come without limitations and

inherent frustrations, for both practitioners and communities[25]. Leaving a

production methodology entirely open to experimentation, redirection and

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[25] Especially so, when the interactive documentary is a measurable output linked to a
funded project (within academia or the creative industries).

diverse authorship is a daunting prospect for practitioners. This is where the workshop format of production becomes vital in retaining a sense of progression and direction for such open collaborations. Workshops can be used to convene co-creators, in a bid to try out new production methods in a nurturing and supportive environment. This could mean beginning with the practitioners' previous experience as a guide, or indeed leaping into unknown production territories alongside one another.

Expressions of workshop culture can already be seen in the i-Docs project in the many Hackathons, symposiums and industry gatherings that are aimed at a professional audience of practitioners and scholars. Some labs and festivals are developing frameworks towards opening opportunities beyond the professional realm[26], although these largely still appear to be aimed at individuals who identify confidently as practitioners. *Red Tales* (2015) has begun to lay down theoretical and practical frameworks as to how the interactive documentary can be shaped by citizen co-creators, and suggests areas which scholars and practitioners need to work on to further this potential.

This presents a point for convergence through which the interactive documentary form can stand to broaden collaborations with communities via the methods that community storytelling and co-constructed research have explored. These fields rely on extensive workshop methodologies to promote inclusivity. From the research design, through to the potential

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[26] !FLAB is a development lab bringing together diverse practitioners alongside developers and coders to develop interactive factual stories. The lab is led by Sandra Gaudenzi. Along similar lines, Mozilla Festival (https://mozillafestival.org) advocates for a 'healthy internet' exploring challenges such as digital inclusion. The festival goes a step further encouraging 'participants of all ages and skill levels' to attend.

impact and legacy of a project, communities are considered as key stakeholders in view of the research outcomes and the processes which have led to the findings.

Impact and Inter/Action- Mapping Co-Creator Experiences

Rose has raised a provocative debate surrounding how effective and impactful collaborations have been within the interactive documentary field:

> How is it possible to gauge the success of these collaborative projects from the point of view of participants and therefore assess their potential impact on communities? Unfortunately there is little independent evidence to draw on. (Rose, 2014, p.207)

In revealing this, Rose too highlights this disparity which needs to be further addressed, through both the practice and scholarship which is developing the interactive documentary form. Dovey (2014, pp.28-29) suggests that co-producers from non-media backgrounds 'might be seeking to make action in the world…together'. This impetus, along with a tendency towards issues-based socio-political subjects[27], demarcates the real crux of what draws in co-creators to give their personal time and efforts to these projects. However, what impact do both the processes and outcomes of collaboration

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[27] The interactive documentaries *Points of View* (2014), *Question Bridge* (2014) and *Obliterated Families* (2016) illustrate this tendency.

have *on* co-creators? I will now briefly provide an outline of two projects

which are going some way to addressing these questions.

Anandana Kapur (2017, p.33) is currently engaged in a mobile filmmaking

project to co-create an 'inclusive' interactive documentary with women in the

city of Delhi (see Figure 8). Taking a curatorial (ibid., p.34) role in the

project, Kapur (ibid., p.26) collaborates with women 'across class and caste

boundaries' in a narrative reclamation and re-imagining of their city. The

project is still in progress, however, Kapur (ibid., p.34) has produced

scholarship which details the process she and her ten co-creators are in the

midst of. During this 'open-ended exploration', Kapur (ibid., p.27) is

capturing the emerging experiences and tensions of her collaborators

through the conversation threads she is sharing with them, as they engage

in the practice (ibid., pp.32-33).

Figure 8. Images from Anandana Kapur's mobile phone based interactive documentary. (Source: Immerse News, 2017).

Using WhatsApp (ibid., p.28-33) and emails (ibid., p.34) to communicate with her co-creators during the production process, Kapur (ibid., p.28) is continuing her exploration of conversation as method from her antecedent social-change project *Baat-Cheet* (translating as *conversation*). Co-creator messages to Kapur have provided insights into how the women are experiencing the production process. This includes the use of capture methods which are new to them (ibid., p.29) and the personal tensions experienced during the process of filming others or being filmed using mobile devices (ibid., p.32). In her scholarship on the project, these online collaborative conversations and negotiations become a key part of her 'meta-tagging' (ibid., p.31) processes, findings and impact. Revealing the nuances of co-creation, authorship and DIY filmmaking practices.

North Lab research centre based at Northumbria University has also focused on developing a framework for 'enabling polyvocality in interactive documentaries' (Green, et al, 2017). Their argument for the development of a 'sociotechnical toolkit' emerged from their two-year participatory interactive documentary project *Red Tales* (2015)*.* With a view to unlocking the 'unrealised potential' (ibid., p.1) for the new documentary form to transition from single-authored to collective narratives, via the investigation of how co-creators experience collaborative production. Arguing that applications such as Klynt are designed for single-users, *Red Tales* was instead developed on WordPress in a bid to promote a 'structural agency' (ibid., p.2), which other

interactives, such as *Question Bridge* (2014) have negated to explore[28].

Many interactive documentaries are typified by their bespoke, stand-alone

platforms. North Lab were keen to instead consider the affordances of 'user-

generated media publishing platforms' (ibid.), such as YouTube and

WordPress, alongside social media, in order to interrogate the possibilities of

a convergence allowing for multiple authorship designs.

The team of computer scientists and transmedia practitioners behind *Red*

Tales identified that to move beyond "executory participation"[29], towards

"structural participation"[30] would require the de-centralisation of how

documentary design is formally structured (ibid., p.3). Using WordPress,

Red Tales was co-designed between academics, practitioners and citizen

co-creators via online interaction and in-situ workshops. In a co-authored

paper, the academic team behind *Red Tales* qualitatively analyse four

participant experiential interviews and draw findings from their personal

research journals, alongside workshop data. From these mixed method

data-sets, they refined the outcomes into some final themes from which to

base an analysis which reflected both their research aims, and the accounts

of the participants (ibid., p.6). Their themes for analysis and the further

unpacking of co-creation included:

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[28] In *Question Bridge* (2014), the users who contribute content do not also have 'the ability to inform the context in which this dialogue occurs, or…initiate their own conversations' (Green, et al, 2017, p.2).
[29] The act of interacting with content via "liking", "following" or uploading user-created content (ibid., p.3).
[30] Where participants share authorship over the concepts and design of an interactive documentary (ibid., p.3).

-'Bringing a community together and representing its diversity is challenging'.

-'Gatekeepers and facilitators [influence on the] project and artefact formation'.

-'Projecting responsibility and ownership onto others'.

-'Building critical mass and connecting with audiences'.

-'Trajectories of participation' (ibid., pp.5-6).

Of most significance to my own research, *Red Tales* highlights the potential to harness the accessibility of pre-existing, mass-populated transmedia platforms, in order to re-situate participation in interactive documentary within imperfect 'polyvocal' (ibid., pp.1-4) co-design.

Evolving the Interactive Documentary through Imperfection

As a transdisciplinary form, which has gone through the processes of technological, methodological and scholarly emergence and evolution, the interactive documentary is now situated within a period globally where convening people to foster connectedness and social cohesion has never been more crucial. Impact, connectedness and activism for and with co-creators from marginalised backgrounds is now firmly at the forefront of the interactive project agenda. This became more apparent to me during my participation at the i-Docs 2018 symposium at the Watershed in Bristol.

The symposium created multiple committed spaces for discussions surrounding impactful co-creation in light of political crises[31], i-Docs for educating climate change impact[32] and convening temporary communities to create sites for social cohesion[33]. Perhaps of most significance to my research and experience as a co-creator was my participation in the workshop 'Visual Mapping of Participatory Spaces' led by Liz Miller and Dorit Naaman. The purpose of the workshop was to learn and develop creative methods for mapping the processes of co-creator/practitioner experiences and dynamics. Of most use were our discussions on:

-The categories of participation.

-Shifting roles.

-What can be done with media/artefacts which don't fit into the final iteration of a project.

-Holding space for co-creators.

-How to work through that which arises from co-creative environments.

Although the radical and activist thematics of many projects had been highlighted prior to this current period we are in, it is evident that as the field has progressed from emerging to evolving, there is now a space and a need for an exploration on the praxis of an *imperfect interactivity*. How this can be

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[31] Alexandra Juhasz presented her current project *#100hardtruths-#fakenews* which provides a critical mapping of the first one hundred days of Donald Trump's US presidency. Juhasz also shared her ongoing poetry workshops project and spoke of material-based interactivity, co-learning and 'real-time: real-place conversations' (Juhasz, 2018).

[32] In the opening keynote, Liz Miller (2018) spoke of interactives for impactful teaching; using WordPress blogs to develop large-scale interactive projects with co-creators as key stakeholders and suggested some exit strategies for co-creation relationships.

[33] Claire Doherty (2018), Director of the Arnolfini, shared her experiences of public art projects and the importance of convening temporary communities of co-creators, rather than bringing personal assumptions about pre-conceived community groupings.

developed further and what it might look like and achieve? This was another key area which was under discussion at i-Docs 2018, peppered throughout the keynotes, workshops and presentations. The accumulation for this activity and discussion surrounding imperfection emanated from the workshop which Allister Gall and I were invited to deliver during the first day of the symposium (see Figure 9). During the workshop we launched our new collaborative project *Imperfect Interactive*[34].

Figure 9. Group reflections after our Workshopping an Imperfect i-Doc Praxis mobile filmmaking workshop at i-Docs 2018, Bristol. (Source: Kelly Zarins).

Returning now to the scholarship of the i-Docs project. Gaudenzi's call for collaborations with citizen co-creators to begin from the 'conception' of interactive documentaries could enter into a dialogue with Rose's imperative that DIY practices should be more evidential in the visual synthesis of interactive projects. There is a post-production stage in many interactive projects, where the filmmakers and web developers physically exit the

collaborative conversation. Returning to their studios to edit raw footage and build online platforms. Could this production paradigm be reworked? As Michael Chanan (2007, p.215) implies, 'being filmed is to give up your own authorship of yourself'. Surely practitioners could (and should) attempt to breech this? Eschewing industry-standard production values; instead working on methods and frameworks which attempt to sustain co-creator collaborations further. This would undoubtedly lead to a longer, more logistically complex production process, but never-the-less, one which would be working towards the realisation of a perhaps borderless interactivity.

Interactive documentary stands to borrow (more) from the radical practices of community storytelling and participatory video movements, with which the form already shares many methodologies. Evidently, the links are already being recognised between these fields of practice and scholarship. However, here I suggest that there may be more to this relationship and more to be gained from imperfect and DIY approaches to collaboration on interactive projects. This brings about the question: how can media professionals and academics further embrace the imperfect nature of sustained collaborations across communities: developing a visual form which represents an open process of learning and creating together?

Part Three- Towards an Imperfect Interactive Documentary Praxis

Part two of chapter one has established the interactive documentary form as a possible site for further evolution. In part three I will unpack the contexts which I am drawing from in order to establish how the form can be expanded as an emancipatory form. In this section I examine the routes for further impactful collaboration through a dialogue with imperfect, everyday creative practice. I draw inspirational methods and frameworks from previous manifestations of imperfection in non-fiction filmmaking. Suggesting areas for convergence with the interactive documentary project.

Imperfect Cinema

The *Imperfect Cinema* project (Gall, 2016, p.14) has highlighted the emancipatory potential of DIY, collective filmmaking practices which exist outside of mainstream film culture. This iteration of imperfection is fueled by a DIY punk ethos and the celebration of an egalitarian approach towards a sustainable filmmaking culture. The project[35] seeks to create a participatory reaction and antithesis towards the limitations and sustainability issues of mainstream film culture. Providing a framework through which to open up participation to fledgling DIY filmmakers. Moreover, Gall's collaborative project sets out the significance of the collective social spaces required to sustain participation in alternative film cultures.

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[35] *Imperfect Cinema* has also expanded with an *Imperfect Orchestra* and *Imperfect VR*.

Figure 10. 2011 Imperfect Cinema event flyer. (Source: Imperfect Cinema).

The development of an imperfect praxis, as set out by Gall (2016, pp.21-22) in his PhD thesis, was a result of the following guiding principles:

-'Practice (action) and reflection (theory) must operate within our direct social experiences'.

-'The ideas in action developed through sharing the research and practice as a common idea, to be renewed, developed and expanded'.

-'The idea of 'imperfection' should be easily communicable'.

-'It has to be a contested negotiated space that has a focus and is engaging'.

-''Imperfection' is explored for its emancipatory potential'.

-'It is not something that has 'been done'; it is something that always remains to be done'.

-'[An affirmation] that value, in film or any other kind of cultural production [sic] is something that is produced in and through social dialogue'.

It is exactly for its emancipatory potential through collective practice that *Imperfect Cinema* can inspire a sustainable framework for projects which seek to build and design interactive documentaries with marginalised communities of co-creators. In his thesis, Gall (ibid., p.22) reiterates that his findings affirm the value of 'face-to-face social interactions' and that his research acknowledges the influence of web 2.0 on DIY culture, however, remains firmly within an emplaced 'living everyday context'.

Moreover, De Michiel and Zimmerman (2013, p.356) have similarly attested to the significance of 'lived social relations' and in-person interaction in the interactive documentary, yet so little has been explicitly documented on workshopping as a method for engaging co-creators with no previous technical experience. Here the *Imperfect Cinema* methodologies can be re-contextualised to introduce new ways of developing alternative filmmaking cultures and sustaining co-creation in the interactive documentary.

Gall cites underground and collective cinemas, alongside individual filmmakers including Jonas Mekas, Jean Rouch and Maya Deren who have informed his imperfect cinema practice. Drawing his main theoretical underpinning from Julio García Espinosa's 'For an Imperfect Cinema' (1969) (see Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media, 2005), Gall situates his collective project within a Marxist political discourse. Discussing the social capital of collective practices 'in between [the] alternative and popular spaces' (ibid., p.25) of the capitalist first cinema and the auteurist second cinema. Here the potential for an imperfect development of the interactive documentary project comes to light. The need for *another* space, through

which the barriers between authorship and spectatorship become dissolved (ibid.).

Radical Production Contexts

Alongside inspiration from *Imperfect Cinema*, my formative exposure to the independent Chinese cinemas of the early new millennium (Zarins, 2013) and the methods of the Situationist International have also ignited my own explorations into imperfect practices. These inspirations have been cemented by my experience of joining the Radical Film Network and the camaraderie which this most nurturing of communities has extended to me. In this section, I will discuss these influences further, as a method for setting out the contexts which have led me towards the development of an imperfect interactive documentary praxis.

Interventions which have unleashed the camera from its rigid tripod into the hands of experimental and emergent filmmakers have punctuated the history of audio-visual practices. Makers willing to take risks and step outside accepted cinematic conventions have formed practices within reality. Disbanding the barriers of professionalism; embracing personal, collaborative, often non-linear alternatives. Michael Chanan has offered a thorough account of how a divergent path has been carved across the non-fiction filmmaking landscape in *The Politics of Documentary* (2007). Looking to the revolutionary 1969 *Toward a Third Cinema* manifesto by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, Chanan (2007, pp.10-11) has traced oppositional filmmaking from *La Hora de los hornos* (*The Hour of the*

Furnaces) (1968), through to the collectively produced indigenous and student video movements which emerged globally in the period which followed (ibid., p11).

Collectives and Workshops

Moments within participatory and collective documentary share in a dialogue with the current interactive project, forming new literacies and opening practices to foster collaboration within an ecology of sharing. I will now outline some of the significant practitioner collectives which have informed my own development towards collective and workshop practices in the interactive documentary. Of particular influence on my interests are three organisations which came out of the British workshop and collective movements of the 1970's and 1980's. The Amber Film Workshop (1968- to present), the Leeds Animation Workshop (1976 – to present) and The Black Audio Filmmaking Collective (1982-1998).

Amber Film Workshop

The antecedents (see Fitzgerald, 1988) of the British workshop film movement hailed from the Amber Film Workshop. The collective was founded by polytechnic students from working-class backgrounds to 'document traditional regional working-class communities in the North East' (Newsinger, 2009, p.388). Amber are transdisciplinary; having practices situated within the intersections of film, photography and live theatre (ibid.) to explore working-class identity. The collective sought to remain independent from government funding ideologies and narratives which

victimised or censored working-class expression and identity (ibid., p.389).

This approach became imperative during the Thatcher years and the

culminating assaults of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike (ibid., p.390).

Figure 11. Still from Eden Valley (1995). (Source: Amber Films).

Amber pioneered British community-based documentary. Crafting creative

production processes from *within* and *with* North-East communities to

document and celebrate a culture in decline. Indeed, from the 1980's (ibid.,

p.396) to this day, Amber actively engage in a conversational creative

process with the community they are situated within. To achieve this, the

collective transitioned their former documentary practice into experimental

territories. Through which community engagement via conversations and

workshopping is transposed from non-fictional research and documentation

to fictional drama. This diversion from Griersonian documentary methods

(ibid., p.392) saw them training older people from the East Durham region in

video production skills as part of an extended project which ran from 1992-2001[36] (Young, 2004, p.61). In 1988, collective member Pat McCarthy spoke of the group as media activists: 'the media should belong to you, you should influence it.' …what we're saying to people is that it's an area you should be involved in. It's not something that should be done *at* you' (Fitzgerald 1988, p.164).

Leeds Animation Workshop

The Leeds Animation Workshop are a production company working to international broadcast standards (Wragg, 2018). Purposefully established in 1976 by a group of friends in order to create an awareness raising film about the need for suitable childcare options, the collective continues to run animation workshops for individuals and community members alongside their own production activities (ibid.). The Leeds Animation Workshop are a beacon of how collective workshop practices can be sustained and developed from an initial ground-up formation. With a lasting workshop practice which generates educationally and socially impactful films, the workshop research their productions in 'close collaboration' with 'interested parties and communities' (ibid.).

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[36] The project resulted in three films: *Eden Valley* (1995) (see Figure 11), *The Scar* (1997) and *Like Father* (2001) (Young, 2004, p.61).

Figure 12. Still from They Call Us Maids: The Domestic Workers' Story (2015) (Source: Leeds Animation Workshop).

One of their earliest films *Give us a Smile* (1983) tackles the effects of everyday sexual harassment on women via an illuminating yet empowering approach. Whilst the workshop's most recent film *They Call Us Maids: The Domestic Workers' Story* (2015) saw the collective consult with the Voice of Domestic Workers campaign group to reveal the marginalised narratives of female workers who are trapped within modern slavery (see Figure 12). This incredibly impactful award-winning[37] film has been screened internationally at film festivals.

Black Audio Filmmaking Collective

The Black Audio Filmmaking Collective (BAFC) fused Third Cinema (Marzano, 2014, no pagination) and artist film practices with 'testimonial

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[37] *They Call Us Maids: The Domestic Workers' Story* (2015) was awarded and shortlisted for the following: Best Short Screenplay Award-Winner at the Canadian Labour International Film Festival, 2016; Best Genre Short Film Award-Winner at the Monkey Bread Tree Film Awards, USA Summer 2016; Shortlisted for a Research in the Arts Innovation Award at the Arts and Humanities Research Council, BAFTA, London, November 2016 (Wragg, 2018).

memory' (Fisher, 2007, p.27) over a sixteen-year period. The collective of film and media makers initially formed as undergraduates at Portsmouth Polytechnic in 1982 (Eshun, 2007, p.79). Generating a polyphonic conversation through the layering of audio, narration, video and archive material, the BAFC disrupted the 'official narratives' (Fisher, 2007, p.27) which suppressed Black British and diasporic collective memories, testimonies, creative spaces and imaginary. Okwui Enwezor (2007, p.109) has spoken of the social and political environments and crises which lead to the urgency and formation of collectives in reaction to 'loss of space in social forums' and 'lack of participation in the development of historical process'[38].

Figure 13. Still from the Black Audio Filmmaking Collective's Handsworth Songs (1986). (Source: Smoking Dogs Films).

'Sustaining Alternative Film Cultures'

The Radical Film Network (RFN) was formed in 2013 with the ambition to unite the significant range of organisations and individuals involved in

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[38] Factors which resonate strongly with our own collective practices as we have convened as a safe space in the shadow of Brexit.

politically and aesthetically radical film in the UK and internationally (Zarins, 2015). The inaugural conference in 2015 brought together long-standing filmmakers and academics, alongside fledgling practitioners. Discussions, papers and workshops during the conference covered citizen journalism, the distribution and archival of activist films and methodologies for working collaboratively via collective practices. The AHRC funded project: Sustaining Alternative Film Cultures ran throughout 2016-2017 to explore the challenges faced by contemporary radical filmmakers and distributors. The project also investigated how our practices can be further developed and sustained in the current climate.

The network has begun a global conversation[39], devoted to the histories and developments of radical practices, proving an essential resource and community for DIY and activist film practitioners. Through participating in RFN conferences and events, I have benefited from forging links with filmmakers and academics who have decades of experience in developing participative projects. I was also able to reciprocate this dialogue through sharing my research and practice on interactive documentary[40]. It became quickly apparent that many in the network were looking for accessible and independent ways to establish records of action and to explore the tools which the open web has on offer for divergent communities of practice.

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[39] At the time of writing, the Radical Film Network has 133 affiliated organisations, spread across twenty-four countries and four continents.

[40] The short film *Second Home: Our Here* (2016), accompanied by a research statement was selected for publication in a radical special edition of *Screenworks* in association with the RFN. (see Zarins, 2017)

As I worked to reacquaint myself with film production at the beginning of my

PhD, I developed much of my early confidence as a practitioner through my

exposure to the examples of radical and oppositional filmmaking which were

shared at RFN conferences and events. I quickly identified the potential to

use the interactive documentary form as a tool to explore how collective

filmmaking principles might play out in both online and emplaced

environments.

The DV Revolution- Stepping Away from Professional Methods

During my MA in World Cinemas at the University of Leeds, I focused my

scholarship on independent Chinese cinemas and depictions of migrant

workers[41] in the early 2000's (Zarins, 2013, p.4). In my dissertation, I

analysed the temporal and phenomenological qualities of *West of the Tracks*

(*Tie Xi Qu)* (Wang Bing, 2003), a long-form documentary in which the

filmmaker drifts around the Tiexi district of Shenyang with his rented DV

camera. This film re-ignited my own drive to revisit my earlier photographic

and filmmaking practices, via the emancipatory potential of imperfect and

immersive auto-ethnographic modes of practice. Wang was able to

catalogue the topography of the district and capture the daily lives of the

migrant workforce over a three-year period in his monumental nine-hour

documentary, spanning three chapters: *Rust*, *Remnants* and *Rails* (Zarins,

2013, p.17).

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[41] Also known as the 'floating population' (*Liudong renkou*) (Zarins, 2013, p.4)

Figure 14. Still from West of the Tracks (Tie Xi Qu) (Wang, 2003). (Source West of the Tracks (Tie Xi Qu) DVD).

The 2000's marked a period in which some documentary filmmakers took a radical step away from established professional production methods and traditional film crews. Instead favouring independent approaches, with the emerging agile immediacy of DV cameras. In 2006, Wu Wenguang wrote of how his time spent with Fredrick Wiseman and Ozawa Shinsuke punctuated his 'dilemma' of trying to make creative, professional standard documentary films on a low budget. Wu (ibid., p.136) had become troubled by the 'conspicuous' nature of large crews wielding intimidating broadcast standard cameras. He sought more harmonious methods that would align with his authorial approach, which drifted outside of mainstream broadcasting norms.

At this time, Wu (ibid., p.138) stepped away from the industry standard kits he had been struggling to rent. Instead he began to use a handheld DV minicam. An act, which he recalls, distanced him from professional

filmmakers. He did so in personal pursuit, of what he refers to as the 'social work' of documentary making. Through which, one must grasp (as he did from Shinsuke Ogawa) that documentary is far more than simply film. The medium also resides in an openness to a relationship with everyday realities. A relationship, for Wu, which had become overshadowed by the monotony of professional protocols and financial constraints. Wu also spoke candidly on how the DV minicam changed his approach to his film about a traveling troupe of performers, *Jianghu: Life on the Road* (1999):

> I'm no longer able to disappear from the scene as soon as the filming is done, like the "professional documentary filmmaker" I used to be. I can't stop myself from keeping in touch with members of the troupe…From time to time I go stay with them in the tent or in their home villages, and each time I go I bring along my DV camera, filmmaking now and then as the mood strikes. I don't know if this material will ever be used, and at the moment I'm not particularly worried about it. I'm just following my own sensibilities. Following life itself. (Wu, 2006, p.139)

Aesthetically, DV filmmaking was to bridge some of the divide between amateur and professional documentary filmmakers. As independently focused practitioners, such as Wu, took up use of the same formats as the new DIY film culture. The advent of the DV revolution in both East Asia and the West represented a movement towards mobilised forms of filmmaking in a bid to capture previously hidden or underrepresented personal and collective realities (Wang, 2005, p.16).

Following the path of antecedent Direct Cinema and Cinema Vértié movements[42], Wu highlights the barriers which are present when conforming to professional production standards. In doing so he directly addresses the possibilities for domestically available lo-fi cameras to allow filmmakers to go out into the world. To be present in the moment with people and participate, even collaborate, to a level which is difficult from behind a full crew and large kit.

Figure 15. Digital photograph taken during Leeds Dérive event (May 2016). (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

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[42] The Direct Cinema and Cinema Vértié movements were developed in Canada and France respectively at the end of the 1950's. The entrance of mobile and lightweight cameras and 'synchronous sound' (Chanan, 2007, p.152) equipment allowed filmmakers to redefine both the technical, representational and philosophical realms of documentary making.

To up and go is the boldest statement of self-preservation. Laying claim to flânerie has always enabled women to reroute the paths they were expected to take and disrupt the lives they were expected to live.

Elkin, *A Tribute to Female Flâneurs,* 2016

The Dérive as Method

Linda Chiu-Han Lai (2007, p.205) has described the procedures of the 'Urban Generation' of independent DV film-makers in Chinese cinemas as being akin to the European practice of '*flânerie*' or the '*dérive*' ("drifting") (Zarins, 2013, p.48). Indeed, Wang Bing's three-year drift through and *with* the workers of the declining Tiexi district; Jia Zhangke's dramaturgic documentation of his journeys through the ruination of Datong and Fengjie; and Wu Wenguang's (2006, p.139) impetus to 'follow…life itself' are all in the spirit of the dérive.

In the original iteration, Charles Baudelaire's (1995) masculine and mythical (Livingstone and Gyarkye, 2017) Flâneur was later conceptualised through a Marxist lens by Walter Benjamin in his unfinished *Arcades Project* (1927-1940). Etymologically originating as a French noun, the Flâneur was an idle wanderer. Later to be encapsulated as a more active, poetic and unashamedly bourgeois explorer of the urban landscape. We can then see the transposition of the concept manifesting through reactionary artistic practices, such as Guy Debord's Situationist[43] 'Theory of the Dérive' (1956).

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[43] The Situationist International (SI), a group of intellectuals and artists founded by Debord in 1957, were influenced by the radical politics of Marx and a drive to integrate the theories and practice of art into everyday life (Matthews, 2005, no pagination).

Pertaining to a drift through the urban landscape, observing the attractions which one is drawn to. Debord also outlined the possibilities of collective practices within his theory, moving this concept somewhat away from the solo pursuit it was originally represented as.

More recently, the traditions of studying the city via psychogeographic methods have been revisited. The author Will Self (2007) has chronicled his global urban wanderings; yet again placing the acts of flânerie and drifting within a middle class, male paradigm. In a more recent welcome revelation, Lauren Elkin reclaims the act of flânerie as a feminine pursuit in *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City* (2017). Alongside Elkin, Olivia Laing discusses women as Flâneuse in her novel *The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* (2016) (Livingstone and Gyarkye, 2017).

Figure 16. Still from Jogtography Workshop GoPro footage, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Leading from this, I would like to suggest that it is possible to appropriate the positionality of the Flâneuse within the context of how one navigates practice-based research. Here I am setting the case for practice-based

research as an act of dérive: a collective wandering through experiential practices. This open and admittedly anachronistic method of approaching practice-based research can also be utilised as a way of mirroring the transience of co-creator migration experiences and the convening of cross-cultural communities.

Elkin (2016, no pagination) also highlights that, for women, flânerie can become 'testimony'. A method through which to overcome marginalisation. Linking back to Virginia Woolf, Elkin (ibid.) also touches on flânerie as citizenship, a practice for 'engaging with the world'. In *Our Here* the dérive has been revisited many times as a method for exploring our city and re-imagining/encountering some of the environments which we may or may not be familiar with within the cityscape.

Interim findings

In this literature review chapter I have surveyed and critically analysed existing literature and methods in order to further explore the issues raised in my research problem and question. I have identified the central concerns and methods of the form in order to understand how the existing production paradigms and methodologies have been informed and shaped. Through this close examination, I have also revealed the aspects of production, collaboration and potential for development in the form that have not previously been investigated, or which carry the potential to be further expanded upon. In part three, I have surveyed radical and DIY filmmaking

approaches and suggested areas for convergence with the interactive documentary project.

   My key interim findings from this literature review are as follows:

- The form has always been closely associated with developing representations of marginalised communities and narratives, in a bid to raise awareness and create social impact.

- Early publications and production methods mainly focused on the development of areas on completed platforms for participation via user generated content. As the form and corresponding scholarship have evolved, so too has methodology exploring community-based collaboration. Alongside my own research, a few promising articles and projects have more recently emerged which relate to the identified areas for development which I discuss in this research.

- Although, there are a few scholars and practitioners that are exploring alternative methodologies, there is an academic and media professional consensus that broadcasting standards and traditional documentary production methods remain integral and central to the form.

- The potential for collaborative production methods to be developed further through a dialogue with previous DIY, participatory and collective workshop movements have been raised in a number of publications, which have as yet only been explored by a small number of practitioners.

-There is an abundance of academic debate surrounding collaboration, authorship and previous alternative production methodologies, though there is very little practice being carried out to test and develop the expansion towards co-creation in all stages of production.

-Whilst there are calls for the publication of data and analysis on participant experience, my literature review reveals that only Kapur and Green et al. have published and developed practice-based research projects to contribute to knowledge in this area.

Through the development of this literature review I have evidenced that there are multiple calls from within the scholarship to expand production methodologies in order to empower community-based co-creators to represent themselves, using their own narratives and methods. Whilst there are a small number of projects and publications contributing to the development of knowledge in this area, there is still a requirement for further data and critical engagement with participant production experiences in order to create a body of research to support further analysis and evolution of the form.

In Chapter 3 I will provide a thick description of the initial workshop of the *Our Here* project to provide an example of how my iterative workshop practice began. I will then directly address the deficiency in data on participant production experiences through a critical analysis of my own

data, which was gathered during the process of co-creating the interactive

documentary project *Our Here*.

Chapter Two: Production Methods

Do what you can.

Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic,* 1851

Introduction

This chapter sets out the trajectory of the collective practice which was developed through the process of creating *Our Here*. As Gall (2016, p.83) also experienced within the context of collective practice-based research, solo authoring written accounts of the experiences and outputs can be problematic. Attempting to gauge the impacts of co-creation when it was predominantly 'situated within a live participatory context' (ibid.) is challenging from a methodological perspective[1]. In this chapter I provide an analysis of the key areas of innovation and supporting data in order to evidence my contribution to knowledge.

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[1] An analysis of impact which considers both the formative and summative feedback provided by co-creators is featured in the concluding chapter.

Practice Background

After engaging in only fleeting periods of practice since my undergraduate degree in 2007, this project has allowed me to both revisit filmmaking and approach interactive documentary as a newcomer. During my first degree, I developed my skills in 35mm photography. Spending most of those three years in the darkroom processing my work. Throughout the early stages of my practice, I also used newly available negative scanners to convert analogue negatives into digital images and construct digital essay films from this process (see Figure 17). I experimented with various post-production techniques, using early versions of Photoshop and Final Cut Pro. The latter of which I self-taught, using a printed manual, in the days pre-dating YouTube tutorials. It was through this early period of my development as a practitioner that I realised the potential in building a transdisciplinary practice between convergent analogue and digital forms.

Figure 17. Still from Screen Seven (2007). (Source: Kelly Zarins).

Alongside this interest, I always maintained a commitment to using the equipment that was readily available to me; be it domestic or professional-level. Whilst many in my undergraduate cohort were striving to achieve professionally recognisable results, using medium format cameras from the university stores. I instead chose to work with my own basic kit, comprising of a Pentax P30 35mm SLR camera. Left to me by my father who had recently passed and a pre-owned Canon 1NRS 35mm SLR. I had also taken to using a handheld Canon DV camcorder to digitise my photographic prints and create gestures of movement within the frame[2]. Using the equipment available to me gave me a sense of ownership and confidence over the processes of learning and creating. This was to become a methodology that I would continue to engage with during my PhD research.

Closures- Early Experiments with Klynt

As someone who has never restricted their interest toward mastering one mode of practice, I was keen to create a space where my transdisciplinary and imperfect approach could impact the interactive documentary form. Before launching *Our Here*, I spent the early stages of my PhD developing and revisiting my personal filmmaking practice. I attended film production workshops at Leeds Trinity University and began self-directed learning on Adobe CC, WordPress and the Klynt interactive editing and publishing application.

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[2] My inspiration for this technique was ignited by Marker's inclusion of the rostrum camera, operated by Jean-Pierre Sudre in *La Jetée* (1962).
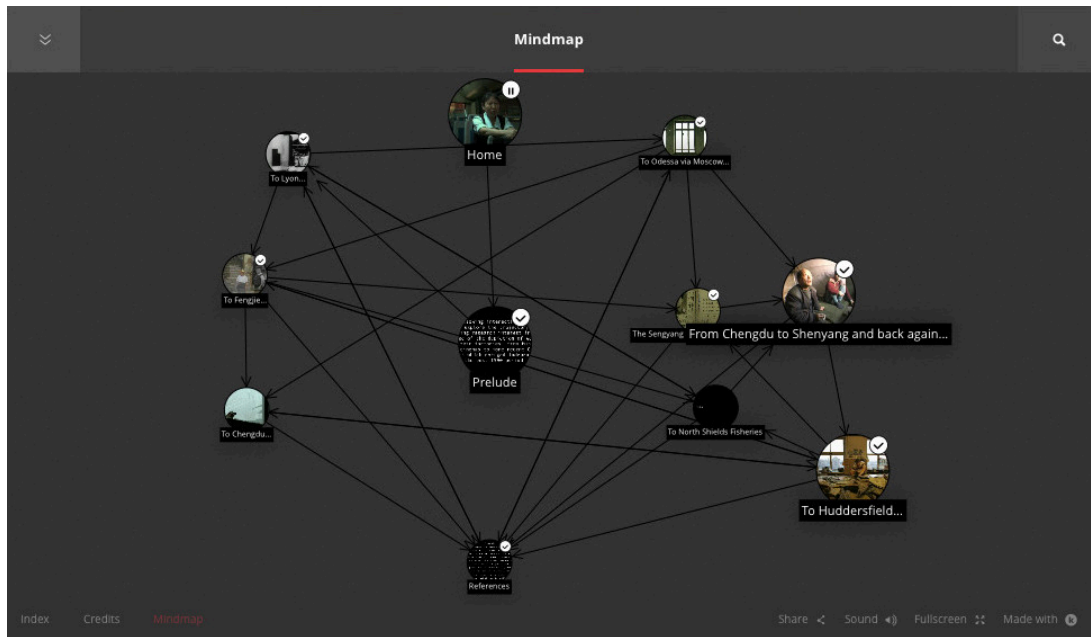
Figure 18. Mindmap screen from Klynt film Closures (2015). (Source: Kelly Zarins).

At this time, I began production on my first interactive documentary *Closures* (see Figure 18). Working on Klynt and WordPress to compound and practice the skills I was developing. I utilised the production experience of *Closures* to assess the process of building a simple interactive documentary as both a solo, and fledgling practitioner. The internationally recognised projects which I had begun to analyse, such as Katerina Cizek's multi-project *Highrise* series (2010-2015) and *Question Bridge* (2014), had been developed by experienced interdisciplinary teams of producers, filmmakers and web developers. Working on *Closures* I was keen to locate the affordances that an application such as Klynt could offer small-scale projects, which are built from the ground-up, with no experienced practitioners on-board.

I began to locate gaps in the production ecology of the interactive documentary form. Areas and ideas of where I anticipated that grassroots, DIY approaches could be put into practice:

-An entire interactive documentary made using DIY content.

-An interactive documentary formed via transmedia storytelling, with different levels of content distributed across pre-existing commercial and community platforms[3].

-The introduction of transdisciplinary mediums/medias, other than the predominant use of linear traditional documentary filmmaking.

-An interactive documentary lead by co-creator design.

-Co-editing on non-linear software and applications to build a body of content.

-An interactive documentary which has the capability to embrace visual shifts and re-workings as part of its design, in-line with an open and evolving workshop practice.

The dialogue of my research has been concerned with seeding further enquiry into the imperfect and participatory affordances of interactivity. With a view towards moving the conversations surrounding practice towards a collective approach with citizen co-creators. I sought to produce a practice-based research project, through which a collaborative interactivity was enabled and evolving across all stages of the production process.

My solo project *Closures* brought to the fore the possibilities to gain new confidence as a practitioner through the process of creating an interactive documentary. *Closures* builds on my previous practice and scholarship surrounding essay and compilation film forms, and the phenomenological

convergence between still and moving images on screen. The work was also a way of self-publishing the central findings of my Master's research, which highlighted the dialogues between cinematic depictions of factory workers across early European and independent East-Asian cinemas. To create each short chapter within *Closures*, I remixed video and sound abstracts from the films which I had discussed in my dissertation (see Figure 19). I re-worked this media in the non-linear editing suite to accompany the voice-over narration which I had developed from my original text[4].

Figure 19. Screenshot of the Closures (2015) Home Screen. (Source: Kelly Zarins).

I quickly began to grasp the assemblage capabilities of Klynt as an application which could be used to reveal, interpret and re-connect diverse and disparate narrative moments into synthesised, non-linear dialogues. I also noted that this method of building-up and mapping-out media artefacts and narrative segments could be done gradually, with the potential to add

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[4] The "remix" culture has become a key component in bringing an imperfect synthesis to digital interactivity and user-generated content (see Mark Amerika's *Remixthebook*, 2011; see Brett Gaylor's *RIP: A Remix Manifesto*, 2009).

more media, as and when it was created. This gave rise to the possibility for me to create "feature length" projects (and beyond), over a gradual period. Rather than working towards a pre-designed, authored work, I could instead focus on my central concern of establishing a workshop practice with a convened community of co-creators. I was interested in both inviting and encouraging imperfection though an open, conversational process. Centred around the evolution of co-learning and co-creation.

Our Here: Background to the Practice

As touched on in Chapter One, in the five years prior to this PhD research period, I worked, studied and socialised with international students and members of staff at the University of Leeds. Working at a language centre, I specialised in immigration support, HE admissions and developing support and engagement frameworks for international students. During this time I also completed an MA in World Cinemas, during which I studied alongside and formed friendships with many international students.

I have always been drawn to cultures and experiences of migration as my own family heritage, in part, is rooted in a history of displacement. Knowing very little of my Grandpa Anton's own forced displacement story, I have often sought resonance and connection through vicarious experiences and narratives of immigration. During this PhD, I have explored my own intentionality and positionality, in terms of how my cultural identity is informed by my family heritage and my belongingness within an international

community. Emersion in this creative project has allowed me to develop further insights into the experiences and challenges of migration.

Prior to being awarded my PhD scholarship by Leeds Trinity University, the original concept behind what was to become *Our Here* was very humble. I had intended to make a short film about intercultural exchange surrounding the themes of cooking and friendship. When I heard that Leeds Trinity University were looking to facilitate interactive documentary production, I became keen to see how I could expand the project through a transdisciplinary collaborative approach. From my early research into the interactive documentary form, I recognised the opportunities for new findings which my auto-ethnographic positionality could perhaps present. I identified several key methodological sites for investigation: collective workshop practices, co-creation from the ground-up and transdisciplinary and imperfect production methods.

During the launch period of *Our Here*, my primary focus was to build a collective interactive documentary project. I looked to the previous practice and scholarship surrounding the form for inspiration and to locate gaps, which a new body of work and research could explore and address. The motivations for making *Our Here* differed to *Closures*. I viewed the non-linear, experimental practice of making *Closures* as one which was entirely self-authored. As such I had developed a clear vision of how I wanted the work to look and navigate. Alternatively, *Our Here* is a collective project, hence I avoided bringing my personal preferences into our discussions and workshops. It was my aim for the project to be designed and shaped as

much as possible by the collective experience. I did however bring my intentionality to adopt underpinning theoretical frameworks surrounding imperfection and social capital, in order to provide an emancipatory workshop environment for co-creators.

I had been exposed to other collaborative interactive documentaries made by documentary filmmakers, such as Elaine McMillion Sheldon's *Hollow* (2013). Whilst these works can be navigated in a non-linear way, through which the interactor selects their own path and navigates the database style content. The film clips they are navigating all prescribe to a traditional linear documentary format (see Figure 20). The linearity of these short films is produced via the established techniques of documentary filmmaking. Eliciting narrative using interviews, recollections, alongside small amounts of content which has been contributed by citizen co-creators.

Figure 20. Still from Hollow (2013). (Source: Hollow, 2013).

This style of professional documentary filmmaking, combined with sections of DIY co-creator media, seamlessly blends professional documentary practices with vernacular forms of media making. The seamless aesthetic nature of such projects emanates from high-end bespoke websites, produced by professional web-developers. As a transdisciplinary practitioner from an arts background, I have to be honest here that at first, I felt out of my depth at the prospect of building an interactive documentary without a team of experienced media practitioners. During the first year of my PhD I considered where the untrained, yet experienced creatives, such as myself, were to situate their practices within the non-linear, experimental and collaborative possibilities of the form.

Background to the Collective

My good friend Roya Alimalayeri is just one of the many women who inspired me to develop *Our Here* into the project it became. An Iranian former international student, Roya now lectures in Linguistics and English Language and is the headmistress of Leeds Persian school in her free time. A position she holds on a voluntary basis. Roya is also an active photo-blogger, sharing her creative accounts of life and travels in Leeds, Europe and Iran on Instagram. Many of the co-creators in our collective lead similar busy lives, through which they are developing their careers and social connections in the city.

Figure 21. Roya's self-portrait taken during Leeds Dérive, 2016. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

It is for this very reason that *Our Here* embraces a workshop structure which allows for varying levels of participation and co-creation. In recognition that our collective already had important roles and commitments within their own long-standing community groups. *Our Here* also offers self-reflexive methods for women to explore their creativity within an emerging collective practice, whilst gaining new, and developing existing skills and confidences through activities they may previously have found little time for. Rather than creating a framework which focuses on the community groups they are already involved with, it became my personal aim to invite our informal network together: creating connections through friendship, creative connection (see Gauntlett, 2011) and the shared experiences of everyday life in our city and beyond.

The flexible nature of our collective also echoes the transience of migration; offering some co-creators a method through which to leave their digital and personal mark on the city before they move away. Transience is a key part of life in international communities, one I have become very familiar with myself over the years of welcoming new acquaintances and navigating how to maintain contact with friends who relocate. In a way, *Our Here* is a reaction to this personal experience and the real-world situation of witnessing your circle of friends spreading outwards globally, due to many factors, be they personal, career related, or down to the tightening limitations of immigration regulations.

Outline of Practice Context

Our Here posits that both a methodological and aesthetic *imperfect interactivity* can be created via everyday creativity and DIY methods. I will now further clarify the areas through which our practices explore imperfect methods:

-The absence of media professionals (filmmakers, web developers), in lieu of a convened community of co-creators. This "absence" marks a significant departure towards a transformational, DIY iteration of interactivity which has not previously seen a full exploration within interactive documentary production.

-Collective experimentation within a fully open transdisciplinary methodology. Shaped by co-creators via conversation and collaboration workshops.

-A production methodology which seeks and is driven by an openness and acceptance of new experiential factors (socio-political, methodological, aesthetic) throughout the duration of the project. In essence, this methodology seeks to remain engaged in, and reflect a fluid and evolving dialogue between co-creators.

-A production methodology which is based on a framework that invites and facilitates flexible co-learning and co-creation.

Issues such as commitment to production values and techno-fetishism can be a source of limitation, a barrier between professional film and media makers and citizen co-creators. These co-creation relationships are present throughout the interactive documentary form. However, can these potential limitations be overcome, or indeed disbanded in order to re-envisage collaborations with citizen co-creators?

In order for this to happen, for citizen co-creators to shape the design of the interactive documentary, authorial control would have to be relinquished and make way for an *imperfect interactivity*. One in which pre-production meetings are open discussions through which to collectively decide on the themes and potential outcomes of the project. Moreover, the methods used to build the media and platform would need to embrace transdisciplinarity

and imperfection, in order to remain open to the different levels of confidence and the technical skills of the co-creators.

What I am suggesting, and what we as a collective have practiced for over three years, is of course not for everyone. However, as a form, the interactive documentary is a site for collaboration, activism and openness. *Our Here* puts forward that everyday creativity and imperfect practices can provide an expansion of how collaboration is realised within the form. This *imperfect interactivity* can open the dialogue further between DIY filmmaking and transmedia storytelling, whilst also allowing for other methods to make an entrance into the form. Through an openness to everyday creative acts and transdisciplinarity as modes of expression on interactive projects, media practitioners can enable citizen co-creators to shape the ownership, design, narrative and platform(s) of projects.

During the launch period of *Our Here*, I revised my own learning on the fundamentals of digital filmmaking and photography after a considerable break in my practice. I also established new skills on Klynt, which is an editing and publishing application for interactive storytelling[5]; alongside developing web design skills on WordPress. Moreover, there were methodological areas which I had no previous experience of, including practice-based research methods and co-creation practices.

Methods in Context

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[5] See (Klynt, 2018)

Of the key areas I identified, collective workshop practice was my central

focus for building an interactive documentary project with a novel approach

towards collaboration. I could see that many projects had used workshops

as a method when working with communities[6]. However, I wanted to try and

take this method in a new direction: building collective workshopping in as

the *primary* method for production. The Connected Communities, Pararchive

project provided early inspiration. The project implemented a co-constructed

practice-based research framework, through which to co-produce an entirely

new community-designed storytelling archive and research platform from the

ground-up. The team behind Pararchive placed sustainable co-creation at

the forefront of their methodology. Through planning in key workshops with

community-partners throughout the life-cycle of the project; in order to

enable community groups to shape the design and functionality of the

platform.

I also formed links with local practitioners from DIY filmmaking and collective

workshops through my affiliation with the Radical Film Network. Sharon

Hooper (formally a member of Vera Media), has shared her experiences of

feminist collective filmmaking practices during one of our workshops. In

2015, I was also fortunate to discuss methods for sustaining collective

workshop practices with Terry Wragg and Jo Dunn of the Leeds Animation

Workshop (1976 to present) at their long-established studios in Harehills,

Leeds. Drawing together these links in practice between community

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[6] For example, Katerina Cizek held community workshop during the production of the
Highrise project. (See Cizek [no date] *Interview with Collabdocs*)

storytelling, collective workshop practices and DIY filmmaking, I began to map out a methodological framework.

My initial aim for the project was to create various spaces, both online and embodied, in which a collective of women could design and co-create an interactive storytelling project. My personal drive was to produce a visual storytelling project with the women who had inspired me for many years. I was also eager to re-establish my own filmmaking practice after a ten-year hiatus. However, I had no distinct plans for how the project would look, only the concept that I wanted to co-create a multi-vocal work. One which would capture the layering of cross-cultural conversations and narratives which I experienced and appreciated as part of my daily life.

I suggested the name Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective the launch of the project. Speaking with co-creators during those early workshops, it was felt that this name was suitable to describe our collective aims and activities at that stage. Although we have continued to co-create short films, our practices have also developed to include material-based forms and digitally interactive versions of these forms. The main project title *Our Here* is derived from a page in our first zine; created by a (at the time newly arrived) Japanese student, Sayaka Furumoto (see Figure 22).

Figure 22. Sayaka Furumoto's zine page from which Our Here takes its title. (Source: The Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective, 2018).

Analysis of Key Innovations and Supporting Data

In this section I will discuss key pieces of data which have emerged through my iterative workshop process. I will draw upon data from short documentary films, recorded project design and production conversations with co-creators, and the paper-based and interactive zines which were also created during the cycles of our evolving praxis. Through my analysis of this data, I will evidence the unique areas of innovation and contributions to knowledge which resulted, whilst bringing in key concepts from the literature and methods discussed in my literature review to contextualise my contributions.

Through the development of a collective practice, I have empowered co-creators with the authorial agency and open-access to recording equipment to be fully active stakeholders in the early stages of project design and production. Throughout this section, I will provide data to suggest that what is needed to address the low uptake of citizen collaboration on interactive documentary projects (see Nash 2014a), is a new *inclusive* production methodology. I will demonstrate that my innovative methodology empowers communities and citizens to shape the aesthetics, production methods and overall design of projects which represent their own lived experiences.

1.Testing Existing Production Paradigms: Creating Opportunities for Expansion and Disruption

In order to disrupt and move beyond traditional documentary production methods, I began by testing these existing methods from within the early context of my own iterative practice. During the first two workshops, I experimented with a mixture of participatory and traditional documentary film production methods. This approach led to the co-creation of two short films which serve to document how a new production methodology can begin to emerge through iterative praxis.

Figure 23. Group photograph taken at the Our Here launch workshop. (Source: Sam Toolsie, 2015).

The media created during our first two workshops provided two audio-visual data sets and mapped transcriptions from which I analysed and extracted key themes emerging from our conversations surrounding the lived experience of international women in Leeds. These themes were then agreed upon collectively and shaped the focus of future workshops. Following on from the first workshop, I developed two qualitative surveys in order to gather primary data on co-creator experiences of the workshop and how they envisaged their involvement in the design and production of the project going forward. As I analyse key pieces of data to reveal the main areas of innovation which emerged from the iterative workshop process, I will also refer back to relevant results from these two surveys as a means of demonstrating how co-creator responses directly shaped the design and production of the project going forward.

During the first two workshops, two members of the student film production team from Trinity Vision at Leeds Trinity University captured rushes using broadcast standard equipment. This professional standard footage captures the playful mood of the co-creators as they record one another with handheld cameras and as they begin to take part fully in documenting the ideas and stories under collective discussion. This professional footage also captures more focused moments in which workshop attendees are diligently and steadily filming a poetry reading from co-creator Nana-Essi. Rather than forming the main content for the remainder of the project, as seen in other collaborative interactive documentaries such as *Hollow* (2013) and *Out My Window* (2010), this professional footage is only called upon during two workshops in order to document the co-creators' first interactions with the audio-visual equipment.

This early workshop data is of great significance as it provides much called for insights into how community co-creators interact organically and of their own agency with audio-visual equipment. Answering Sandra Gaudenzi's (2014) call for consideration into what strategies can be used to empower collaboration, this data provides findings on how community co-creators can 'engage in… self representation' (ibid. p.143) and collaborate in the conceptual stages of a project. During the early workshops, and indeed throughout the following nineteen workshop iterations, I ensured that a variety of entry-level and broadcast standard recording equipment was available for co-creators to use. In addition, I made it my intrinsic goal to avoid providing direction to suggest what co-creators should film or create. I

instead introduced examples of how methods and recording devices had
previously been used in existing projects, both inside and outside of the
interactive documentary form. A co-creator response taken from a qualitative
survey after our first workshop, along with conversations I had with co-
creators, provided an early insight into how this collective (as opposed to
authorial) approach was a source of some understandable uncertainty:

Q2

Were my descriptions of the project/collective, it's possible goals and the
plan going forward, clear enough?

Mostly, yes! There were some grey areas as well.
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

Question and co-creator response to Launch Workshop Feedback survey. March 2015.

Alice McIntyre (2008, no pagination) has written accounts of the challenges
of collaborating within 'processes of change' in Participatory Action
Research. My early experiences of sharing the methodologies of PAR and
collective practices with co-creators lead to some uncertainty in terms of
project goals and the dynamics and roles within a collective practice. It took
some time for all of us, as newcomers to PAR and collective practice to
embrace and see the potential in the unexpected, and how an iterative
approach can lead to stronger enactments of agency, change and feelings
of empowerment (ibid.). The survey response and further conversations with

co-creators highlighted that I needed to ensure that my intentions to offer a collective approach towards production and design were clarified during each iteration of the project. I found David Gauntlett's (2011) accessible descriptions of how everyday creativity and social connection are significantly more valuable to community-based projects than aiming to replicate professional aesthetics and design incredibly useful throughout the project.

In order to experiment with participatory filmmaking methods in our early workshops, entry-level audio-visual recording devices were available for co-creators to use. A number of co-creators opted to use these devices to create their own representations of the workshop activities and conversations. It was my aim for co-creators to identify their own chosen methods during the project. With this in mind, I did not emphasise any requirement for co-creators to use the audio-visual equipment. It was simply available to them, should they wish to experiment with it. In a later section of this chapter, I analyse this approach in relation to how my own positionality as a creative practitioner and co-creator, rather than director or central author was both challenging, and yet key to the development of data and knowledge surrounding a new methodology for inclusive practice.

Using professional and DIY methods tandemly in these founding workshops produced aesthetically diverse sets of audio-visual data, which were then used in the development of our collaborative long-form co-editing process. In the two short films that chronicle the conversations and experimental

production methods trailed during our early workshops, the co-creator and broadcast standard footage appear together to offer valuable insights into early co-creator project design and production experiences. Audio-visual data from our third workshop offers further evidence as to how co-creator agency in our emerging production methods was innovated upon significantly at this stage. I will now analyse data from these first three workshops below, in order to demonstrate the early progression of our innovative production methodology.

Figure 24. Ally documenting our launch event in 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

The image above is a still taken from footage shot by a co-creator during our launch workshop. This still demonstrates how professional documentation of this workshop and the visibility of broadcast standard audio-visual equipment was low-key and kept to a minimum. Appearing in the background of the still above, second from the left is Ally Thornton, the Co-ordinator of Trinity Vision. Ally was invited to attend the workshop to document our activities and conversations. Ally used a professional-level DSLR camera to capture photography, videos, and sound of the event.

During this workshop, broadcast standard equipment was not made

available to co-creators. I instead opted to offer a range of entry-level

cameras and sound recording devices to ensure that accessible options

were available for co-creators who were new to filmmaking. When planning

the workshop, I discussed equipment choices with Ally and we agreed that

using a small DLSR would enable her positionality as a professional

documentarian to be less of a dominating presence. When asked if they

were comfortable being filmed during the launch workshop in the feedback

survey, all co-creators responded 'yes', with one adding that they felt it was

'unobtrusive' (Appendix A.1). This intentionality and consideration of

levelling production hierarchy links to Wu Wenguang's (2006, p.136) findings

surrounding the intimidating nature of large production crews and equipment

(see pages 112-113 for further discussion on this).

Figure 25. Co-creators watch a short introductory film which I made at our launch workshop in 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

In a further bid to introduce collective dynamics and imperfect production

processes to the co-creators, I made a short introductory film for the project.

This film was significant because it was one of the first short films I made after a ten-year hiatus in filmmaking, and so it allowed me to be vulnerable in front of the co-creators and demonstrated that I was going to be learning *with* them, developing my own skills and confidence also. The short featured photographs and videos from my personal archives, which depicted my own life as part of an international community in Leeds. I sought permission from the friends featured in the personal media to show examples of my own place within this community, alongside them and sharing in a larger generational history of migration to the UK. This short film also enabled me to reveal my shared auto-ethnographic positionality and approach on board the project, both as a third-generation migrant and a co-learner of film production.
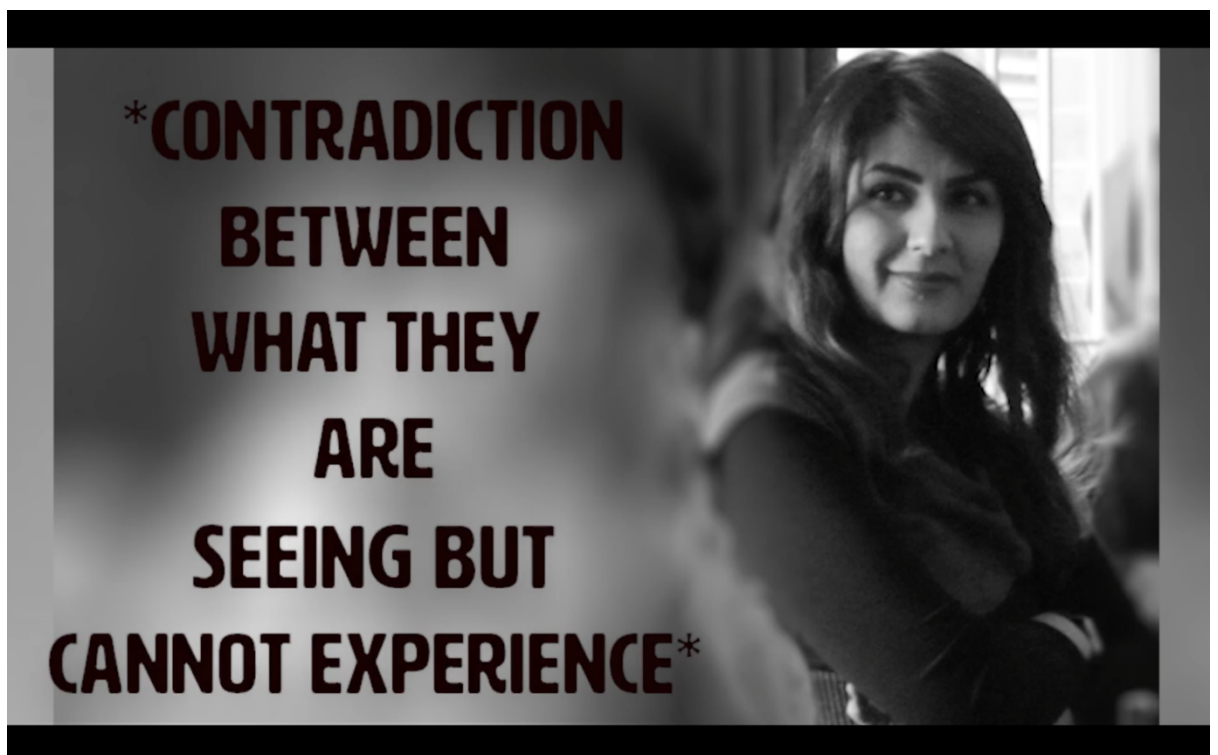
Figure 26. A still from the short film International Women's Day 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Lastly, I have included a still from our short film *International Women's Day 2015*. The film shares significant moments of conversation and production methods from our first workshop. The still above features one of Ally's photographs and titles have been added in post-production to highlight key quotes from co-creator's during the event. Below I include a full transcript of this co-creator's discussion surrounding her call to consider the inclusion of marginalised women from Middle-Eastern backgrounds in our project:

'Because the difference between men and women is that men are already having a different life. So, when they move to another country, to a different culture, they are not experiencing that big environment, because they already had that life, those freedoms and everything. For women, the difference is that they are coming from a very limited, very restricted area. So, they are moving here. They are seeing all these types of freedom and everything, but because they are still limited to that family, there is some kind of contradiction between what they are seeing, what they are having, but what they cannot experience. They cannot practice what they are entitled to'.

The film ends with this testimony from co-creator Roya and her wishes that our project can be inclusive and welcome women who are experiencing this marginalisation. This still and transcription evidence the significance of co-creator conversations in the setting of project themes, priorities, and expectations for impact. This excerpt from the launch workshop demonstrates what Alice McIntyre (2008, no pagination) refers to as 'critical questioning' and 'a determination to take action about issues under

exploration', which form key elements of focused and meaningful self-reflection in autoethnographic research and PAR.

This suggested area of action and inclusion was enacted in our next workshop. Two new co-creators joined the workshop, which was held at the University of Leeds with staff and students from the Language Centre, my former workplace. The new co-creators we welcomed were international students, newly arrived in the UK and Leeds. One of the co-creators Aala was from Oman and shared her recent experience of travelling outside of her home country for the first time and, significantly, the journey had been without her designated male chaperone due to a visa situation.

The central focus of this workshop was informed by the positive survey feedback surrounding the community storytelling and conversational aspects of the launch workshop (see Appendix A.1). I would also reflect here that the act of documenting a collective conversation disrupts the dynamics of traditional ethnographic documentary interview techniques in which the documentarian takes authorial control of the narrative via the questions they decide upon. In light of this, our second workshop was based around further opportunities to create a space for conversations between women with diverse migration experiences and heritage.

Ally, the Coordinator of Trinity Vision, joined us again for this workshop to document our conversations and production methods. I had begun to learn how to use broadcast standard camera systems and sound recording as part of the learning which was open to me at Leeds Trinity University. In light

of this, I asked Ally to bring some of the larger broadcast equipment to the workshop to showcase to co-creators, as an option for them to learn about and use in their own documentary films on the project. Entry-level cameras were available again; however, for this workshop I also introduced the option of using the broadcast cameras to co-creators and explained that I was learning how to use them. In a continued effort to avoid a production skills hierarchy, Ally also invited a degree student to join her who was learning sound recording for film.

Aala from Oman showed an interest in the broadcast camera as she had previously studied media. She was uncertain about getting up to use the camera in the workshop. However, I reassured her that I had only used it once myself. In handheld camera footage filmed by her friend Assel, the co-creator can be seen as she moves the camera to film a conversation surrounding future production planning as it takes place. We were discussing possible filming locations and what length co-creator films might be, depending on how much they wanted to discuss. Her interaction with the broadcast camera is documented in both the footage she captured as she was using the camera, and the footage recorded by her friend.

Figure 27. A still from the short film Conversation Club 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

This transcript from our discussion surrounding the length of our future films provides important data and insights into how community co-creators can challenge conceptual authorship (see Gaudenzi, 2014). I was asking co-creators how long they thought their own films in the project might be, in order to open up a conversation surrounding production. I had suggested one-minute films to make the option more accessible to co-creators who did not have much free time to volunteer, in reference to the survey results (see

Appendix A.1.1). One co-creator replied: 'one minute is so short. I think it's easier for someone who hasn't been here for long'. We went on to discuss this further and also think about filming locations in the city.

Another co-creator contributed suggestions surrounding how we could bring social media into the project, which was her preferred production method:

'if you want to document the life of people maybe you can ask them to have a SnapChat for one day? Especially the international students. They always have these recordings about their life here and send it to their families'

I replied with encouragement and some general questions surrounding how SnapChat works, as I was not familiar with the application at the time: 'I wonder how you would gather SnapChat? Would it be screen shots from your phone?'. The co-creator responded and suggested that people could perhaps use their own phones on the project, rather than the camera equipment I was offering[7]. The conversation continued in depth surrounding the design and navigation structure that our interactive documentary could take. During this part of the workshop conversation, some co-creators began to use the collective noun 'we' to describe future production plans. In this workshop our conversation took on the form of a production meeting. I was able to share my research aims: to innovate with co-editing and for co-creators to shape the methods and the design of the project, in addition to creating media together.

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[7] SnapChat was tried out by a few co-creators but we encountered difficulties in publishing the media on our website. However, co-creators did make good use of their own devices and methods. In Abbey Dash a co-creator uses her mobile phone to film and an Instagram account was set up which co-creators used to upload their photos and short blogs to.

Figure 28. A still from the short film Conversation Club, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

This second film alongside our launch event film could be considered as meta documentaries in their transparent depiction of the entire workshop activity: including the recording equipment used by both the production team and the co-creators. In both films we witness a reversal of ethnographic methods which traditionally document subjects in their own environment; here, this paradigm is shifted to gather audio visual data on missing representations of co-creator production experiences. The participatory methods represented in these two films also evidence an expansion, as the co-creator footage is in no way directed or conceptually shaped by a central author. Instead the footage is playful, evidencing the co-creators enacting their own agenda in their experimentation with recording equipment.

Figure 29. A still taken from the rushes of the short film Out of the UK, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Our third workshop was a radical departure from the first two, which were used to set the project themes and gather feedback data from co-creators on early production experiences and their interests going forward. For our third iteration, we responded as a filmmaking collective to a fellow co-creator request to document their final day in the UK. Due to tightening visa restrictions, the co-creator Nathalie was forced to return to her home country of Taiwan. I had just learnt how to use broadcast standard cameras and sound equipment. In addition, one of our co-creators Roya had expressed an interest in learning production and post-production skills on our first fully co-created documentary short.

Several areas of key innovation were developed during this iteration, some of which were directly informed by the wishes expressed by co-creators in the earlier quantitative surveys I had carried out. *Out of the UK* offers audio-visual data on what interactive documentary content looks like when it is fully co-created by newcomers to broadcast standard production methods.

During the pre-production stages of making *Out of the UK*, I met with

Nathalie and I asked her what she wanted to discuss and represent in her

film. Together, we developed some prompts that she would like to use for an

informal discussion during our filming.

The inclusion of Nathalie's personal photographs in the film directly

addresses the survey results from Appendix A.1 to include 'personal images

of 'her Leeds' and 'her home', in addition to a personal narrative running

over the visual components of the film'. As the results from Appendix A.1.1

reveal, a majority of co-creators were interested in developing new

filmmaking and editing skills. *Out of the UK* represents the enactment of

these co-creator wishes as pre-production, filmmaking, sound engineering,

use of personal media and co-editing were all included during this iteration.

In addition, co-creators had also expressed an interest in creating a blog

(ibid.) and as featured in the film, upon her return to Taiwan, Nathalie

remained involved in the conversation and post-production by writing her

own blog post to update the collective on her reflections of leaving the UK.

The inclusion of personal media in this film is of particular significance as it

is also discussed by Nathalie in the film. She shares a reflection of her own

experiences of photography as a way of documenting her life in Leeds.

Developing this autoethnographic element further, some photographs and

video footage which I had taken, years before making *Out of the UK* at an

event we had attended together was included in the final edit of the film. The

footage illustrates the Nathalie's discussion of her involvement with the local

swing dancing community and a personal representation of our friendship.

During the film Nathalie also shares her reflections on our project. She talks philosophically about the collective experience of being an international woman in Leeds. Alongside this part of the discussion, we included footage from the launch workshop to continue the visual collective dialogue into this iteration.

Nathalie suggests that the project: 'is not a fixed script story' and that 'there is no certainty of what is happening next'. This reflection links strongly to my rationale for developing a methodology of sustained co-creation; one in which co-creators are involved throughout the entire project. This comment also provides evidence as to why it was crucial for the collaboration options in the project to be flexible, inclusive, and open to the transitions and challenges which we would all face in the future.

Nathalie remained active in the co-creation process, despite being forced to return to Taiwan. Key passages from her blog post are included at the end of the film. Nathalie shares her deeply personal experience of being forced out of the UK and having to leave behind her life and friends. She shares the reality of how difficult it is to live in the UK as an international student and immigrant, in light of the tough migration procedures and how they impacted her sense of safety and belonging. In a critical 'questioning and unveiling' (Hughes and Pennington, 2017) of her experiences, Nathalie reflects that: 'I really put a great deal of effort to establish a decent life in the UK…No words can describe how depressing it is to drop everything behind and return home like a loser.' On life back in Taiwan, she adds 'I don't need to try so hard to

behave like a "good" immigrant in order to be accepted by local people. I can

enter the border without being demanded to give finger prints like a criminal.'

Figure 30. A photograph taken during the filming of Out of the UK, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

As the data discussed throughout this chapter reveals, one of the central

ways in which this project disrupted existing production paradigms was in

the genre-agnostic approach of the ten documentary shorts which were co-

created. Through analysing the genre and format conventions of each short

film, it is possible to trace the innovation at each iteration of the praxis. In

total, the project resulted in four meta documentaries which chronicle our

methodology as it evolved through the process of co-creation. We also

produced four short co-created personal documentaries which tested out

more traditional documentary methods, including: event documentation,

interviews, cut aways, narrative use of photography, the Ken Burns effect,

and title screens to provide information. Two non-linear art films were also created, in a direct representation of our experimentation with radical production methods.

The cyclical, experimental process of Participatory Action Research has been described as 'a theory of possibility rather than a theory of predictability (Wadsworth, 1998), providing the freedom required to critique and move beyond existing practice paradigms. Our experimentation with multiple documentary genres makes *Our Here* a genre-defying project. Each iteration emerged organically from conversation, collective pre- and post-production. We allowed each iteration to take on a format and genre as part of our process-over product methodology. There were no pre-conceived ideas about how each iteration would present aesthetically. My aim could be described as radical: to remain open to what each iteration would reveal in terms of thematic development for the project, and innovation towards the expansion of a collective methodology.

Mandy Rose (2014, p.206) has made insightful suggestions surrounding how professional and participatory media are presented in the interactive documentary form. Rose's suggestion that there needs to be a differentiation between the two types of content, in order to evidence the 'self-direction' of participants, does go some way to addressing existing limitations surrounding authorship and representation. However, as my research demonstrates, more inclusive and accessible production methods can empower beyond participation and into a fully realised co-creation. Here I am referring to a project and production design in which co-creator content

and collective authorial voices can become the dominant representations in the form, as opposed to a tokenistic or segregated set of audio-visual content.

Hollow (2013) made significant ground in the inclusion of substantial co-creator content and monthly participatory workshops which enabled co-creators to somewhat influence thematic structures of the project and learn basic media production skills (Flynn, no date). Co-creator made shorts were featured *amongst* professionally filmed shorts on the final documentary platform, rather than being relegated to their own User Generated Content area, as seen in *Out My Window* (2010). One of the trailers for *Hollow* (2013) features meta documentary style professionally shot footage of a young co-creator using a handheld camera and headphones to film a conversation between local residents.

Figure 31. A still from a trailer for the interactive documentary Hollow, 2014. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XhbgcKJsc8 (Source: Hollow).

In a presentation at Magnum Foundation's 2014 PhotoEx symposium, project creator Elaine McMillion Sheldon describes her intentions to concentrate on community storytelling over 'teaching form' (Magnum Foundation, 2014) in her community participation workshops. McMillion also highlights how empowering co-creators with the equipment and skills to film auto-ethnographically within their own community reveals valuable conversational documentary testimony, which would never be shared so openly with professional documentarians from outside the community.

In conclusion to this section, I have highlighted that in order to move beyond the limitations of only offering User Generated Content sections for community and citizen participation, experimentation in how to develop community-based and community-led production methods is key. I have demonstrated that community conversation workshops can be utilised to empower citizens to shape the conceptual design and themes of interactive documentary projects. Breaking down production crew hierarchies and professional authorship is also key to developing an inclusive production methodology which is informed by community co-creators and makes space for their own autoethnographic testimonies and creative methods. I have discussed pre-production and production methods via iterative workshop practices in this first section. In the next section I will provide and analyse data on how post-production paradigms can also be disrupted and re-imagined through a more inclusive and co-creative methodology.

2) Co-Editing: Collective Post Production

In this section I will share and analyse data on how I have gradually disrupted and expanded upon existing post-production paradigms through iterative workshop practices. I should begin this section by highlighting that since I first studied media production at BTEC level, I have always been more drawn to the post-production side of filmmaking. Upon beginning my PhD, after a ten-year hiatus from film production, I was especially eager to develop research into how post-production could be made inclusive for citizens and communities as a co-creative collective practice. I researched existing examples of collaborative post-production and found only a few accounts detailing such practices.

In 2012, Judith Aston and Sandra Gaudenzi wrote an article setting out how they had convened the first i-Docs symposia and the areas of interest they were currently researching. They wrote of the 'participative mode' of interactive documentary and provided an example of online editing as a method for involving the audience in the production process (Aston and Gaudenzi, 2012, p.127). They gave the example of Bret Gaylor's 2009 open-source cinema project *RiP: a Remix Manifesto*. Rather than using participatory filmmaking or user generated content methods, Gaylor's project focused on inviting mass online collaboration during the post-production stage. Spanning six years, this long-form collaborative post-production process was the result of hundreds of people being invited to download the film rushes and remix the edit (Gaudenzi, 2014, p.133). Gaylor has revealed that it took time and an evolving experimental process to crowd source an interested audience of remixers for the project, as initial attempts to garner

interest amongst mass audience were slow to gather momentum (ibid.).

However, *RiP: a Remix Manifesto* is a linear rather than an interactive

documentary, and so faces limitations as to how much remixers could take

authorial control of the project. Gaudenzi (ibid.) also acknowledges this

limitation, recognising that 'the viewers can help in the process, but they

cannot own the form'.

The example above replicates the paradigm that was set in the early

scholarship surrounding the form: that collaboration occurs within the

audience or users of published interactive documentaries, as opposed to

during *all* stages of production, and within the community which the project

is representing. *Big Stories* (2008) represents an example of long-form

community collaboration which encompasses community-based post-

production workshops in a web-based documentary format. Based in

Australia, the project situates film-makers in residence to live within a small

town and provide participatory filmmaking training (including post-

production) to the local community.

In 2015 I spoke with the project's Creative Director Martin Potter to gain

further insights into how to community co-creators were developing post-

production skills and autonomy. Martin shared that the short community

made films are produced using various methods: 'Many of them were shot

and/ or edited by the person making them - they're generally digital stories

(we've run 1 or 2 digital storytelling workshops in most towns' (Potter, 2015,

no pagination). Using methods taught by the digital storytelling organisation

Story Center, the project contains a vast array of one- to four-minute short

films using a combination of first-person voice overs and photographs from the co-creators' personal archives. Many of the project's films are entirely created by community co-creators throughout all stages of production, including pre, and post (ibid.) The project also contains films made by local professional filmmakers and a few of the films are based on community-made rushes and then professional post-production (ibid.)

Figure 32. A still from the citizen made documentary Cowra, 2008. (Source: Big Stories).

Figure 33. A still from the citizen made documentary Cowra, 2008. (Source: Big Stories).

Figure 34. A still from the citizen made documentary Cowra, 2008. (Source: Big Stories).

In an early qualitative survey taken just after our launch workshop, I gathered data on co-creator's interests going forward in how they would like to be involved and shape the project through all stages of production and the development of methods.

I received the response below signaling that one co-creator was interested in learning post-production skills:

Taken from A.1.1 survey Q6

Would you like the opportunity to learn filmmaking/ photography skills as you take part in the project? If yes, please write details of what you would be interested in learning below:

Yes, I would like to gain some advanced photography skills. Editing films is another area I'd be interested in.

4/1/2015 1:56 PM

Developing co-editing methods to build a body of documentary content was one of the areas which I had highlighted as largely unexplored in the

literature and methods search stages of my research. I introduced the option

for co-creators to edit our rushes from the first iteration of the project, after

our initial launch workshop. At this early stage, there was no direct uptake by

co-creators to learn and collaborate with hands on editing. However, I did

gather some data from co-creators via email feedback surrounding their

suggestions on the direction which draft edits I sent them should take. I

created a Vimeo account for the project as it enabled me to upload draft

edits privately, with the option to publish later when co-creators were happy

with the edit. I received the following feedback and edit directions via email

from two co-creators based on the first draft edit of our launch workshop:

'I really enjoyed watching the video, and thought the blend of still and

moving images was complemented by the text, and it was a clear message

about what the overall aim of the group is.' (Anonamised, 2015)

'I think these all look very interesting. The movie is great. I just have a

couple of comments on the movie. The catchy phrases and lines were very

appealing. So, I think if you can find some more of them among

people's speeches to add to the video, it would be nice. Also, a couple of

photos were repeated a few times, some with a very slight difference. Maybe

using more different photos, if you have got any more though.'

(Anonamised, 2015)

I acted upon these co-creator directions and created a second draft of the

short film to show them for approval. This practice formed the first iteration

of our co-editing methods: after each workshop, I would offer the opportunity for all project co-creators to either co-edit the film with me in person or provide their directions to shape the edit online. Regardless of whether all of the project co-creators had attended each workshop, I would continue to update and involve every co-creator of project developments and opportunities for co-creation going forward. This formed part of the inclusive production methodology, based on my survey data which demonstrated that the co-creators led busy lives and had small pockets of free time in which to collaborate. As I go on to describe, this method for inclusive practice and keeping collaboration options open to all co-creators, regardless of workshop attendance, gathered momentum. This also enabled me to keep the community storytelling and production methods conversations active amongst all co-creators that had an ongoing interest in collaboration.

I held my first co-editing workshop shortly after our second project workshop. The two new international students who had joined the second workshop answered my call to learn post-production skills. I held a small workshop for the three of us at Leeds Trinity University Media Centre in one of the editing suites. The newly arrived students were eager to explore the city and enjoyed traveling with me to Horsforth via bus to visit a place that was new to them. During the workshop, I took the co-creators through the first stages of editing using Adobe Premiere. The co-creators learnt how to create a new project, upload rushes, and then begin to log rushes and start adding them to the project timeline to form a draft edit. By the end of the workshop, we had the draft edit established and the co-creators had begun to shape the format that the short personal film would take. I finished the edit

based on their direction and they then sent me photographs from their

personal archive to add to the film. In July 2015, I was invited to present a

paper and share my early findings at MIX.03: Writing Digital at BathSpa

University. I presented in the Digital Storytelling: Interactive Forms strand,

which was chaired by Mandy Rose. During my presentation, I showcased

the film we had just co-edited, which we named *I want to Try your Veil*

(Available at: https://vimeo.com/user10370034).
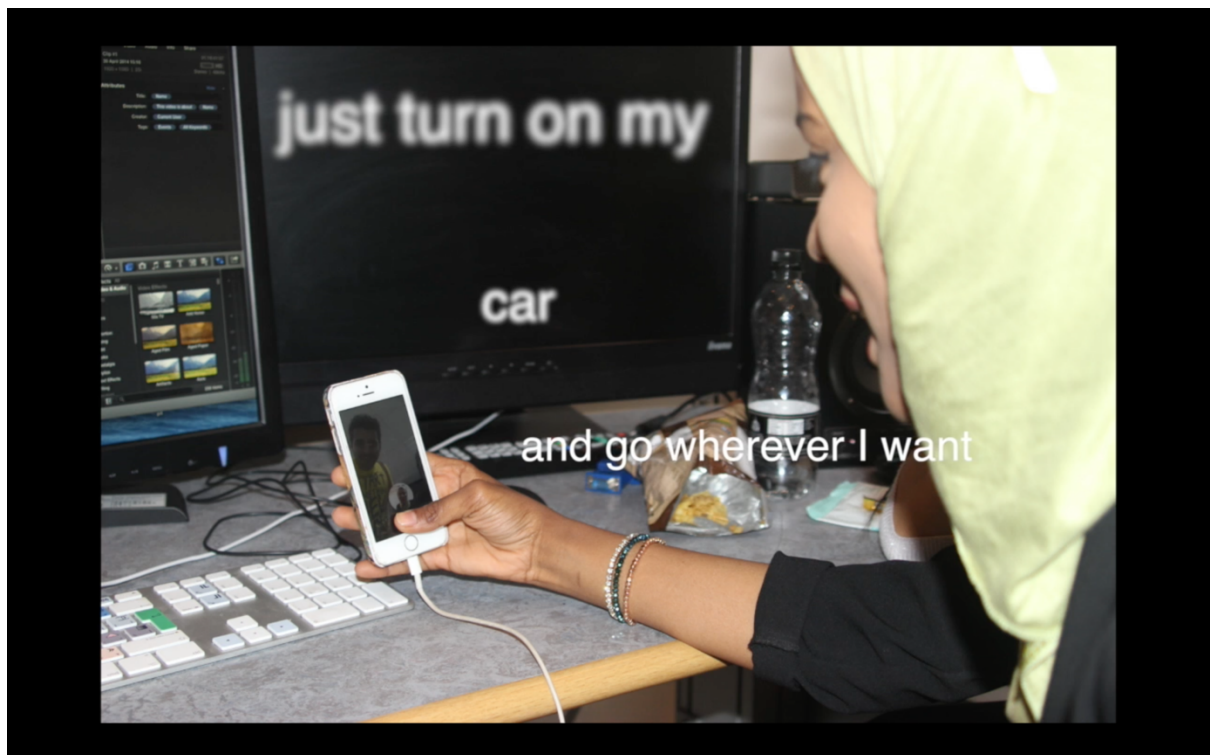
Figure 35. A still from the short film I Want to Try your Veil, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).
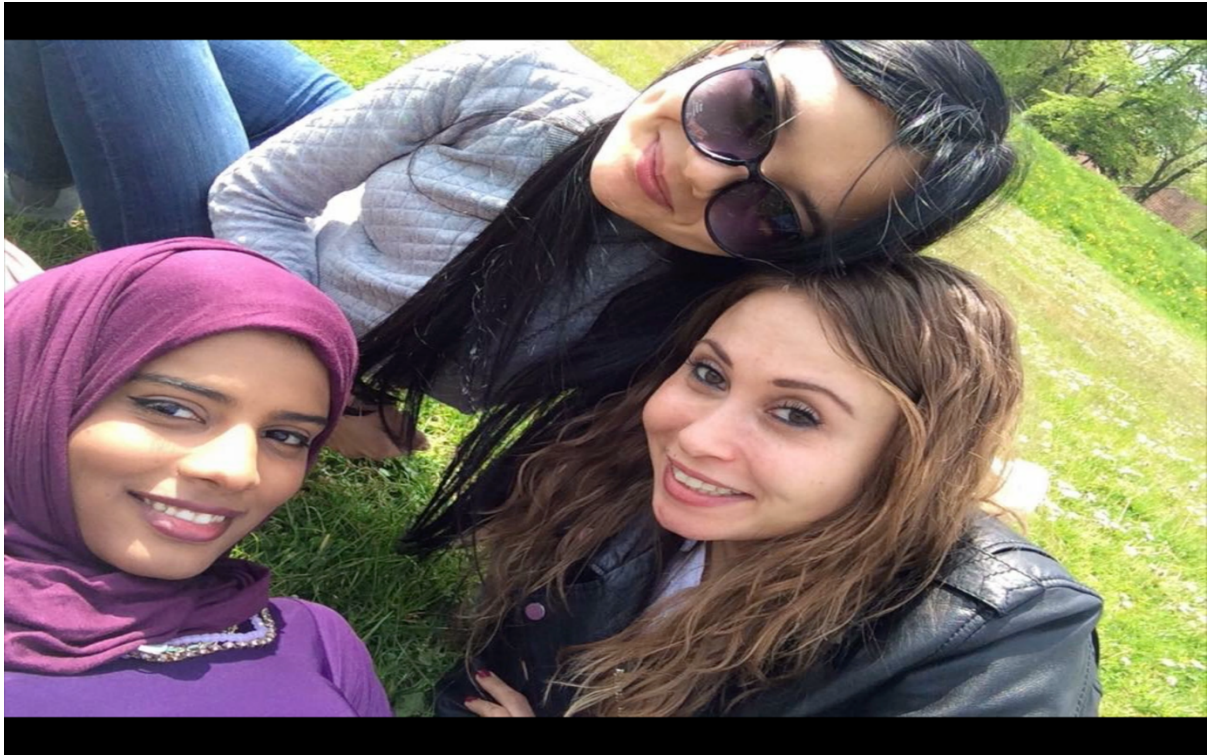
Figure 36. A still from the short film I Want to Try your Veil, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

During the next iteration of our workshop practice, we innovated our co-editing methods further. For our third iteration, *Out of the UK* as mentioned above, we experimented with how a crew of newcomers to broadcast standard equipment can learn together to produce documentary content, from pre-, right through to post-production. Co-creator Roya had learnt the basics of sound production on set and was also interested to learn how to edit film and so we worked together on the post-production of the rushes we had gathered. We maintained conversations with the co-creator that the film was based on via email, message apps and Skype. This enabled her to continue to shape and develop the film with us over the following months.

During the co-editing workshops, after I had shown Roya how to use Adobe Premiere, she was empowered to take the lead on editing the film. I strongly

felt that co-editing was a vital method to expand the possibilities of co-creation further on the project. It signaled a step beyond 'executory participation' (see Green, et al. 2017), moving towards enabling a 'structural participation'(ibid.), where a co-creator was shaping the entire edit of the film. Roya chose some creative commons licensed music for the soundtrack and directed the edit of the film towards a linear traditional "human interest style" interview format. At the time, this was an editing style that I was largely unfamiliar with myself, as my own previous filmmaking experience had focused on artist filmmaking methods and non-linear narratives. We uploaded two draft edits of the film onto Vimeo for Nathalie in Taiwan to have a final review of before we allowed open access viewing[8].

Whilst the draft version of *Out of the UK* was on Vimeo, Roya also wrote a comment on the platform with some further suggestions as to how I could improve slightly on her edit and make some small changes on her behalf: 'I think it's very good, now that I'm watching the completed version. Only one suggestion, we could have had different pics of Nathalie in Taipei, every time the blog text screen changes. What do you think?' (Anonamised, 2015)

I responded to her comment on Vimeo:

'I'm just adding the re-edited version on here now, in line with some changes which Nathalie suggested. We could perhaps have different pics from Taipei with each screen...I'll ask Nathalie what she thinks too.' (Zarins, 2015)

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[8] The final edit of *Out of the UK* is available on the *Our Here* Vimeo channel. The two draft edits are also available on Vimeo.

In her book about the methods of Arts-Based Research, Patricia Leavy (2020, p.23) draws parallels between the editing of raw data and data analysis. Leavy (ibid.) suggests that the 'translation' of raw data from one form to another – for example, from video rushes to draft edit – is a form of interpretation and analysis. When analysing the levels of co-creation that were achieved during my project, looking through the framework of Participatory Action Research, I often asked myself: "are my fellow co-creators empowered and given the tools to *also* act as co-researchers in this project?"

Referring back to Alice McIntyre (2008, no pagination) for guidance on the elements of PAR, she suggests that 'the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process' is key. This enabled me to consider analysis as part of the 'implementation' of our research process. Further to this, although my fellow co-creators were not involved in writing up our research findings in the traditional way, they were active stakeholders in the interpretation and analysis of our raw data via the co-editing process.

A total of four co-creators collaborated in hands on editing workshops with me throughout the project. In order to make co-editing more accessible and inclusive to the wider collective of co-creators, I also offered co-creators various forums via email or commenting on Vimeo to direct and shape the edit of each of our films and later on, our zines. I will also discuss later in this chapter how co-creators and I collaborated in the dissemination of our

research. Furthermore, in my conclusion chapter, I will provide a final reflection on the levels of co-creation and co-research that were achieved during the project lifespan and offer suggestions as to how this can be improved upon in future research.

3) Experimenting with Radical Methods to disrupt paradigms and suggest new methods for imperfect collaboration

In a progression of my initial approach to experimenting within existing production paradigms, in Winter 2015 I moved on to the next iteration of our workshops to test creative methods linked to radical movements in both film and art. Whilst some co-creators were interested in developing our own take on traditional documentary paradigms, there were some co-creators who wanted to try and expand into more creative and playful production territories. It was also the case that collaborating within film production methods was not an accessible entry route for some co-creators who needed more inclusive entry routes to the project in order to gently build their creative confidence and experience. It was clear from our conversations that a number of co-creators would appreciate a more social, more accessible introduction to collective practice on the project. As a creative practitioner from an arts-based background, I was also keen to experiment with alternative methods, outside of the limiting paradigms of traditional documentary production standards.

In the summer of 2015, I had been invited by Terry Wragg and Jo Dunn of the Leeds Animation Workshop to visit their long-standing studio in Harehills, Leeds. During my visit, I gained valuable insights into how Terry had maintained their women's animation collective for over forty years. Sharing their experiences of working with The Voice of Domestic Workers organisation (VDW) for their latest film *They Call Us Maids: The Domestic Workers' Story* (2015), Terry spoke of the importance of the social aspects of collective collaboration.

From working with VDW she had witnessed how sustainable collectives can be formed by marginalised communities and provide a space for friendship, creativity, activism, support and engaged citizenship. I decided this method would work well for our project, as the informal feedback I was getting suggested that our group conversations were the most impactful aspect for our co-creators also. In 2015 I organised three[9] workshops which were based around social interaction, playfulness and the Situationist dérive as a method for interaction with our environment.

As discussed earlier, Alister Gals' (2016, p.21) thesis makes the call for an imperfect filmmaking praxis, rooted in 'direct social experiences'. With my research, I too saw the emancipatory possibilities for a disruption of existing paradigms in the form, in pursuit of a dialogue with radical collective film practices which have a long history of creating accessible spaces for

[9] These were our Jogtography and British Art Show 8 workshops in November 2015 and the Leeds Dérive workshop in May 2016.

communities and citizens to collaborate. Participatory action research also evidences that impactful community-based praxis can be developed through a commitment to the social aspects of research. Alice McIntyre (2008, no pagination) has summerised that PAR empowers citizens to take pride in their own 'local knowledge' and their vernacular descriptions of such knowledge.

In winter 2015 I planned a Jogtography workshop for our collective, in which we could experiment playfully with wearable cameras whilst jogging together. A few potential co-creators who had expressed interest in the project were runners and I wanted to create a workshop which focused on socialising away from the more formal, seated workshops which I had been holding.

I chose to introduce wearable cameras to the project as I felt that they may enable co-creators to engage in a social gathering, without having the limitations of having to carry and consider cameras. This was a workshop with no emphasis on outcomes and no emphasis on form. This was an experiment in if media can emerge organically, without the burden of considering camera angles, or the visibility of large recording devices. It was also a workshop for co-creators who had previously been deterred by considerations of finding the available time to plan, record and edit a film.

Figure 37. A still from the short film Maisaa's Abbey Dash, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Some of the rushes gathered during the workshop on a Go Pro camera and DSLRS were used as cut aways in our next personal documentary short about a collective member running a charity marathon (available from https://vimeo.com/202786553). In the film, we layered video footage and photography to illustrate her autoethnographic account of the refugee experience:

'I live here on my own. Why don't I have the right to, isn't that one of my basic human rights? To get my Mum here? How am I supposed to have the courage to risk her life on a boat? I can't ask her..If I'm gonna do anything, she would go with all her dignity and respect to the British Embassy in Lebanon and apply for a visa. She would come on a plane...I always run, it's always included in my workout regime…I do enjoy running more than other

things because you kind of like loose yourself and you forget about what's going on…you kind of connect to the bigger environment and the world around you. So you kind of…blend in, and you forget about your own worries.'

Figure 38. A still from the short film Maisaa's Abbey Dash, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Figure 39. A still from the short film Maisaa's Abbey Dash, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

The above stills from our personal documentary *Maisaa's Abbey Dash* are contrasted with documentary photographs and videos taken during the marathon by co-creators. A few co-creators used their mobile phones to capture video and I used my own personal DSLR camera to also photograph our fellow co-creator's experience of the event.

In this iteration, the innovation emerged from embracing imperfect methods to gather media during the social Jogtography event. This marked our expansion towards a social creative praxis, whereby the emphasis was on developing meaningful collective social interactions between co-creators from diverse migration backgrounds. The media gathered from our socials was then added to our collective's archive of media, from which we could draw on for future films. Moving away from more formalised, seated

filmmaking workshops saw our project make significant impact in raising the visibility of international women in the city. Our workshops became personal *and* political statements as we physically and digitally began to "take up space" in the city and make our presence known.

Figure 40. A still from the short film British Art Show 8, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Figure 41. A still from the short film British Art Show 8, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Figure 42. A still from the short film British Art Show 8, 2015. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

The stills above from our social workshop at British Art Show 8 depict our growing use of wearable, mobile cameras to interact with the cityscape and enjoy more playful and informal filmmaking methods. In my end of project qualitative feedback survey, co-creators commented that the social aspects of the project had been personally impactful and significant for them. When I asked: 'what did you enjoy most about participating in the project?', one co-creator responded: 'the socializing part, learning about people and cultures in first hand and making new friends.' (Appendix B).

In May 2016, Co-creator Roya and I joined Leeds Trinity University media staff and students in a psychogeography event to celebrate the original launch of the Situationist International (SI) manifesto in May 1960. Attending this event and exploring literature surrounding SI methodology enabled me to enrich our collective social praxis with further theoretical underpinnings and knowledge. I found the Marxist notions of 'specialisation' and 'integration' (Matthews, 2005, no pagination) particularly useful in contextualising my research aims to interrogate and disrupt documentary production hierarchies and paradigms. The Marxist concepts explored by the SI spoke to me about the emancipatory potential of the new methodology I was developing, and compounded my intentions re-situate marginalised voices as active agents within their *own* visual culture (ibid.). As discussed in depth in chapter one, through our experimentation with the methods of the dérive, we have put forward significant new representations of a feminine articulation of these practices.

Figure 43. A still from the short film Leeds Dérive, 2016. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).
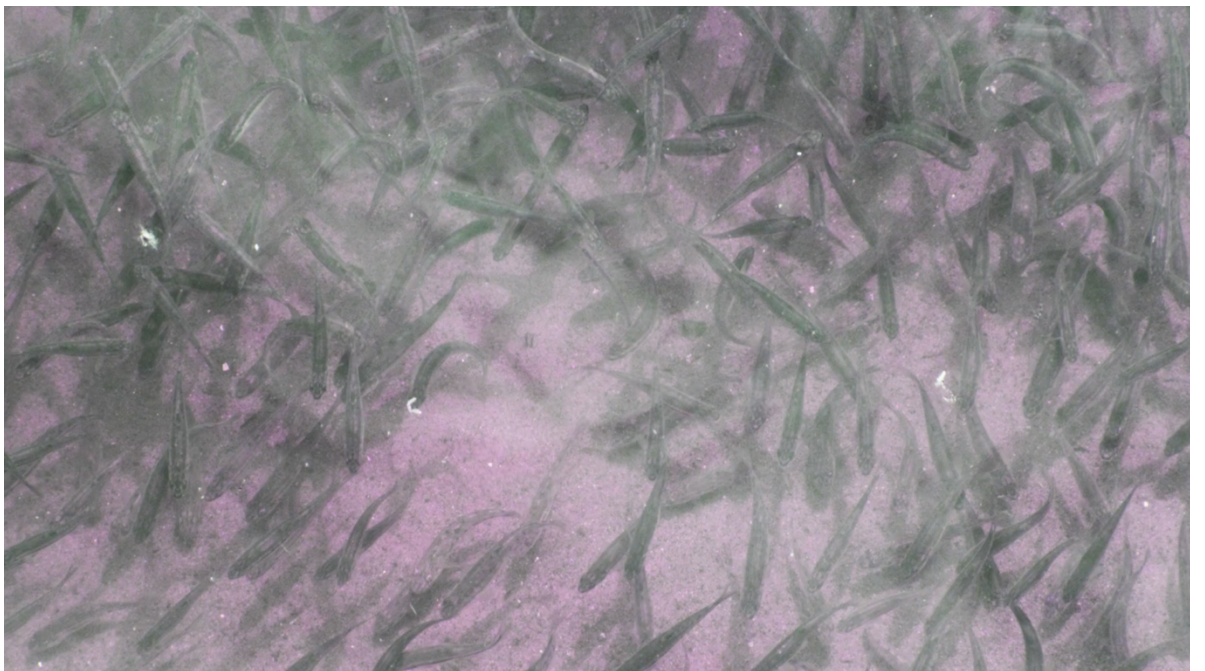
Figure 43. A still from the short film Leeds Dérive, 2016. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

The stills above are taken from a co-created visual poem (available from:

https://vimeo.com/user10370034) which we made with the rushes and

photography gathered during the psychogeography event. The visual poem was a completely new medium for us to explore and demonstrates the diversity of our iterations, compared to the more traditional documentary formats which we had previously co-created. Whilst we were in post-production for the visual poem, Roya connected strongly with the conversations featured in some of the more recent arts-based iterations of our project: digital and paper-based zines. Together we scripted a call and response style poem to narrate the film, which explores our feelings about the EU Referendum result and how it could affect the intercultural dynamics of our city.

Our next iteration saw the most radical departure from traditional documentary production methods as a new co-creator introduced arts-based zine making methods to our collective. In July 2016, we had held our first zine workshop, which was organised collaboratively with the new co-creator. This workshop provided us with a post-EU referendum space to come together socially. We used the space to celebrate our intercultural perspectives in the wake of a rise in xenophobic and racist hate-crime in the city and nationally. Melanie Ramdarshan Bold (2017) has described zine making as an alternative cultural practice, away from the limiting conventions and representations of mainstream media. Our first and subsequent zine workshops were very popular with regular co-creators and new members of our collective alike. I witnessed that the full expansion of our practices into an imperfect and inclusive to access arts-based iteration resulted in the most engaging and collaborative workshops of the project (see Appendix B).

The interactive documentary form has seen previous examples of arts-based methods being used to develop content and shape design concepts. In 2010, the *Johnny Cash Project* published a crowd sourced video in which their global audience had used digital draw and paint tools to hand design each still which made up this collaborative project. Later, in 2011, *Welcome to Pine Point* saw the intersection of the book, the film and the family photo album in a flash animated interactive documentary exploring the death of a small town in Canada. Both projects celebrate hand drawn and digital design and animation in the form. However, they do not move beyond the existing paradigms of user-generated content and professional authorship.
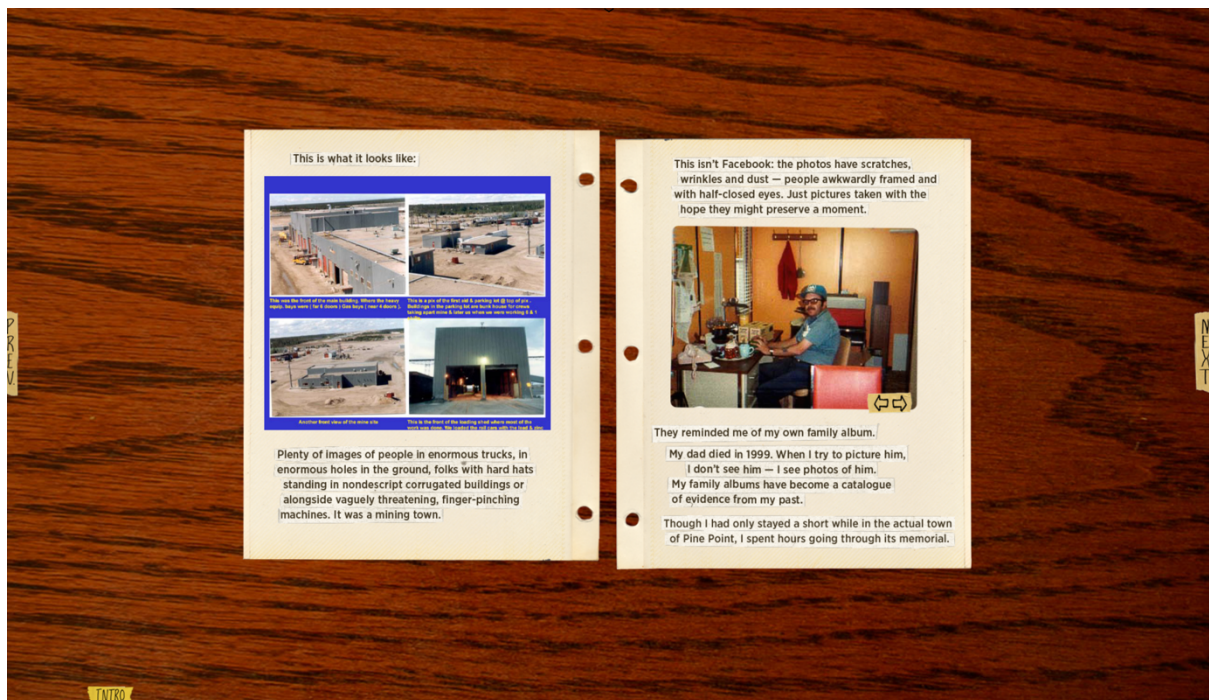
Figure 45. A still from Welcome to Pine Point, 2011. (Source: Welcome to Pine Point).

Through our developing collective engagement in radical creative methods we developed a charity partnership as part of our project. Our diverse inclusive methods and growing collective had gained us further visibility in

the city. In February 2017, we were invited by Marvina Newton CEO of Angel of Youth charity to collaborate on her *One Day Without US* day of action to celebrate immigration in the city. Marvina approached us to document the event with a film and I suggested that we could try a new iteration of our zine making practice, introducing a street zine method whereby event attendees could create zine pages using clipboards, paper, and felt-tip pens. The street zine offering was very well received at the event and it broadened the diversity of our co-creators again as it was inclusive for families with young children (see Figure 46). The documentary short and digital zine created for *One Day Without US* represent a realisation of critical and social purpose for our project. The event and ongoing charity partnership provided a real-world activist purpose and active briefs upon which to test our new production methodology.

Figure 46. Members of the public taking part in the One Day Without Us street-zine workshop, 2017. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

4) My Positionality as a Community-based researcher, Creative Practitioner, Co-Creator and Co-Learner

The final innovation which I will discuss regards how my own positionality within this research project is radically different to the normative paradigm of the professional media author, or that of the professional production team. Within the existing literature, there are very few detailed and critical autoethnographic accounts from the authors and production teams of interactive documentary projects. In order to address this gap in data, I will now provide an autoethnographic analysis of my own positionality in this project. I will critically analyse my diverse project roles as a creative practitioner, co-creator, co-learner, and community-based researcher.

Firstly, I will take a critical look at a sample of the existing accounts on authorship positionality in the form. Two such accounts from 2017 provide illuminating literature on how traditional documentary authorship is being transformed, in favour of a move towards co-creation with community stakeholders and professionals from relevant disciplines. As these two accounts evidence, there is no fixed definition for co-creation. Instead, co-creative relationships are forged and negotiated on a project by project basis, dependant on many interpersonal and situational factors.

In her long-term residency with the National Film Board of Canada, Kat Cizek was recruited in 2004 to further investigate social change via collaboration with communities in an expansion of the *Challenge for Change* project, which ran from 1967-1980 (Wiehl, 2017, p.38). In an interview with

Mandy Rose, Cizek provides some useful insights into her positionality as a

director and how her background in journalism informs how she negotiates

the dynamics of working with co-creators. Taking into consideration the

expertise of co-creators, alongside her own areas of expertise, Cizek

describes that, to her, co-creation does not mean the forgoing of authorship

altogether (ibid., p.40).

Considering herself as the director of her projects, Cizek puts forward a

rather compartmentalised view of collaboration as a process of pragmatism,

in which co-creators are invited to enter the project at key moments to share

their expertise and lived experience, and then exit the project when the

stage of production is no longer within their realm of expertise (ibid., p.46).

Whilst I agree that it is important to honor and celebrate the diversity of

expertise which co-creators bring to a project, I do feel that Cizek's

steadfastness concerning authorship and directorial control is not conducive

of inclusive and emancipatory co-creation. I would argue that this approach

does not provide communities with the authorial autonomy to shape how

their narratives and hopes for change are represented. In the interview,

Cizek states that she does not allow co-creation to extend into the post-

production stages of her projects:

> Yes, we can collaborate on this specific thing at this moment.' Then,
>
> however, there is also the point where you realise that it's your turn,
>
> and you want to continue making a documentary where you have
>
> people participating but not having them in your editing room eight
>
> hours a day. (Wiehl, 2017, p.46)

For Cizek, the roles handed out within co-creative relationships are defined by expertise and prior experience. The NFBC project brief may be to drive social change through the co-creation of media; however, this intention to ignite change is not fully present in the dynamics of how the narratives of her co-creators are shaped through the post-production process.

It is of course essential here to consider the very different contexts of the projects Cizek is working on, compared to the context of my own research. With substantial funding from large organisations, there comes an immediate pressure to deliver high standard results which still conform to the broadcasting standards of organisations such as NFBC. This does not create a suitable premise for experimentation and investment into community co-creator production experiences and autonomy. Alternatively, practice-based research conducted within a research community which is exploring the development of imperfect emancipatory methods *is* a suitable context in which to privilege co-creator agency and eschew the expectations and limitations of mainstream media production.

The second example I have located describes a very different approach to co-creation which embraces vernacular media and 'open-ended exploration' (Kapur, 2017, p.27). Anandana Kapur has explored co-creation from an autoethnographic standpoint based in her home city New Delhi. In an extension of her own participation in protests to 'reclaim the city space' after the 2012 gang rape and murder of Jyoti Singh (ibid, p.26). Kapur describes her positionality as a filmmaker, witnessing and standing alongside women

'across class and caste boundaries' (ibid.). In discussions surrounding her work in progress project, Kapur examines her own class positionality, which is shared with some of the women in her co-creative project, yet different to the domestic workers who were gaining a new visibility and overcoming their relative exclusion from the 'feminist imaginations of the city' (ibid.).

Kapur's account of her work in progress provides significant and much needed data on how projects can emerge from events and social sphere activities which are experienced directly by filmmakers. Developing an 'open-ended' and inclusive methodology of her own, Kapur shares that 'the women would be co-creators and have ownership over deciding the frequency, nature and themes of their documentations'. (ibid., p.27) Moreover, in contrast to Cizek's (Wiehl, 2017) defense of directorial control, Kapur is open to empowering participants to use their 'existing media practices', in a bid to develop ''talk back" to hegemonic narratives' (ibid.) and create change surrounding the digital divide (ibid., p.32). It is evident from studying Kapur's account that she places a long-form critical significance on developing and evolving inclusive co-creation methods, as opposed to ensuring mainstream broadcast standards are met.

As part of her ongoing process of experimentation and development surrounding these methods, Kapur invited a gender-rights practitioner to observe her interactions to ensure that her own class background would not incite any coercive participation from women of a different class (ibid., p.28). Going forward, Kapur positions herself as the project curator and plans to approach a domestic workers network to expand co-creation beyond the

limits of her own class-based contacts (ibid., p.34). This leads me onto a critical analysis of my own positionality within my research project. In a similar attempt as Kapur, I too expanded my project to co-create with a charity partner, enabling me to transcend the boundaries of my own social networks based at the University of Leeds. In expanding my project and running workshops with Marvina Newton's Angel of Youth charity, I was able to realise one of our collective project goals: for co-creation to expand outwards into the city and to be inclusive beyond the academy walls.

As discussed in chapter one my own positionality and autoethnographic approach is underpinned by my lived-experience as both a third-generation immigrant of Latvian heritage and navigating academia from a working-class background. The co-creators on board my project represent a broad spectrum of global cultures, ethnic origins, and class backgrounds. Our shared, lived experience of first-hand and multi-generational migration heritage with the backdrop of life in Leeds was the basis for our conversations and autoethnographic creative practices.

During the project my roles were as a community-based researcher, creative practitioner, co-creator and co-learner. The roles I assumed developed throughout the project lifespan and echo other case studies found within Participatory Action Research (see McIntyre, 2008, no pagination). I will now discuss each of these roles in relation to how my positionality created avenues for innovation and contributions of new knowledge surrounding production methodology in the interactive documentary form.

During the early stages of this research, a large section of my literature search and formulation of my research question was informed by my investigations into emerging community-based research frameworks. As a member of the community that my project would be based within (see Horner, 2016, p.29; see Hayano, 1979, p.376), I was looking for examples to inform my unique positionality and locate how my autoethnographic approach could be used to underpin the development of a new contribution to knowledge. Projects such as Pararchive, 2015 and the resources published from the AHRC Connected Communities (see Light and Millen, 2014; see Horner, 2016) funding strand provided me with a framework to begin developing my own community-based research project.

I identified that co-creation from within the exploratory creative practices of my project would enable me to explore new methods to empower my fellow community-based co-creators to shape each production stage with their own expertise, interests, and methods. I viewed co-creation as a strategy from which to ignite a disruption of traditional directorial control, in favour of moving towards collective practices and project design. Taking this community-based approach to research allowed me to also shake off the limitations of authorial academic control which is normatively taken in PhD research. My unique positionality lead to me assuming the dual roles of both community-based researcher and co-creator throughout the lifespan of the project.

Co-creation approaches in community-based research share many commonalities with how participation is enacted in arts-based research (see

Finley, 2008). Just I have employed co-creation as a framework for

disrupting authorial control in the form, I also strongly identify with the

possibilities of arts-based research methods to disrupt the dominant

paradigm of broadcast production standards. Combined, I felt that these two

inclusive research approaches would allow me to represent myself

authentically within the project as both a creative practitioner (Leavy, 2020,

p.3) and a third-generation immigrant. I also hoped that this inclusivity would

be experienced by my fellow co-creators and empower them to flourish

creatively, in turn, shaping a new production methodology from within the

social community I was developing from the ground-up.

It was evident to me from my analysis of existing interactive documentary

projects that filmmaking production represented the dominant method within

the form. There were, however, promising examples of projects which took

alternative routes, for example, by using sound as the main media source

(see *Public Secrets*, 2007; *Mapping Main Street,* 2008; *Quipu Project*, 2015

and *Radio Right Left,* 2017). Through my positionality and experience as a

creative practitioner, I could also see that the introduction of an imperfect

arts-based approach to the form had the potential to disrupt the proliferation

of traditional filmmaking techniques, in favour of a more expansive

production methodology, informed by community co-creators as opposed to

media professionals. In chapter one I have discussed my own experience as

a photographic artist and how this research project has enabled me to revisit

my own creative practice. Unlike projects such as Cizek's *Highrise* Series

(2010-2015) although I founded my project, I did not view myself as the

central author or wish to have directorial control over the production

standards or final platform. Instead, my positionality was closer to that of my fellow co-creators: we were from the same international community in Leeds and we did not consider ourselves to be media professionals.

Throughout my literature search and research into existing projects, I did not find any examples of communities developing their own interactive documentary projects without the involvement of media professionals or senior academics. With this in mind, my research offers a new insight into how communities can develop their own production methodologies and how the community-based interactive documentary can be (re)designed and (re)imagined, both conceptually and aesthetically by non-media professionals. I will now draw further examples from my own data to examine how my positionality has played a crucial part in the development of this innovative methodology and contributed much needed data on inclusive community-based interactive documentary production.

My decision to found a collective was based on a critical awareness regarding my own positionality within the community which the project is set in. At the time of beginning the project, I was part of a wonderful and supportive community of international staff and students at the University of Leeds. I was both working and studying with the international staff and students there for many years. However, my experience of migration is not direct; rather, it is part of my family heritage. I do not directly understand what it is like to move or be forcibly displaced to another country, as is the case for the other people in our collective. I did not feel that my experience as a third-generation immigrant ethically positioned me with the lived-

experience to be the central project author or director. As a collective, we discussed what it means to be or to feel "international" (see *Conversation Club,* 2015. Available at: https://vimeo.com/266096234). This discussion topic was raised by my fellow co-creators and provided me with an opportunity to share my personal motivations behind the project. I described to them how I have always felt a kinship with people from other cultures and countries. Not fully knowing the circumstances of my own Grandpa's forced displacement from Latvia, I find it healing to witness and hold space for the migration stories of other people and their families.

Establishing collective authorship and project design in an interactive documentary was a key element of my contribution to knowledge. I was unable to locate any other projects that took a fully collective approach. However, there were times when it became very challenging to continue with this approach and keep momentum going from a production and post-production perspective. As highlighted in my early survey data (see Appendix A.1.1), my fellow co-creators had little free time to spare. Rather than simply continuing to edit our films by myself, I developed innovative methods to build online editing conversations into the post-production process. This enabled me to continue collaborating with co-creators and demonstrate that it *is* possible to retain an inclusive approach throughout all stages of production. My role as a creative practitioner from an arts-based background also empowered me to operate outside of the rigorous production standards which most mainstream documentary filmmakers conform to.

When I first began this project, as a newcomer to interactive documentary, with no recent filmmaking experience, I felt very intimidated when researching other projects and personally considering where I could make an impact on the form. It was in this initial research period, during the formulation of my research question, that I began to realise the potential and freedom to experiment that my positionality as a newcomer and relative outsider granted me. I overcame the imposter syndrome which I was experiencing at conferences and industry events. I began to articulate my research aims and locate a newfound confidence in the innovative approach which I was forging, based on my unique positionality. There were times during the research journey when it was incredibly challenging to continue developing an open and flexible co-created project. My approach was at odds with that of established and successful media-makers that are most prominent within academic coverage of the form. There were indeed times when I wanted to make *my film* in *my style* and comfort zone. However, each workshop iteration revealed to me that my approach and positionality *was* achieving the gradual development of new data on co-creation, and a new inclusive production methodology for communities.

Barone and Eisner (2012) have remarked that arts-based research entails a motivation to be educated and transformed (Leavy, 2020, p.30). I would argue that my research and findings demonstrate that this motivation is especially impactful when present in academics as well as community co-creators in community-university research projects. This leads me to a discussion of my positionality as a co-learner within my own research project and collective practice. Long et. al (2020, no pagination) have highlighted

the need for the feminist values of 'cooperation, community and interdependence' to be given the worthy attention they deserve in discussions of feminist collaboration and co-learning within academia and organisational structures. They rightly argue that 'feminist collaboration can be an essential place to normalize feminist principles in everyday processes' over the dominant masculine 'values of competition, individualism and autonomy' (ibid.). My research harnesses the potential of cooperation via collectivism, which is currently missing in the authorship and production paradigms found within the form.

Rejecting solo authorship within my research has enabled me to overcome the normative masculine approach of directorial control found in both film production and academia.

As I have demonstrated, existing projects such as Kapur and Green have pursued the development of inclusive co-creation methods in the form. However, my research goes beyond co-creation to examine if inclusivity can be developed further via a collective approach to community authorship. It is within the collective approach which I have developed that also positions myself as a co-learner, alongside my fellow co-creators who are also learning about new creative methods, and, most importantly, teaching me about their own pre-existing knowledge of methods which are new to me. In a complete reversal of Katerina Cizek's expertise-led production approach (see Wiehl, 2017), I have welcomed the opportunity to learn new creative skills from my fellow co-creators, and, in turn, share the new media production skills which I am learning with them during our workshops and

socials. As my data in this analysis evidences, during the third iteration of our collective workshop practice, I initiated this process of co-learning by sharing my new broadcast film production knowledge with co-creators during the process of making our first personal documentary short *Out of the UK* (2015) available at: https://vimeo.com/166828792.

Through further iterations of our practice, my openness to learning new methods and re-learning methods I had not used in over a decade created an equality in the experiences and expressions of our collective authorship. The most meaningful example of this occurred when a new co-creator introduced the arts-based method of zine-making to our collective, and in doing so, completely transformed and expanded our ability to capture our conversations via inclusive and imperfect DIY methods.

During our first zine workshop, I shared the new experience of designing, creating, and printing a zine all in one day with my fellow co-creators. It took us an entire day to create the zine from scratch and the process of scanning the hand-drawn pages and then assembling them to print copies of the zine was very challenging, as none of us had any prior experience of this. During this new iteration, I experienced co-learning new creative methods alongside my fellow co-creators as we developed our own approach to assembling the zine during the workshop. Much removed from the segmented production process of professional filmmaking, our new arts-based method involved us all collaborating creatively and socialising throughout each stage of the process as we worked together to learn a new skill and forge a new collective representation of our stories.

Setting aside my own creative skill-set in favour of holding space for a new co-creator to share their methods with us, we collectively discovered a DIY approach which enabled us to prioritise the social and conversational elements of our workshops. In addition, another co-creator chose to do some research to locate a suitable online platform to publish our zine on. She suggested Flipsnack and we used the platform to publish a total of four zines during the project lifespan. Flipsnack also enabled us to further innovate on our original zine and develop interactive zines, which harnessed a transmedia approach that allowed us to link other types of media into our digital zines and engage in transmedia storytelling (see Jenkins, 2003). This methodology of embracing co-learning openly within the production stages of an interactive documentary enabled me to experience what it is like to be a co-creator learning new skills in order to develop autoethnographic representations of my lived experience. In creating an inclusive space for co-creators to share their own creative methods with our collective, my methodology prioritises an 'equal partnership…in the production of knowledge', whereby co-creators are directly shaping new production methods based on their expertise and interests (Horner, 2016, p.9).

As highlighted in my literature review, early iterations of participation in interactive documentary scholarship and practice were based around User Generated Content created by a very limited audience of the form. My data on co-creator and creative practitioner experiences in a collective iteration of collaboration demonstrate that it is possible to move beyond the digital divide of user generated content and expand co-creation into all stages of

production. In replacing the dominant paradigms of the media professional and film director with that of the creative practitioner and co-creator, it is possible to develop new community-led production methods through an inclusive relationship of skills-swapping, conversation and co-learning. My research actively pursues a disruption of the dominant power structures (see Sjoberg, 1976) which are typically found in tokenistic forms of participation, in which communities are relegated to controlled sections of a project, rendering them unable to autonomously represent their own narratives and lived experience.

The final area which I consider to be of great importance to the realisation of inclusive co-creation in interactive documentaries is a commitment to raising the visibility of community co-creators at both industry and academic events. This void in the physical representation and attendance of community co-creators at events which showcase the projects they are stakeholders in was raised at the i-Docs 2018 symposium. During the four years of my project, I attended many conferences and industry events as both a speaker and a delegate and on only one occasion witnessed the inclusion of community members in a workshop based on the community-based arts project With One Voice International Arts and Homelessness Festival and Summit in Manchester. Despite the fact that the majority of interactive documentary projects rely on some level of participation with under or misrepresented communities, I found it concerning that those communities involved were never in attendance to share their perspectives of the projects which represent them and are based on their lived experiences.

In my own research project, I identified co-creator visibility as a potential area for innovation through investigating a collective approach to inclusive production. I actively addressed this on two occasions in which I was successful in securing funding for fellow co-creators to attend documentary film industry events. In May 2016, I was granted access to use some of my annual Leeds Trinity University funding for co-creator Jess to represent our collective at the Radical Film Network unconference in Glasgow. Whilst attending the event Jess took part in the panel discussions and shared her insights with our collective through a series of mind maps which she created during the event. She also kept a video diary whilst at the conference to document her experiences.
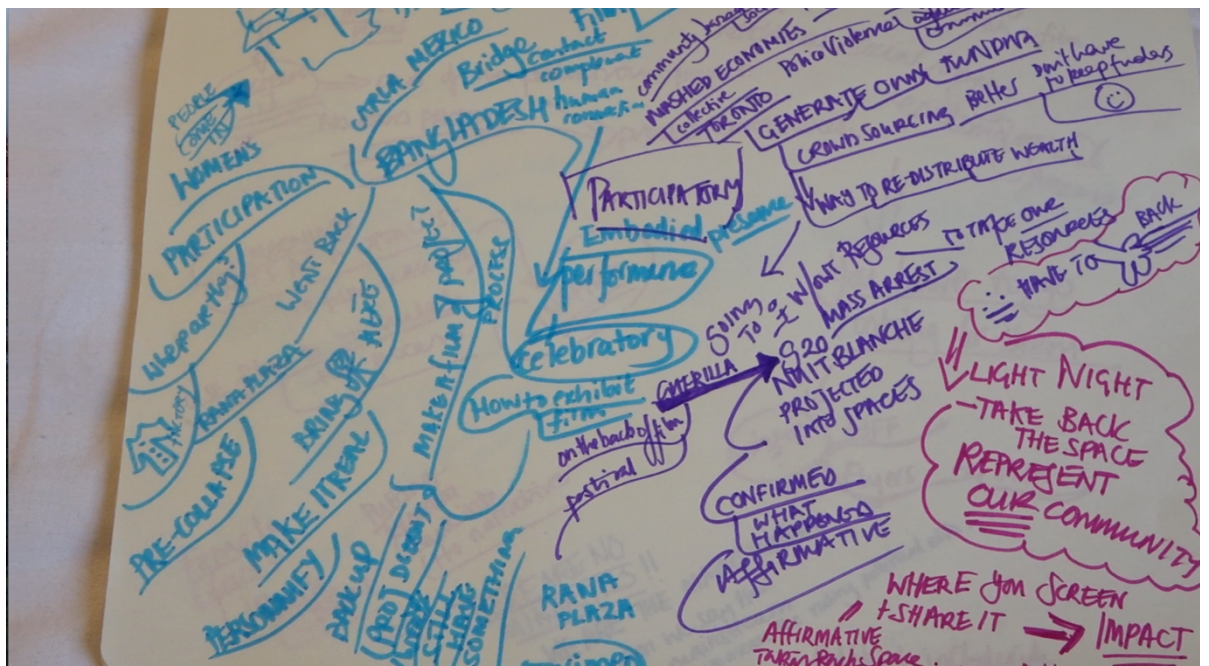
Figure 47. A still from the unpublished rushes of Jess' Radical Film Network Unconference Video Diary, 2016. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

The video diaries provide a significant audio-visual data set upon which to evidence the impact of event attendance on co-creators and how such activities can empower their critical engagement with praxis. In the video diaries, Jess provided a summary of the unconference discussions for our

collective to view. Entering into the panel discussions of the event clearly provided her with further access beyond our workshops, to critical debates surrounding pertinent issues. Jess asks critical questions surrounding which methods can be used to ignite creativity. She muses: 'I guess we're just going to have to show our process…including all the messy bits…this is the makings, it's the mess' *(Jess' Radical Film Network Unconference Video Diary,* 2016). In her video diary discussions surrounding representation, Jess questions: 'should *anyone* be representing someone else?' Suggesting that it is 'better for people to represent themselves where they can' (ibid.). She shares that during one of the panel discussions, she put forward important critical questions surrounding what is meant by participatory filmmaking and describes experiencing a resistance to her suggestions of open and inclusive co-creation as a method (ibid.).

Figure 48. A still from the unpublished rushes of Jess' Radical Film Network Unconference Video Diary, 2016. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Although we didn't edit the video diaries for publication, they provide a wealth of data on how co-creators can experience attending and participating in events which can go on to inform how they bring their own perspective on theoretical and methodological discussions into projects. The raw audio-visual data testifies to the impact of co-creators accessing relevant conferences and events, in order to both academically and methodologically enrich their ideas and experiences of co-creation. This new-found visibility grants co-creators an entrance into the debates of the form and, in-turn this carries the potential to inform their collaboration. Inspired by the discussions, Jess also shares her ideas on how she wants to make a film surrounding these topics, talking through her initial ideas surrounding the production elements and how it would be visually structured.

I continued to build on this experience of developing opportunities for my fellow co-creators to attend conferences and events. In June 2016, I was awarded funding from the Radical Film Network's AHRC project 'Sustaining Alternative Film Cultures' for co-creator Roya to join me at Sheffield Doc Fest. The funding covered her festival pass, accommodation, and travel. This enabled Roya and I to attend the festival together and represent our collective through panel discussions and networking. We viewed and gathered valuable inspiration from the documentary projects which were showcased. The festival provided Roya with visceral examples and interactions with collaborative documentary projects and VR. Attending together also provided us with the opportunity to network and share updates on our project and represent our collective.

Summary of Analysis Findings

In this section I have analysed a series of diverse data sets which have emerged from my research, in order to evidence and discuss the innovative new methodology which I have developed. My data is extracted from the short documentary films, qualitative surveys, audio-visual and paper-based records which were a result of my engagement with an iterative PAR approach to address the identified gap in inclusive production methods. Through my critical discussions of the data, I have drawn upon key concepts from the literature and methods discussed in my literature review to contextualise the significance and social impact of my contribution to knowledge. I have divided my key findings into four areas of innovation which represent a practice-based investigation of the issues raised in my opening research problem and research question sections.

In my analysis, I have firstly demonstrated that new data on co-creator production experiences can be examined to develop community-led approaches to project design and production. This engagement with an iterative process, driven by my emerging data on how co-creators were developing their own project themes and production methods via collective conversation, marked the beginning of a disruption of existing production paradigms, which are less accessible to communities.

Having developed new production and project design methods in our early workshops, the next area which we investigated was experimentation surrounding collective post-production. This chapter shares new data on

methods which can be used to empower co-creators to remain active stakeholders in their narratives, beyond existing participatory filmmaking techniques which traditionally involve the exit of community members from the production process (see Wiehl, 2017, p.46). I have also evidenced, through a dialogue with arts-based research theory (see Leavy, 2020, p.23) that collective editing, or co-editing as I have titled it, deepens the involvement of community-based co-creators in the co-construction of research which represents their own lived experiences.

In order to support my claims that a collective approach to interactive documentary production makes the form more accessible to communities, I also analysed data which reveals that a dialogue with radical praxis can achieve this. In a successful attempt to empower co-creators to introduce their own creative methods to our collective practice, my data discussed in this chapter demonstrates how the introduction of imperfect, arts-based methods can create more inclusive and autonomous entry routes for communities.

The final area of innovation covered in this chapter demonstrates how my own positionality as a community-based researcher, creative practitioner, co-creator, and co-learner has contributed significant new knowledge surrounding the disruption of normative authorship paradigms. In order to address the gap in data and critical thought around accounts of authorship and the directorial control of marginalised narratives, I offered my own authoethnographic reflections of my experiences as a newcomer to the form, and my positionality within the community in which my project was based. In

the analysis of my data surrounding authorship and representation, I also highlighted my commitment to and methods of raising the visibility of community co-creators at both industry and academic events. I evidence how this new-found visibility can grant co-creators an entrance into the debates of the form and, in-turn, this carries the potential to inform their collaboration.

Building the Transmedia Conversation

I built in time for discussions surrounding platforms and design for our interactive documentary as a key feature in almost every one of our workshops. It was my intention that the interactive documentary which we produced would reflect our conversations and the concepts which were introduced by each co-creator. Our early workshopped discussions indicated that co-creators were interested in building our project partly on the social media and commercial platforms which they already used in their day-to-day lives. In April 2015, I suggested that we use WordPress to develop our interactive documentary platform as a central hub through which to channel our conversations, stories and the diverse medias which we were developing across other platforms.

The commercial and community platforms which we have used have been in response to our requirements to upload specific media artefacts onto a suitable formatted platform and within an accessible and appropriate interface and context. Platforms such as Vimeo, Flipsnack and Yarn enable

users to edit and draft content gradually before publishing. These are particularly useful features for collective projects, such as ours, where multiple co-creators may wish to review media content before publication.

I researched and set-up a majority of the platforms used to build the conversations of *Our Here*. I chose to reimagine the interactive documentary as an expanded transmedia form; through which documentary media is cast across diverse platforms, perhaps reaching a broader audience, across multiple contexts. In addition, our use of both Flipsnack and Instagram were instigated by co-creators who were eager to explore the use of these platforms for our storytelling via zines and photography. Each platform has provided a new avenue for our collective—an extension of the space through which to inspire and sustain our transdisciplinary methods and conversations. I will now provide a brief overview detailing the uses of commercial and community platforms through which *Our Here* has developed transmedia conversations.

Commercial and Community Platforms

Vimeo

Our first platform was a Vimeo channel through which to upload our co-created short films online. Using Vimeo to privately host films for the view of co-creators only, provided us with a method to broaden our co-editing discussions, outside of our workshops. This method also allowed for a wider accessibility for co-creators who had relocated overseas or were unable to attend workshops. Vimeo's private publication functions gave our co-

creators the time and space required to establish their creative confidence and voice in our project.

I had aspired to keep our edit conversations open and transparent online, viewable to a public audience, using the comment function on Vimeo; however, I found that co-creators preferred to hold our group conversations privately on Facebook messenger. I was administrating the account, but our collective had the reassurance that our co-created work would not be shared publicly until everyone involved in the production was comfortable with the content and final edit of our media. This process inevitably results in a longer duration of post-production. However, interacting with transmedia storytelling as a method allows for narrative and content to be built up and added gradually, within more sympathetic timescales than say a feature-length documentary.

Social Media

I created social media accounts in the early stages of the project to establish a forum for online group discussions[10] and a web presence for academic dissemination[11]. We used Facebook messenger to host online forums, through which to plan workshops and hold discussions surrounding the production of our films. We also held online editing conversations which helped to develop our collective voice and vision for *Our Here* during the first year of production.

SoundCloud

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[10] I used Facebook for this, as requested by co-creators (see Appendix A.1.1)
[11] I set up a Twitter account for this (see ibid.)

A globally-leading open platform for audio and music; SoundCloud provides a free to use uploading and sharing service for artists and audio creators. This platform enabled me to create a dedicated landing page for our project, upload images to illustrate multi-vocal narratives, build playlists from our tracks and then share our content across social media. SoundCloud also has very useful analytics counters that are visible per track and not just to the account holder, but also to other users. The platform also has built-in audience-generating features, allowing for keyword tagging and other platform users to follow your content as it is uploaded.

Yarn

Yarn is a community storytelling platform created by the Pararchive: Open Access Community Storytelling and the Digital Archive project[12]. Pararchive was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and was developed at the University of Leeds. I became familiar with the Yarn platform at the Connecting Communities: Storytelling & the Digital Archive Conference & Community Showcase in March 2015. The platform was created through working 'with communities to develop new resources from the 'bottom-up' (instead of the conventional 'top-down')', with the aim to 'co-produce a more open resource that functions effectively for a diverse range of users and communities' (The Pararchive Project, 2013). This collectively researched and designed resource provides a platform for anyone to engage in research and practice, at localised levels from within their community.

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[12] View the Pararchive Project blog for full details of the project (see The Pararchive Project, 2013)

I created our 'archive partner' account on Yarn and developed three stories around our early workshops[13]. It was my hope that our co-creators would add their own recollections, building on my initial stories using the notes function, however there was no take up on this as again, outside of our workshops, co-creators were extremely busy and unable to contribute further time to our project. Despite the lack of co-creator interaction on Yarn, my impressions are that the platform is a contextually significant and user-friendly space for planning and journaling community-based research and practice[14]. The functionality to add media into a story from a hyperlink and without the requirement of uploading it to the Yarn platform creates a simple digital dissemination option, placing research into the arena of a global community of interest.

Flipsnack

Flipsnack is a digital flipbook application which can be used to create online publications. Jess Poole introduced Flipsnack as a method for digitising our zines, with a view towards adding interactive features such as hyperlinks and embedded videos. I set up an account and dedicated membership page for our project in July 2016. To date we have digitised and added interactive content for five handmade zines, which were co-created during our workshops. From Flipsnack I have then shared and embedded links to the

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[13]*Our Here* Yarn stories are available from:
https://yarncommunity.org/users/LeedsIntWomFilmColl

[14] In 2018 I launched a new collaborative project *Imperfect Interactive* with Allister Gall. We used Yarn as a platform to create an imperfect interactive documentary, which captures our first workshop at i-Docs 2018, Bristol. Available from: https://yarncommunity.org/stories/637

zines on social media and on our WordPress platform. Flipsnack allows members to create their own dedicated page, which can be personalised with images and text; acting as a portfolio of their publications. Our members page also openly displays simple viewer analytics to visitors. This feature has been useful for our co-creators to gain an insight into the size of audience which our zines are reaching.

Our first three Flipsnack zines were edited on Adobe Photoshop and InDesign and then uploaded to Flipsnack as a PDFs. However, as the application has been developed, I have begun to design whole zines using their custom flip book software. The software works with pages and layers, much like Adobe applications, but in a much simpler to use format, and on a free to use application. Our zines on Flipsnack are an example of how basic, free to use versions of world-leading software applications can be utilised for DIY, community-created projects.

Instagram

As *Our Here* has developed, I have noticed that our most involved co-creators all shared an interest in using Instagram in both their personal and creative lives. In summer 2017 we launched our final platform, an Instagram account, along with the project-related hashtags #ourhereleeds #internationalleeds and #knowyourleeds. We began using Instagram to broaden our transmedia storytelling methods and open our project and media to a wider audience of potential co-creators online. Roya, a photo blogger in her free time had suggested that we transition elements of our storytelling and media onto the platform.

The launch of our Instagram marked a peak in the collective interest to co-administer one of our platforms, with six co-creators joining our Facebook group conversation to plan and access the administration and launch of this final iteration. Unlike the launch of our activities on other platforms, several co-creators worked with me to collectively design a user name, dedicated hashtags and a call for participation for our Instagram account. These co-creators also have full editing access to the account and are actively posting photos and text highlighting our workshops and key events in the city from their perspective[15]. This simple creative platform has enabled us to divert our collective activities into a photo-sharing community, with the ease of accessibility and participation which came with everyone having a pre-exiting interest in using the platform in their free time.

WordPress

Since 2015 I have been gradually developing an interactive documentary platform for *Our Here* project using WordPress. Initially I launched a simple WordPress website for our project in April 2015. During the first two years of the *Our Here* project I used the site to act as a central online platform, through which to archive our media artefacts as they built up and to archive details of our workshops. The site has always been used as a central hub through which to channel the media for the project which has been uploaded across a range of commercial and community platforms. Upon each development and redesign of the *Our Here* website, I held conversations

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[15] The *Our Here* Instagram account is available to view from:
https://www.instagram.com/our.here.leeds/

with interested co-creators to ensure that the site met their expectations and provided a rounded representation of our collective and our project.

WordPress worked really successfully as a simple platform upon which to develop our DIY interactive documentary from the ground-up. As the project neared its final year, I began to consider how I could transform the site into a platform which represented our methods of conversational production visually. In early 2018 my friend, graphic and web designer Geoff Gibbs offered to collaborate with me to develop the *Our Here* interactive documentary platform on WordPress. I sketched out an interface design which was developed from our original website and retained the same content and overall visual style which the collective had worked on.

Using an updated WordPress theme allowed me to work with Geoff to redesign the original home page of our website into a landing page for our interactive platform. The landing page is based around a matrix of image grids which depict the chronology of our workshops and development of our conversational production method. *Our Here*'s media artefacts can be viewed from this landing page through a simple scrolling navigation of our conversations. Our media artefacts can also be viewed and interacted with via the platform's media archive. This form of navigation invites interactors to navigate our interactive documentary as a database of separate media artefacts and platform content—breaking it down into each media type.

Concluding Thoughts

I would like to conclude this chapter by discussing the challenges of facilitating co-creator engagement and direct involvement with platform design, administration and development.

Although I have remained the sole administrator of our online platforms and accounts[16], I have always endeavored to open up administration rights to co-creators. Throughout our three years of collective practice I sent regular updates to all co-creators at significant points when I had launched new material on our WordPress platform, and to invite collaboration on up-coming workshops and events. Regardless of if a co-creator had only been previously able to attend just one workshop, or all, I was always sure to keep everyone updated on the project and to keep the channels for collaboration open to all.

Upon creating each of our platform and social media accounts I have engaged in conversations with co-creators, asking: is this platform appropriate? Are you interested in using it? Do you have any issues or doubts about the suitability of the platform? Alongside these suitability questions, I also clarified that the accounts are open for editing by any co-creator, providing the log-in details as each new account was created. This option to edit platform content garnered very little interest from co-creators. This was understandable and somewhat expected, as I was working on the

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[16] With the exception of our Instagram account which is co-moderated and co-authored by several co-creators.

project in a full-time capacity, whereas co-creators had their own fulltime

work and voluntary commitments[17]. I took the main responsibility to maintain

and develop our platforms in-line with our conversations and the creative

direction of our workshop practices.

It has been through an openness to transdisciplinary methods that our

collective has flourished from adopting imperfect approaches to collaborative

practice. Learning skills together from the ground-up and through the lens of

interactive documentary production had initially led us towards the

exploration of DIY documentary filmmaking practices. A worthwhile process,

however, at times also a frustrating one. This early production period

outlined, for us, the reality and binary between the professional and user

generated content that we were viewing across the interactive documentary

form.

I discovered that the platforms and applications which are simple and free to

use provide useful analytics tools, showing visible counters for

viewing/interaction statistics. These commercial and community platforms

can enable DIY collective projects to gauge their audience online. Moving

away from the one bespoke platform approach of most interactives also

enables project content to potentially reach a wider audience of interactors;

outside of the limited community of practitioners and scholars working

exclusively on the form.

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[17] See Appendix A.1 and B.1.1 for co-creator feedback on time available to collaborate on the project.

Chapter Three: Conversational Production and Practice Outcomes

Introduction

The practices and outcomes of *Our Here* have emerged organically through conversations during our workshops and chance introductions; all manifested from the expanding social nature of our collective practices. The digital and material-based artefacts of *Our Here* have been intrinsically shaped by the everyday social situations and informal methods which have seeded gradually within our convened international community. Our workshop practices have taken onboard multiple forms and have been shaped through the layering of our conversations; carrying along the ideas, themes and stories of previous workshops.

I have termed this methodology *conversational production* from within the context of the interactive documentary form. To illustrate this method, in this chapter I will trace the practice outcomes of *Our Here* via the journey and polyphony of our conversations as they have expanded and weaved the path of our interactive documentary production process.

Early Conversation Workshops

International Women's Day 2015 captures the beginning of our
conversations, revealing the early significance of *conversational production*
as a method for locating commonality and the sharing of experiences
amongst our emerging collective. This short film opens with a brief
soundscape of our post-workshop conversations as they overflowed in the
space after our initial workshop had ended. The body of the film centres
around our initial conversation points. This first film captures our initial
introductions and co-creators beginning to share stories of how they came to
live in Leeds, their impressions of the city and the challenges which they
have faced. Two filmmakers also feature in the conversations: Sharon
Hopper and Jan Worth share their experiences of the emancipatory potential
of participatory and collective filmmaking practices.

Conversation Club chronicles almost the entirety of the conversations which
occurred during our second workshop held at the University of Leeds
Language Centre. The stories and ideas which emerged from the circle of
women who participated in this workshop provided many of the key themes
which our creative practice has gone on to explore. Of most significance
from this conversation came several ideas which were suggested and
carried forward to shape the design of the interactive documentary project
which we have developed.

Conversation as Co-Created Film

In the period following these early conversation workshops, I collaborated with several co-creators who had expressed an interest in making short personal documentary films and learning production skills through this process. In 2015 our conversations centred around developing skills and storytelling through DIY collective filmmaking practices. In *Out of the UK,* co-creator Nathalie Yang shares her feelings of belongingness and connection to Leeds as she describes how life in the city has been transformational for her. She talks about her identity as a dancer, which developed during her years within a local community of Swing dancers in Leeds, and then later widening to dance communities in other parts of Europe. The conversation here explores feelings of belongingness and the enactment of citizenship within a local and wider community. Nathalie describes the significance of belonging to a local community for her wellbeing.

She also suggests that our project should reflect the 'flowing in life' and 'uncertainty' which migration experiences bring; stating that: 'this is not a fixed script story but a real-life journey'. Passages from Nathalie's blog also appear in the film and reflect her sadness and anger at being forced to leave the life she had built for herself in the UK. Her title for the blog 'Out of the UK' is also carried through into the film's title as a way of connecting the two media artefacts.

Maisaa's Abbey Dash 2015 emerged from many conversations between myself and co-creators Maisaa and Jess. Our conversations centered around how Maisaa could represent her passion for running as an act of self-care in a short film. Maisaa also wished for the film to reflect both her life

in Leeds and the struggles which she faces due to the situation in her home country of Syria.

In the film Maisaa shares her insights into the everyday reality of displaced Syrians. She discusses the difficulty of being able to feel settled in another country whilst her home country is facing total desolation. Maisaa speaks with empowering honesty and bravery about 'life in a terminal'. The duality of trying to continue and contribute as a citizen in the UK, in the wake of being separated from her family and culture; whilst also being painfully aware of their suffering and the dangers which face them.

Our conversations though the process of making this film were also uplifting at times. Maisaa spoke about her hopes for future generations of Syrians. She also wove the recent phone conversations she had had with her mother and sister back home in Syria into our conversation. She reflects the stark disparity in living conditions between life in the UK and her home country. An impossible juxtaposition which she is faced with witnessing vicariously during her phone calls back to Syria. Maisaa's defiant spirit breaks through in the visual realm of the film. Her sheer joy in the act of running, the smile she vividly expresses as she prepares for the 10K, and then again after her run, as she shares the moment with her friends.

The conversations which we captured during the process of making the film flow through into our next film *British Art Show 8*. These earlier conversations are weaved into the soundtrack of this film which explores our dérive around an exhibition at Leeds City Art Gallery. Here our former

conversations interplay with those which we had whilst we encountered the artworks in the gallery space; creating at once a blending and disruption to the auditory realm.

Conversation as Multi-Vocal Narrative

Our next workshop was also between two close friends, co-creators Magda and Felicity. Their conversation reflected a narrative which had been raised in previous workshops: the importance of friendships and shared enactments of citizenship between local people and newly arrived citizens. This workshop was focused on reminiscence as a conversational device to develop the themes of collective memory and social capital within the project.

Magda spoke openly with Felicity of her perceptions during their first meeting whilst volunteering together for the Red Cross in Leeds. Felicity describes her enthusiasm towards making connections and friendships with people who have immigrated to the UK. Magda talks about how she came to the UK with teaching experience and within a week of arriving she was volunteering to help children from different cultural backgrounds with their Maths, Science and English. She undertook the volunteering to gain experience for her career and to meet new people. The theme of running as a shared pastime is revisited in this conversation; in relation to significant places where the two friends spend time together.

There is a really heartening and honest tone to the conversation as Magda and Felicity relive their memories of spending a Christmas together with Felicity's family. Calling back to Nathalie Yang's discussion of loneliness in *Out of the UK*, Magda opens up about the reality of moving to a new country and how this can be a lonely experience to begin with. She also discusses joining various convened social, volunteering and exercise communities as a pro-active route for self-care.

Conversation in the Shadow of Brexit

The outcomes of the EU referendum in summer 2016 reverberated through our conversations; at once disrupting and re-routing our concerns as a collective. This dramatic turning point in UK politics and our social landscape compounded our intentions for the project, and the necessity to come together during the fallout of the result. Supporting each other through this unexpected shift gave our project a new immediacy and increased our collective sense of purpose.

This period also saw the entrance of new forms into our workshops, through the broadening of our practices into material-based crafts. Our next conversations took place just two weeks after the Brexit result, during a zine making workshop at Leeds Trinity University, which was attended by former and current international students, alongside Jess Poole. To foster a continuation of our early conversations and to carry into our workshop the voices and ideas of co-creators who were unable to attend, I shared some of the themes which our storytelling had previously explored. I offered starting

prompts to co-creators: the open themes of 'home', 'community' and 'everyday life' derived from our earlier conversations.

Figure 49. Mishka's zine page from the Zine in a Day workshop, 2016. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Mishka**,** who came to the UK from Slovakia to study, describes her early feelings of home between the two countries as 'sitting on two chairs, but not really claiming neither of them'. She went on to write:

> I was connecting home to a specific place or a country…I realised that I
> don't have to fix myself to a specific place or country (in order to have home
> or feel at home)… After some time, I figured that I AM MY HOME…I'm at
> home wherever I feel comfortable, safe…where I have good friends who

care for me…and where I can welcome and make comfortable other people.

I have learnt that home is in my heart.
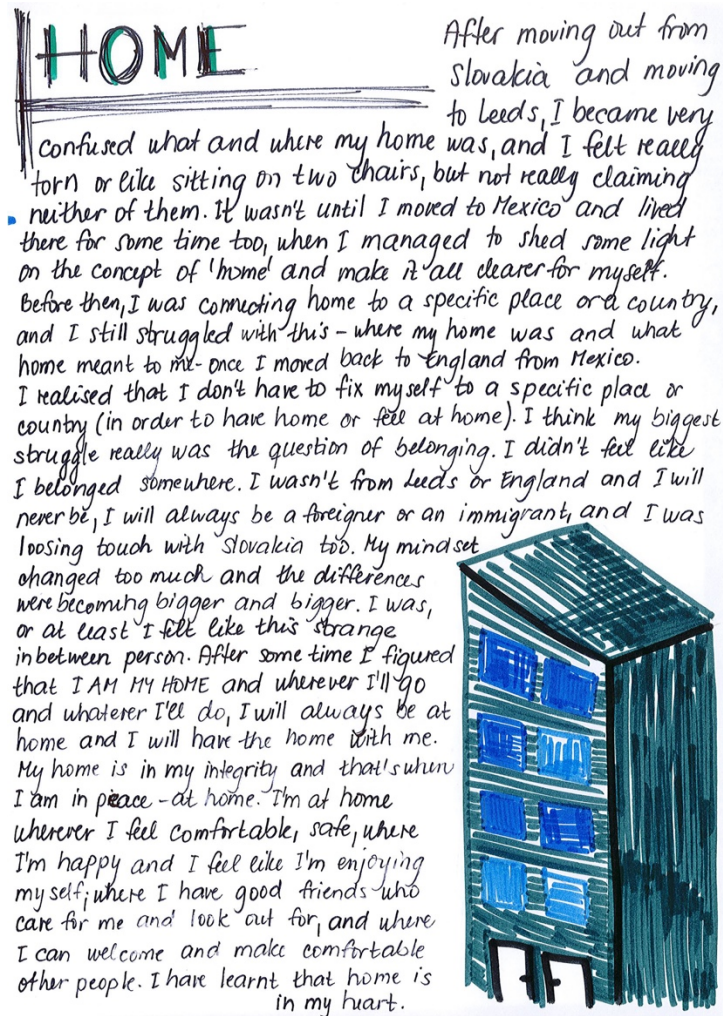
Figure 50. Mishka's 'Home' zine page from the Zine in a Day workshop, 2016. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

During our conversations, I spoke of how I find the stories and experiences of women who have immigrated inspiring and empowering. One of my zine pages was in celebration of how I personally perceive the strengths and achievements of immigrant women. A newly arrived Japanese student, Eriko, created one of her zine pages to share about how she felt a sense of freedom in the UK, in contrast to the social and patriarchal restrictions she was feeling at home in Japan.

Figure 51. Eriko's zine page from the Zine in a Day workshop, 2016. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective).

Eriko and her friend Sayaka brought to our conversation some wonderfully enlightened mantras for newly arrived international students to consider: 'How to make international community=Just be yourself where you are new'; 'Happy Birthday to brand new me' and the statement from which we chose the title for our project 'Let's make second home our here'.

One of the zine pages which has been commented on by audiences of our zine several times is the pictorial diagram which depicts the transitory reality of immigration for international students. At the end of our zine in a day

workshop, Jess came up with a closing mantra which really encapsulated our connection and conversation that day: 'together we are stronger' (see Figure 3).

In February 2017, we were invited by Marvina Newton to be involved in the One Day Without Us national day of strike action in Leeds. This was following on from my previous conversations with Marvina during an interview I held with her in early 2016. To continue our new conversations and practice of zine making, I also suggested to Marvina that we could run a street-side zine stall alongside her craft stall to collect pages and create an independent publication as a method for documenting the event.

This invitation to collaborate marked a pivotal and impactful turning point for *Our Here*—through which we were enabled to broaden our convened community of co-creators and build an ongoing partnership with the Angel of Youths charity. It had always been my aim that the project would develop a community of co-creators which reached out across the city, across cultures, nationalities, classes and generations. I was incredibly keen to build even further on our early aspirations around creating visibility, connections and spaces for women from diverse cultural background—to convene and explore the international identity and fabric of our city. In essence, I had always hoped that the spaces we created in our workshops would bring together women from different cultural, socio-economic and generational backgrounds who wouldn't have otherwise had the platform to form connections and share experiences through conversation and everyday creativity.

The short film *One Day Without Us Leeds* captures some of the key conversations of the day surrounding our celebration of and solidarity with those who have migrated to Leeds. The film and zine capture stories from the diverse communities and generations who attended the event; speaking out against post-Brexit hate crime and the stereotyping of immigrants. The film also features two short interviews, one with a group of European veterinarians who are campaigning to raise awareness on how Brexit will affect animal welfare and food standards in the UK. The other interview was with a passer-by, Libyan-born Ahmed who decided to stay and join the event as he felt a connection to the conversations we were having. The film also incorporates pages from our zine and documentary footage of the zine making stall.

The *One Day Without Us* zine is available as both a paper and interactive digital form[18]. The original paper version of the zine opens with a quote taken from Marvina's speech during the event. The following pages generate conversations between the people who contributed their drawings, stories and ideas to the zine. Nine-year-old Lloyd, the son of co-creator Sam, contributed perhaps the most poignant page which depicts an Angler fish as a metaphor for the resolute strength of immigrants in the face of hostility. The theme of the natural world as a symbol of strength and freedom is also captured in the beautiful simplicity of Mishka's page which draws parallels between migratory birds and human migration.

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[18] The *One Day Without Us* interactive zine can be viewed on Flipsnack:
https://www.flipsnack.com/leedsintwomfilmcol/leeds-one-day-without-us-zine.html

Figure 52. Mishka's page from the One Day Without Us Zine. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective, 2018).

Expanding the Conversation with Angel of Youths

Following from the film and zine which we co-created for the One Day Without Us event, we continued to build on our conversations with Marvina Newton and the girls and women involved with her charity. During 2017 – 2018 we gradually developed a partnership through co-organising workshops with Angels of Youth and the longstanding collective of co-creators from *Our Here*.

Fostering and developing sustainable collaborations with Marvina and the girls and women from Angels of Youth enabled our collective to more fully

realise the aspirations for an impactful practice which we had been working towards over the previous two years. We had by now formed a longstanding collective of co-creators, developed our workshop practices through our conversations and transdisciplinarity, and now we were able to co-organise meaningful and useful workshops which opened and developed *Our Here* within a wider convened community of co-creators.

We were invited by Marvina to run another zine workshop during her event to mark International Day of the Girl Child 2017. Marvina suggested that the zine could explore a "letter to self" approach in order to draw on the theme of the day, which was: "how can we empower girls to fulfil their potential?". During the workshop we held creative and supportive conversations around two large tables: one for writing a letter to a younger or older self and one for creating drawings and collage related to the theme (see Figure 53).

The fifteen illustrated letter postcards which were created during the workshop were combined in the design of an interactive zine online which stands as a creative record of the event. I designed and built the interactive zine entirely on Flipsnack; editing a layout for the letters and artwork which manifested a new iteration of the conversations between co-creators. The interactive zine also embeds the social media conversations which were happening during and after the event, through hyperlinks to Instagram content from the *Our Here* photo-sharing community.
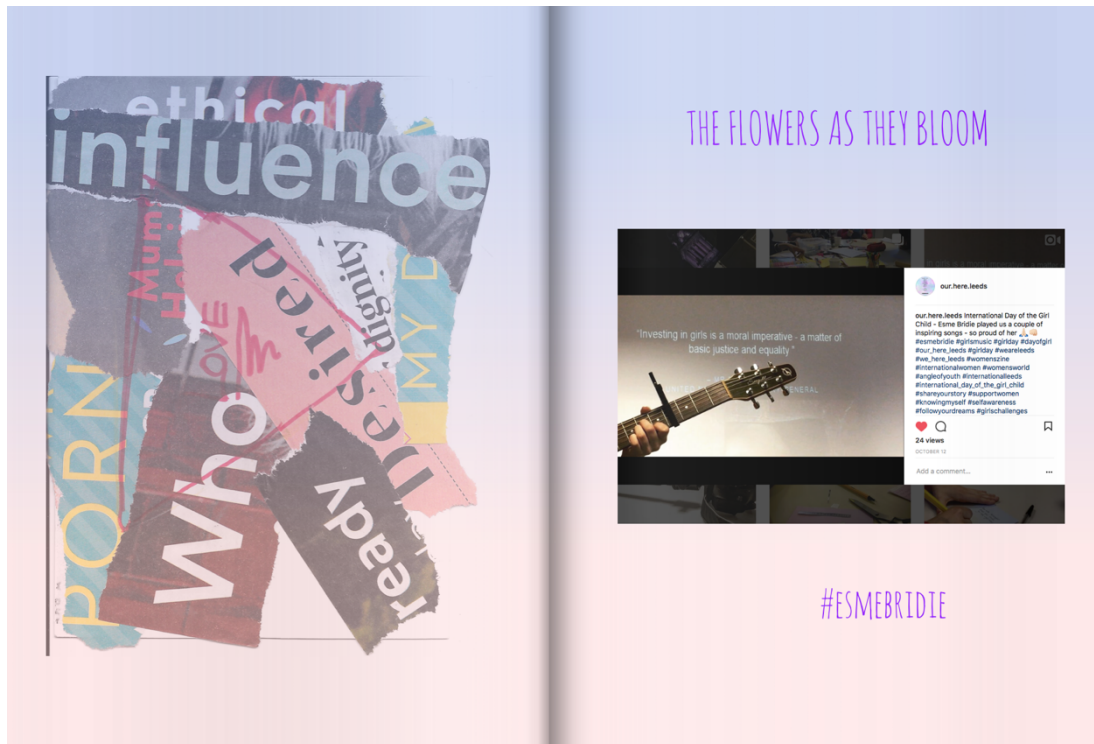
Figure 53. A page from the Postcard Zine which brings together handcrafted and interactive content via hyperlinks. (Source: Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective, 2018).

The conversations of the interactive zine differ from the conversations during the workshop. During the workshop the co-creators were discussing what their letters were going to be about and how they planned to illustrate them. Many co-creators worked together to plan out their postcards through sharing ideas and building their creative confidence collectively. The conversation brought together by the interactive zine represents individual voices, stories and ideas which build page by page to form a gathering of voices and narratives which intertwine and finding a polyphonic strength.

Following from this workshop we co-organised and ran one final workshop around International Women's Day 2018. The *Our Here Celebration* was another collaboration between *Our Here* and Angels of Youth. This workshop brought together another conversation between longstanding *Our*

Here co-creators and new collaborators, both from Marvina's more recent

Angels of Youth placement student group and women and girls who were

interested in our project through hearing about our workshops. We held

lengthily discussions during the planning stages of the workshop to ensure

that we were offering a dynamic safe-space which would support the shared

conversations and activities of both *Our Here* and Angels of Youth.

The planning conversations were really crucial to this workshop and to

facilitate a collective discussion about what direction *Our Here* and the

Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective would take once my

PhD was completed. Among the ideas for activities and themes were: a craft

table for the détournement of patriarchal greetings cards; showcasing and

exhibiting the interactive content and zines of our *Our Here*; distributing our

zines; imperfect/DIY mobile filmmaking; DIY name badge crafting; bring and

share a dish; Herstory craft activities and musical performances. There was

a clear agenda that we would continue with our DIY filmmaking and crafting

practices. Moreover, new conversations were emerging from our

collaboration with Angels of Youth. We identified a need for a monthly

women's/girl's wellbeing circle in Leeds which would be accessible to

women from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. This is

something that I go on to discuss further in the final chapter of this thesis.

I welcomed co-creators to the workshop with the preface that *Our Here* is a

safe-space for women and girls to have conversations and celebrate our

shared interculturality through everyday creativity. I thanked our

longstanding co-creators for their collaboration and support and I opened the

space for new conversations and collaborations. I invited everyone to interact with our online content via the MacBook which was set up and to browse our paper zines and take a free copy home with them. I also shared our hopes and plans for the collective to continue with a focus on co-creating an accessible women's/girl's wellbeing circle in the city. Marvina introduced the Herstory craft activity and spoke about the significance of International Women's Day for reclaiming and developing untold and marginalised women's histories, alongside representations of our own personal challenges and achievements.

Over the next two hours we shared food, sang, read poetry, created media together and gathered around the tables to craft. We also spoke about the project and how we could develop new supportive and creative conversations. New connections were made throughout the workshop. The event brought together girls and women from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds to talk about exploring creative and empowering careers and developing new skills. Our celebration was a crescendo of conversations. With renewed promise that we would continue to broaden our convened community and our workshop spaces which bring together women and girls who would otherwise not have the opportunity to meet.

In the next and final conclusion chapter, I will draw together the interim findings which have been shared and discussed throughout this thesis to collate my research claims and suggest areas where this research can be expanded and improved upon.

Chapter Four: Final Reflections and Future Practices

Introduction

In this concluding chapter I will recap the areas which my research has

investigated and the challenges and tensions within my positionality and

new methodology. I will also outline the key findings and impacts of the

practice and research. This will be led by a discussion of the qualitative

survey data which I have gathered from co-creators at various stages of the

project. I will conclude this thesis by speaking about the expansion of the

project and the new collaborative areas I am perusing in light of my findings.

I will also suggest other possible future directions and areas for

improvement surrounding the research and practice.

Questions and Methods- A Recap

This practice-based PhD has provided me with a context to continue my

research and practice into the exploration and investigation of auto-

ethnographic DIY filmmaking and transdisciplinary arts-based practices.

During this project, I have also expanded upon my previous experiences of

developing social spaces through which to convene and connect diverse international communities. Through the development of innovative co-constructed research from the ground-up, I have striven to investigate some of the ever-present questions surrounding collaboration, participation and co-creator design in the interactive documentary form. In doing so I have generated vital new data which provides insights into how communities can develop their own production methods and gain autonomy over all stages of project design and production. The development of my *conversational production* methodology, has been informed by my alignment with emancipatory and imperfect (Gall, 2016) participatory action research frameworks. I have developed a documentary arts-based methodology which places 'everyday creativity' and the formation of 'social connection' (Gauntlett, 2011) above the limiting factors of professional production processes and standards.

I set out on at the beginning of my PhD to investigate if the interactive documentary could be further expanded as an inclusive co-created form for communities and creative practitioners. My aim was to create sustained possibilities for collaboration throughout *all* stages of production, including initial conception, design, production, post production and platform design. Interactive documentaries produced and designed by media practitioners are a standard within the form. Alternatively, I wanted to introduce methods which embraced crafting and imperfection as emancipatory potentials for citizen co-creators with no previous experience in filmmaking or platform design. My central aim was to breech the dominance of professional media practices and traditional documentary filmmaking in the form, in favour of

finding new methods through a ground-up approach to practice. I saw the potential for an imperfect and collective iteration of the form, through which to respond to the scholar and practitioner debates surrounding collaboration and participation.

Our Here crafts imperfection within the interactive documentary form through the innovative new methodology of *conversational production*. This thesis has provided me a forum through which to share and analyse my data, in an articulation of the practice of co-creating an interactive documentary. Writing up and analysing the iterative processes and autoethnographic accounts of the praxis has allowed me to reflect upon and contextualise the path which my research has taken. I identify with Gall's (2016, p.144) description of the relationship between the written and practice outputs of practice-based research. He suggests that 'the written text and film represent the context-specific moments in which collective experiences emerge, although retrospectively and imperfectly'. In addition to this, as I privilege a 'process over product' (Juhasz, 2003, p.72) approach to my research. I therefore equally consider the entire process of the project to be an integral part of my PhD submission.

Tensions within the Research

There are arising problematic tensions and contradictions to explore within the research and practice surrounding my research. PhD research is inherently a process of developing expert and professional approaches to fields, problems and questions. Choosing imperfect practices and collective

experimentation as methods for locating a new praxis is far-removed from the approaches normatively taken in doctoral research. However, my DIY ethos towards the research and practice was also reflective of my own positionality, as a newcomer to the form and to practice-based co-created research.

Using commercial platforms such as Instagram also lead to tensions through a restriction over the design of how the DIY media content appears and is contextualised. The very nature of Instagram is highly constructed. Even though it is used in a vernacular way by many- to share personal images and ideas, it also proliferates a highly commercial context. The platform is predominantly used by companies and consumers to engage in the commercial and vernacular promotion of brands and products. Other commercial platforms such as Flipsnack, Vimeo and SoundCloud also restrict the aesthetic nature of how community-made media is presented, embedded and viewed. These platforms did, however, enable a facility in which our media could be situated within our own project landing page; providing some control over the contextualisation of our media artefacts. Yarn is very much in contrast to commercial platforms; in that it offers a more suitable context within community-based research. Yarn also suited our methods, with the platform's ground-up approach to co-created design.

In the first year of the project I went through a process of analysing interactive documentaries, paying particular attention to how they were produced. During this time, I was trying to establish how to develop the co-creation of an interactive documentary with the resources and skills we had

and would be developing. There came a tension that year between my research aims to develop an interactive documentary which was entirely co-created, and co-creator hesitancy towards making suggestions which impacted the design of my central PhD project. I planned our early workshops to be completely open, to empower co-creators to directly shape the project design though our conversations. The participatory action research framework was very effective in providing a contextualisation for co-creators that the conversations, themes and praxis emerging from previous workshops would inform our future iterations, in order to develop a new methodology.

Developing a production methodology which welcomed and included a collection of diverse aesthetics, methods and practices understandably had the potential to appear rather concerning and un-unified to some co-creators (see Appendix A.1 Q.4 and Q.9). However, as the project and our collective developed, I could see that many co-creators grasped that my central aim was to develop an inclusive interactive documentary project, with no emphasis on a final iteration. My intention was to record and analyse how the project changed over time, as the practices and media were shaped by the flow of co-creators and our conversations. In light of this tension, going forward, I would perhaps seek to re-work and reconsider *conversational production* as *conversational creativity*, or something along those lines. The term "production" marks an emphasis on product, whereas our practices have demonstrated that significance and impact can be located within everyday creative *processes*- long before any tangible product comes to fruition, if at all.

Findings and Impact: Interpreting Co-Creator Experiences

I will now summarise the key findings and areas of impact which the development of this new praxis and production methodology contribute. The data which informs my findings is taken from the short documentary films, qualitative surveys, audio-visual and paper-based records which were a result of my engagement with an iterative PAR approach to address the identified gap in inclusive production methods. Summerising my interim findings and the results of my data analysis on co-creator experience and opinion, I have identified three main findings, and I will go on to suggest the impact which these findings have had[19].

Figure 54. Slide illustrating the Conversational Production method taken from my presentation at Provoking Discourse, Manchester Metropolitan University Postgraduate Research Conference. (Source: Zarins, 2018).

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[19] These findings and impact were discovered and generated through *conversational production* in *Our Here* and were discussed in my paper '*Our Here*: Imperfect Interactions in Interactive Storytelling' (Zarins, 2018) (see Figure 54).

1) **A critical engagement with data on community production experiences is essential in the development of inclusive and sustainable production methodologies**

As my literature review demonstrates, early scholarship surrounding the interactive documentary form called for the development of strategies for collaboration with citizen co-creators and opportunities for citizens to challenge 'conceptual authorship' (Gaudenzi, 2014, p.143). However, until 2017, there was no published data or research which directly represented the production experiences of citizen participants and co-creators in interactive documentary projects. Prior to the publications of Anandana Kapur and David Green et.al in 2017, which directly addressed the void in experiential community-based production data, there was instead a primary focus on citizen participation via User Generated Content as an addendum to published projects and platforms.

Through my analysis of the early literature on audience research, I evidenced that this early reliance on audience-only participation was not fruitful, as limited data revealed that the form was not attracting robust viewing figures at that time (Nash, 2014b, p.125). In my literature review, I argued that this approach of housing user-generated content on a separate section of published projects was not inclusive, and reinforced the digital

divide for those marginalised citizens who did not have access to an internet connection or the technology to view projects online. I did identify some projects which were using participatory filmmaking methods and featuring citizen-made content throughout published projects[20]. However, until 2017, there was no literature or practice-based examples of projects which had actively gathered primary data on citizen production experiences in order to expand into new and inclusive production territories.

In 2017, Anandana Kapur published her ongoing research into autoethnographic approaches to co-creation, in which she is gathering and using data on co-creator production experiences to inform her future practice-based research. Kapur's project is based on mobile filmmaking methods. The filmmaker addresses the tension between the socio-economic background of some of her co-creators and the use of technology which they cannot usually access (ibid. p.32). In this critique of her own methods, Kapur is raising an important subject for debate and the need for further research into how co-creators can have autonomy over production methods which present their own methods of communication and representation. In the analysis of my own research data, I have addressed this point and evidenced how my new production methodology actively welcomes co-creators to contribute to an expanding collective toolkit of their own vernacular media and arts-based methods.

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[20] *Hollow* (date) contains entire short documentary films created by the community which the project is based on.

In the same year, North Lab research Centre published their findings from a two-year investigation into co-creator production experiences in collaborative interactive documentary (Green, et al, 2017, p.1). The team identified that the key to co-creator autonomy and the move away from solo authorship paradigms could be located in the design structure of projects and platforms (ibid. p.3). Through their qualitative analysis of participant experiential interviews, personal research journals and workshop data, they identified themes surrounding the challenges of representation, ownership and audience. Their article suggested that future research should interrogate the positionality of producers and look into the creation of a new toolkit to enable emancipated co-creation and a restructuring of the form (ibid., p.10).

My project and the resultant data provide a body of research into co-creator preferences and experiences which are required to fully unpack and develop community-led production resources. Firstly, I gathered and analysed my primary data, I then generated themes surrounding co-creator wishes and expectations. To summarise, the findings of my analysis indicate that co-creators:

-Feel comfortable in developing their own organic agency when using audio-visual equipment without direction from a project author or formal filmmaker.

-Require flexible and open options for long and short term collaboration.

-Are willing to discuss the tensions within iterative collective practices and the process over product approach. Co-creators understandably have differing views surrounding uncertainty, creativity and professionalism.

-May expect a more traditional approach to authorship and authorial control within the contexts of research and creative projects.

-Feel comfortable with smaller and minimal film production crews during formally documented events and workshops.

-Appreciate the sharing of autoethnographic accounts and personal storytelling from the creative practitioners and community-based researchers they are collaborating with.

-Require safe community-based spaces in which to critically question issues and plan how to collectively take action to affect social change.

-View conversation and community storytelling methods as a priority in the development of co-constructed research and practice.

-Have an interest in, and are committed to, shaping all stages of media production and (co)learning skills in pre-production, production and post-production.

-Are interested in moving beyond filmmaking to explore arts-based iterations of autoethnographic documentary.

Informed by these main findings which are based on my research into co-creator wishes and expectations, our sustained collective praxis developed over three years. During each iteration of the project, I worked with the emerging data and findings on co-creator experience to develop a new production methodology, through which to disrupt dominant production paradigms and offer new inclusive approaches for co-creation.

Despite the challenging nature of the project and the time constraints which co-creators experienced, modelling my production method on conversation – the aspect which co-creators felt was most personally impactful – enabled their collaborations on the project to flow freely, without them needing to make commitments of time beyond attending workshops when they were able to. The collective dimension of the project allowed for this method, as some co-creators had more interest in other aspects beyond the main social workshops, such as co-editing short films, photo-blogging or design work on our digital and interactive zines.

Enabling open access for co-creators to flow in and out of the project broadened the reach and impact of our collective practices. Rather than focusing for long periods on producing professional documentary films, as most interactive documentaries do. Instead, we were able to adapt our practices and workshops to welcome new co-creators and our charity partner Angel of Youths as the reach of the project expanded into new communities and modes of expression. With five longstanding co-creators choosing to be involved directly in the development of the collective, we

were able to develop practices and workshops which brought our
conversations to a total of sixty-five co-creators.

Adopting a conversational openness to production also ensured that co-
creators were able to directly shape and re-shape the project. This created a
sustained co-creation. One in which there was room to explore everyone's
ideas and practices; leading to a more meaningful and impactful co-creation
experiences. One co-creator commented: '[the project] offered me to chance
to express my thoughts and my feelings and of course make my voice heard
by other people'. She added 'people working together towards something
which in our case was this film, zine and the whole project! It's "US" that
make this project alive! All of us' (Appendix B.1). Another co-creator shared
her experiences of the approach of the project as being 'interactive,
inclusive, very welcoming and adaptable – never pressured or forced into
anything. Always could do, contribute, create whatever I wanted. I loved to
observe how the project kept growing and I am excited to participate on its
future development' (Appendix B.1.1).

One of the main areas I identified to disrupt authorial and directorial control
in the form was in post-production. In my analysis chapter, I critically
analysed existing methods of post-production and provided an example of
how these paradigms are already being challenged using participatory
filmmaking workshop methods. In order to empower my fellow co-creators to
have structural and authorial agency over their collective narratives, I
developed co-editing methods to offer co-creators to have a collective
editorial voice during each iteration of our project. I developed options for co-

creators to direct the edit of drafts online from wherever they were located to overcome the physical barriers posed by borders. I also developed in-person, co-editing workshops, in which I shared my own developing knowledge of post-production with co-creators and encouraged them to develop their own editing styles.

This interactive documentary project is truly a reflection of the period which it was co-created during. The looming development of Brexit brought with it uncertainty for all immigrant communities in the UK and an increase in hate crime. The political and social climate provided an additional call to continue developing a sustainable and inclusive production methodology, through which to hold space for and empower co-creators to represent their own narratives and perspectives.

The shadow of Brexit saw our collective form closer bonds during our workshops. Sharing our experiences, concerns, and above all providing a safe space to celebrate the diversity of our stories and feelings about immigration and life in Leeds. The thread of precariousness surrounding immigration experiences is woven throughout the stories developed by our collective. Nathalie spoke openly in our first film *Out of the UK* (2015) and her blog (of the same title) about suffering with depression when she was forced by tightening visa regulations to leave her life, partner, friends and community in the UK. Maisaa shared her experiences of being displaced and being unable to return home to her family in Syria. Shortly after the EU Referendum, Georgia, a European student from Cyprus, asserted that the UK had previously been viewed by many international and European

students as a welcoming country. Georgia voices her concerns that

international and European students may not feel as welcome to come and

study in the UK anymore[21].

When I began to receive feedback at the end of the project, the

questionnaires appeared to voice a consensus that the most impactful

experiences of co-creation had been felt during our sharing and celebrating

of co-creator immigration stories, post-referendum:

> It is not only a way to raise awareness among people locals and nationals
> but also a way of supporting and welcoming people from other countries in
> here. It is a sign that British still believe in globalisation, in humanity, in
> cultural differences, in internationalism…the best representation of British
> people who support internationals here in this difficult times of uncertainty. It
> is so valuable to know that people like you are supporting in every mean
> immigrants in the UK. Mentally and psychologically means so much for us
> (Appendix B.1).

Whilst another co-creator highlights the significance of our interactive

documentary post-referendum, and the connections which she developed

through our collaborative conversations and practices:

> I definitely learnt how Brexit has not just affected me and my circle of friends
> but other people in other circumstances and that I while you see on the

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[21] *Our Here: A Zine Workshop by Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective* (2017) is available from: https://vimeo.com/201940523 .

internet that lots of people feel the same way (upset) about Brexit, actually

meeting them in person and talking about it was far more cathartic than just

'liking' things online from behind the screen (Appendix B.1).

Through encouraging empowering conversations and celebratory narratives

surrounding how our collective could represent personal migration

experiences, some co-creators noticed that the project had an impact on

their self-esteem and wellbeing. One co-creator explained this impact as

feeling as though: 'You are not alone, that there are always people you can

bond with, talk to, work with, collaborate with. That together you can achieve

anything' (ibid.). Whilst the emancipatory impact of the project was

described by another co-creator as giving her 'confidence to speak up for

myself as a woman and as a woman in a foreign country' (ibid.).

Summarising the findings from my data on co-creator wishes, production

experiences and impact leads directly back to one centralised theme: the

significance and social impact of conversation. Through the development of

conversational production, I have prioritised the wishes and ongoing

feedback from my fellow co-creators to design an inclusive methodology

which imbues the elements and social impact of conversation into each

stage of production. Harnessing the power of connection through everyday

creativity, I have contributed new knowledge on how communities can use

conversational production in order to gain autonomy over their narratives

and lived experiences.

In order to continue to expand the growing body of research and practice into inclusive co-creation, I would call upon communities and creative practitioners to use *conversational production* as a methodology to develop their own praxis (see Appendix D). There are some improvements which I would suggest in order to gather further robust data. For example, gathering feedback from co-creators after each iteration of this project would have provided me with more nuanced data on their experiences of co-editing, co-learning and attending academic and industry events. In person workshops provide a good opportunity to gather feedback immediately after co-creators have experienced specific iterations and production environments. I also suggest that further audio-visual documentation of collective workshops and co-constructed research interactions in a community setting would provide valuable data on how traditional documentary paradigms can be disrupted and expanded upon further.

2) **Imperfect arts-based methods open up emancipatory and empowering project entry routes for people with barriers to collaboration**

In my literature review, I discussed the imbalance between suggestions from within scholarship to imagine interactive documentary as 'a radical new form' (Gaudenzi, 2013, p.14), and an articulation and experimentation of this through practice. My early research surrounding existing methods and

scholarship demonstrated that, whilst there were calls to develop a dialogue between radical DIY filmmaking methods (see Coffman, 2014; see Dovey 2014; see Rose, 2014) and the form, there was little evidence that media producers and filmmakers were relinquishing their authorial control to favour of a more inclusive community-led approach. In late 2014 I began forming my research question and aims to address this imbalance. Inspired by the methods and political engagement of the newly launched Radical Film Network, I envisaged how my positionality as a creative practitioner and newcomer to the form could free me to investigate collective workshop practices and develop imperfect iterations.

During the early iterations and development of our collective, I gathered much needed primary data on co-creator wishes, production experiences, and early impact. Through my analysis of this data, I identified some of the potential barriers and challenges to collaboration which co-creators were experiencing:

-Over the course of the project several co-creators expressed that their own lack of free personal time was a major barrier to fulfilling the level of participation which they had hoped for.

-Many co-creators were unavailable to collaborate in continuation over the three years, due to work, life and family commitments.

-I had witnessed through my one-to-one conversations with co-creators that for some, being involved in a three-year interactive documentary project was, quite understandably, an overwhelming prospect.

-Co-creators were experiencing traumatic immigration situations and demands to apply for new visas. Unfortunately, some co-creators were forced to return to their home countries due to this.

-Without a set production standard or direction from a central author or producer, there were times when co-creators were understandably overwhelmed by the open invitation to create whatever they wanted, and choose from a wide range of equipment, or indeed, use their own.

-Co-creators expressed concerns surrounding the imperfect DIY nature of the project. Suggesting that without a set theme or subject to base production on, the project may not be focused enough.

-It was challenging to describe the premise of, and to establish, a collective approach at the start of the project. The contexts of PhD research and filmmaking are traditionally viewed as solo authored practices.

-Co-creators found it understandably challenging to develop new creative confidence and skills using filmmaking as a method. Making a personal short film was quite an intimidating prospect.

Through the development of *conversational production*, I addressed these challenges and offered ways of working around barriers, in order to enable as many co-creators as possible to continue their collaboration on the project inclusively. Each iteration of the project and emerging praxis signified an expansion of the methodology in a bid to include and celebrate the creative ideas and emerging approach of our collective. In order for co-creators to have the opportunity to collaborate on each stage of the production process, I responded with an introduction of the following methods:

-Developing a series of socials and welcoming a social element into all workshops. This provided busy co-creators with an opportunity to enjoy their limited free time together, without the pressure to produce a tangible outcome from each iteration.

-Sending out regular email newsletters to keep all co-creators up to date with how the project was developing and opportunities for them to attend workshops, provide feedback on their experiences, or get involved in online editing discussions to continue shaping the project remotely.

-Creating a methodology which enabled co-creators to freely enter and exit the collective autonomously, with no requirements for a continuous collaboration commitment.

-Introducing imperfect arts-based practices to our workshops in order to demonstrate the emancipatory nature of everyday creativity, and a process over product approach.

-Moving beyond filmmaking as a central method and empowering co-creators to share their own creative practices with the collective and shape future iterations and methods.

-Using conversation as a methodology in order to demonstrate to co-creators how *all* input from them was significantly informing the development of our project and praxis, demonstrating that collective conversation holds the power to disrupt traditional authorship paradigms, in favour of a more inclusive approach.

Drawing together these findings surrounding the barriers and challenges which co-creators face, two main strategies and methods emerge as the most essential elements which both enabled me to overcome these barriers, and achieve my research aim: to disrupt dominant production paradigms and authorial control. The first strategy which had a significant impact on co-creator experience was the inclusion of a social aspect within each iteration. In response to Alexandra Juhasz's (2014) examples of how communities can best balance their collaborations between online and in-person iterations, alongside the emerging experiential data which I was gathering from co-creators, our project represents an emphasis on in-person collaboration. In addition, through holding the majority of our collective workshops in-person, I also directly addressed the inherent limitations with

the user generated content approach, which many early projects considered to be a substantial expression of co-creation.

Secondly, my introduction of imperfect methods, which have previously been linked to radical movements in film and art, had a significant impact on the trajectory of our praxis. In a video diary filmed by a co-creator at the Radical Film Network's Glasgow Unconference in 2016, the co-creator asks critical questions surrounding how creative confidence can be ignited in those who are struggling to find it. The data and findings from our project reveal that through embracing imperfect methods, including psychogeography and zine making, co-creators experienced the combined impact of social connection and developing empowering new autoethnographic modes of expression.

One co-creator summarised the significance which social connection has on creativity, and the development of connectedness through everyday expressions of creativity:

'It has made me appreciate how much all these things rely on interpersonal skills and charm and getting the best from myself and other people. Without a good grounding of trust and bonding and common ground these projects would not have gone as smoothly and as well as they did…talking to new people isn't so scary. That connecting can be through art, film, photography anything' (Appendix B.1).

There were, however, challenges. Even with the relative immediacy of a method such as zine making, the production process can also culminate in a

lengthy design process when producing the layout and printed copies of zines. One co-creator provided some insightful feedback on this: 'the zine one was my favourite. I really enjoyed it, the preparation and the socializing part. The only negative it was that it was a bit lengthy' (Appendix B.1.1). This perspective reiterates that even DIY and imperfect forms can be time consuming to collate into unified outputs.

My own positionality as a creative practitioner and newcomer to the form is the final and perhaps most significant aspect which informed our experimentation with imperfect arts-based methods. As identified in my early research, in order to disrupt dominant production and authorship paradigms in favour of a more inclusive approach, the production hierarchies of broadcast filmmaking needed to be dismantled. My positionality falls firmly outside of these established authorship paradigms.

I came to the project and research with the intention to be experimental, learn new skills, be transformed through the process and create social connections. I was, and still am greatly inspired by the international community at University of Leeds. However, with no direct immigration experience personally, I always felt that the people to tell, design, and structure the project were those that had experienced and lived it. As a newcomer to interactive documentary and with my own artist filmmaking practice on hiatus in the decade prior to this project, I was also a co-learner alongside my fellow co-creators. This additional positionality enabled me to create a safe space for co-creators to introduce their own methods of

creative documentation, and to share their expertise with the collective and myself.

3) **Participatory action research offers a unique opportunity for the interactive documentary form to be disrupted and reimagined as an inclusive community-based praxis.**

In my initial research into the form, as it was emerging in 2014, I identified the central concerns of most projects were based around the representation of marginalised communities, social action, and change. However, within the confines of traditional documentary filmmaking, there was little room for the form to expand beyond tried and tested participatory methods, and limited expressions of collaboration with communities. Approaching the form from my unique positionality as a creative practitioner and fledgling community-based researcher, I was able to locate the possibilities of introducing participatory action research and arts-based research frameworks, to disrupt existing approaches. Through my introduction of an iterative PAR approach to the form, I was able to steer our project away from the existing practices of broadcast standard filmmaking and the directorial control of marginalised narratives.

Through my introduction of a PAR approach to the interactive documentary form, I was also able to realise my research aim to develop a new inclusive production methodology. Alice McIntyre (2008, no pagination) has described the contributions to knowledge and impact which PAR carries the potential

to create. McIntyre (ibid.) highlights that through engaging in PAR, co-creators can ignite an 'appreciation of local knowledge' and 'enrich their sense of themselves…in ongoing processes of action and change'. PAR is also viewed by McIntyre (ibid.) as providing communities 'the freedom to explore…how *they* experience their individual and collective realities'. These outcomes of social capital link directly back to my research aims, and also my data from co-creators, revealing that they desire to create spaces for the collective development of creative confidence, pose critical questions and 'take action' (ibid.).

I will now revisit McIntyre's (ibid.) four key elements of PAR, in order to summarise to what extent these were realised in my own research.

'(a) a collective commitment to investigate an issue or problem (ibid.)'

My research can be viewed as having two separate agendas.Firstly, to create a safe community-based space for an international community to share conversations and develop creative practices together. Secondly, to disrupt existing production paradigms in the form, in favour of a new, more inclusive production methodology. Our collective focus was on our shared experiences of life in an international community and our desire to create autoethnographic representations and take up space in the city and online. Although I always dedicated a section of each workshop iteration to discussing the interactive documentary form and collaborating with co-creators on how our project was designed and structured, my data reveals

that disrupting the form was not a central concern for co-creators. However, I do not think that this removes any significance from our collective commitment to learning new skills together as we shared conversations and developed authoethnographic approaches to documenting our praxis.

One of the primary issues which co-creators raised from the early stages of the project was that they wanted to bring together women from diverse migration backgrounds across the city and expand our project to welcome new co-creators. This was a shared aim which was achieved during each iteration through our commitment to keeping our collective open and flexible for new co-creators to join, either as short- or long-term collaborators. Our achievement of this collective goal is especially evidenced in conversation club (available at: https://vimeo.com/266096234) and International Women's Day Celebration 2018 (available at: https://vimeo.com/259576204) in which longstanding and new co-creators from across the city came together to celebrate and view a showcase our project.

Co-creators also resonated with my aims to develop a methodology which empowers communities to tell their own stories, away from traditional ethnographic techniques. Together, we collaborated across all stages of project design and production in a realisation of this aim. Co-creators reflected critically in our workshops on how the project could be structured, the methods we should use, and the themes we would focus on.

'(b) a desire to engage in self- and collective reflection to gain clarity about the issue under investigation' (McIntyre, 2008, no pagination).

Collaborating to develop an innovative and impactful praxis is a continual enactment of collective reflection and action. In order to expand an inclusive approach through each iteration of our project, it was essential to revisit our methods and themes each time and critically consider how our collective conversations were to be represented. Through this process of collective reflection, co-creators felt able to challenge conceptual authorship as evidenced in my data. An example of this can be found in the documentation of our second workshop, in our discussions surrounding the contested definition of an international woman and our early production conversations. My audio-visual data also provides insights into how co-creators engaged in self-reflection during our project. As discussed in the analysis of my data when Jess attended the Radical Film Network Unconference, she engaged in a deep self-reflection surrounding her thoughts on how people can develop creative confidence and the 'mess' which is an inherent part of any creative process.

'(c) a joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action that leads to a useful solution that benefits the people involved' (McIntyre, 2008, no pagination).

I shared my hopes and research aims for the project with co-creators at our launch event in 2015. I continued to share my research aims and evaluate them with new and longstanding co-creators during each iteration. Throughout the project, I invited co-creators to join me in our expanding collective, and together we developed a new inclusive production

methodology through the iterative process of PAR. A poignant moment in the project was during the EU referendum and the result of Brexit. The open and inclusive praxis which we had been developing found a profound new meaning and purpose: to provide a safe space to celebrate our international community and welcome new arrivals to the city during the challenges which were arising. As one co-creator reflected: 'this is not a fixed script story…there is no certainty of what is happening next' (*Out of the UK*, 2015). The flexibility of our project enabled co-creators to continue to have agency and develop empowering and motivational new social connections (see Appendix B), despite the barriers they experienced.

'(d) the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process' (McIntyre, 2008, no pagination).

From the launch event to our final workshop three years on, we actively engaged in the collective planning of our practice and iterative process. Some co-creators were longstanding throughout the entire project, some collaborated intermittently, and some collaborated on single iterations. Our conversations and the data I gathered informed the process of planning for each iteration in order to continue our development of an inclusive praxis. I have also evidenced, through a dialogue with arts-based research theory (see Leavy, 2020, p.23), that our co-editing process ensured the involvement of co-creators in the co-construction of our research, via the interpretation of raw audio-visual data. Co-creators were also visible in both academic and industry settings, representing our collective project and co-

constructed research. One area I have identified which could be developed further is that future co-constructed research could be expanded upon to also involve co-creators in the academic publication of the research and presentation of research at conferences and industry events.

This research project represents my first experience of engaging in PAR and community-based research. Through this research journey I have developed expert knowledge of the processes and potential of PAR to transform academic research and collective creative praxis. I have located a research approach which has empowered me to embrace my unique positionality and view the possibilities that a beginner's mind can hold; both individually and for communities. In order to expand upon my growing expertise of PAR and community-based research, I can see the potential in applying for substantial funding to enable co-creators to take more formal roles with the research process in a more advanced realization of co-constructed research.

Future and Expansion of the Research

Outside of *Our Here* as a PhD project, the women of our collective have expressed aims for our practices to continue and broaden to invite new co-creators[22] and continue to explore film and zine making. Some co-creators have also suggested that the social and community dimensions of the collective's workshops are key areas of impact to take forward and

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[22] In Appendix B.1.1 a co-creator suggests that 'it would be good if the project could develop more so we could branch out its activities and get more people/ women involved'.

develop[23]. Marvina Newton has shared her concerns with me over the lack of support structures in place locally to provide mentors for girls and women from marginalised ethnic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. For me, this places mentoring and wellbeing firmly at the forefront of future developments of the collective, which I will discuss further below.

International Girls' and Women's Circle

As a collective, we have been discussing the possibility of establishing a monthly international inclusive women's circle in Leeds. Women's circles are historical in their context and offer a safe and intimate space for women to hold space and support one another through various empowering, spiritual, communicative and creative acts and rituals. My own personal experience of these spaces in the city has informed the ideas which I am bringing to the collective. I have concerns surrounding my experience of these wellbeing spaces as being for predominantly white, economically comfortable[24] women. Whilst my experiences have been formed only within my own locality, I think it likely that women from marginalised ethnic and social-economic backgrounds are financially unable to access or are even afforded an awareness of such wellbeing groups. Conversation forms the basis of the women's circle and it is from this perspective that I can see the potential to combine our own methods and expand the collective further; with a view to creating an inclusive and empowering wellbeing space in the city.

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[23] In Appendix B.1.1 one co-creator suggests that food sharing would be a good activity, whilst another co-creator expresses hopes for a 'meet up circle' (ibid.).
[24] Whilst these spaces are inclusive for women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, they usually have a fee per workshop due to space hire, food and craft materials. This can be a monthly cost that restricts many women from attending and joining these supportive communities.

Women's circles rely on community spaces and it was through our final workshop, the Our Here Celebration that I began to research free to use meeting spaces within the city. Through the development of a monthly women's circle we are hoping to use these free spaces to offer a free to use wellbeing community to women who are underrepresented within preexisting women's circles. I am also hoping to apply for funding to supply craft materials and food for the women who join our circle.

Imperfect Interactive

Another future direction for my research and practice is developing through my recent collaboration with Allister Gall as we launch our *Imperfect Interactive* project. As mentioned briefly in chapter one, part two of this thesis, after meeting Allister at an IRIS event in 2017[25], later that year we began discussing the possibility of bringing together our research and practice to further explore the impact of imperfect workshop methods on the interactive documentary and storytelling forms. In March 2018, we delivered a collaborative workshop at the i-Docs 2018 symposium at the Watershed in Bristol. The synopsis which we co-wrote for the workshop further explains our intentions and reflects the wider ambitions of our collaborative project going forward:

> Building on the *Imperfect Cinema* and *Our Here* projects, we put forward the provocation that an exploration of imperfect practices in i-Docs will broaden the possibilities for inclusion and impact via co-creation. Taking an open,

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[25] *Some Sevens Clash* was a two-day practice-based research event exploring DIY punk approaches to collective practices such as live performance and zine making (IRIS, 2018b).

trans-disciplinary approach to co-creation from the ground-up, imperfection as both method and DIY ethos, carries the potential to breach the barriers of exclusivity and professionalism. Imperfection as praxis carries the possibility for fledgling co-creators to shape the design, production and impact of the i-Doc (Zarins and Gall, 2018).
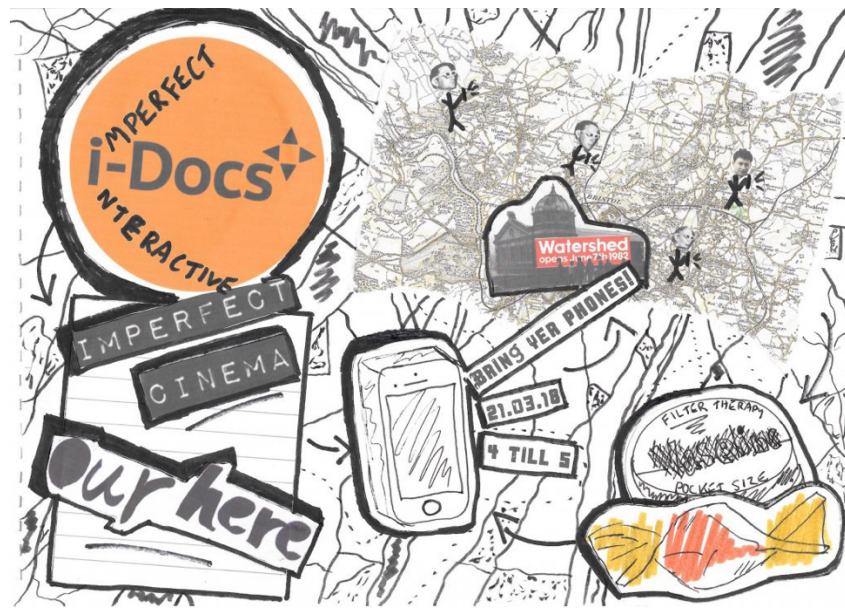
Figure 55. Event flyer for Workshopping an Imperfect i-Doc Praxis, i-Docs 2018. (Source: Imperfect Interactive).

We opened the workshop by showcasing our findings from the *Imperfect Cinema* and *Our Here* projects. In addition to inviting 'delegates to collaborate in DIY filmmaking activities using their mobile devices to capture and upload short sequences online during the workshop' (ibid.). I have already begun to develop a new confidence in further developing DIY filmmaking workshops from my early collaboration with Allister. I feel that I can learn a lot from the accessible and playful methods he has developed to engage new audiences in DIY filmmaking activities. Prior to the workshop, we had many discussions surrounding how we can begin to combine our previous findings and efforts through *Imperfect Interactive*. We aim to look

for funding for a new series of workshops to collectively explore methods, platforms and potential impacts on a larger scale.

Whilst the experience of co-creation on *Our Here* was impactful for girls and women from migrant backgrounds and heritages; another avenue could be for our collective to consider how and if we could align further with organisations such as Hope not Hate. To explore and aim to foster new understandings and connections between convened international communities and other austerity-affected communities and individuals who are currently being targeted by right-wing agendas to create division and hate.

Through my own practice-based research and my collaboration with Allister, I plan to continue investigating how co-creators can shape the platforms which house interactive documentary projects. In particular, locating imperfect methods for engaging increased levels of interest from co-creators in how their practices manifest to an online audience of interactors, beyond a reliance on commercial platforms. David Green spoke at the i-Docs 2018 symposium of this need for a support structure for citizen co-creators. One which would entail the form embracing ephemeral and imperfect practices, akin to the Japanese *Wabi-sabi* philosophy (Green, 2018). Gauntlett (2011, p.244) has rightly pointed to the significance of a 'making and doing culture' as an active reaction and possible remedy for 'social isolation [and] fragmented communities'. His thoughts surrounding the connections which creativity fosters, in both embodied and online convened communities

highlight the impactful, yet also the challenging task of bridging the two environments. There is still a need to unify these embodied and online acts of social connection and creativity in a space and form which places wellbeing and creative emancipation at the forefront of practitioner and co-creator agendas.

For the time being I wish to conclude this thesis by expressing my profound gratitude to each co-creator that has collaborated along this research journey. It is my sincerest hope that this written account of our collective practices has highlighted how essential each and every interaction, conversation and creative act has been in shaping this contribution to knowledge and the impact of the practice and research.

Appendix A

This section of the appendices contains anonomised questionnaire responses, completed by co-creators at the beginning of the project.

A.1 Launch Workshop Feedback Questionnaire Results, March 2015. There were a total of 3 respondents to this questionnaire.

Q1

In just a few words, what are your initial thoughts after attending the workshop and its relevancy to the project?
Top of Form

Bottom of Form
Good attendance, really interesting project
3/19/2015 2:38 PM

It was very useful to find out more about what the project is actually about and who else will be involved.
3/18/2015 11:10 PM

I was amazed by the independent filming idea. I think I will keep contributing, as much as my time allows.
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

Q2

Were my descriptions of the project/collective, it's possible goals and the plan going forward clear enough?

Yes
3/19/2015 2:38 PM

I think so. You explained that this project was a collective and what that meant, and also that the output would be an online interactive documentary.
3/18/2015 11:10 PM

Mostly, yes! There were some grey areas as well.
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

Q3

If you used any of the camera and sound recording equipment, what did you think of this experience, was it worthwhile to bring these things into our workshop?

n/a
3/19/2015 2:38 PM

I'm not sure. I guess it is worthwhile for you because you are able to listen to and watch the recordings. As far as using the equipment is concerned, it wasn't a new experience for me because I have used audio and video recorders before.
3/18/2015 11:10 PM

The cameras, not really! Everyone has used a camera at some point in their life. It was better if we had started recording from the very beginning, rather than towards the very end, to just have tried some skills out.
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

Q4

From my descriptions and the demonstration of interactive documentaries, did you gain a clear understanding of what our final project could look like and how people could view it?

I saw possibilities
3/19/2015 2:38 PM

I would say a clearer understanding because our project probably won't look exactly like any of the documentaries we saw.
3/18/2015 11:10 PM

Yes and no! I think it would have been better if you had printed out a sketch of the final work or how you hope it would look like at the end. I know that everything is rather vague at this point, but it is good to have a final picture.
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

Q5

Were you comfortable with the workshop being recorded? Please state why if yes or no.

Y
3/19/2015 2:38 PM

Yes. It was unobtrusive.

3/18/2015 11:10 PM

Yes, I'm not afraid of cameras, as long as I have not said something stupid or acted in an embarrassing way :D
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

Q6

What did you think of the mix of women in our collective? Do you think it is helpful for the collective to have experienced local women filmmakers onboard to make films with us from time to time and share experience?

Y, lovely to have a range of women together. looking forward to more
3/19/2015 2:38 PM

It was very very good to meet such interesting women with different backgrounds. Yes to the second question.
3/18/2015 11:10 PM

Yes, definitely! Sharon Hooper was brilliant, so was Samantha. It's good to have someone with the same or closer experience as well.
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

Q7

What did you think of the short films shown during the workshop?

Good
3/19/2015 2:38 PM

I don't really have an opinion. Sorry.
3/18/2015 11:10 PM

They were helpful, specially the one you had made yourself.
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

Q8

What ideas, if any did you have during the workshop for your own short film as part of the project? Or have you had any ideas since the workshop on how you may want to represent your experiences of Leeds in your own short film?

Shots of my Leeds, my home with my narrative over top
3/19/2015 2:38 PM

I don't have a clear idea yet. I was hoping that it would be possible to get minimally involved with the project, so I was glad to hear that it was possible

to just have a one-off interview and maybe provide some photos. At the moment I have no plans to do my own short film, but I'll see how I feel about it later on.
3/18/2015 11:10 PM

Some ideas were built up in my mind which need more thinking. I will speak to you about this later.
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

Q9

Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to add about the workshop, or your thoughts in general about the project/collective?

It's a really interesting and valuable project
3/19/2015 2:38 PM

I think it is better if we have a single theme for the themes. If it is more focused, the final work might look more focused and united. Like, is it going to be just about the achievements, challenges, daily life, or just anything? This is just a personal opinion though; you surely know better. :)
3/12/2015 2:53 PM

A.1.1 **Participation in the Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective Questionnaire, April 2015. There were a total of six respondents to this questionnaire.**

Q1

Can I interview you for this project?

6 answered Yes

Q2

Would you prefer your interview to be videoed for the project or would you prefer an oral interview? (With an oral interview no video footage of you will appear in the final published project)

1 answered: Yes, I would like to borrow both a video camera and a digital camera (for photographs only)

1 answered: Yes, I would like to borrow a video camera

3 answered: Yes, I would like to borrow a digital camera (for photographs only)

1 answered: Would prefer to borrow sound recorder only to record story/ideas

Q4

Would you like to use your own device (mobile phone camera, iPad camera or other sound/video/photography recording equipment) to record your own media for this project? Please write details below:

I am open to anything
4/21/2015 1:37 PM

I can use my own digital camera. Note: In this questionnaire I was required to answer both questions 3 and 4, although they exclude each other. Please ignore my answer in question 3 - I'm happy for my visual image to appear in the final project, but I don't need to borrow any equipment.
4/5/2015 10:43 PM

No
4/5/2015 8:25 PM

I will use my phone and my camcorder.
4/1/2015 1:56 PM

I carry a digital camera with me at all times in case I happen upon something of interest. I daresay, however, that this would be an opportunity to learn how to use my phone camera also to record events. I am set in my ways and have not really bothered to keep up with the times...
3/31/2015 6:56 PM

Q5

Do you have recent or old photographs that you would like to contribute to the project? (These could be photos of you, your family/friends, places you have travelled, photos of Leeds, or special events that you have attended in Leeds). If yes, please write details below:

I have photos from Tour de France and places I have visited in Leeds
4/21/2015 1:37 PM

I have recent and old photographs that I would be happy to contribute, but I can't provide any details right now.
4/5/2015 10:43 PM

I have lots of pics from China
4/5/2015 8:25 PM

Yes, photos of places I have been to in the last 8 years, related to my story.
4/1/2015 1:56 PM

I recently attended and participated in an event to commemorate International Women's Day at Inkwell in Leeds (7/3/2015). It was an evening of incredible performance poetry, prose, music and singing. I will contact the organiser to ask her permission to use a photo of the event.
3/31/2015 6:56 PM

Q6

Would you like the opportunity to learn filmmaking/ photography skills as you take part in the project? If yes, please write details of what you would be interested in learning below:

Yes i t would be wonderful to learn few things about both
4/21/2015 1:37 PM

No.
4/5/2015 10:43 PM

yes, particularly to learn how to take good pictures of people
4/5/2015 8:25 PM

Yes, I would like to gain some advanced photography skills. Editing films is another area I'd be interested in.
4/1/2015 1:56 PM

I love learning, and since it's been a while since I participated in something like this, I would like to learn as much as I can
3/31/2015 6:56 PM

Yes, I am happy to learn skills on using these equipment.
3/31/2015 4:57 PM

Q7

How often would you be able to attend small social events to meet up with others who are involved in the project. Thinking carefully about how much free time you have, please select a response from the drop-down menu below:

4 answered: 4 times a year

1 answered: twice a year

1 answered: once a year

Q9

I would like to keep everyone who is involved in the project up to date with our progress and to ask for everyone's ideas and input on how the project represents international women in Leeds. Would you like the opportunity to

be part of an online community to discuss the project and contribute your ideas to it?

5 answered: Yes, I would like to be part of a Facebook group

1 answered: Yes, I would follow a Twitter page

3 answered: Yes, I would like to write posts for a blog if one was available

Comment added: I would like to access an online blog and occasionally contribute towards it, however, I have no idea how this is done but I am willing to learn.

Appendix B

This section of the appendices contains anonomised questionnaire responses, completed by co-creators towards the end of the project. All co-creator responses appear in italics.

B.1 **Questionnaire sent on 14 March 2017. There were a total of two respondents to this questionnaire.**

1) Have you ever made a film/zine before?

   -I have done an IndieGoGo project before and I have done one or two filmed interviews but I have never done a Zine before.

   - I didn't know about zine before or even collective films in the way Kelly is doing it.

2) Did you have an interest in making photography, film, zine or media before joining this project?

   - I have an interest in those subjects but prefer to work in a team rather than solo so these projects were perfect for me.   - I like taking photographs but not really interested because I didn't know much about it.

3) How has your interest and knowledge about how to make film and media projects changed since you collaborated on this project?

-It has made me appreciate how much all these things rely on interpersonal skills and charm and getting the best from myself and other people. Without a good grounding of trust and bonding and common ground these projects would not have gone as smoothly and as well as they did.

- However I wish I knew because it is an amazing experience. I really enjoyed participating in both the film- the interview, the womens' international day gathering at the Reliance 3 years ago and of course zine! It offered me to chance to express my thoughts and my feelings and of course make my voice heard by other people. I would love be learn to make these kind of things for different occasions especially the film making. It is so interesting and valuable skill to have.

4) What purpose do you think our media could have for local audiences and a global audience online?

-That you are not alone, that there are always people you can bond with, talk to, work with, collaborate with. That together you can achieve anything.

- It is not only a way to raise awareness among people locals and nationals but also a way of supporting and welcoming people from other countries in here. It is a sign that British still believe in globalisation, in humanity, in cultural differences, in internationalism!

5) Have you learnt any new skills or found new confidences though this project?

-That talking to new people isn't so scary. That connecting can be through art, film, photography anything.

- I wouldn't say much of skills in a practical way but communication skills and socialization and of course friends, INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS and you Kelly. The best representation of British people who support internationals here in this difficult times of uncertainty. It is so valuable to know that people like you are supporting in every mean immigrants in the UK. Mentally and psychologically means so much for us.

6) Has this project allowed you to talk about/share anything you felt unable to express previously on your own?

-I definitely learnt how Brexit has not just affected me and my circle of friends but other people in other circumstances and that I while you see on the internet that lots of people feel the same way (upset) about Brexit, actually meeting them in person and talking about it was

far more cathartic than just 'liking' things online from behind the screen.

- As I said before it was my chance to express myself about my experiences as an EU in a foreign country trying to balance both positives and negatives. I felt important and valuable as part of this project! I have been given a voice and an opinion to things happening in my life. Sharing is what makes life experiences important for you and for others who can learn from you and follow your example or avoid your mistakes!

7) Can you see how your input has contributed to research about how people can make films collaboratively? (ask me about this if you have any questions)

- I think the Zine days can show how to film collaborative work and how to be sensitive in capturing new teams working together.

-I think that without me and all of the other people that talk or participated in the film obviously that wouldn't be collaborative?! I mean this is the definition of collaboration I guess! People working together towards something which in our case was this film, zine and the whole project! It's "US" that make this project alive! All of us guided by you, Kelly. Thank you for giving me the chance to be part of this project really! This will be one in a lifetime experiences I collected as a PhD student, international and woman! Now I would have another story to tell as all these I shared with you during the film! You had the idea and together we made it happened!

B.1.1 Questionnaire sent on 1 December 2017. There were a total of two respondents to this questionnaire.

1) Was the purpose of the project clear to you?

-Yes.

- YES

2) What is your overall impression of the project approaches and outcomes?

-Interactive, inclusive, very welcoming and adaptable – never pressured or forced into anything. Always could do, contribute, create whatever I wanted. I loved to observe how the project kept growing and I am excited to participate on its future development.

- I think it was something needed to fill the gap and an opportunity for international women in Leeds to express themselves. It brought people together.

3) If you attended any workshops for the project, what was your overall experience of them? Where there any positive and/or negative points?

   -Always positive. Like I said, workshops were always welcoming, interactive, inspiring and provided freedom to our creativity and ideas.

   - The zine one was my favourite. I really enjoyed it, the preparation and the socializing part. The only negative it was that it was a bit lengthy.

4) Have you learnt any new skills through participation in the project?

   -Improved my zine making skills. Networking.

   - How to prepare a zine magazine-mandala drawings.

5) Has the project helped you to build any new confidence?

   -I guess in a way yes. Confidence in myself too, perhaps. Who I am and what I do.

   - Confidence to speak up for myself as a woman and as a woman in a foreign country.

6) Has participation in the project made you feel connected to a wider international/local community?

   -Yes, but it would be good if the project could develop more so we could branch out its activities and get more people/ women involved.

   - Yes since I am a [nationality removed] in the UK.

7) What could have been done differently to improve your experience of this project?

   -Perhaps it all would be a bit more diverse if more people got involved in the e.g. zine making sessions, but I never felt like anything wasn't good enough.

   - Attend more events maybe?!

8) What did you enjoy most about participating in the project?

   -Making the zines, meeting new people/ other international women living in Leeds. Setting up social media for the project.

   - The socializing part, learning about people and cultures in first hand and making new friends.

9) What did you find least enjoyable about participating in the project, or did you find anything disappointing about the whole project itself?

-Lack of my personal time to do more.

- Nothing.

10) Would you like to be involved in the future workshops of this project?

-Yes.

- Of course.

11) What type of workshops would you like to see the project run in the future?

-More zine making, maybe some sort of film making project too and the 'meet up' circles.

- Maybe cooking from different countries-Cooking skills taught by different people-cultures-countries around the world.

12) Did you experience any barriers which stopped you from being able/or wanting to take part in the project and the workshops?

-My personal time.

- My busy schedule only.

13) What is your opinion of the project website and its content?

-Looks nice, modern, interactive.

- Excellent work

14) Did you feel connected to/understand the research aims which this project is based on?

-Yes.

- I think so.

15) Do you feel that your ideas/suggestions contributed to the practices/workshops of the project?

-Yes.

- Yes. Especially my experiences as a [nationality removed] student in the UK after brexit.

16) Do you feel like your ideas/suggestions contributed to the direction of the project?

-Yes ☺

- I think so, as Kelly told me she used my ideas and views upon political situation in the UK.

Appendix C

This section of the appendices contains copies of information which relates to workshop planning.

C.1 **Launch event flyer, March 2015.**

Leeds International Women's Filmmaking Collective
Project Launch Event and Celebration of International Women's Day

Date: Sunday 8th March

Time: Introduction to the project and filmmaking workshop 2pm-4pm; Drinks and continuing discussions in the bar from 4pm onwards

Place: The Reliance Bar Meeting Room, 76-78 North Street, Leeds LS2 7PN (Map: http://www.the-reliance.co.uk/hours-map)

This workshop and initial meeting will be for a small group of us to meet up and have an introduction to the project and make plans for the films that we want to start making as a group.

I will share my ideas on my role in the project and how this links to my PhD research.

I would like to hear your ideas and opinions on the project and the types of films that we can make to represent your story of life in Leeds.

As well as project participants, I have also invited some local women filmmakers who would like to share their experiences, inspire our group and show their support for the project.

Activities:

2.00-2.15 **Introduction to the project:** my background, why I'm doing the project, my research interests, open discussion, questions.

2.15-2.30 **Chance to view some other Interactive Documentary Films**: using the iPads that will be available.

2.30- 3.00 **Roundtable Chat:** everyone has the opportunity to introduce themselves and talk briefly about their time here in lovely Leeds.

3.00-4.00 **Camera Workshop:** working in pairs with a local filmmaker, we will set up small filming areas and learn how to film one another using simple video camera equipment. We can film conversations amongst one-another, talking about your favourite places in Leeds; the day that you arrived in Leeds; your daily life in Leeds; key challenges you've faced and your successes since moving here. These questions can all be up for discussion before/ during the event. Please let me know if you have any ideas or suggestions to help develop the discussion!

Appendix D

A quick guide to Conversational Production for community projects:

-Develop a bespoke media/research consent document before your first interaction with communities. Resources for this are available at connectedcommunities.org. Consider co-creator anonymity and build inclusive options for this into your document. You could present a working document to your co-creators and they can then suggest amendments to fit their needs.

-Begin with community-based storytelling in a centralised/accessible location for potential co-creators. Aim to provide funding for transport and provide refreshments. Consider the significance of workshop venues: are they welcoming/accessible places for co-creators? Discuss and plan future workshop venues with co-creators.

-Gather qualitative data on co-creator feedback after each new iteration of your project. Paper and online surveys can be a useful tool for this. Use this data to shape and design your next iteration.

-Expand the collective of co-creators throughout the project lifespan where possible.

-Ensure that engagement with the project is flexible and accessible for co-creators who may need to move away from the project location. Develop methods collectively to overcome borders and barriers to access.

-Safeguarding vulnerable people: If you are covering distressing issues, do you have the expertise within your project team to safeguard people who are vulnerable? If you are inviting co-creators for a community storytelling project about a distressing issue, you will need to ensure support is in place for co-creators to share their testimonies without bringing any harm to them.

-Which creative/digital tools are co-creators confident with? Using already? Would like to share their skills with fellow co-creators? Would like to try out and may not currently have access to?

-At this point, if a creative practitioner is onboard the project team, they may also introduce the creative/digital tools which they use and have a knowledge of.

-As a collective, you may decide to focus on a particular production method to record your workshops/storytelling. Or you may decide to experiment with and use multiple methods throughout your project lifespan.

-Locate funding and develop opportunities for community members to gain visibility and represent their own narratives at academic and industry events.

-Consider how your co-creators can engage in the research project at the level of co-constructed research. Use the literature discussed in my thesis to support the development of this.

Appendix E

Chronology of Workshops

Launch Workshop

I planned a launch workshop, to which I invited potential co-creators to explore the options for a collective project. I planned a two-hour workshop which included an introduction to my background and the project. I also gave a brief overview of the interactive documentary form. The main portion of the workshop was dedicated to an informal ground discussion, where everyone could introduce themselves and start to discuss their interest in taking part in the project.

In total, twelve women attended the launch workshop. The group comprised of current international students; former international students- now settled in Leeds; women from first and second-generation migrant heritage and an English Language teacher with a background in supporting migrant women. In addition, local film practitioners Sharon Hooper and Jan Worth also supported the launch of the project with their attendance as guest speakers. I had met Sharon and Jan a month earlier at the inaugural Radical Film Network conference in Birmingham. Our conversations during that conference weekend had really cemented my plans to form a collective in order to co-create the project. Sharon was able to share her previous

experience from her time at Vera Media, a Leeds-based filmmaking collective of women who run community filmmaking courses and operate as a production company making socially-engaged educational and campaign films. Jan Worth discussed her experiences as a screenwriting specialist and spoke about her work which has been screened on Channel 4 and is stored in the BFI archives.

The group discussion marked the high point of the workshop. Everyone was keen to speak, support and find common ground based on their experiences of life in Leeds. I edited a short film which highlights the themes and discussions of the event, drawing out the key points of our discussion. There was a unanimous feeling between the international students (present and former) that Leeds is a place where people want to settle and build lives after their studies. A sentiment that has also been echoed later down the line in this project, by women from different migration backgrounds, and indeed by many non-migrant co-creators, who are not originally from the city.

For me, this was an early indication from the first workshop that these potential co-creators shared my feelings of belongingness in relation to experiencing Leeds as an international city. Additionally, in reaction to my personal motivation behind the collective and project, co-creator Sabina Grahek expressed how welcome it was to hear that a local British person recognised and wanted to celebrate the positive impact which international people and communities bring to the city.

Jessica Austin-Walker described her experiences of arriving in Leeds in the 1980's during the workshop. Joined by her friend, the poet Nana-Essi Casely-Hayford, Jessica spoke about a previous film project they were involved in to reminisce and capture the vanishing testimonies of elders from the African and Caribbean communities in the city. Nana-Essi gave a powerful poetry reading during the workshop and discussed her early experiences of segregation in Leeds, during a time when it had been a less diverse city. A former international student, Nathalie Yang from Taiwan spoke of her love for the city alongside the challenges she had faced upon

graduating and trying to settle after losing her academic support networks.

Roya AliMalayeri, a former international student from Iran, spoke about her

hopes for the project to unlock the social restrictions faced by women

migrating from the Middle-East to Leeds. Roya spoke passionately on how

women from some cultural backgrounds are sometimes prevented from fully

exploring a new way of life in the West.

Sharon Hooper screened some clips of her films during the workshop and

spoke about her participatory filmmaking work with international

communities in Leeds. Sharon linked her experiences into the emerging

capabilities of interactive documentary to enable people to 'tell their own

stories'. Screenwriter Jan Worth added to the cross-generational

discussions that were taking place with her background in collective

filmmaking practices, which began for her in the 1970's.

Conversation Club
May 2015

Our second event was a filmmaking and storytelling workshop for international students and staff held at the Language Zone, University of Leeds. I co-organised this event with Jess and Sabina, both of whom had attended the launch event. Jadzia and Carolin from the Language Zone also helped to organise this workshop. The workshop was open to anyone who had attended the launch event, and an open invitation was extended to international students at the Language Centre. In total the workshop was attended by seven co-creators, including two newly arrived international students.

The premise of the workshop was to introduce the project to more women and invite collaboration through filmmaking: both during the workshop and beyond. I introduced the option that co-creators could borrow equipment to make their own short films or use their own mobile devices. I suggested that co-creators may want to use the project as their forum to record some of

their experiences of Leeds, as a way of keeping a record of their time in the city. Some of the women who attended were former international students who had remained in the city and established careers. These women shared their stories of how they had built a life in the city during the workshop; alongside the recently arrived international students, who spoke of their early impressions of Leeds.

Similar to our launch event, we welcomed a generational diversity as Jadzia shared her experiences of moving from London to Leeds thirty-five years ago as the daughter of Polish migrants. Aala, a newly arrived international student from Oman shared her early perceptions of being a Muslim woman from the Middle East in the city. During the workshop co-creators were keen to experiment filming with both the simple to use, and broadcast standard camera systems to film our conversations and their own break away discussions.

I ran a small follow-up post-production workshop with Aala and Assel in the Media Centre at Leeds Trinity University.We logged the rushes from our Conversation Club together and developed a draft edit for a short film based on the stories and experiences which Aala had shared during our workshop. Aala also contributed a few of her own personal photographs for the short film.

Out of the UK
June 2015

In summer 2015, co-creator Nathalie Yang discovered that she was unable to remain in the UK as her visa was expiring and she could no longer meet the new requirements. Nathalie wanted to record her thoughts and feelings on the day before she flew home to Taiwan. Together we decided on the

themes which the film would explore and composed some conversation prompts. Roya Alimalayeri had attended the launch event and expressed an interest in collaborating on Nathalie's film to learn new skills in production. I had recently learnt how to use broadcast standard cameras and decided to practice these new skills and share them with Roya and Nathalie for our first film.

It was a challenging shoot with our small fledgling crew. Roya opted to do sound and I operated the camera and held the conversation with Nathalie. There was a sense of urgency as we were filming; knowing that the next day, Nathalie would be leaving behind her life in the UK. It was poignant for me that our first personal documentary film would capture one of my primary motivations for the project: the ephemeral nature of our friendships and community. Roya's main interest was to learn how to edit film and so we worked together on the post-production of the rushes we had gathered.

Jogtography Workshop
November 2015

The first direct expression of flânerie and the dérive method in *Our Here* was through a Jogtography workshop which I organised for the collective. Jogtography is a rather niche concept; combining running and photography as a social and creative activity. As a few of our co-creators were already active runners, I hoped that this would be a fruitful way of expanding our project into imperfect methods. The act of taking photos whist running frees

up the photographer to capture unique moments of imperfection; with no time or option to consider the conventions of framing and so on. During this workshop, we explored a location which we were all very familiar with: the University of Leeds campus where most of us originally met. We encountered the campus via a new visual and physical method. Jogtography and filming using wearable GoPro cameras was a first for all of us. Some of the media we captured during this workshop formed cutaways for the short film we developed about co-creator Maisaa's experience of running the Abbey Dash.

Maisaa's Abbey Dash
November 2015

Maisaa is a former international student. Originally from Syria, Maisaa now lives and works in Leeds. Combining her love of running with her passion for raising awareness and support for her home-country, Maisaa ran the 10K Abbey Dash with several colleagues in 2015, raising £3,000 for the Red Cross. We ran a mobile filmmaking workshop at the event, spending time

supporting Maisaa and capturing the moments before and after her run. Using mobile devices allowed us to become immersed in the experience with Maisaa. This was our first workshop to focus on a social and personal gathering.

British Art Show 8
November 2015

To celebrate the opening of the British Art Show 8 national exhibition at Leeds City Art Gallery, four of our co-creators met to explore the exhibition and record our interactions with the art works. We opted for light, mobile cameras including the GoPro Hero and a selection of Canon DSLRs. For sound, we used a portable microphone recorder. Our conversations during this social workshop centred around our experiences of the gallery space and our playful experimentation with the recording devices. Collectively, we

gathered over 200 digital photographs and around an hour of audio and sound rushes.

Storytelling Workshop
March 2016

Co-creators Magda and Felicity expressed their interest in holding a small, one-to-one conversation workshop. Through storytelling methods, we explored the themes of reminisce, friendship and how newly arrived citizens can connect with their local community. The themes for discussion were planned by the three of us prior to the workshop, during our conversations on how Magda and Felicity had first met when Magda had moved to Leeds from Krakow, Poland. Their story of intercultural friendship narrativised the social challenges faced by newly arrived citizens and highlighted the efforts and rewards of volunteering as a method for fostering belonging and enacting citizenship.

Magda and Felicity did not want to record their story on film and instead chose to produce an audio recording that could be illustrated by their personal photographs. We spent a long time discussing how their story could be structured on an online platform; planning which images could be used and how the sound should be edited. We remained active in maintaining a dialogue over how the story took shape through the post-production stages.

Leeds Dérive
May 2016

In a direct methodological exploration of Situationist practice, we joined staff and students from Leeds Trinity University for Leeds Dérive. A psychogeography event to celebrate the original launch of the Situationist International manifesto in May 1960. Co- creator Roya and I explored an area of Leeds we were unfamiliar with, recording our findings along the way.

Roya opted to bring her camcorder and I used my own Canon DSLR. After

wandering and exploring for hours along the Leeds Liverpool canal

pathways and the Brewery Wharf area, we reconvened with the others at the

Victoria Hotel pub in the city centre. There we exchanged our findings of the

dérive and compared the different methods of capture we had used.

Zine in a Day
July 2016

At this point an interest in exploring material-based crafts was introduced to

our practice. Co-creator Mishka had previously collaborated on her first zine

in a day workshop in 2015. She became interested in joining our project and

together, we co-organised a zine workshop for the collective. Continuing the

conversation from our earlier workshops, I suggested some loose themes

derived from our discussions surrounding feelings of belongingness,

experiences and expressions of community and reflections upon everyday life in Leeds. We had also planned our first zine workshop at a key turning point in our conversations; as co-creators had expressed a wish to come together to discuss the recent Brexit result and the rise of hate crime we were witnessing in the city (Zarins, 2017: no pagination). Rather than dwelling on the negative impacts of Brexit, the purpose of this workshop was to provide a safe space in which to come together and celebrate international citizens and communities in Leeds.

The plan for our first zine workshop was that we would plan, make, scan, edit and print a handmade, material-based zine over the duration of one day. In total six co-creators joined our workshop, including two international students from Japan who were studying English for Academic Purposes at the Language Centre with long-standing co-creator Jess Poole. Another new co-creator also joined our workshop, Bex Cattran who I had previously met through my role in student support at the Language Centre.

This workshop was held at Leeds Trinity University, whereas most of our previous workshops had taken place in the city centre to enable ease of access for co-creators. City centre workshops in open public spaces were also significant in my considerations of place and a desire to create a practice which breached the academy walls. This was especially in light of the fact that many of our co-creators were or had formally been based within the academy. One aspect of marginalisation which I had witnessed during my experiences of working within the international student community in Leeds, was that often interactions with local people outside of the campus

were limited. Due to this, I wanted the project to offer more varied

experiences of the immediate locality to co-creators.

Aside from brief introductions to the project and zine making by myself and

Mishka; the workshop was an opportunity to relax, socialise and be creative

together. We listened to music, with co-creators taking turns to add tracks to

a Spotify playlist. The master copy of our zine was assembled from hand-

drawn A4 pages. Some pages featured printed photos and text, assembled

in a collage method. On one page, Georgia Thrasyvoulou created some

paper foldings of a boat and a plane to create a textured effect (See Figure
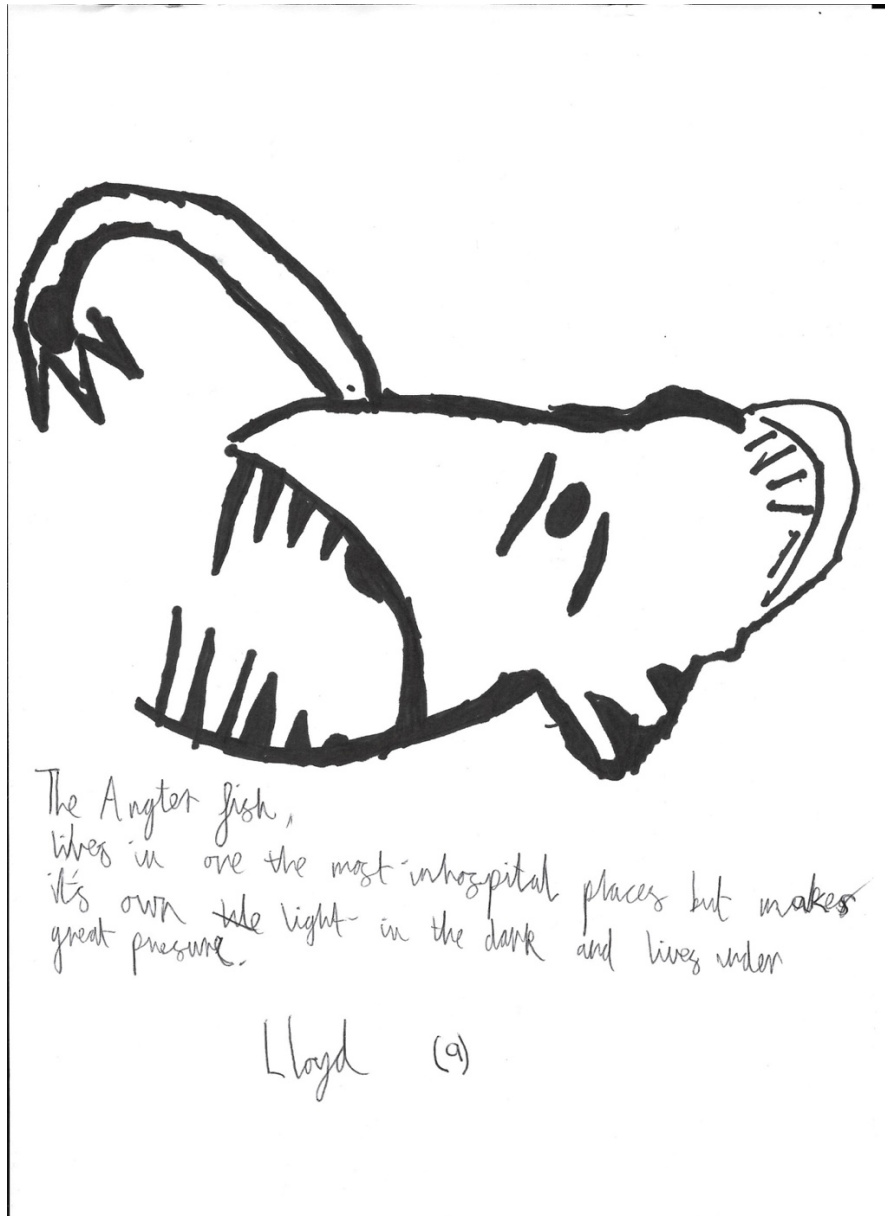
38).
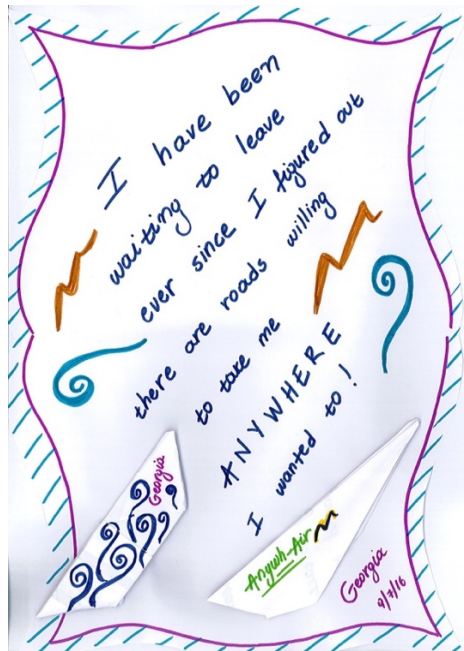
In total, we co-created thirty pages for our zine. We laid out all of the master

pages and worked together on the structure and narrative. Arranging the

pages so that they represented our conversations during the workshop. The

next stage was to scan each page and edit the zine digitally as PDFs in

order to print it out. This was a first for all of us, and we put in many

additional hours to bring the final printed zine copies together. Each co-

creator was able to take a full colour copy home with them. Wider

distribution was later achieved online using Flipsnack, with additional paper

copies continuing to be distributed freely at our collective workshops and

IRIS research centre events.

One Day Without Us
February 2017

Marvina Newton had expressed an interest in being involved in *Our Here*

and in early 2017 she invited our collective to collaborate at the One Day

Without Us event she was planning for Leeds. The event took place in

Leeds city centre, Marvina arranged for a temporary stage and stall area to

be installed at the top of the Briggate high-street. Jess Poole, Roya

Alimalayeri and Sam Toolsie responded to my open invitation for our

collective to join the collaboration. We were asked to make a short film of the

day. I also suggested that we co-organise a street-zine workshop stall for

the people who attended the event to contribute a page to a special edition

zine.

The Angler fish,
lives in one the most inhospital places but makes
it's own tale light in the dark and lives under
great pressure.

Lloyd (9)

International Day of the Girl Child
October 2017

Our penultimate workshop during my PhD research came as Marvina

Newton extended another welcomed invitation for a collaboration with her

Angel of Youths charity. Marvina was running a half-day workshop to mark

the International Day of the Girl Child 2017. I was invited to be a panelist

and give a talk about the achievements and challenges I have experienced

as a working-class woman in academia. Our collective was also asked to

run a zine making workshop around the theme of "writing a letter to your younger or older self" for the girls who were attending the event.

Co-creators Roya and Mishka collaborated with me on this workshop. Having recently launched our Instagram photo-sharing community, Roya and Mishka were interested in taking photographs and doing some live photo-blogging from the event. The event was held at the headquarters of Angel of Youths in Leeds city centre, and was also attended by Detective Superintendent Lisa Atkinson (Head of Crime for Leeds) along with performers and organisers from Girls That Gig. On offer was a varied programme of talks, live music, discussion and our zine workshop.

Local artist Monique Glynn-Jack collaborated with us on the zine workshop and contributed blank postcards for the girls to write their letters on. We split the workshop across two tables. One where I was facilitating the girls to write a letter to their past or future self, and the other table were with Monique and Mishka, who provided them with inspiration for decorating the

front of their postcards. The tables were bustling with creative conversations and the sharing of ideas and personal stories. A total of fifteen decorated postcards were created during the workshop and everyone agreed that we should combine them to create a zine. After the workshop, I scanned each postcard and designed an interactive zine using the Flipsnack publishing application. Marvina later shared the zine online with the participants from the workshop on the event Facebook page.

Our Here Celebration and International Women's Day 2018
March 2018

This celebration of International Women's Day 2018 coincided with three years of our collective practice since the launch of _Our Here_ in 2015. I collaborated with several collective members from our previous workshops to plan an event to showcase our interactive documentary project and workshop methods to a wider audience. We held the celebration event at the new John Lewis Community Hub in the city centre.

The event was attended by eighteen women and girls, most of whom had not previously attended our workshops. Marvina Newton invited girls who were doing a placement with her Angel of Youths charity. Long-standing co-creators also invited along women from their networks who were interested in viewing our project and collaborating on some crafting and filmmaking activities. We based our celebration and exhibition around the women's circle model: including a "bring a dish" food sharing table, empowering conversations through creative activities and live performances of singing and poetry.

The celebration encapsulated the unique qualities of *Our Here.* Convening women and girls from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds who might not usually have the opportunity to share a space and make connections. I edited together a short film using photographs and sound which was captured collectively during the celebration.

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