A participatory action research investigation into an open, online Community Project exploring how teaching and learning occur in a non-institutional, non-specialist, technology enhanced learning environment

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Author Declaration

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

The word count submitted (excluding references and prefix, but including appendices) is 68539 and does not exceed the maximum of 70000 agreed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) in July 2017.

Signature ....

Abstract

This Participatory Action Research (PAR) project begins by positing that online networks bring the possibility of meaning-making and knowledge creation developing outside institutions. The project has lasted for four years (and continues as a 'live' project) and this research covers the first 18 months of that period.

This project considers what happens when online learning is made possible on a non-institutional platform with roles of teacher and student made open to anyone. The tag line of 'anyone can teach, anyone can learn, anything at all, for free' provides a platform for open access that will create opportunities at the heart of the action of this research. It seeks to explore not only 'how' learning takes place, but also 'who' is involved, 'what' in relation to how knowledge is defined and 'why' that questions common-sense assumptions of the purpose of education.

Findings reveal complex identities of formal educators seeking space, free of institutional constraints. Community learning approaches reveal groups seeking spaces that avoid community gatekeepers and a desire for nuanced perspectives. Technology is encountered as a complex ecology in which institutional approaches suggest limited use as a deficit yet where project users define it in terms of privacy, ownership and appropriateness.

My original contribution to knowledge is found in the revealing of outsider spaces that are at least as rigorous, reflective and powerful as those located within institutions. The findings reveal contested spaces and a willingness to

develop ideas and networks that educate and inform. This is true of those with no links to institutional learning and makes clear the breadth of meaning-making that exists beyond the 'usual spaces'. Findings also reveal that those working within educational institutions seek out spaces beyond often restrictive standardisation to create new thinking spaces, empower others and distribute opportunities to contribute. My original contribution comes also through the creation of an authentic learning space that proved an effective, if complex and often difficult to maintain, online space. Much of the value of the research comes through the originality of an online platform developed beyond institutional ownership. Participation rather than representation was a key component of this innovation. The alignment of theoretical positions that seek becoming, Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic principles and Freirean popular education approaches, offer a strong foundation that challenges convention while providing a clear and coherent discourse.

The location of the research is crucial in establishing originality of purpose. This research develops the discourse around MOOCS to include those voices beyond the institution. Here, they are not voices on the margins but voices from the centre.

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Abbreviations

CBHE	College Based Higher Education
CoP	Communities of Practice
CP	Community Project
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institute
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
PAR	Participatory Action Research
UK/ U.K.	United Kingdom/ United Kingdom (adj)
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Part 1: Framing the Thesis

This first section of the thesis consists of four chapters:

Chapter 1. Introduction

Chapter 2. Contextualisation

Chapter 3. Literature Review

Chapter 4. Methodology

The purpose of the four chapters is to introduce the thesis that frames the research project historically, in relation to research questions and with a basis in contemporary literature. The argument for the validity of the research emerges here and the methodology chapter defines how the research is carried out commensurate with the theoretical framework and the overall ethos of the project.

1 Introduction

In beginning this project, I initially focused on technology and education with a specific interest in the inclusion of community and non-traditional practices. I began with a contention that learning happens everywhere and that expertise and education are distributed across all people and communities. It is a contention that challenges a common-sense view that specific educational institutions are a necessary and primary source of learning. This position argues that institutional learning channels the priorities of the dominant forces in a society.

The internet seemed to make possible new communities and networks that by-pass this organisational 'common-sense' and realise that educators might come from anywhere. The Community Project (CP) emerged as an attempt to work with others to see what would happen if we created an online learning space without hierarchies and explicitly non-institutional. The need to ask such a question reflects ongoing concerns that institutional education focuses on a specific view of education that prioritises some groups in society while denigrating others. Alternative opportunities for learning outside schools are not new, worker's education movements have included political, cultural and philosophical challenges to state-sponsored schooling for over a century (Lovett, 1975, p. 9). Illich (1971) advocated a deschooling of society so that our common awareness that learning occurs mostly outside institutions (p.72) might become central to how we design education. For Illich, the question of whether new approaches to education might emerge is prohibited by,

'a lack not only of imagination but frequently also of appropriate language and of enlightened self-interest' (p. 73).

Illich argues that modern technology must be utilized to allow a universal freedom of speech and learning (p.76). While writing before the advent of the contemporary internet, Illich's position advocates computer mediated networks that would avoid the *'secrets'* (ibid.) and *'hidden curricula'* (p.74) of professionalised, institutional education. This research seeks to reveal what occurs when an explicit move beyond institutional learning is attempted. Illich contends that broader societal and cultural change must also occur in any move toward such deschooling and while this seems inevitable, the first steps must be bottom-up and generated by community-led initiatives. The emphasis here is on adding to the imagining of new educational practices and through recognizing the challenges and possibilities, help the development of language to accommodate these re-imagined spaces. Throughout the thesis a tension exists between those seeking to use technology as a means of establishing institutional practice and those seeking alternative non-institutional practices. These polarities are made clear through the establishing of professional approaches that dismiss non-institutional approaches as nonsense alongside complex arguments for re-imagined concepts of learning. Seeking a non-institutional space here is necessary in establishing authentic, meaningful evidence around what happens when this is attempted in practice, not just in theory.

The research has at its core an interest in emancipation, of considering the

potential of technology enhanced learning to set free what education involves, who it includes, where it exists and how it is created. It became clear over the two years of action, research and reflection that this intervention was a realisation of a personal educational passage.

Schön (1995) calls for real, lived research that reveals the actual practices that affect the researcher. This project does that and generates a series of actions and reflections that help reveal learning in online space as a fractured space of conflict and experimentation. The Community Project emerged from a recognition of the *'vague, messy'* (p.28) spaces that we inhabit and sought to explore what happens when trying to create a space beyond the traditional, academic mainstream.

As a literacy educator for many years, I was constantly frustrated at the marginalisation of the skills of individuals and a drive to have achievement recognised only through national curricula qualifications. This frustration came from recognising narrow targets of attainment created at the expense of diverse skills, experiences and practices that did not fit these constricted criteria. Rather than being a space for diversity, multiple approaches to knowledge and a true universal approach to knowledge, the academy appeared as an elitist tool of segregation. Inclusion was based around allowing access to these spaces of standardisation that breached traditional admission policies. Little attempt was made to realise the richness of diverse ways of knowing and multiple ways of seeing the world that existed beyond academia. The community was considered an 'other' that might be studied and engaged, but not viewed as an equal partner in creating knowledge.

The increase in technology as a tool for communication, sharing and learning offered hope for a different approach to how learning might occur. Potential for learning without borders, outside traditional practice and the 'usual places' of learning, appeared possible. Significant shifts occurred in how people came together to share and learn and generate knowledge through social media, online forums, video sharing websites and expanding communication networks.

The focus of this thesis is around the extent to which networked spaces can offer meaningful spaces for learning beyond institutions but that might redefine the borderlands between community and Academy.

1.1   The Community Project

The focus of this research is the creation of the Community Project, a free to access, non-institutional, open and online learning platform. The banner headline of the website is that, "anyone can teach, anyone can learn, anything at all, for free" (Project website). I created the CP platform with the intention of all those registering having immediate access to course creation privileges. It was envisaged that the platform would be as free of restriction as possible and provide an authentic, non-institutional space on which diverse learning might develop.

The intended user group for the project was expected to emerge rather than attach to any pre-existing group. This was an early obstacle in avoiding the usual routes to disseminate an idea, with such preferred tracks already established along institutional lines.

The Contextualisation section (2.2.1) provides historical background to the project and links to a contemporary online learning ecology. Through my own and participant experiences, the development and emergence of the first 18 months of the project provide the focus of this research.

1.2   Defining the Purpose of the Project

Learning outside the institutions happens already, is vast and widespread and occurs in multiple guises across society. The aim was to provide an opportunity for learning outside the institutions that used networked space and might reveal under-researched motivations and challenges.

The extent to which communities and individuals might create learning was at the core of the project with an interest in whether technology enhanced networks might help create new approaches to teaching and learning.

Additional interest came in establishing learning *outside* being as valid, meaningful and valuable as that *within* real or virtual campus walls.

A growing body of work recognises the potential for redrawing the borders of where education might exist (Edwards, Gallacher & Whittaker, 2007; Facer, 2011; Holland, 2011; Hall & Smyth, 2016). Despite this, a residual *institutional epistemology* (Schön, 1995) resists challenges to centripetal ownership and dominance. Edwards et al. (2007) consider traditional educational approaches begin from a dismissive position, characterised by institutions asking,

> *'why should we worry about whether learning is taking place outside the academy and why should we bother researching it?'* (p.4).

The contention of this research is that widening participation is rooted in expert-led, centres of knowledge reaching out to places beyond the institution. This approach contends that institutions appear to see education as a one-way pouring out of knowledge from the centre to swamplands beyond. An alternative mutuality in which distributed expertise define a two-way exchange, a porosity of borders between inside-outside is considered as the research unfolds.

Institution as centripetal dominance

A key contention of the research is that institutional practices alienate critical education and act as forces of control. It is not argued that all institutional provision falls into this category, but that technology enhanced learning might amplify narrow, elitist approaches while simultaneously advocating transformation. Bamber and Crowther (2012) argue that education acts as the '*Achilles heel of social control*' (p.190). That is, it acts as a primary space for hegemonic coercion, while also becoming a crucial space for resistance and criticality. Later sections (3.4) consider institutions as areas of resistance. Here, the argument is made that technology enhanced learning is used to augment and disseminate a constricted, elitist and conventional approach to education while proclaiming transformation and change.

Two examples of institutional online learning help define how institutions promote centripetal control.

First, in *Teaching as a Design Science* (Laurillard, 2012) the emphasis on conventional approaches to the roles of teacher and learner are explicit. Laurillard challenges any idea that the lines between teachers and learners is

becoming blurred. She responds that,

> *'Technology opportunists who challenge formal education argue that, with wide access to information and ideas on the web, the learner can pick and choose their education - thereby demonstrating their faith in the transmission model of teaching. An academic education is not equivalent to a trip to the library, digital or otherwise. The educationist has to attack this kind of nonsense but not by rejecting technology. It is a stronger attack when first we must ask what learners need from education and therefore from technology'.* (Laurillard, 2012, p.4)*.*

Laurillard argues that increasingly autonomous learners would lead to a state of transmission and instruction. Learning must be guided by professional educationalists who not only hold the key to the content, they also have the responsibility to ask what learners need from technology and education. In this approach, the learners are guided by an expert group of professional educators and the possibility for alternative non-institutional educators is dismissed.

Second, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provide a powerful and still emerging model of educational opportunity created within institutions and distributed outside. The catalyst for the Community Project was in part a response to the development of MOOCs that promised open access but appeared typically rooted in institutional personnel, content and ownership.

Initial responses suggested radical transformation from MOOCs. Holford et al. (2014) described how MOOCs would,

> *'change education out of recognition: partly by the new opportunities they present and partly by their threat to existing institutions, systems and structures'* (p.569)

In the thesis, a MOOC binary (see section 3.2.6) reflects patterns of institutional dominance that prevail despite transformational rhetoric. The systemic change promised by MOOCs seemed to be populated by institutionally-tenured staff and rooted in discussion familiar to existing institutional courses.

While interest in MOOCs may be diminishing (Kovanović, et al. 2015) they remain a significant reference point for wider discussions about technology enhanced education (Selwyn, 2015, p.17). This thesis concurs with Selwyn that rather than a coherent model of education, MOOCs offer a '*prefiguring of possible and desired realities*' (ibid.).

Across the thesis, MOOCs help contextualize education in digital spaces as part of a complex and incomplete project. Complexity comes from the continual evolution of what MOOCs are, from early connectivist approaches that advocate learning beyond campus walls, to later incarnations fully embedded in the institutions. The incompleteness relates partly to the inevitability of being incomplete in such a rapidly evolving concept as well as the limited approach to research into MOOCs that focuses on data analytics and business models rather than learning. Their emergence indicates the clearest attempts of institutions in appropriating technology to move beyond traditional delivery methods. The visibility of MOOCs, and their direct relevance to the open and online design of the Community Project, means they offer a useful comparative in the contextualization chapter, literature review, the findings and conclusion sections. It is through MOOCs that we find evidence that networking technologies are instrumental in changing practices across the educational landscape and that concepts of 'open' and 'online' differ considerably in institutional interpretation from those of the Community Project.

Such a comparison is valuable is establishing the need for the Community Project research as despite numerous research projects around MOOCs, Kovanović et al. and Selwyn's comprehensive reviews reveal community applications play no part.   Selwyn defines MOOCs as, *'best understood as a conduit for long running struggles over the nature and form of higher education in the digital age'* (Selwyn, 2015, p.191)*.* This thesis broadens the discussion to include voices of those outside research communities and institutional discourse.

The argument here is that design science and MOOCs perpetuate a common-sense view of education as hierarchical and institutional.   The Community Project provides an authentic, non-institutional alternative that allows new voices to be added to the discourse on technology enhanced learning.   The extent to which this indicates transformative possibilities, or acts as an Achilles heel, will inform the narrative of the thesis.

1.2.1 Defining Emancipation and Empowerment

The significance of emancipation and empowerment as two powerful terms comes from the initial concern of the research; that people might develop new approaches to learning if freed from institutional expectations and conventions. Despite the central importance of both terms, they prove slippery when attempting to establish neat definition.   It is useful to separate them to establish their distinctive use and application across the thesis.

Emancipation comes with a powerful political concern that considers that institutional learning might be a part of a restrictive, oppressive and dominant structure. From a popular education position (section 2.3.2), to be free of such

oppression learning must adapt and allow for practices that emancipate knowledge and those involved in sharing it. Emancipation here might involve the redistribution of resources, the altering of what learning might be considered worthwhile and an emancipating of who might be involved in making these choices. Freirean popular education defines emancipation as a resistance to dehumanisation (Freire, 2005. p.44) imposed by oppressive forces. The co-design of the Community Project and the participatory nature of research into it respond to Freire's calls for authentic dialogic engagement that allow for diverse and distributed involvement in education. Dialogue is essential, as is the openness to alternative approaches to what emancipation might mean to those involved in the project. As such, emancipation is linked to the redistribution of ownership, has clear links to popular education uses of the term, while also providing a background for other interpretations of emancipation as a concept. It is applied in relation to what courses are created and the rationale for those choices and is informed by the dialogue between participants and my role in establishing where emancipation might occur and what it may mean to each of us involved.

Empowerment offers a similar interest in freedom from convention but is less established as a means of resisting institutional convention and tradition. Empowerment is included as a means of establishing where participants might consider they feel a sense of power that may have been previously denied. There are no attempts to measure empowerment, or create a metric scale of power that this might operate on. Rather, empowerment provides a guide that emphasises a concern with personal responses rather than conventional foci on increased skills or functional learning outputs. The inclusion of all

participants, and all registered users of the CP, as teachers from the outset is considered a significant inclusion. The inclusion of empowerment as a factor of inquiry shifts away from practical concerns over skills and practice and includes emphasis on individual responses based on personal feelings and experiences of power.

1.3   Introduction to the Theoretical Context

Researching education outside the institutions comes with a risk of being trivialised and automatically lessened by being *outside* this dominant *inside*. The theoretical choices made establish the research as valid, meaningful and supported by wider philosophical approaches to education.

The thesis uses two distinct theoretical positions, Freirean popular education and Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic thinking. Both positions share a concern that people, and reality itself, are incomplete projects that reach becoming through learning. Such becoming is always part of a wider conflict over power and control and learning/teaching are influenced and influential aspects of this contested ecology. In the contextualisation section (2.3) each theory helps provide a rationale for seeking educational approaches that resist domination and reflect distributed knowledge (Wiggins, 2011). A position common to each is a recognition of power being embedded in the ways that education helps to shape how knowledge is created. Popular education resonates with my own history as community adult literacy educator and a concern with the transgression of teacher-student roles and the distribution of knowledge (Freire, 2005; Wiggins, 2011). Freire's identification of a dominating banking model of education (Freire, 2005, p.71) offers a critique of power-laden teacher-student

relationship. Popular education is rooted in critical action and social justice but resists sectarian, ideological certainty (discussed in section, 2.3). The prioritising of multiple voices and approaches influences the methodology section and a basis of research done with and not on, or to, people finds support from popular education as a theory concerned with mutually respectful relationships.

The introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic approach is significant as a balance to any perceived political bias from Freirean popular education. Although non-sectarian, popular education is commonly aligned with Critical Theory. The concept of the rhizome allows an alternative approach to transgression of role and distribution of knowledge. Some participants openly resisted what they perceived as political readings of their actions (section 5.1.3.1) and including two distinct theories helps to avoid a one-dimensional framework. Rhizomatic principles also help broaden how learning outside institutions might be conceived. There is a resistance to an arborescent schema (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.323) that is characterised by branches of knowledge and a single taproot. The argument in this thesis is that the institutions might offer an arborescent model against which a distributed, non-hierarchical rhizomatic model of the Community Project offers resistance.

The place of theory is to establish that seeking spaces of learning not already confined by institutional convention is well established. A discussion around emancipatory education (section 2.5) and common sense (section 3.3) take theoretical influence as a route to consider multiple influences of insider and outsider education.

1.4   Overview of the Methodology

This research takes a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach with the intention of prioritising participant voice and reflecting the authenticity of a non-hierarchical, non-institutional project. The methodological design is influenced by literature around PAR with some alignment with the broader field of critical action research. It is important to recognise that action research offers a broad range of approaches (Reason & Bradbury, 2008) and the selection of literature used to support choices here have direct relevance to research that prioritises participatory engagement.   Many approaches to action research are non-participatory and applying the term as if it is a single, consistent method would be inaccurate. The thesis operates from the position that while PAR is a distinct term, the application of critical action research is also defined by a participatory approach.

Throughout the thesis, the methodological approach takes a view reflective of Stringer's (2007) ideal that action research is democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing (p11). This is not research that can be done in isolation and '*involves all those who have a stake in the issue*' (p.6). Action research from this perspective is always participatory.   This research project views participation through the extent to which those involved as participants are included in the design of the project, and with the research, analysis and agreement over results.   While the participatory nature of this research is a fundamental part of its purpose, it also reflects a theoretical position that Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2007) suggests has participatory action as a central part of critical action research (p.2). This reflects the use of the terms

action research and participatory action research throughout the thesis. These are consistent in their use and reflect a position based on that outlined by the authors used.

Using PAR as methodology offers compatibility with the theoretical influences and comes with similar concerns. As popular education and rhizomatic thinking act as influences rather than frameworks, the selection of PAR is, '*not so much a methodology as an orientation to inquiry*' (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p.1). Significantly, the research design develops over three distinct cycles and the emergence of themes comes over a period of eighteen months. The research questions (see section 1.7) operate as emergent pathways that help structure the range of action and reflection.

By allowing a plasticity, a responsiveness in research design, the methodology allows the participant voices to both inform the research and shape its direction. The methodology chapter details the choice of PAR and the way it is threaded throughout the research. In this introduction, a key addition is the establishment of my own individual influences that help shape the direction and purpose of the research. I discuss these (see section 1.4.1) as a foregrounding of the research and to establish the validity of the methodological choice. I am influenced by Gergen and Gergen's (2008) contention that participatory action researchers should not seek, '*to describe the **world as it is**, but to realize what visions of **what the world can become**'* (p.167; also see section 4.4.3).

1.4.1 Personal Motivation: Becoming Educator

Personal background is open to multiple influences and often opposing pressures that create what Whitehead (1996, p.457) labels, '*a living contradiction'.* The approach that Whitehead and McNiff (2011) suggest for researchers is that of a *'living theory'* of education. That is, recognising the potential of individual context and circumstance as a meaningful basis for development and change.

My role here is driven by a desire to see a positive change in the approaches to teaching and learning that places active participation above passive acceptance of external expertise.

Developing a new approach to education may come from numerous possible motivations. My own could be located as far back as a student in London and a sudden realisation of my position as working class, northern and a whole host of other identity locaters newly revealed as marginal. It was clear that the student experience was much more than academic development. Many positive and negative memories remain of that time but most strongly felt has been a recognition that institutional education was as much about identity as it was about some concept of neutral content shared by all. What also remained was a clear sense of alienation and marginalisation that seemed to permeate the institutional approach for many, although noting the warmth and positivity it held for others.

Over a decade later and I began life as an educator myself, working in the field of adult literacy education. It was an experience that highlighted aspects of the

teaching and learning space that seemed clearer for this alteration of perspective, from student to teacher. The shift emphasised the contrasting influence of curriculum that seemed often inappropriate and irrelevant but also dominant as the guide to practice. As I continued professional training as an educator I was aware of the prevalence of vast and acute social, cultural and economic issues in classes that offered standardised literacy and numeracy provision to students either referred by external agencies or, less often, attending under their own volition. It seemed that the predetermined tests and outcomes had little relevance to the issues the students faced. It was equally clear that student welfare, while often explicit in organisational literature and mission statements, related purely to their continuation and achievement on courses. A complete trust in the value of the curriculum was made in silent agreement regardless of the irrelevance many students found in the course. The only action possible was to stay and achieve, or to leave.

This is not to suggest courses could not be interesting, exciting, and vibrant spaces. They frequently were, and this often came from abandoning prescribed approaches and returning to the lived experiences of the students, although almost always facilitated through a teacher. The vibrancy came from the people involved forming workable relationships based on the immediacy of the situation and the confidence they had in each other as teacher and student. Freirean popular education helped in rethinking teacher-student relationships and finding alternative approaches to where knowledge came from. The main emphasis came not from theory but how we as people responded to experiences in a system that often seemed to alienate us from each other. A crucial recognition was the denigration of student skills that did not fit the

curricula (Shukie, 2012b) with little opportunity for existing interest and expertise to inform the learning.

My development as educator appeared to be in attempting to reconcile the gap between student and curricula without one having to dominate the other. In institutional education, this domination always privileged the curricula.

Freirean perspectives were emancipatory in allowing a sense of shared experience and suggestions of a 'radical' inversion of the routes to learn and teach. My own experiences highlighted how dominance came with clear links to power and privilege beyond the individual classrooms and institutions.

A recognition of marginalising and oppressive practice in spaces that were otherwise described as liberating and empowering shaped the basis of this thesis. The Community Project is a focus for this research but significantly is an authentic and real-world effort at developing education that intends to improve access and engagement. Including participants throughout was based on recognising how my experiences reflected the value of participation and the limitations of compliance. Giroux (2017) argues that Paulo Freire shuns the '*isolated intellectual…who struggles alone*' (p. xvii) in favour of building '*coalitions, affiliations and social movements capable of mobilising real power and promoting substantive social change*' (ibid.). A similar commitment also motivates my involvement in education and the purpose for this research.

1.4.2 Role of the Researcher

The embedding of research with action is a key characteristic of PAR. It also raises issues in distinguishing between roles of researcher and participant,

which is detailed in the Methodology chapter (section 4.2). A *'schizophrenic stance'* (Cohen et al., 2011, p.359) indicates the tension between roles of researcher and participant. Partly, these tensions are answered in the creation of a 'Main Author' role (section 4.6.1) but this section reflects on my own positions as institutional lecturer researching a non-institutional space.

This is significant as my position in College Based Higher Education (CBHE) is itself a part of The United Kingdom's (U.K.s) Higher Education structure, but not considered equal to traditional universities. A Higher Education Academy (HEA) report (Healey et al., 2014) suggest CBHE is characterised by non-traditional learners who are older, more likely to study part-time, and with teachers that have less autonomy over what they teach (p.7). They also consider that CBHE *'straddles…the distinction between academic and vocational education, and…between HE and further education'* (p.7).

Although admitting the distinctions are '*over-simplistic'* and '*complicated*' (ibid.) the report continues to distinguish between the institutional bodies using a measure of the HEI as the real bastion of education, with a conception of 'higher' in higher education founded on university concepts. Nowhere is there a suggestion that CBHEs can offer different models of research and scholarship that emerge from unique positions of community – knowledge – research. A developing sense of inferiority in this sector could be anticipated, with the HEA report suggesting that:

> '*…most CBHE teachers are not in a position (nor would it be desirable for them) to develop themselves as original researchers'* (Healey, Jenkins, & Lea, 2014, p.14).

There are two inferences here, that an HEI position would distinguish what is, and what is not, beneficial for staff in CBHE and they (we) cannot be taken seriously until we meet criteria set by a superior 'other'.

This casts my own researcher position as at once a part of the academy, but also removed from it, occupying a periphery position in which the value of my contribution is based on those aspects of my work that align neatly with HEI research and scholarship. While the potential to exploit an Achilles heel is recognised, it seems clear this is possible at individual academic levels but not at any institutional level. The personal aspects of my study propose that the academy, the traditional and institutional, provide the background against which the Community Project can offer an alternative. It is recognised that the viewpoint from which I develop this argument is itself evidence of a complex and multi-layered context of the academy. It is easy to miss the influence being within CBHE has on our individual and collective approaches. Furedi (2004) is introduced in the HEA report as exemplifying scholarship in his description that,

> *'The pursuit of research takes academics into territory where they have to rethink, rework, explore and test fundamental concepts of their discipline'* (Healey, Jenkins & Lea, 2014. p.11).

Such an approach also characterises what the Community Project hopes to explore. The difference is that this may include a becoming outside institutional space. I took from Broadfoot (2010) the importance of recognising where the need for academic standards served a purpose while accepting that,

'…scholars also need to question who determines such standards and practices and how these can act as gatekeeping and 'othering' practices designed to protect the walls of ivory' (2010, p.807).

This thesis outlines what happens when attempts are made to reveal modes of learning and teaching that engage with authentic, non-institutional approaches to learning.

1.5 The Significance of the Research

The 'so what?' question of this research begins from seeing what establishing an authentic non-institutional space involves. The practical and lived reality of this resists preferred ideological readings and presents findings based on actual participant responses. The research is formed around a key concern with emancipation and supported by research questions that look at teaching and learning, technology, reasons for engagement and what courses are created.

Informing all questions through participant voice and authentic and lived experiences is critical in establishing findings based on multiple realities. The impetus is on establishing outsider learning as something tangible and possible, and that research based on creating better alternatives is realistic.

The methodology, the researcher position and the contention of the research often challenge the institutional basis of which the thesis itself is a part. This is understood as a necessary and significant approach in illustrating how research might include challenges to the structures in which it is embedded.

Significance was anticipated around what happened outside institutions but also came in reflection over what happens inside. Additionally, borderlands

between the two become critical spaces of porosity, of conflict and recognition of institutional influence beyond the campus walls.

1.6   Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is separated into two sections.

Part One, 'Framing the Thesis', includes this introduction and the research questions.

From here, the thesis moves onto a contextualisation chapter that establishes the Community Project in more detail and outlines historical context, theoretical influence and wider emancipatory education discourse.

A literature review links the research aims to wider discussion around concepts of teaching and learning and specifically in technology enhanced spaces. It also includes a discussion around common-sense as a tool of conventional thinking while also the basis for a philosophical remodelling of what education might become.   A final section engages with other examples of reimagining education as a space for social justice and transformative action.

The methodology chapter concludes the first section and defines research method, design and ontological/epistemological influence.

Part Two is split into two sections. First, *Findings and Discussion* operates across three distinct cycles of the research and establishes what happened in relation to the research questions. Each cycle helps develop the story of the research while also providing space for reflection and discussion around literature as the themes develop.

Next, a *conclusion* chapter seeks to bring the threads of the research together. Over three cycles and across six questions, the amount of data has been significant and the concluding section uses the research questions as a *Framework for Action* (section 6.3.1). This illustrates a bringing together of multiple voices, disparate themes and a desire to find in the research what might be done differently.

1.7   Research Questions

The questions reflect McNiff's (2013) reminder that in Participatory Action Research (PAR) both 'action' and 'research' need to be demonstrated (p.90).

The design of the questions was informed by several factors. First, each question had to act as lines of inquiry into specific areas of concern. These focus on emancipation, technology, rationale for participation, technology and experiences. Second, the questions had to reflect the cyclical nature of PAR and allow for developments of themes across three cycles. Finally, the questions were framed in such a way as to prioritise critical participant dialogue.

In conversation with supervisors at the design stage of the project it was suggested that emancipation and empowerment would need to be explicit in the questions. In response, an overarching question has been included that allows for a collective and individual reflection of these terms. The question appears as,

'To what extent are notions of emancipation and empowerment evident in the participants' uses and experiences of the Community Project?'

This acts as a first point of discussion in each of the findings chapters and opens the thematic discussion in each research cycle.

Five additional questions direct the research:

1. **What range of courses emerges during the development of the Community Project?**

   This question seeks to reveal what subject matter, what the actual courses delivered, is as the Community Project emerged. The question allows better understanding of what subjects are introduced and offers a background to the second question on reasons for engagement.

2. **What reasons do participants give for their involvement with the Community Project?**

   This question focuses on motivation and rationale for engaging with the project. Participant responses help develop awareness of what significance, if any, the non-institutional basis of the platform had. This question also helps frame later discussion on technology and pedagogy by partially separating out participant purpose and motivation.

3. **How do participants experience the Community Project in relation to issues of technology, expertise and accessibility?**

   The Community Project foci included an interest in how emancipatory claims for technology might be realised in a wider demographic. Through this authentic, living project, the ways technology became used, perceived and adapted highlights concerns over technology as a vehicle for learning beyond traditional and funded spaces. In practice, technology proved a complex and contentious space that highlighted reflection on the nature of technological infrastructure as much as on pedagogical application.

4. **In what ways do participants apply teaching and learning practices in roles of both teacher and learner?**

   This question allows a practical engagement with some theoretical ideas presented in the literature review and gives empirical evidence that can support, and challenge, discourse on pedagogical theory and practice.

5. **How do participants describe their experiences on the Community Project regarding positive and negative elements from their own involvement?**

   This question recognises that through explicit focus on participant experiences, negative and positive, the gaps between the technology and pedagogy might best be filled. The question allows participant-generated discussion to shape what is included.

The framing of these questions prioritises the participant voice and provide opportunity for multiple and diverse responses that help to reveal the experiences and the action of the research. These experiences and activities do not occur in isolation and the ways that wider influences impact on the research questions are discussed in the contextualisation chapter (Section 2.6).

2 Contextualisation Chapter

2.1   Outline of the Contextualisation Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to establish what the project is, its background context and how the theoretical assumptions are applied here.

This chapter relates to the thesis by establishing the multiple threads of the project and aligning these with the theoretical choices made.

A historical background to the project links it to the wider educational discourse around online learning. The chapter ends by linking to the research questions and offers a broadening of the context of emancipatory education.

2.2   Defining the Project and its Participants

Here, the purpose is to establish what the project is, what it involves and who is included. This is potentially descriptive, and in part needs to be just that, so that the outline of the project is clear and a degree of visibility is achieved around where this project relates to its theoretical foundation. The history of the project is defined below while this introductory section contextualises the Community Project and its participants overall.

The community that defined the Community Project is better seen as two related, yet separate bodies. First, there are the participants that make up the co-participation and co-research element of the research. These are described in detail in the Sampling section of the Methodology chapter (section 4.5) and range in background from formal educators, community educators and individuals who had become aware of the project through online discussion and

links with other free education networks. They also include the initial steering group members that act as representatives rather than participants and were invited into the project as advocates for community bodies.   The nature of the participant group is discussed in detail (section 4.5) and outlines of each of the main participants are provided to indicate key characteristics (appendix 4a and 4b). It is through these key participants that the research is viewed most clearly and it is their actions and experiences that form the basis of the findings chapters. It is also from this group of participants that the design of the web platform and the interaction with the web developers took place. In defining a fuller picture of the community, these core participants are central to the research but also the main protagonists in the creation of the Community Project platform. There was no single means of attracting the core group, they consist of educators in higher and further education, community and youth workers in informal learning spaces, individuals with no apparent link to education beyond the Project and advocates for community organisations. All had come to the Project following my promotion of the idea of a free-to-share website that we could develop alternative courses to those being offered via MOOCs and had interest on social media and with friends and colleagues. The loose connections were important in establishing that at its early stages the CP had no clear community with which it linked, but there was a focus on a geographic area of where most participants lived.

The second body of Community Project users are less well defined and play only a minor role in the research. Over the course of the three cycles and up to the completion of the research, the numbers using the CP platform increased dramatically and highlighted a global reach. These numbered over six hundred

at the time of writing and represent multiple users (figure 4.5) across numerous website there was little engagement with the research and they offer a relatively silent numerical majority. As most of the registered users in this second group did not respond to requests for engagement they do not feature in the findings but do provide some context for discussion by the core participants. The influence that the increasing number of users has on the participants through signing up for their courses, often causing surprise, is discussed in the Findings chapter. Although silent users this group is represented vicariously through the responses of the core participants for whom the become their primary course participants in many courses. Future research will attempt to reach out to those users who have yet to engage to consider their motivations and experiences.

2.2.1 History of the Project

The project began through a funding bid to a United Kingdom (UK) government agency with a remit to explore educational uses of technology in community-facing contexts. The proposal was that a popular education approach to learning and teaching might allow for the transgression of teacher-student roles and distributed knowledge across non-institutional spaces. Some initial funding was received and this went towards the creation of an online portal and led to the setting-up of a Steering Group for the project. However, the government agency folded shortly after the allocation of funds with two significant outcomes:

1. The funds necessitated a supporting institution, my employer. Once the initial start-up milestones were achieved this support ended.

2. The Community Project became totally free-standing and non-institutional as both initial funding agency and institutional partner left the process.

The points below clarify the initial project aims as defined in the proposal bid:

- Creation of an online portal to allow for the exchange of learning and education.

- Development of the portal to allow access from individuals, community groups, third sector organisations, educators and, ultimately, anyone with an interest in sharing learning on a non-institutional platform.

- To allow for transgression of the terms 'tutor/ student' and to be open to what courses were about'.

(Summary of Community Project bid, 2012)

The initial stages are significant in defining the ways the opening cycle of the research unfolds. An initial concern over the loss of the funding body was assuaged by the project subsequently becoming freestanding and self-governing. The thesis research process began after the funding milestones were complete (see Table 2-1).

Initial bid for funding (December 2012)	→	Funding received (January 2013)	→	Govt. Agency Dissolved (March 2013)	→	Milestones Completed (April 2013)	→	Community Project Research Cycles begin (April 2013)

Table 2-1: Timeline of project from bid to start of research cycles.

There was some contradiction around the necessity of a supporting institution being in place to receive the funds for a non-institutional project. The authenticity of the Project as outside institutional influence only came after the two organisations left. However, the legacy of the institutional involvement resonated across the early stages of the research findings. This was particularly clear in the Steering Group (SG), populated by preferred partners suggested by the institution as representative of community. The first two research cycles depict the movement from this representative SG to

participatory course creators.   The story of the action and the research covers three research cycles over eighteen months that began from the Project becoming free-standing. Although the Community Project continues to run the research is limited to this period.

2.2.2   Contextualising the Community Project in Contemporary Online Education Discourse

The Community Project being non-institutional is a central tenet of the research and this opening section defines what is meant here by institutional.

The institutional and traditional practices that offer an 'other' to the Community Project intervention offer no single, unproblematic, unified reading.   The contention is not that institutions are somehow striving toward domination but that the practices they employ often stem from a worldview that disassociates the institutional body from an 'other' that is outside it.

The power and status of *the Academy* means it becomes a guiding principle for how knowledge becomes formed and shared.   The institutional models of learning and teaching are not limited to *an* aspect of education, as they become *the* definition of education due to their influence. This ownership forms through complex agreements across cultural, socio-economic and political space that Sharpe (1974) describes as an, '*ideology of the establishment'* (p.55).   This suggest a unification of values beyond disparate disciplines that, '…*represent only the common features of a number of a more or less similar ideologies which thus form a family'* (ibid.).

Trowler et al. (2012) describe '*tribes'* that have '*multiple cultural configurations'* (p.241) defined through the creation of normative practices. The suggestion is,

'…these practice resources condition dominant and hegemonic conventions of behavior, structure, decision making and shape discursive use' (ibid.). In practice, while recognising diversity within institutions, institutional *families* generate a level of homogeneity that excludes those outside. Trowler argues that such normative practices are not formed through conscious group decisions; they become '*normalized'* and *'invisible to insiders'* (p.242) as common-sense approaches to what knowledge and practice develop and subsequently shape conventions in teaching/learning/research. These conventions are not static, and influenced by, '*the demands of business and international competition, of the evaluative state and of students as consumers'* (p.253)*.* Manathunga and Brew (2012) argue that the colonial imbalance of tribes and territories terminology need to reflect more liquid conceptions of contemporary research and scholarship that are, '*wild, vast, unpredictable, unhomely, life-giving, powerful'* (p.56). Bamber and Crowther (2012) identify institutional purpose being under threat (p.184) in the face of competitive commerciality and individualism.

This thesis operates from an understanding that a unifying space of institutional concepts of knowledge can be viewed as largely excluding knowledge generated outside institutions. This space is increasingly fragmented rather than static, with diverse responses to commercialisation diminishing perceptions of any idealised purpose of universities (ibid. p.184). The thesis argues that Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provide an example of how technology-inspired change redefines institutional space, yet retains institutional dominance over knowledge and the location of the teacher (section 3.2.6). The contention is that MOOCs merge online, market-driven commerciality with

traditional practices and ideology that blur the concept of academic mainstream. While partially transforming practice, MOOCs remain rooted in traditional concepts of knowledge and ownership of an educational centre-ground.

To highlight the differences between the Community Project and general characteristics of an academic mainstream, Table 2-2 offers several points of comparison. These characteristics were developed through participant discussion and our collective experiences of learning in both institutional settings and on the Community Project. While not exhaustive, they represent what an academic mainstream looks like in actual practice and the ways in which the Community Project most clearly differs from this.

Characteristics of Traditional Academic Mainstream	Characteristics of the Community Project
Clear distinction between student and teacher roles	Teacher/student roles open to all users
Knowledge claims in hierarchical process with faculty/staff at pinnacle	Knowledge generated at course level; multiple sources of meaning-making
Adherence to cross institutional academic practices & quality standards	Course practice defined by users/course creators – no set model
Engagement with state at levels of funding, policy and status	No funding, outside institutional or state-control
Qualification and accreditation base for taught courses	Non-accredited
Characterised by formal learning as key pedagogical approach	open pedagogy approaches blurring formal/ informal
Structured around layers of expertise and status-based professional roles/ titles	No hierarchy of use with no institutional affiliation
Pluralistic in areas of interest represented by disciplines	Pluralistic and based on individual course creator choices
Unified by institutional quality standards across disciplines	Unified by platform use and a community code
Funded through a range of models that include state, private and individual fees	No funding

Set processes for course creation based on standard quality control/academic framework measures	Multiplicity in the course creation process within limitations of the platform.

Table 2-2: 11 key defining characteristics of an academic mainstream with corresponding Community Project approach as defined by the participants and researcher.

2.2.3 A Contested Space between Institution and Non-Institutional Learning

The project is premised on the viability of alternative approaches to teaching/learning/knowledge than those offered in an institutional epistemology. The literature review outlines alternatives, such as Facer's (2011) *folk educators* emerging from social uses of technology that,

> *'…begin to normalise the idea of teaching as a human capacity rather than a professional identity, and learning as an everyday part of life rather than a specialised set of procedures taking place in certain specified places'* (p. 24).

However, the institutional traditions are neither benign nor based on an open relationship with those that challenge these norms. The context of the project recognises a tension between professional approaches that do not recognise the validity of informal and transgressive conceptions of teacher/student.

In the introduction to the thesis, Laurillard's (2012) call for an attack on non-professional educators is considered. In the subsequent design science discourse, pedagogical selections are presented as innate models of human learning, Laurillard claiming,

> *'Amid the constant change of technology and its radical effects on the nature of learning and teaching, one thing does not change: what it takes to learn'* (p. 7).

What it 'takes to learn' is presented as a series of theoretical concepts that are

routinely Western, institutionally-based and with professional teachers as the defining agents. This Project challenges Laurillard's call for only establishment ideologies to continue shaping educational practice.

The space between this project and traditional academic approaches is not one of mere alternatives but one of competing ideas about who teachers and students are, or might become. The project challenges what knowledge is and where it might be found with a contention that academic tradition can be questioned with online learning offering an opportunity to view practice differently. Further, it suggests that not to reflect on learning spaces beyond institutions offers a narrow, exclusive and ultimately impoverished interpretation.

2.2.4 Alternative Approaches to Free Online Community Education: widening the context of emancipatory community education

While non-institutional as a characteristic of the Community Project is vital, it is also recognised that many approaches to online and community emanate from within institutions.   As Collini (2012) argues, the plurality of university approaches means, *'we should not look for anything like a single answer'* (p.6). The literature review includes a discussion of related technology-enhanced responses that expand on this plurality (section 3.4). To locate the CP in the wider educational context, it is important to recognise some emergent practices, both within institutions and those based on community learning. Here, the first section (2.2.4.1) identifies institutional responses that mark a distancing from tradition and convention. The following section (2.2.4.2) discusses examples of community-led, technology-enhanced learning. Both sections help locate the CP in contemporary landscape.

2.2.4.1 Institutional responses

While some institutional approaches remain central to the discussion (for example, MOOCs), others are not included. Extensive research initially included service-learning (S-L) (Butin, 2006; Carrington, 2011; LeGrange, 2007) as an example of academic outreach and community-focussed education. The literature around S-L indicated it remained ill-formed and confused (Butin, 2006) as a form of outreach and was dominated by institutional normative practices.

However, other institutional responses indicate institutional practice in flux. The Social Science Centre (SSC) at the University of Lincoln promotes a widening of educational purpose to resist *'increasingly adopting corporate governance structures'* that rejects '*a consumerist model of teaching and learning'* (Neary & Winn, 2017, p.1). This model alters the value-base of education to reflect, *social relationships of production…based not on competition but on cooperation'* (p.29). Explicit links made to the cooperative movement indicate a return to older, socio-educational practices rather than technology-generated initiatives. The SSC runs on subscription, voluntary presentations and open governance beyond the institution alone.   Their research into cooperative learning also applies a participatory action research framework (Neary & Winn, 2017). While published toward the end of my own research, their emphasis on PAR as critical, co-participator research indicates a reconsideration of where meaning might be found.

Other non-institutional spaces, such as the Free University of Brighton, run free-of-cost courses in real, not virtual space. Schuler's (2015) *Public Sphere*

Project call for an explicit broadening of the institutional mission to include community that indicates close alignment with popular education through participation and widening who is involved. An explicit popular education inspired critical literacy approach to big data (Tygel & Kirsch, 2016) remains within conventional course structures but encourages a critical questioning of emergent practices. Ravenscroft et al. (2016) demonstrate a transferring of ownership using public radio as a means of transforming 'perfomative space' to 'pedagogical space' (p.124).

Others are not explicit about popular education as ethos, but define a blurring of boundaries that lead to a '*porous university*' (Stewart, 2015; Smyth, 2017; Preece, 2017). The approach to such porosity varies, Preece suggests a physical exchange where, '*community members feel free to enter its* [university] *premises and interact with its facilities and staff as equal members of society*' (2017, p. xiii)*.* Smyth emphasises virtual space as key to a redesigning of relationships between communities and institutions. Stewart (2015) questions the authenticity of such approaches, finding that academics might, '*aspire to openness, but too often…speak to and work with the usual suspects*' (np).

The significance of the Community Project is in its authenticity as a non-institutional learning space. It is through such authenticity that the research is able to reveal pressures of compliance and constraining institutional influence despite efforts to exist beyond normative formal space. As such, the CP research widens experiences of cooperative and porous university initiatives that often begin in Adult Education departments that share similar interests in dialogic and participatory education. Where they differ is in their location within

institutions. This masks the issues and experiences faced when creating free educational learning outside familiar, resourced spaces.

While these initiatives remain important, the importance of the CP research comes in establishing that research must exist outside the institutions and feed in, as well as being located inside and feeding out.

2.2.4.2   Non-institutional responses

Other approaches seem more closely linked as they suggest community as the primary location of free, online learning spaces. Peer to Peer University (P2PU), Access for Learning Community (A4L.org) and Transgressive Learning (transgressivelearning.org) are examples of growing numbers of online educational sites.

Each is indicative of a widening of educational form but in each organisations remain in control, professional development is prioritised and governance is dominated by institutional representation. A4L is ran by, and for, institutions and similar models of institutional governance occur in P2PU. Both also include an explicit rationale based on commercial viability.

Many additional approaches that emerge, flourish and disappear also characterise the non-institutional landscape. The random and transient nature makes these difficult to include in research (Zeigler et al., 2014) although they indicate vibrant learning spaces of learning outside the institutions.

The CP offers an insight into an authentic non-institutional space that addresses the issues that come when a platform emerges outside established governance and resource structures.

2.2.4.3 The context of community in the Community Project

The term 'community' is central to the title of the project and its purpose has been explicit in relating community as an alternative to institutional education. This does not suggest that community is an unproblematic term or that it allows for straightforward definitions. Multiple approaches to communty exist (Ismail, 2006; Shaw & Crowther, 2017) with each being affected by the complexities and inequalities of the societies in which they emerge. Across the Community Project the backgrounds of partcipants and the ways they come to design courses reflect multiple positions, economic backgrounds, exposure to education and varied access to power. It is important to recognise that while community is imbued with issues of disparity around power, resources and mobility these are not always visible from outside and nor do they simply replicate singular notions of privilige and non-privilige based on wealth or social status. Ismail (2006) defines common elements of community that include similar geographic space, shared identities and common purpose (p.157). This was not necessarily the case in the CP and the emergent community provided contrasing purposes of participant engagment. Broader issues of race, gender, socio-economic background or political views have certainly influenced participant positions and these will be reflected in choices made and the willingness to engage in certain types of feedback, such as public forums. Where these become visible, they are discussed in the thesis but they can not be assumed or considered as given elements of the action of the research.

Community is a shifting concept and reflects the formation of a non-institutional collective that is complex and fluid. In the CP, it offers a necessary alterantive to institutional education which at times mirrors those instituitional concerns and

at others highlights localised and separate issues and solutions. It has been argued that community is always subjugated by oppressive institutional presence that is paternalistic in nature (Willis, 1999, p. 150). The response here is that while such domination might exist, Freire's (1999) contention that community can disrupt institutional influence based around an, '*elitist, colonial, authoritarian ideology'* (p.90) supports the potential for imperfect communities offering viable alternatives to institutional status quo. The context of this relationship, between institutions and community, reflects that while institutions reflect wider societal imbalance, they inhabit positions of power and influence bound to the upholding of an institutional ideology that reflects a retaining of power and control.

2.3   Theoretical Underpinnings

In any attempt at leaving safe and familiar spaces there is an element of risk and uncertainty. Two theories, popular education and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic principles, provide a theoretical foundation that support a move away from learning/teaching based purely in institutional and professional space.

A feature of this research is the insistence that knowledge and practice outside the academy is significant and developmental.

Antonio Gramsci is significant in offering a foundation to the critical pedagogy of Freirean popular education, while also creating a preferred ideological position that resists hegemonic dominance. Gramsci's (1972) *'organic intellectual'* (p.136) is a figure that differs from traditional intellectuals by

becoming conscious through contemporary experience, not historical rites. Organic intellectuals are defined not by profession but purpose, and offer a contemporary responsiveness that serves to guide societal development. This they do in a mirror of the general technical flow, helping, *'to create the conditions most favourable to the expansion of their own class'* (p.135). The traditional intellectual, inhabits an, *'historical continuity uninterrupted'* by radical political and social change (p.137). The CP challenges both positions and seeks to explore a space between traditional intellectualism, professionalised and institutionalised, and conceptions of entrepreneurial organic intellectuals that further a hegemonic technical proficiency. The significance of theoretical choice underpins a willingness to engage in dialogic encounters, but to have this as an authentic reflection on what purposes and actions co-participants do and think in the research.

Gramsci (1972) warns of the dismissal of those seeking to establish approaches that question the dominant discourse. The suggestion is that '*Man-in-the-mass'* (p.641) or '*man of the people*' (p.650) positions are based on passion yet lack the depth to establish meaningful alternatives. It is a criticism that Gramsci levelled at the Popular Universities, early versions of free, people-led educational opportunities outside normative academic spaces. These he considered lacked any '*organic quality… philosophical thought or… organisational stability'* (p.636). In Gramsci's reflections, the product of non-institutional and popular educational movements ran the risk of a colonial approach in which 'trashy *baubles were handed out in exchange for nuggets of gold'* (ibid.). For Gramsci, education is a complex space that simultaneously coerces toward hegemonic norms, while acting as a site for alternative action.

This posits the teachers as agents of change, while also agents of the state (Bamber & Crowther, 2012). In the literature review (section 3.3.1), Gramsci's view of common sense is used to question the validity of traditional, intellectual elitism. Popular education and rhizomatic principles allow for a reflection of what occurs in technological spaces beyond institutions, whether this supports hegemonic '*capitalism, business-as-usual* [as] *a given'* (Hall R., 2011. p.274) or something other.

2.3.1 Seeking an Alignment of Popular Education and Rhizomatic Principles

Both popular education and the rhizomatic share an understanding of the world as unfinished with people in it in a state of *becoming* rather than *being* (Freire, 2005; Deleuze & Guattari, 1988). This is significant in establishing that the project is not seeking to establish models or processes of good or best practice. It takes the view that these terms are already imbued with concepts of common sense that define what is, and what is not, possible. In a discussion of Gramscian interpretation of *Common Sense*, Robinson (2005) contends that,

> *'…there are different kinds of theory in existence. Some are carefully thought out and express a conception of the world that is integral, expansive and capable of becoming hegemonic. Others are subaltern, and rely to one degree or another on one's subordination to a ruling class* (p.478)*.*

Most closely aligned to popular education, Robinson's position also highlights a crucial feature of both popular education and rhizomatic thinking; a resistance to dominant institutional practice and a call for an opening up in relation to who is involved in learning/teaching, what it entails and what constitutes knowledge. While Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic thinking was not specifically anchored in education, this section and the later literature review highlight rhizomatic

principles as an alternative analytical position not grounded in specific ideology. The theoretical space provides a framework for reflection that is not already chastened by adherence to a dominant discourse within institutions.

Clear links are made between this and Schön's (1995) call for a '*knowing in action*' that proposes radical shifts in research. For Schön, institutional research sees, '*everyday living trivialised along with the status of practitioners… while abstract theorising continued to maintain institutional legitimacy*' (p.4). I take from Schön's assertion that action is essential to lead to knowledge through, '*reaching out and providing a service to a community*' (p.31) and generating a '*scholarship of application… the generation of knowledge for and from action*' (ibid.). Despite sharing much in terms of their resistance to institutional epistemology each theory offers an alternative view of what happens when the normative practices of institutional knowledge are challenged. In Freirean popular education, the emphasis is on generating social justice through education. Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic thinking seeks resistance while offering no ideal end-point or resolved space based on ideological concepts.

Theoretical position	Role of Student	Role of Teacher	Role of Knowledge
Popular Education	*Conscientisation* *Dialogue*	*Banking System of Education* *Problem-posing education*	*Massification* *(de) humanization* *Praxis*
Deleuzo-Guattarian	*Nomadology*	Assemblage	*De(re)territorialisation*

rhizomatic	People-yet-to-come Multiplicity		Smooth/ striated space Majoritarian/ Minoritarian Virtual/ Actual Rhizomatic

Table 2-3: Tripartite structure of the theoretical application across the research questions.

A summary of the two theories is provided (Table 2-3) with an elaboration on each theory in the following sections. Roles of teacher and student are applied as reflections of traditional categorisation although the potential for transgression between them occurs throughout the thesis.

2.3.2 A Background and Definition of Popular Education Applied in this Research

Popular education plays a vital part in the thesis by establishing that action, participation and research might be linked by a shared interest in establishing social change. This section begins by establishing the characteristics of popular education before establishing how it links to the thesis. A glossary (appendix 1a) indicates some key terms and while it is recognised that the definition of popular education is contested this section highlights how it is applied, and the purpose it has, in this research.

Exploring the etymological routes of the term, Braster (2011) distinguishes between *populus*, (Braster, 2011. p.3) rooted in transmission models of public education and an alternative root of '*popularis'* meaning '*belonging to the people'* (p.3) where education is owned, created and shared beyond an educated elite. The distinction between education as an agent of control or as a means of emancipation is significant. While Braster demonstrates historical and contemporary uses of both approaches (Braster, 2011) this thesis operates

from a specific interpretation of popular education being rooted in issues of social justice. This approach finds its roots in the works of Gramsci (1971), Freire (2005) and Myles Horton that emphasises participatory, people-led dialogic learning with a resistance to hierarchical and standardising curricula based on massification. The application of popular education in the thesis is influenced by these roots and contemporary approaches, such as Eubanks' (2011) *popular technology,* that seek means of escaping dominating and elitist practices which define education as hierarchical and standardising.

The basis of this approach is often related to Gramsci's (1971) view of education as part of dominant classes exercising control through hegemony rather than any overt coercion. Rather than dictatorial oppression, a subtle realignment of common-sense notions shape society so that values and practices supporting dominant orders become an unquestioned normative baseline. For Gramsci, the location of education was more than a practical concern of how to teach, and was instead political and ideological, rooted in dominance and a crucial part of the ways in which hegemonic compliance was achieved. Education as a means of addressing social injustice was fundamental to Myles Horton (USA) and Paulo Freire (Central/ South America) with popular education beginning from critical resistance to oppression. Baker (2008) argues that the Horton's Highlander education centre undertook political education from the 1930s and only latterly identified with popular education as a term (p.316).

However, the emphasis of Horton's approach is significant in seeing the purpose of education being,

> *'to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them…it must take account of the needs of existing community life. It must select with the intention of improving the life we live in common'* (Adams, 1998ed, p. 13).

This common life reflects a challenge to hegemonic and oppressive control through a redistributing of who is involved in the creation of knowledge and how it is taught. Freire (2005) prioritises praxis as a core of the educational purpose with theory and action necessary elements for how teaching and learning are developed (p.128). This approach rejects the separating out of specialised experts from ruling classes with a merely active, but unreflective, mass (ibid.). Lovett (1988) proposed that Popular Education is based first on individual responsibility and that *'…Educating yourselves and others, especially in a knowledge of your circumstances, was a step in changing the world'* (p. 5). The emphasis on social change and correcting of injustice insists on education as a practical and lived experience that exists beyond institutional spaces alone. This is instrumental in the Community Project's aim of practicing learning beyond dominating influences to provoke reflection of our own circumstances. Including popular education as theoretical influence reflects the purpose of the Community Project as being based in issues of social injustice with an emphasis on power/ control and emancipation.

Although the CP remained open to multiple uses, the establishment of non-institutional space hoped to address what Crowther (2010) identifies as the delegitimising of education as a space for real change. Crowther describes how,

> *'The power of educational institutions to differentiate 'useful' from 'really useful knowledge' (Johnson 1988) divorces learning from social action and thus critical knowledge about acting to change*

> *society are delegitimated…it also reaffirms a sanitized view about the purposes education serves.'* (Crowther, 2010. p.485).

The emphasis on a 'really useful knowledge' that is based on creating better social conditions, rather than merely useful that provides skills to exist within oppressive social systems, is a fundamental feature of popular education. By moving outside controlling agendas of employer-led and institutionally defined concepts of useful, the participants are closer to making decisions based on their own circumstances. Crowther et al (2005) differentiate *popular* education from *populist* with the former based on overt interest in the experiences and struggles of ordinary people and committed to social and political change (p.2). A crucial element lies in moving away from helping 'the disadvantaged' and instead toward the creation of a, '*more just and egalitarian social order'* (ibid.). Later findings from the Community Project echo this with clear interests in a move from vulnerability to responsibility as the starting point of how people respond in educational spaces. The general characteristics of popular education suggested from this perspective reflect a, '*curriculum coming out of the concrete experience and material interests of people in communities of resistance',* a pedagogy that is, '*collective, focused primarily on group as distinct from individual learning'* and an attempt to, '*forge a direct link between education and social action'* (ibid.).

The spaces in which this occurs are not neutral or benign and reflect Freire's (1985) assertion that, '*Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral'* (p.122). The research questions of the thesis reflect the depth of experience that includes conflicts and challenges as part of the creation of non-institutional

space. Popular education is critical in establishing alternative approaches to the purpose of education and that include wider issues of social change.

Popular Education and Pedagogy

The research questions include concern around choices of pedagogy and technology but do not do so based on intended models or practices. Popular education is valuable in reflecting wider social concerns rather than, '*training in techniques and methods'* (Giroux, 2017. p.xii) and allows an emphasis on pedagogy as a,

> '*political and moral practice that provides the knowledge, skills, and social relations that enables students to explore for themselves'* (ibid.).

Crowther et al (2005) highlight that operating from a popular education ethos means '*pedagogy'* becomes *'a matter of principle and purpose rather than mere technique'* (p.6). This impacts on the research through the importance given to participant motivation and purpose beyond the actual technologies and pedagogies they select. The research focus explores beyond models or practices to include multiple interpretations of what education might be beyond pre-determined institutional best practice.

It is through Freirean concerns of the relationship between teacher and student that the structure of the Community Project was formed, that all users are teachers at registration. This allows a rejection of the banking model of education which Freire (2005) describes as,

> '*…an act of depositing…the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat'* (p.72).

This relies on an implicit and explicit recognition that both roles are promoted

as common-sense basis for traditional institutional education and that the distinction between them is a gap in knowledge – the teacher being in possession of knowledge and the student being in deficit. An equally taken-for-granted assumption emerges that knowledge can be fixed, packaged and transferred across this established binary. The Community Project's subversion of concepts of teacher and student reflects the theoretical contention that the inequality within this dualism lies at the root of dehumanizing education. Freire argues for an alternative realtionship in which,

> '*The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself* [sic] *taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach'* (p.80).

It is this crucial displacement of ownership and control of the learning exchange that incorporates a dialogic rather than hierarchical relationship. Freire suggests that education must be based on *conscientisation* (Freire, 2005. p.104*)* as people engage with the world around them, relating to changes in their world over time and engage in a dialogue with it. Through *conscientisation*, the process of learning would become understood not only in participants' purposes and aims but also in the experiences and responses faced in creating a non-institutional space. The findings of the research highlight the conflicts and frustrations of dealing with a complex world of commercial, technological and socially rooted power that influences how participants describe their own courses and understandings. Freire defines the process involving a necessary understanding of self in the reflective act, an ability to shift between the abstract and the concrete and not lose ourselves in the *flux and reflux* (p.86). The crucial aspect of this is that it is only through this stage of reflective conscientisation that we can be said to engage meaningfully

with the world around us. For Freire, '*When people lack a critical understanding of their reality…they cannot truly know the reality'* (p.85). Across the findings, the recognition of how wider societal and technological structures influence the learning platform are significant. The basis of a dialogic relationship and an explicit purpose of critical engagement meant such issues and challenges were central to participant reflection.   Merely seeking choices of technological or pedagogical techniques or methods would miss these wider influences.

Emancipating Approaches to Knowledge

Popular education begins by acknowledging that knowledge emerges everywhere and is not confined to expert-generated, institutionally-bound concepts alone. This is significant in foregrounding an emancipatory element of Freire easily lost in an academic thesis; that the popular educator does not prioritise formal educational knowledge over knowledge gained through lived experience. Wiggins (2011) describes how,

> *'Popular education is grounded in the idea that the wisdom gained through life experience is in no way inferior (and in some cases superior) to the knowledge gained through formal study'* (p.46).

By prioritising the possibility for alternative readings of the world the research accepts challenges to dominate epistemologies. Crowther (2010) argues that the,

> *'…common culture of ordinary people is delegitimated by an educational system which denies access to the full range of meanings available in society'* (Crowther, 2010. p.485).

The basis of the Community Project is that all users register as teachers and have the responsibility of choosing the direction, content and purpose of their courses. Being outside institutions reflects a seeking of spaces not already

imbued with an institutional common-sense while also recognising that social change itself will be interpreted differently across the participant body. Eubank's (2011) considers popular education supports a democratizing of knowledge that counteracts '*epistemological privilege*' (Eubanks, 2011. p.148) easily becoming '*epistemological superiority*' (p.148). An epistemic plurality (ibid.) works to transfer where knowledge might be found by recognising the ways poor and marginalised voices are commonly unheard (Eubanks, 2011. p.148; Grossman, 2005, p.79).

Popular education and institutional approaches

A defining characteristic of the Community Project is the non-institutional space in which it has been created. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that popular education is strongly associated with institutional education as the spaces in which the state meets its responsibilities to educate its populace (Crowther, 2012; Freire, 1999). The alignment of popular education within institutions is problematic and Crowther (2012) argues that the contemporary language of institutional education means a focus on '*really useful knowledge*' is becoming '*unthinkable*' with the increasing domination of practical, skills-based '*merely useful*' knowledge. For Crowther (2013), the way that popular education can destabilise standardising institutional education is through '*politically committed academics*' (p.1) that work with marginalised groups. By approaching education through asking '*whose side are you on?*' (p.2) such academics can infuse education with wider political purpose and resist oppressive tendencies that maintain the status quo. Exploiting academic autonomy to '*engage dialectically with the opportunities and constraints of the*

academy' (p.10) allows for popular education to infiltrate and shape education as something beyond replication of standardising institutional conventions. That these academics increasingly find themselves, '*in increasingly precarious isolation on the margins of their own institutions'* (ibid.) is noted and suggests that approaches such as the Community Project research provide valuable alternatives in seeking how institutional spaces might be reshaped to include small communities and groups interested in learning outside state-sanctioned, institutional interest.

The recognition of universities as '*privileged and contradictory places'* (Crowther, Galloway and Martin, 2005. p.1) requires individual academics to follow their social conscience and respond to the challenge for '*dissident voices to be heard'* (ibid.). St. Clair (2005) argues that academic need to recognise the privilege they have (p.52) and to design and deliver with an awareness of social justice and to, '*get off campus and out among the people'* (ibid.). Although specific around operating in non-institutional space, the Community Project includes participants seeking routes toward redefining their institutional practice. Going 'off campus' highlights the possibility that redefining practices outside can influence what goes on inside the institutions. While the Project is firmly engaged with those exploring community-based uses that invert where expertise and purpose is located (Eubanks, 2011) the influence of popular education being able to cross institutional-community divide is recognised and reflected in the findings of this research.

2.3.2.1   The Relevance of Popular Education to the Community Project

The basis of the Community project is that all users register as teachers and have the responsibility of choosing the direction, content and

purpose of their courses. Being outside institutions reflects a seeking of spaces not already imbued with an institutional common-sense while also recognising that social change itself will be interpreted differently across the participant body. The research process is thus seen as a fundamental part of the educational process rather than something done outside it, through observation or distant analysis.

This approach to Popular Education then develops inclusion of participants as a central concern. The notion of *empowerment* (Baker et al, 2008. p.321) is one that varies according to the groups involved. Asking '*who is empowered'* and '*how is this power used'* (Baker et al, 2008. p.321) has involved considerations of wider perspectives on who owns knowledge and included participants as necessary co-creators and researchers as well as those teaching and learning. Baker states that, *'…the most important question…is who owns the knowledge and who will it serve'* (p.321). In seeking input and definition from the participants, empowerment comes partially through being heard, but also in better contextualizing a problem, highlighting how an issue is 'lived' and experienced and avoiding alienation though external-expert analysis that reinforces dominant structures and perspectives. The influence of popular education applied through technology is supported by Eubank's (2011) research finding that,

> *'poor and working class people already have a vast experience with IT and thus come to technology and social justice programs as knowledgeable and asset bearing rather than deficient or needy.'* (Eubanks, V. 2011. p.32).

A similar pattern characterises the research here and reflects that popular education allows for:

1. diverse and under-represented people to contribute (from both inside and outside the institution)

2. That contributions can be critical of the status quo and prioritise areas of concern based on social justice rather than on reflecting state-driven interests

3. Re-imagining who teaches and who learns can better reflect what knowledge is critical and how that knowledge is shared.

The value of popular education is the collective experiences of educators applying social justice thinking to their practices. This legitimization of bottom-up approaches to education mean that the thesis finds theoretical support for allowing people to make choices, explore ideas and practices and inform these based on their own reflections within their own communities. McLaren (2015) contends that Freirean praxis comes through practice, experience and reflection, not through *a priori* knowledge of theory (p.30). By emphasising the participatory, popular education also evades those voices from Marxist critical theory that argue for a ready-made raised awareness of what education should do and what participants should decide is valuable, empowering or emancipating. The emphasis of acting on the world brings opportunity to experience and create learning from these experiences. Through popular education, the CP argues for a means of escaping learning as merely a better way of understanding how to adapt to society. Instead, it begins with a concern that the structures of teaching and learning can be better constructed to reflect diverse lives and promote social change rather than social survival.

2.3.2.2   How Popular Education is Used Across the Thesis

Popular education operates in several ways across the thesis which include:

- Operating across the literature, methodology and findings chapters as analytical tool. It is through popular education that the participatory element of PAR becomes clarified as a democratising act related to empowerment and issues of social justice rather than acting as mere pedagogical technique.

- Developing awareness of multiple interpretations of common-sense as a fluid concept that allows for challenges to terms/practices included in approaches to teacher, student and knowledge.

- Providing an established theory based in literature, practice and research that challenges the dominance of common-sense approaches to what education is and who it involves. It is through popular education that overt concepts of emancipation as a political act that respond to issues of social justice is made clear.

- Considering the relationship between communities and institutions as spaces for learning rooted in social justice. The Community Project illustrates this transgression includes both inside/outside and an emergent porosity of borders.

- Emphasises a philosophy of praxis as a relationship between action and reflection that informs how participation and the purposes of learning are measured.

The value of popular education in establishing outsider voices serves to disrupt other approaches that underpin an educational status quo. The discussion

here provides support for challenges to established order and while recognising the political nature of popular education (Crowther, Galloway, & Martin, 2005, p.2) there is also a resistance to sectarianism and concepts of *'circles of certainty'* (Freire, 2005, p.39). Concepts of certainty around what should be achieved and who should be involved are resisted as additional layers of oppressive, silencing and hierarchical prescriptive knowledge. Grossman (2005) describes how '*voicelessness'* is attributed to others by powerful groups that '*cannot or will not hear'* those that do not *'echo with their own assumptions and beliefs'* (p.79)**.** Through popular education it is considered that contradictory political approaches can arise in participant dialogic encounter and is not closed to all but those in agreement. As a theoretical influence, popular education challenges ideals of objectivity. This is true of the ontological significance given to 'love' as a crucial feature of the educators' approach. Freire (2005) argues that, *'True solidarity is found only in the plenitude of this act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis'* (p. 50). Across the thesis, reflection often encompasses intangible reasons of engagement, and defines in part my own catalyst for the research. It comes at a risk that Freire (1998) recognised, of seeming *'ridiculous, mawkish, or unscientific if not anti-scientific'* (p.3). McLaren (2017) contends that through love as a basis of pedagogy we create learning that begins with positive outcomes for all, rather than individualised achievements that necessitate the poverty of others (p.41-42). The purpose of any research seeking authentic distance from established practices comes with such a risk. Theory provides a link to other practitioners and projects that share convictions of social justice and resistance to common-sense and helps validate moves beyond recognised borders of practice. The Project responds

to Crowther et al's (2005) contention that *'there are always new spaces to be opened up and new connections to be made' (*p.7) and this research reveals diverse voices and experiences that pose deeper questions and reflection over what it takes to learn.

2.3.3 Deleuze and Guattari and the Rhizome

Deleuze and Guattari's work covered diverse areas and while they did not write extensively on education specifically, their influence on educational discourse is commonly found in challenges to the mainstream (Grellier, 2013; Cumming, 2014; Carrington, 2011; Semetsky, 2008; LeGrange, 2007; St. Pierre, 2004).

Grellier (2013) suggests that the increased use of rhizomatic approaches in educational research is based on a desire,

> *'…to challenge traditional power structures, give voice to those previously unheard and open issues in messy but authentic ways'* (p.83).

The rhizomatic shifts from hierarchical, centralised frameworks of knowing that help frame the Community Project and avoid continual comparison to a preferred, common-sense version of education dominated by familiar voices.

2.3.3.1 Defining Rhizomatic Thinking as an Influence on the Research

A glossary of terms and concepts applied to the rhizomatic thinking (appendix 1b) outlines some of the key ideas related to Deleuze and Guattari's approach. This section reflects on the rhizome as an approach to knowledge based on biological references in which arborescent structures characterise institutional concepts of knowledge (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).   In the arborescent

concept, knowledge exists in branches, leading to single root structures and creates a genealogy of knowledge with linearity and hierarchical structure.

Conversely, the rhizome has multiple roots, can be ruptured and re-emerge at any point and relies on connection and networks to emerge. There is no hierarchical structure involved with continual links and formations resisting linearity. Deleuze and Guattari provide six distinct principles of the rhizome: *Connection; heterogeneity; multiplicity; asignifying rupture; cartography; and decalcomania* (pp.7-13)*.* They describe how,

> *'A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles'* (p.8).

In the Community Project the onus is on the possibilities of learning coming from anywhere, with a possibility for random surfacing. For Deleuze and Guattari,

> *'…the tree imposes the verb 'to be', but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction 'and… and…. and'. This conjunction carries enough force shake and uproot the verb 'to be''* (p.27)*.*

The rhizome presents an authentic alternative to single tap root arborescent structures. Such single roots describe the institutional model, but also revolutionary alternatives that replace one fixed ideology with another while maintaining hierarchal structures (pp.24-25). The rhizome emphasises non-ideological assemblages similar to Freirean '*circles of certainty'* (Freire, 2005, p.39) that resist sectarianism, and preclude singular concepts of control. It differs from Freire in resisting pre-defined concern with institutions as a realisation of the state's responsibility to provide education.

Used in various ways to suggest a challenge to educational infrastructure (St. Pierre, 2004; Semetsky, 2008; LeGrange, 2013; Carrington, 2011) the rhizome has also been applied in online space as a model for connectivist MOOCs (Cormier, 2008; Mackness, et al., 2016) and as a model of the internet (Buchanan, 2007; section, 5.2.3.4.3).

The significance of the rhizomatic to the project comes through this opportunity to challenge established order and explore '*yet-to-come*' (Wallin, 2014) action not predefined by specific political positions. The importance of the rhizomatic is in establishing a space that recognises creation coming from multiple participants, the collective assemblage generating difference between continual exchange. Williams (2013) highlights Deleuze's approach being that, '…*we should seek the most complete expression of reality as possible but that this requires creation rather than discovery'* (p.197).

The introduction of the rhizomatic provides depth not only in how this broadens theoretical discourse but also in suggesting that the structuring of context itself is an assemblage, an act of creation that exists between arboreal and nomadic perceptions of reality. St. Pierre's (2004) discussion suggests that,

> *'Deleuze's ontology is 'built upon the not-so-controversial idea that how we conceive the world is relevant to how we live in it… that we ought to conceive understandings that at least permit and perhaps encourage better—and alternative—ways of living in the world we conceive'* (p.285).

Operating from this basis, the Project uses theory as enabler for creating emancipatory learning, rather than as a boundary or limitation. Recognising that a multiplicity alters what action occurs is central to research that involves multiple participants, and Deleuzo-Guattarian thinking helps locate that

theoretically. Analysing a multiplicity as a rhizome helps distinguish from traditional research that uses multiple participants purely for number and statistical validity.

2.4 Tensions and Resolution

There is much that links Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy with that of Freire (Buchanan, 2014) and the similarities are worth noting: ontologically, both theories begin with a notion of 'becoming' over 'being' in relation to reality. With equally defined resistance to institutional domination, Deleuze and Guattari provide what is often considered a complex ontological space. Ontology of the Virtual and '*people-yet-to-come'* (Carlin & Wallin, 2014, p.xxi) are indicative of a Deleuzo-Guattarian interest in fluidity of meaning. Freire aligns ontology, or '*ontological vocation'* with a concern in becoming *'more fully human'* (Freire, 2005, p.55); (see section 4.4.2) or involving a process of '*humanisation'* (p.75).

Both positions allow for a questioning of common sense assumptions that are based on institutional logic across the project and are discussed in the literature review and findings chapters.

Deleuzo-Guattarian notions may sit less easily with pre-determined research questions. This is understood, but reflective of this not being a project that exists in entirely 'smooth space' and remains bound in a tension between competing structures. On the one hand, the creation of a learning space defined by its non-institutional ownership and resistance to standardised models; and on the other the necessity to meet defined academic standards of a Doctor of Philosophy

(PhD) thesis. These are tensions that are accepted and understood as real, lived experiences of the issues also influential in the formation of the project.

Including both as theoretical lenses is expected to allow a range of motivational rationales to exist without funnelling participant responses into predetermined concepts. A popular education political response is not precluded, nor is it insisted upon.

2.5   Contested Spaces of Emancipatory Education

Emancipatory education is a core concern of this project but evades a simple definition.   Lane (2016) defines three types of emancipatory education: emancipation *'through'*, *'within'* and *'from'* education (p.33) with the orientating influence on each being formal, institutional education. While *through* suggests education can emancipate all people, *within* suggests inequality exists that can be overcome by educational reshaping.   Emancipation *from* organised education contends that emancipation must occur beyond, and outside, confining institutions.   All three appear in the research, with some attempts made to relate participant discourse to these categories (section, 5.3.3.1)

2.5.1   A Modern Logic of Emancipation

It has been important to allow what emancipation means to be generated by the participants and not imposed from *a priori* conceptions.   Biesta (2017) defines a *'modern logic of emancipation'* (p.5) in which liberating educators must first denigrate the consciousness of those to be emancipated.   Biesta includes critical theory as a model tending to replace one set of oppressive structures with another.

This research recognises the dangers of a '*myth of pedagogy*' (p.6) that defines a binary of knowing and ignorant, unknowing people, in need of liberation. Some see threats to emancipation through well-meaning teachers who lack critical, moral leadership and disable, '*the hearts minds and bodies of their students*' (Darder, 2017, p.40). Freire's rejection of sectarianism echoes the need for participatory co-creation of terms rather than a modern logic that considers one group less developed than another.

Biesta's analysis is important here in recognising the difference between Freire and Critical Theorists that depict an ignorant other. For the Project to consider all users able to generate knowledge then a preferred version of what must follow cannot exist. Biesta contrasts Freire to Ranciere's (1991) '*Ignorant Schoolmaster*' in which '*master explicators*' (p.5) are resisted. Instead the educator acts only as a spur for others to learn amongst themselves and requires no expertise. This is pertinent to the project in allowing for multiple approaches to knowledge and to defining what an educator is and does. Understanding the impossibility of singular versions of emancipatory education adds to the messiness of the analysis but also reflects authenticity around what happened across the research.

2.6   Linking theory, frameworks and approaches to the Research Questions

To consolidate the context of the Community Project the various themes and approaches must be understood in relation to the research questions through which it is investigated. The emphasis in each question is on the experiences and practices of participants as they develop the platform and their own courses. Being outside the institution is central to this, as is an understanding

that neat lines of distinction are impossible to define. Sharpe's (1974) ideology of the establishment is troubled by those who identify contemporary institutional space with influences from neo-liberalism, consumerism and business models (Bamber & Crowther, 2012; Trowler et al, 2012). The framing of the questions allows participants to reflect on how their own experiences reflect these influences and the findings highlight multiple cases of seeking non-institutional space as a means of escaping institutional demands. A framework of institutional and CP characteristics (Table 2.2) argues for tangible distinctions but the questions accommodate a blurring of these lines and helps reveal participants navigating practices that often cover both. Recognising the often-indistinct boundary between community and institution, the questions can reflect that much institutional discourse is not benign and instead offers a denigration of outsider practice. Laurillard's (2012) relating of non-professional educators as 'nonsense' presents a clearer purpose to the questions as an inquiry into what occurs beyond institutional space and whether 'what it takes to learn' might be different outside the institution.

The Community Project shares an ecology with other free education projects that come both within and without institutions. The openness of the research questions in asking for participant experiences of pedagogy, motivation, course choices and uses of technology help highlight what challenges are faced when beginning to learn and teach outside the institution. Porosity of university-community borders (Stewart, 2015; Smyth, 2017; Preece, 2017) argues that new relationships might occur without completely leaving the institutions. Through an inquiry into what motivates the participants to engage and investigation into the restrictions faced when building an outsider space the

research questions add to the knowledge around what such new relationships might require. The concept of community is also significant, far from a utopian space the research allows a reflection on the diversity of interpretations participants bring in the creation of this online community. Looking at experiences and practices ensures that participant-led dialogue avoids pre-determined concepts and establishes often conflicting views of the purpose of the Project. Participants and non-participating registered users create a form of community not easily defined by shared purpose or common location. That this exists as a newly emergent form of community is significant and helps frame the findings in the context of loosely connected, online and disparate gatherings that might be considered communities. The findings reveal approaches to engagement that relate to often anonymous relationships and how this affects the ways teaching and learning respond to these.

Emancipatory education provides a powerful motivation for the creation of the project but is itself open to interpretation. A risk of introducing theoretical frameworks is the potential for perpetuating concepts of Biesta's (2017) '*modern logic of emancipation'*. Through using a participant action research approach with open research questions the intention is to avoid such pre-determined concepts and instead to reveal authentic and lived experiences. The research questions are not of, or from, theory and are explicitly linked to emergent practice and participant dialogue. However, both Deleuzo-Guattarian and popular education concepts provide a lens through which emancipatory practice at the micro-level of the thesis can be reflected at a macro-level of educational philosophy. Theory allows the research to engage in discourse with other educational projects and to relate its findings to wider concepts of

emancipation, teaching and learning. Although setting questions at all risks a degree of determinism, the avoidance of 'circles of certainty' (Freire, 2005. p.39) comes in ensuring that the questions prioritise the participants. The frameworks, approaches and theories that contextualise the CP provide a valuable framework to which the research questions can provide further, meaningful and authentic data.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The literature review provides two key purposes to the thesis. First, it offers some wider rationale for the creation of the Community Project as an intervention. This supports a PAR approach that explicitly seeks to improve a situation by establishing what it is that needs improving.

Secondly, the literature review establishes the contemporary educational ecology in which the project emerged. It adds to the contextualisation chapter and relates the voices of others concerned with transformative education. Each section creates a platform to the research questions and helps establish the significance of teaching and learning in technology-enhanced spaces as complex and contested. Four sections are included:

1. **Approaches to Teaching and Learning**. A framework of transformational discourse in contemporary Higher Education (HE) reflects my own proximity to the sector as educator and student. This provides a background to the research questions around teaching and learning practice and course choices made and offers some context to participant experiences.

2. **Emancipation from Common Sense** argues that 'common sense' provides a critical space to consider different perspectives around the potential for transgression in learning/teaching. This provides a basis for the research question around emancipation and empowerment and informs subsequent participant discussion around common-sense in teaching, learning and technology.

3. **Reimagining of Institutional-Community Space** includes three sections: *Occupy the Institution*; *Formal/informal learning*; *Alternative Pedagogies.* These combine to illustrate multiple alternative approaches to what transformation might look like and widen the ecology of learning and teaching included in the research question around teaching and learning.

4. A **Conclusion** that summarises the arguments and reflects on their significance to the thesis.

3.2 Approaches to Teaching and Learning

This section highlights that the Community Project is part of a discourse of continual reflection around what roles and purposes educators and institutions have.

Four sections shape this argument:

1. A learning paradigm above a teaching paradigm.

2. The significance of purpose in choices of 'philosophies of practice'.

3. Movement beyond the institution through technology enhanced approaches.

4. A MOOC binary as a model of competing forces.

3.2.1 Learning Paradigm/Teaching Paradigm

This section asserts that fundamental shifts in education were underway before the advent of technology. Barr and Tagg (1995) used Argyris and Schön's (1974) distinction between *espoused theories* and *theories in use* (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p.15) to argue that a shift from an instruction to a learning paradigm was necessary.

Their contention was that,

> '*…the gap between what we 'say' we want from higher education and what its structures 'provide' has never been wider'* (ibid.).

They describe two poles, a traditional '*instruction paradigm'* of standardisation based on institutional control and a *'learning paradigm'* grounded in student activity.

Table 3-1 distinguishes between both paradigms with knowledge increasingly distributed and more collaborative teacher-student relationships emerging.

Instruction Paradigm	Learning Paradigm
Learning Theory	
Knowledge exists 'out there'	Knowledge exists in each person's mind and is shaped by individual experience
Knowledge comes in 'chunks' and 'bits' delivered by instructors	Knowledge is constructed, created and 'gotten'
Learning is cumulative and linear	Learning is a nesting and interacting of frameworks
Fits the storehouse of knowledge metaphor	Fits learning how to ride a bike metaphor
Learning is teacher-centred and controlled	Learning is student-centred and controlled
'Live' teacher, 'live' students required	'Active' learner required, but not 'live' teacher
The classroom and learning are competitive and individualistic	Learning environments and learning are cooperative, collaborative and supportive
Talent and ability are rare	Talent and ability are abundant
Nature of Roles	
Faculty are primarily lecturers	Faculty are primarily designers of learning methods and environments
Faculty and students act independently	Faculty and students work in teams with each other and other staff
Teachers classify and sort students	Teachers develop every student's competencies and talents
Staff serve/support faculty and the process of instruction	All staff are educators who produce student learning and success
Any expert can teach	Empowering learning is challenging and complex
Line governance; independent actors	Shared governance and teamwork

Table 3-1: Outline of two paradigms, adapted from (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 17).

Barr and Tagg allow for a reconsideration of the meaning of 'what *learning* is' (p.17) through shifting from a focus on teachers to one on learning. This approach suggests a collective ethos of emancipatory purpose against

institutional preference for instruction.   They suppose that,

> *'Right now, the Instruction Paradigm is our theory-in-use, yet the espoused theories of most educators more closely resemble components of the Learning Paradigm'* (p.15)*.*

They provide a telling model of institutional learning governed by teaching as a product, based on lectures and similar in form to Freirean banking models with, '*students…viewed as passive vessels'* (p.11).   The shift would signify a move from '*competitive and individualistic'* instructionist classrooms to '*cooperative, collaborative and supportive'* (p.13) ones where learning dominates.   They argue that educational means and ends are conflated, with institutional purpose losing sight of its wider purpose and instead measuring success on institution versus institution quality measures. This institutional model also masks the *'beliefs'* (p.15) of educators as they face pressure to abandon a focus on learning to adhere to institutional models focused on instruction.

3.2.2   Philosophies of Practice

Belief might also be read in Kanuka's (2008) call for educators to recognise their '*philosophies-in-practice'* to better select their technologies-in-practice. Using an earlier non-technology educator-type framework (Elias & Merriam, 1980) Kanuka merges pre-digital categorisation with emergent technology.

The suggestion Kanuka makes is that before engaging with technology, educators must define *'what types of persons we expect our education systems to produce'* (Kanuka, 2008, p.2)*.*   This is important in defining *'the ends our educational purposes are to achieve'* (ibid.).

Different types of educator will thus employ different forms of technology and necessitate educators knowing their own philosophies-in-practice. Kanuka illustrates a range of technology determinist positions (Table 3-2) which informs technology choices appropriate to Elias and Merriam's educator types (Kanuka, 2008, p.13).

Determinist Orientations	Associated traits/theoretical positions
Uses Determinism	Technology is neutral; supposes autonomy/control of technology by individual learners/teachers
Social Determinism	Technology embedded in and shaped by social structures. 'Social choices shape form and content of technological artefacts' (p.5)
Technological Determinism (negative)	Negative view of technology - causal, increased oppression through corporate, neo-liberal practices; political-economic bias to elite classes
Technological Determinism (Positive)	Causal - technology able to effect positive change and increased learner autonomy

Table 3-2: Orientations of technology use (adapted from Kanuka, 2008).

The call toward educators' understanding and applying their own philosophies avoids '*mindless activism'* and moves from conformist thinking to one where educators might generate, '*…rational thought, personal growth or to bring about political and social change'* (ibid.).

The significance comes from arguing that institutional practice is undergoing continual reinvention/resistance in the face of conforming and restrictive standardisation. For Barr and Tagg and Kanuka, responsibility for resistance lies with educators.

Although recognising the importance of diversity, Kanuka's position does not consider alternative concepts of teacher/student. For instance, a '*radical*' educator solves problems using an open source VLE, thereby maintaining institutional control while appeasing the radical tendencies of the educator (Kanuka, 2008). It is transformation happening within specialised educational space rather than promoting alternative outsider approaches.

3.2.3 e-Learning Singularity Paradigm

Parchoma (2011) warns that aligning institutional standardisation with choices of technology risks a slide into an *'E-Learning Singularity Paradigm'* (p.63). Parchoma suggests this comes from focusing on, '*effectiveness, consistency, efficiency, fiscal sustainability and…change for its own sake'* (ibid.) rather than any meaningful purpose. Instead, institutional policies tend toward, '*embedding standardised technologies into homogenous pedagogical practices'* (ibid.).

The results of narrowed institutional purpose, of business-case education, is most clear in how technologies are applied regardless of any pedagogical means or educational ends. An impoverished institutional purpose leads to standardisation in which,

> '*all forms of ICT-mediated teaching, learning and community* **should**… *converge into a limited set of identifiable, manageable best practices'* (p.64).

Parchoma (2011) argues for a recognition that technology is *value-laden* (p.73) and that we must consider how educational *means* and *ends* connect with technology. This leads to awareness that choices become a '*site of social struggle'* (Parchoma, 2011, p.71).

The purpose of the Community Project agrees with Parchoma's call for a '*critical philosophy of technology'* which considers,

> *'which philosophies of teaching and disciplinary cultures are underserved by common technological options, thus opening new research questions on how to address these shortcomings across teaching and learning cultures'* (p.74)*.*

The potential for transformation and emancipation comes first from identifying the ideological concepts within available technologies. The implications for the Community Project follow Parchoma's call for '*continued exploration'* that consider technology choices as, *'a site for political, social, technological, pedagogical and philosophical creativity'* (p.81)*.*

This critical position develops from Kanuka's position in recognising that technology and pedagogy choices take place in a complex institutional space. Institutional pressures of Research Excellence Framework (REF), National Student Survey (NSS) results and university rankings define an increasingly '*marketised view of higher education*' that contributes, '*to a weakened commitment to higher education as a transformative or emancipatory experience for students'* (McCulloch et al.,2016, p.2).

Regardless of the initial impetus an individual academic may have for social justice or any other philosophical stance, the '*competing and sometimes contradictory pressures'* (p.2) of the institutions would dilute and reshape this. While an institutional hegemony includes critical challenge, the threat of technology is of concealed standardisation masked as innovation. The non-institutional status of the Community Project allows reflection partially beyond these pressures, though findings later reveal institutional influence resonates beyond the campus walls.

3.2.4 Transformation through Technology

This section argues that institutional transformation exists but tends toward minor modifications of familiar traditional approaches.

Some commentators consider institutional transformation is a result of the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies (Beetham & Sharpe, 2007; Laurillard, 2012). Others consider this may involve learning moving beyond the institution (Siemens, 2005; Facer, 2011). In each case, technology is a driver, or at least enabler.

Anderson and Dron (2011) propose a historical timeline across *three generations of distance learning* (Table 3-3) in which Web 2.0 technologies provide the latest stage of a continuum rather than any radical departure. Within each generation, technology and education interweave to represent '*a social worldview of the era in which they developed'* (p. 80). Pointedly, all three generations '*are very much in existence today*' (p.81) highlighting that contemporaneity is not the defining factor over approaches taken. Connectivism is presented as a progression from transmission (cognitive-behaviourism) and later constructivist ideas seemingly supporting Siemens (2005) assertion that '*an entirely new approach is needed*' (p.3). Kop (2011) argues that,

> '*Something fundamental has changed with the latest developments of the Web… People can now learn on online networks outside of the control of the institution*' (p.19).

It may be that a connectivist third generation offers a crack in institutional domination through which the light of new non-traditional approaches may get through.

Generation of distance education pedagogy	Technology	Learning Activities	Learner Granularity	Content Granularity	Evaluation	Teacher role	scalability
Cognitive-behaviourism	Mass media; print, TV, radio. 1:1 communication	Read and watch	Individual	Fine: scripted & designed from the ground up	recall	Content creator; 'sage on the stage'	High
Constructivism	Conferencing (audio, video, and web) many to many communication	Discuss, create, construct	Group	Medium, scaffolded and arranged; teacher-guided	Synthesise essays	Discussion leader; guide on the side	Low
Connectivism	Web 2.0; social networks, aggregation & recommender systems	Explore, connect, create and evaluate	Network	Coarse: mainly at object and person level, self-created.	Artifact creation	Critical friend, co-traveller	Medium

Table 3-3: Summary of Distance Education Pedagogies (Anderson & Dron, 2011).

What is less clear is the extent to which connectivism is based on any change in educational '*means'* and '*ends'* (Parchoma, 2011).

The contention of the Community Project is that widening who teaches and what is taught requires a radical departure from institutional concerns. Connectivism remains part of an institutional continuum and any purpose of multiple voices challenging institutional power and dominance remains limited, if present at all. While technology-enhanced-learning makes learning outside institutions possible, this appears more as a shifting of location rather than a redistribution of control.

3.2.5 Locus of Control

A locus of control is presented (Table 3-4) that highlights two positions, **Institutional Enhancers** and **Institutional Reformers** that help define where the Community Project sits. These two positions reflect transformation as an aspect of control rather than of altered location of learning.

This continuum represents institutional control at its strongest with enhancers,

and empowered learners representing the reformer end of the spectrum.

Empowered learners making own design decisions			Institution/ teacher in control
Community Project	Institutional Reformers		Institutional Enhancers

Table 3-4: Locus of Control (adapted from Mayes & DeFreitas, 2007, p. 21).

Institutional Enhancers describe transformative practice located within institutional practice and control (Laurillard, 2008; Beetham & Sharpe, 2007; House of Lords Report, 2015; Mayes & DeFreitas, 2007; Conole & Alevizou, 2010). Technology acts as catalyst to future pedagogical development and teachers remain the centre of development that resists broader socio-cultural or political change. Emancipation comes through enhancing existing practices to improve enduring roles of teacher/student. The approach is characterised by teachers as agents of control and change (Laurillard, 2008), based on improved teacher training (Conole & Alevizou, 2010) with teachers being both the answer and their ill-preparedness a barrier (Beetham & Oliver, 2010).

Institutional Reformers view technology as fundamentally altering the ways we teach and learn and that will require radical restructuring of the institutional spaces of learning (Siemens, 2005; Facer, 2011; Kop, 2011; Lamb & Groom, 2010). The institution remains but emancipation comes through reimagining what they might become.

The Community Project is placed at the left of the spectrum to indicate the possibility of learning/teaching/knowledge moving further than both enhancer/reformer positions in challenging the location and the people involved. Neither reformer nor enhancer positions involve explicit political

motivation, although enhancers are often located within policy directives. More transformative institutional responses are discussed (section 3.4) but these are currently small-scale and unrepresentative of the wider sector.

3.2.6 A MOOC Binary

MOOCs operate as a keystone to the thesis, providing a catalyst for the Community Project while illustrating reformer and enhancer tendencies in contemporary educational discourse. Freire describes *massification* as binary opposite to *liberation* (2005, p.148), this section explores the extent to which the MOOC may be read as a rejection of that or further support for it.

This section provides links between types of MOOC to better inform the locus of control in relation to the Community Project. Three sections serve to:

1. Outline a MOOC binary that indicates enhancer/reformer positions.

2. Define types of emancipation and learner empowerment that differ across MOOC-types and highlight shifts in roles of teacher/student/knowledge.

3. Offer a critical position in which 'massive' offers something unique and helps frame the alternative approach of 'community' in the thesis as distinct.

Distinguishing xMOOCs and cMOOCs

MOOCs offer an embodiment of the institutional response to a changing landscape. The xMOOC/cMOOC binary spans a locus of control from institutional control to student-in-control positions (Table 3-5).

Daniel (2012) contends that beyond a shared acronym, they are, '*so distinct in pedagogy that it is confusing to designate them by the same term'* (Daniel,

2012).   While recognising that Veletsianos and Shepherdson (2016), and Bayne and Ross (2014) question the neatness of the binary, it is applied here as a measure of their diverse educational approaches.

Fidalgo-Blanco (2016) make the distinction as,

> *'xMOOCs are instructivist and individualist, use classic e-learning platforms and are based on resources, cMOOCs are connectivist and are based on social learning, cooperation and use of web 2.0'* (p.2).

Both exist in technology-rich networks and are characterised by large numbers of participants (Daniel, 2012; Kop, 2011).   The xMOOC is generally funded through corporate finance with institutional sponsorship (Haggard, 2013; Daniel, 2012).   Most xMOOCs are hosted on corporate MOOC platforms such as Udemy and Coursera, with some institutional collectives such as FutureLearn in the UK.   Connectivist MOOCs take place on distributed networks using web 2.0 technologies generally facilitated by institutionally-based technologists/educators. The differences between cMOOCs and xMOOCs indicates control at the macro level (institution/corporation) reflected in the micro level of instructivist/ behaviourist teacher-in-control approaches.

cMOOC (or Connectivist MOOC)	xMOOC
'connectivist, social learning approach that focuses on communication amongst participants online' (Bayne & Ross, 2014. p.4) *'driven by principles of pedagogic innovation within a richly networked, disaggregated mode of social learning'* (Bayne & Ross, 2014, p.21) *'based on a philosophy of*	*'Focus more on content transmission and knowledge acquisition through repetition and testing'* (Bayne & Ross, 2014. p.4) *'institutionally-focused 'xMOOC', characterised by pedagogy short on social contact …overly reliant on video-lecture content and automated assessment' (*Bayne & Ross, 2014.

connectivism and networking' (Daniel, 2012. p.2)	p.21)	
'cMOOCs…originally designed to challenge traditional approaches to teaching and learning by experimenting with new pedagogical approach' (Mackness & Bell, 2015. p.25)	*'developed by elite US institutions …follow a more behaviourist approach'* (Daniel, 2012. p.2) *'xMOOCs …have taken a traditional pedagogical approach to teaching and learning'* (Mackness & Bell, 2015. p.25)	

Table 3-5: Distinction between cMOOCs and xMOOCs.

Concepts of Emancipation across MOOC types

The distinction between MOOC-types is reflected in conceptions of emancipation and empowerment. Anderson and Dron's (2011) framework is adapted to illustrate teacher/learner/knowledge (Table 3-6) based on principles of knowledge control and the role of teachers/ students. The emphasis across MOOCs is one of disruption. In xMOOCs this begins a process of updating pedagogy to reflect changing digital environments (Bayne & Ross, 2014; Laurillard, 2012).

Connectivist MOOCs suggest a more radical distancing from traditional institutional approaches. Bell (2011) presents an argument familiar to both MOOC-types that learning theory based on teachers, students and classrooms,

> *'do not provide an adequate framework for us to think and act in the digitally saturated and connected world'* (Bell, 2011. np).

	Community Project	CMOOC	XMOOC
Teacher Role	Open to anyone; create course/network and make choices of topic and approach; no professional or institutional requirements	Open – tendency toward professional educators; facilitate network	'Star lecturers'; institutional affiliation; focus on transmission' relocate institutional knowledge in free access space

Student/Learner	Free access; activities based on course. Access online and real world	No entry criteria; varied activity according to MOOC; contribution to network	No entry criteria; activities based on MOOC leader tasks
Content/Cognitive	Knowledge a blend of teacher/community led. Non-discipline specific and wide range of subject areas	Knowledge created through networks; student creativity integral.	Institutional disciplines and courses (Abridged/tailored for online transmission); teacher-created

Table 3-6: Establishing roles across Community Project, CMOOCs and XMOOCs.

How new frameworks are imagined reflects competing notions of teacher/student/knowledge familiar to critical applications of philosophies-in-practice (Kanuka, 2008; Parchoma, 2011). While more detailed reflection is applied to the discussion of how Community Project participants 'live' their roles, the discussion here is framed around ways MOOCs propose new directions.

Teacher

Despite the transformative potential of MOOCs, in most xMOOCs, the traditional 'teacher' role is not dismissed and any transformation occurs *within* roles, although the roles remain in place. Bayne & Ross, (2014) argue that,

> *'…the place and visibility of the teacher remain of central importance. MOOC teaching is high visibility, high risk and dependent on significant intellectual, emotional and time commitment'* (p.8).

Daniel (2012) questions the extent to which universities are pedagogically innovative and argues that xMOOCs are,

> *'…based on very old and outdated behaviourist pedagogy, relying primarily on information transmission, computer-marked assignments and peer assessment'* (p.12)*.*

Knox (2014) argues that simply allowing student involvement is significant

although this should not, '*…negate the importance of the teacher-curated material, or the role of the teacher'* (pp.166-7).

Connectivist MOOCs appear more transgressive and propose '*decentring the role of teacher'* (Mackness, Bell, & Funes, 2016, p.4) and emphasise student creation of knowledge which teachers facilitate (Milligan, Littlejohn, & Margaryan, 2013). MOOCs have been seen as embodying the increasing influence of commercial concerns and a devaluing of teacher-roles (Scholz, 2013; Daniel, 2012). Mirrlees and Alvi (2014) depict MOOCs as the pinnacle of a *Taylorising* of education that standardises and deskills teachers and merely provide an, '*automated substitute for flesh and blood professors*' (p.65). The emancipation envisioned is the liberating of institutional ownership to be replaced by that of the market.

Learner/Student

MOOC discourse is often seen as a response to meeting changes in students' '*expectations and demands'* (Irvine, et al., 2013, p.172)*.* In an institutional context emancipation comes through choice of delivery mode (p.182) yet residual concerns of accreditation and access to professors remain crucial (p.173). Mackness et al. (2013) question how straightforward it is to apply connectivist principles to pedagogy (p.42). A lack of formal support structures and dismantling of traditional roles can be emancipatory, but research by Mackness and Bell (2015) highlights this can lead to situations where,

> '*…alongside exciting, inspiring and transformational experiences, there were others that were demotivating, demoralizing, disenfranchising and even disturbing'* (p.34).

Other approaches suggest that the xMOOC is dominated by instruction and

teaching roles remain but are diminished (Feldstein, 2014, p.7).

While cMOOCs are partially seen as a threat to institutions (Stewart, 2013; Siemens, 2005) the dominance of users with higher level qualifications exists in both types of MOOC (Kop, 2011; Haggard, 2013). The roles, practices and conventions recreated in virtual, online space remain familiar to institutional models with little evidence of new users creating alternate approaches. Knox (2014) identifies, '*anxiety …and a sense of losing identity and individuality*' (p.169), amongst students on an institutional MOOC. Participants report not valuing peer contributions greatly (p.170) and question '*where are the professors?*' (ibid.). Knox suggests embracing the massive for possible future benefits despite the concerns of users.

Knowledge

In cMOOCs the emphasis is on '*meaning-making*' (Siemens, 2005) and a reframing of how knowledge is generated (Irvine, Code, & Richards, 2013). The cMOOC values knowledge being generated in wider communities (Stewart, 2013) reflecting a link to Freirean ideals, although lacking any social justice purpose. Relating to Parchoma's (2011) critical mission, of matching *means* with *ends*, cMOOCs suggest a disruptive potential but one without clarity of purpose. Siemens argue that cMOOCs,

> '*…were not designed to serve the missions of the elite colleges and universities. They were designed to undermine them, and make those missions obsolete*' (in Feldstein, 2014, p.7).

However, the actual purpose of the cMOOC remains largely contained in terms of process rather than purpose. What this change is for, why it is necessary, is much less considered in relation to broader emancipatory concerns of social

justice, socio-economic transformation and the rationale for making the institutional model obsolete.

Challenges to the Community as Emancipatory Space

The extent to which 'massive' is a crucial feature of open online courses is key to comparisons between MOOCs and the community focus of this research.

In xMOOCs, the notion of business models is integral (Haggard, 2013) with large numbers offering market-economic opportunities. Huge data-sets are also attractive to organisations seeking patterns of engagement and data-mining to generate future online models of education. A consequence is much research in which, *'learners' voices were largely absent'* (Veletsianos & Sheperdson, 2016, p.214). Mackness and Bell (2015) contend that cMOOCs were always about *networks* rather than *community*. The distinction between the two relates to Downes' assertion that,

> *'the two play different roles …communities embed knowledge and standardize practice …MOOCs disrupt existing patterns of thinking and introduce people to new connections and new ideas"* (Downes in Mackness & Bell, 2015, p.30)*.

This view appears based on a concept of community as parochial and static, although with little indication of how increased size leads to increased disruption. While communities are equated with narrowed cognitive exposure, Downes' position is unclear as to how simply expanding numbers leads to transformed ways of thinking.

Stewart (2013) argues that *Massive* acts as a *'Trojan horse'* (p.229) disrupting *'elite gatekeeping institutions and corporate interests'* (ibid.). For Stewart, participatory culture in cMOOCs develops digital literacies *despite* the

dominant instruction of the institutions. Knox (2014) writes directly of the Community Project that in replacing the *massive* of MOOCs with *community* it is,

> '*isolating educational activity from an external world imbued with threats and liabilities. It is an attempt to position education as a transcendent, sterilised activity disconnected from the contaminations and disputes of the populace*' (p.174).

Having dismissed community as a meaningful site of transformation, Knox (2016) later argues that MOOCs offer a conflicted but emancipatory space, suggesting that,

> '*the promotion of the MOOC works hard to sustain the prestige of the educational institution and the uniformity of potential students in what may be a new world of 'massive' education*' (p.46).

Yet, the institutional resonance in the MOOC does not deter the possibility that,

> '*…rather than the innovations of technology or pedagogy, it may be that a different way of thinking about ourselves offers the most profound way of understanding, and productively intervening in, the emerging project of the MOOC*' (ibid.).

As with Stewart's '*Trojan horse*' there is a contention that regardless of the lack of transformative design, radical change may occur merely through exposure to massiveness.

These positions differ from the emancipatory space of Freirean popular education by suggesting the bigger, the better. The potential for local impact and value is not considered. Such approaches to massive provide examples of espoused theory rather than theories-in-use. Downes and Siemens present emancipating approaches to knowledge creation but MOOC discourse remains dominated by narrow demographics with most participants already familiar with, and involved in, institutional education (Veletsianos & Sheperdson, 2016).

Resisting a Utopian Vision of Community

Although community is considered as an alternative learning space to institutional practices it is not a blank slate with an absence of inequality or struggle. St Clair (1998) argues that the, '*problem with community is…that there are too many semantically justifiable interpretations'* (p.5). The ambiguity over a definition is compounded by a concern that community can become either too broad to be off any analytical use or that it is used as a utopian cover all term that homogenises those it includes and ignores the *'the plural and unequal nature of communities*' (Martin, 1993).   Hugo (2002) reflects that community is often related to only positive values of value and inclusion and often seems to have the power to *'inspire a reverential suspension of critical judgment'* (p.5) and a glossing over of the reality that, '*learning in community is a complex, multi-layered, and often contradictory process'* (p.6). The approach Hugo offers is a closer investigation of the ways community (gemeinschaft) and society (gesellschaft) operate together in times of continual and rapid change (p.21). This insists on a resistance to utopian retrospective views of community and instead an approach based on enquiry about how people engage with each other. This would include

1. A focus on the ways communities learn and exist within society and how well particular backgrounds and identities adapt and succeed.

2. Awareness of the different type of leadership and the ideological perspective of community leaders in the formation of learning communities. (adapted from Hugo, p.22)

An awareness of both would be necessary to avoid replicating, or creating anew, inequalities based on an inadequate understanding of , *'power,*

silencing, knowledge politics, social control, individual agency, and resistance' (ibid.).

St. Claire (1998) defines community as relationship (p.5) in which individuals operate *'within a field of diverse and interweaving communities'* (ibid.) and as a site of discourse and culture in which groups come together to create shared practices.   From both positions the concept of community is fluid and reflects often competing positions between educators and community participants. Aligning with Hugo's points, the emphasis of the Community project has to reflect on the backgrounds not only of the participants but also of my own position as main author and the direction this may lend to the project. St Clair concludes that investigating relationships and multiplicity within community can help educators to '*explore what we mean to ourselves and to our communities'* (p.5). Within the Community project the exploration includes an acceptance of the complexity within and between participants and myself. The limits of research come in accepting that hidden power may mean the community formed around the CP will exclude some people while more amenable to others. Additionally, relationships will be reflective of our other communities and the experiences and capital we bring from those. It is through accepting that community formation and engagement will often feel like being '*caught in the middle'* of often competing agendas and influences (Shaw & Crowther, 2017, p. 4) that the CP research reflects the necessity of continued reflection to avoid perpetuating singular, and simplified notions of community.

The value of this reflection is an awareness of both community and institution being able to generate new relationships that reject authoritarian, paternalistic

approaches from the latter and subdued silence from the former. Freire (1999) argues that an authoritarian institution sees that, '*democracy deteriorates whenever the popular classes become too present'* (p.90). The insinuation is that while both community and institution inhabit the same societies, one does so from power and other from weakness. Establishing a non-institutional project here allows for a reflection of both a shared ecology and an inequality in the access to make change. Responding to this with a re-imagining of where change and ownership might occur is a fundamental basis of Community Project.

3.3   Emancipation from Common Sense

This section builds on the earlier contention that the Community Project offers an alternative to conventional institutional approaches to education. The theoretical influences define common-sense as something to be disrupted and the discussion here offers a foundation for common sense as something manufactured rather than innate. The intention is to reframe what teaching and learning might include and broaden these to include the experiences and practices of CP participants.

3.3.1 Gramscian Concepts of Common Sense as Basis for Praxis

Common Sense suggests that prevailing conditions are simply '*the way things are'* (Landy, 2011, p.49). Both enhancing and reforming institutional educators base transformation on taken-for-granted assumptions that institutions are primary spaces for knowledge-creation that include distinct roles of teacher and student.   While teacher-student roles might change, common sense

parameters define the extent to which this change can occur and ensure transformation is already controlled by these pre-existing limits.

Gramsci's (1972) approach to common sense provides a complex space in which the acceptance of such dominant ideas is challenged. Watkins (2011) defines Gramsci approach as a challenge to those leaders that, *'ground their assertions in what 'everybody knows' as just 'common sense''* (p.106)*.*

Similar approaches occur in educational theory and policy, such as Laurillard's (2012) fixing of '*what it takes to learn'* (p.7) that prioritises teachers as sole agents of change (Laurillard, 2008, 2012; Bayne and Ross, 2014; Knox, 2014). The CP challenges an unquestioning acceptance of where teaching and learning occur and a Gramscian reading of common sense that is, *'not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself'* (Gramsci, 1972. p.630) while also reflective of existing social inequalities. The relationship between common sense and good sense define wider power relationships within social/ educational hierarchies that inform the way knowledge becomes embedded in culture and common usage.

The Significance of Gramscian Common Sense in the Thesis

The value of Gramsci's approach is the potential to disrupt the way things are. Patnaik (1988) defines Gramsci's critical position as partially resistant to an '*enlightenment rationality'* (p.2) that, *'condemned the views of ordinary people as superstitious, naïve, meaningless, irrational'* and that, '*the task of philosophy was to supersede their belief systems'* (ibid.).

Gramsci criticises the ways in which even Marxist positions that suggest support of the common people do so from an intellectualised distance that

operates with only an '*intuition of subaltern groups'* (ibid.) rather than in actual beliefs, ideas or thoughts. This results in an enlightenment logic in which even supposed representative organisations for ordinary people are, *'…not able to break with the traditional teacher-pupil relationship and consequently not able to facilitate an intellectual formation within the agency itself'* (Patnaik, 1988, p.3). Such residual enlightenment logic serves to separate the intellectual from those they seek to represent, creating a common sense in which philosophy is '*incomprehensible for laymen'* (ibid.).

Both approaches lead, either through patronisation or condemnation, to a situation in which, '*further development of working class consciousness is impossible' (*ibid.)*.

Gramsci proposes the necessity of praxis that neither dismisses popular knowledge nor reifies it. For Gramsci, a philosophy of praxis includes more than merely aligning theory with practice and instead involves a, '*deeply held coherent set of ideas, values, vison and analytical understanding which shapes action'* (Bamber and Crowther, 2012. p.192). The educational goal must then raise awareness of oppressive practice and generate change.

Bamber and Crowther suggest that danger comes from an under-developed intellectual awareness of hegemony that leads some educators to become '*agents of the state'* (2012, p.193), unwittingly perpetuating inequality. CP participants illustrate multiple perspectives that evade commonality over what oppression means and what form challenges to it might take. Ill-informed educators with singular, inflexible messages can easily become propagators of centripetal views of community if unable to respond to such diversity.

Some educators posit a move away from enlightenment ideals of individualised learning toward networked collaboration (Facer and Sandford, 2010. p.85). They suggest economic conditions of mass industry created an institutional common sense based on this factory image which have become increasingly irrelevant. Transformation that reflects such structural, technological change requires society-wide adjustment than merely improved teacher education or progressive pedagogy.

Later sections (5.1.3.4; 5.2.3.4) highlight experiences community educators have when facing pyramids of technology infrastructure they find alienating and threatening. This illustrates contemporary hegemony forming around corporate and technological, as well as institutional and establishment, infrastructure. A questioning of common-sense assumptions of educational purpose proves important in reimagining what uses these infrastructures might be used for.

Common Sense as a Space for Emancipation

For the Community Project to rethink what teacher-student means relates to Gramsci's rejection of '*manufactured'* (Hill, 2007, p.76) distinctions between '*glorified …mental prestige'* and '*denigrated …manual labor'* (ibid.). A significant contemporary version of this distinction comes through Laurillard's (2012) call to attack those who do not learn in the accepted spaces, leading to a denigration of learning outside professional institutions.

Gramsci's position supports a direct challenge to such elitist segregation as he,

> *…rejects the idea that 'thinking' should become the exclusive activity of a group of people who stood above and to the side of the majority'* (Hill, 2007, p.76).

In this thesis, a resistance to hierarchies of thinking creates a gap, where, *'identity of term does not mean identity of concept'* (Hill, 2007, p.77). As such, new meanings might be negotiated that avoid pre-determined, externalised realities. The terms 'teacher' and 'student' might be reimagined in the Community Project and demonstrate a '*living philolog*y' (ibid.) where common sense definitions are questioned and reframed.

Accepting language as continually in flux aligns with Freirean and Deleuzo-Guattarian ''becoming'. Gramsci's (1972) '*philosophy of praxis'* (p.640), argues for,

> '*a criticism of 'common sense' basing itself, however, on common sense in order to demonstrate that 'everyone' is a philosopher and that is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought …but renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity'* (p.638).

The call to become critical is to begin a '*criticism of the philosophy of the intellectuals'* (ibid.) and to challenge what might otherwise be a residual, common knowledge beyond question.

Such a position informs the approach of this research to Parchoma's (2011; also see section 3.2.3) '*critical philosophy of technology'* (p.74). The contention here is that popular education finds roots in Gramsci's call for a philosophy of praxis (Mayo, 1999; Allman, 1988) with critical participation a fundamental part of conscientisation (Freire, 2005). It is through lived participation, not theoretical discourse alone, that new models can be created that challenge dominant hierarchical practices. The dialogic approach is theoretically and practically significant in avoiding hierarchical and distancing mechanisms that prioritise institutional responses. Through this approach to praxis, localised, small-scale activity can inform concepts of teacher, student and knowledge (Wiggins, 2011).

As with Gramsci, praxis in popular education is considered the starting point for '*wider learning'* (Mayo, 1999, p.25).

In ascertaining what wider learning means, a crucial distinction between Freire and Gramsci appears in relation to high and popular knowledge (ibid.). Gramsci (1972) considered through criticising common sense that *good sense* (p.660) would follow which in turn paves the way to higher philosophical thought. Gramscian approaches lead to an,

> *'…advocacy of the need for subaltern groups to gain the means to critically appropriate established 'high status' cultural forms and knowledge with a view to moving from the margins to the center'* (Mayo, 1999, p.23)*.*

Freirean interest lies in promotion of the popular, while recognising that for Freire, *'…the popular constitutes only the entry point to knowledge and is not the be all and end all of the learning process'* (ibid. p.24).

In establishing that knowledge operates on a trajectory, from popular to wider learning, the significance for community-based projects is that knowledge can be both relevant in its immediate location and able to become enriched through reflection. This is significant in arguing that courses created on the Community Project include 'higher' learning despite their being located outside 'Higher Education'. It highlights that movement away from centripetal expertise to include distributed networks of knowledge creation (Wiggins, 2011, p.46) is possible.

3.3.2 Common Sense and Technology

The technological landscape in which the Community Project exists is complex and requires some reflection on how conflicting pressures are already embedded in the means of communication. Several approaches here describe

how the techno-educational infrastructure is biased toward dominant common-sense readings.

Robinson argues that a Gramscian reading of technology is 'ethico-political' (Robinson, 2005, p.480) and views history as, 'the struggle of systems…between ways of viewing reality' (p.480). Historical analysis becomes the exploration of a, 'clash of ethico-political principles' and if these principles are left unchallenged we, 'can only describe historical events from the outside and cannot draw causal conclusions' (p.471). While Gramsci might liberate thought/action from purely dominant conceptions, subaltern groups remaining 'within the framework set by the ruling class' (p.473) cannot begin alternative readings of reality. Robinson argues that to be able to achieve autonomy and 'change the world' (ibid.) subaltern groups need to 'develop a new conception of the world …not dependent on ruling class ideas' (ibid.).

A framework of technology and media that may appear neutral yet reproduces dominant value-systems provides a hurdle to emancipatory action not easily seen. The reality in which we educate takes place in spaces reflecting, 'corporate control of the media…and 'common sense' assumptions which arise from committed exposure to material espoused by rightwing outlets' (p.480).

Technology and media tools lead to 'sub-alterns lifeworlds …territorialized and constructed by dominant elites' (p.477). Calls for educators' critical choices to become widened (Kanuka, 2008; Parchoma, 2011) must also include shifts from individual action to wider awareness of ownership and control of networks and systems. Giroux (2007) proposes ethics and political ideas become overshadowed by instrumental factors, arguing that,

> *'The consequence of the substitution of technology for pedagogy is that instrumental goals replace ethical and political considerations, diminishing classroom control by teachers while offering a dehumanizing pedagogy for students'* (p.124).

In this approach, the instrumentalism of technology prioritises **means** over **ends** of education and reflects Parchoma's concerns of technology as a route to standardisation. Mirrlees and Alvi (2014) argue MOOCs as Taylorisation processes prioritise business models (2013) and replicate economic inequality. They propose that '*citizens not corporate and governmental elites'* (p.68) should hold the power of choice. Hall and O'Shea (2013) describe a creeping neo-liberal common sense across the public sphere (p.4) that reduces teacher-student to provider-customer contexts and infuse the language of education with neo-liberal philosophies.

The practicality of a corporate logic is already established according to Buchanan (2007) who argues that,

> *Google is effectively the common sense understanding of what using the internet actually means … one writes with a pen, makes calls with a phone, and searches the internet.* (p.14).

A pervasive '*search engine culture'* (p.15) has effectively transformed the utopian vision Tim Berners-Lee (2000) had of learning by sharing in an '*enormous, unbounded world'* (p.34). Instead, a culture of mass-market-seeking corporate entities ignore state legislation/ censorship and prioritise commercial exchange (Buchanan, 2007).

The rhizomatic potential of the internet must contend with the arboreal potential for the web developing a set of practices increasingly shaped by a corporate common-sense. The '*rhizome as tendency'* (p.12) is always opposed by an

arborescent pull to the conventional centre-ground. The search engine culture results, Buchanan argues, in a feeling that, *'the world really is at our fingertips, that we are verily 'becoming-world''* (p.15). As such, the desires for emancipatory thinking are wholly aligned with the common-sense of search engine culture. Buchanan argues for a resistance to a pessimistic acceptance that,

> *'Google is the global id …to do so is to accept that our deep atavistic desire is to buy something and there could be no more dystopian outlook than that'* (p.16).

A *'becoming-world'* that is experienced as emancipatory while simultaneously reinforcing corporate common-sense logic indicates ends contradicted by means. Such a contradiction appears in the experiences of the Community Project participants (see sections 5.1.3.4; 5.2.3.4) where educator technology choices appear as fragile individual moments amidst powerful corporate forces. Rather than seeking new spaces for challenges to hegemonic control, a rapidly moving technology infrastructure leads to self-deprecation, as,

> *'we tell ourselves it is because we don't properly understand Google…rather than dismiss the search engine itself as fundamentally flawed'* (p.14).

An ability to identify such flaws widens learning to include a questioning of these platforms rather than merely increasing the skills needed to function within them.

Crowther (2010) describes how,

> *'the more powerful the discourse the more deeply embedded in our common sense are its problems, its definitions of learning, its understanding of participation and the range of appropriate 'solutions''* (p.480).

Crowther's argument is that *'professional knowledge/power formation'* (ibid.) is shaped by the powerful in their image of what key concepts should be.

A reading of institutional approaches to technology reflect solutions coming through attempts at creating links between digital skills, employability and institutional purpose (FELTAG report, 2013; Lords Report, 2015; QAA Review into Higher Education, 2014). As these seek to establish a dominant discourse in relation to funding and research, the subsequent creation of common sense emerges where technology and employer-needs becomes taken for granted. While philosophies-in-practice suggest the agency of the individual educator, a dominant economic superstructure emphasises market forces as shaping educational purpose. Landy (2011) argues this tension leads to a concern with becoming proficient yet not to question hierarchical concerns.

A critical layer of analysis questions approaches such as Stewart's (2013) Trojan horse value of MOOCs that accept digital literacies as significant and valuable without concerns over wider socio-economic influences.

Similarly, Knox's (2014) embracing of the massive suggests a common sense that leaves unchallenged the location of the university or the status of the professor, but depicts a new subaltern group as beneficiaries of massiveness still moderated by institutions. For both Knox and Stewart, 'massive' is significant and reinforce approaches such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) that prioritise global, international/intra-national scales (Gorur, 2015).   Common-sense based in statistical reliance on vast data-sets means that,

> *'other evaluations become mere intuitions or vague feelings – easily dislodged with 'That's not what the numbers say'* (p.3).

Emphasising statistical relevance thus prioritises those models most adept at operating at scale, and ignores and denigrates small-scale and

localised practices.   Others find in technology a space for creative resistance. Facer (2011) posits '*folk educators'* who use technology to,

> '*…normalise the idea of teaching as a human capacity rather than a professional identity, and learning as an everyday part of life rather than a specialised set of procedures taking place in certain specified places*' (p.24).

Eubanks (2011) describes a '*popular technology'* in which a narrative of technology as emancipation is countered by a realisation of technology as part of wider societal imbalance. Toyama (2011) argues that technology acts '*as a magnifier of existing institutional forces*' (p.75). The consequences of this amplification require an understanding that, '*technology cannot substitute for missing institutional capacity and human intent'* and '*tends to amplify existing inequalities'* (ibid.). For Toyama, technology applications are most successful when,

> '*they amplify already successful development efforts or positively inclined intent, rather than to seek to fix, provide or substitute for broken or missing institutional elements'* (ibid.).

The significance of this is realised in participant discussion (section 5.3.3.4) which suggests refocusing on human intent above institutional momentum around increased technological use.

3.3.3 Habitus as Residual Common Sense

Bourdieu defines habitus as,

> '*a general, transposable disposition which carries out systematic, universal application – beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt – of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions'* (Bourdieu, 2010, p.166)*.

If learning conditions remain controlled by institutional logic, the potential for wider knowledge and practice to inform it is diminished.   The influence of the

location of learning extends beyond technological spaces with habitus insisting on an appreciation of wider structural and cultural norms that shape, *'our way of being in the world'* (Goodfellow & Lamy, 2011, p.98). Establishing that learning is partially defined by where it takes place allows appreciation of how institutional logic expands beyond what happens within the institutions.

As with Bourdieu's (2010) description of the autodidact, knowledge/culture not acquired '*in the legitimate order established by the educational system'* (p.328) becomes a '*miniature culture'* and a '*collection of unstrung pearls'* (ibid.). The Community Project's relocation of knowledge and the people involved differs from MOOCs not only in practice but also in purpose. The Community Project makes a direct attempt at relocating learning outside the personnel and habitus of institutional convention to challenge power and dominant practice.

Costa (2015) uses Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to consider the ways in which digital networks can liberate thinking inside institutions and create networks that challenge standardising practice. Yet, Costa also finds that,

> *'…this apparent freedom for individuals to re-invent the logic of academic practice comes at a price, as it tends to clash with the conventions of a rather conservative academic world'* (p.194).

Such clashes lead to *'disjointed identity'* (ibid.) with powerful frameworks establishing status, identity and informing purpose. Costa describes '*outcasts on the inside'* (p.197) referring to academics attempting to remodel common-sense practices within institutions.

Costa describes how,

> *'The more a social field succeeds in establishing itself as habitus the more successful it is in forming and maintaining its structure. This, in return, assumes the individual's identification with the institution, by reconciling the social*

> *agent's practices with the social structure of the institution's norms'* (ibid.)*.*

From this, the autodidact's *miniature culture* remains devalued but so too is the opportunity for internal deviance and restructuring problematised. Action within the Community Project takes place against a habitus, a commonality of agreed principles not naturally occurring but manufactured and subsequently defended. Bourdieu (1997) highlights '*popular'* (p.90) as a term that refers to things '*excluded from legitimate language'* (ibid.) in part through '*sanctions implemented by the educational system'* (ibid.).

This leads to a complexity of escaping a common sense, a habitus that defines language and action in shaping learning. Popular education reverses this '*symbolic aggression'* (p.90) of popular to argue for a valid and powerful response beyond institutional common-sense norms.   Whether viewed as '*outcasts'* or '*deviant practitioners'* (Costa, 2015, p.203), identity is a significant concern in participant action across the Community Project.   In prioritising participant voice in the thesis, the tendency toward a common-sense interpretation is reduced. However, institutional habitus remains an influential factor in how participants engage with the Project.

3.3.4 A Minor Philosophy of Education: A Deleuzo-Guattarian Rhizomatic Response to Common Sense

The establishment of common-sense has thus far aligned with political ideologies familiar to critical theory and popular education.

This section proposes a resistance to common sense that evades an ideological basis and comes through interpretations of Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic principles.

Rhizomatic approaches to education have been applied to many different areas of learning that include Connectivist MOOCs (Cormier, 2008), indigenous people in institutional education (Ferreira & Devine, 2012), Service Learning (Carrington, 2011; LeGrange, 2007) and alternative schools (Roy, 2003). Each challenges a dominant concept of common sense and propose a deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation of majoritarian schema.

The inclusion of the rhizomatic in this thesis comes with awareness that applying the rhizome is itself part of a complex reading of common sense.

Gregoriou (2004) identifies a '*tragic paradox*' (p.240) in which the transformative potential of the rhizome is lost when it is applied to traditional models of action. She reflects that,

> '*…the rhizome has found a hospitable niche in pedagogical discourse only as a metaphor for decentred and non-hierarchical systems of organization*' (ibid.).

Instead, Gregoriou suggests an approach which is, '*not to represent the rhizome but to implant it in thought*' (ibid.). In place of neat application of rhizomatic principles the thesis operates from what Gregoriou proposes as a '*minor philosophy of education*' (p.244). This is not a set of established principles but instead a fluidity in practice that allows variation. The 'minor' from minoritarian proposes the creation of new narratives/experiences within a major language. It can be read here as minor knowledge existing within dominant space.

Gregoriou offers a Deleuzo-Guattarian reading of philosophy that challenges the Gramscian perspective. She argues that philosophy necessitates foundational approaches to knowledge according to the '*big figures of philosophy's fathers*' (p.234). Such philosophy is repressive, not the higher

liberating space that Gramsci suggests. Gregoriou cites Deleuze and Parnet (1987) that philosophy acts as,

> *'A formidable school of intimidation which manufactures specialists in thought – but which also makes those who stay outside conform all the more to this specialism which they despise …it effectively stops people from thinking'* (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987, p. 13)*.*

Gregoriou (2004) defines Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic approaches as anti-philosophy that allow a rethinking of thought unbridled by traditions of philosophy. When pedagogy becomes enmeshed with philosophy it creates a primary route to learning that marginalises alternative voices (p.223). Gregoriou argues for a '*minor philosophy of education'* that challenges majoritarian dominance and argues for a rhizomatic multiplicity resisting neat alignment of pedagogy with philosophy (p.248).

The distinction from Gramsci's approach is that through a minoritarian approach the knowledge generated by a community is not seen as lesser than philosophy. The significance for educational philosophy is that purpose is shifted to '*finding instead of regulating, encountering instead of recognising*' (p.248).   Such a relocation of where meaning is found, where encounters generate new thinking, becomes crucial in the development of the Community Project. Action can produce relevance without automatic application to an 'other' in the form of philosophical norms.   Gregoriou's minor philosophy of education offers a chance to wrest control from dominant representational ideas through creation, encounters and becoming.   This is not a straightforward task and one that must avoid slipping back into established concepts that are *'just or correct'* (p.248).

3.3.5 Establishing Resistance to Representation as a Basis of a Foundational 'Common Sense'

This section outlines how the rhizomatic offers an alternative perspective of a un-common-sense that prioritises multiplicity and distributed expertise over centralised models. It offers an important foundation on which the distributed, non-institutional space of the Community Project can be viewed as valid while outside 'common-sense' notions of teacher-student-knowledge. Deleuze (1994) argues that common sense acts as a '*hindrance to philosophy*' (p.170) and for a rethinking of common sense as a basis for a natural philosophy that evades grand narratives. Finding in Cartesian representation common sense as a '*determination of pure thought*' (p.168), Deleuze responds that common-sense acts as *concordia facultatum* (p.169), which Roy (2003) defines as,

> *'thought [being] confined to maintaining "correctness" of existing ideals, and to the allocation of established truth values rather than the creation of new ethical and sensory engagements'* (p.23).

Any attempts at affirming new thoughts are lost through continued adherence to a basic purity found in common sense. Reynolds (2010) challenges a Cartesian '*univocal*' (p.232) common sense as unable to represent multiple, diverse interpretations and even if it could that this would lead to, '*nothing more than the shuffling of the deck of cards*' (ibid.).

Deleuze also resists a Cartesian position but considers *univocal* (Colebrook, 2010, p.186) as a reflection that there cannot be,

> *'…a hierarchy of beings – such as the dominance of mind over matter, or actuality over potentiality, or the present over the future –because being is univocal, which does not mean that it is always the same, but that each of its differences has as much being as any other'* (ibid.).

For Colebrook, Deleuze's resistance to hierarchical concepts of being and

innate properties leads away from '*logos*' and toward '*nomos*' (ibid.). Crucially, both nomos and logos create hierarchical difference but in logos space is '*divided, distributed and hierarchised by some law, logic or voice (logos) that is outside or above what is distributed*' (ibid.). A nomadic approach has no such pre-determined, transcendent models instead envisioning smooth spaces for, '*creating concepts and styles of thought that opened new differences and paths for thinking*' (ibid.)*.*

Colebrook offers a useful summary by illustrating how Deleuze,

> *'…rejects the idea that a principle, or a power or tendency to think, should be limited by some notion of common sense and sound distribution. Nomadicism allows the maximum extension of principles and powers; if something can be thought, then no law outside thinking, no containment of thought within the mind of man should limit thinking's power'*
> (p.186)

The importance here is in recognising this resistance to pre-defined common sense prioritises immanence over transcendence (Colebrook, p.187) with an emancipation of thinking and action to allow fundamental redistribution of power. Here, the inversion and interrogation of teacher/student/knowledge are possible through recognising the limiting structures of common sense.

Roy (2003) argues this as a basis for general teacher development, proposing that, '*We want teachers to move away from this image of thought and create new values and new sense*' (p23). This is crucial in any project proposing new forms of learning-teaching-knowledge without immediately referring back to established standards.

This shift from logos to nomos argues that contemporary, traditional approaches are not the only way of teaching and learning and whether as permission-giving, encouragement or a call to arms, a Deleuzo-Guattarian

approach offers emancipatory potential through dislocating a logical sequencing of what might be possible. Roy uses the shift to encounters from representational thinking to establish spaces that back off from '…*reified categories into the underlying fields of flux and variation, we shed layers of strata or deterritorialize, enabling ourselves to move from closed spaces into more open terrain'* (p.26).

O'Riley (2003) argues this deterritorialisation can correct reductive globalisation and rhizomatic approaches can, '*affirm what is excluded from Western thought and reintroduce reality as dynamic, heterogeneous, and non-dichotomous'* (p.27). Even within Western institutional spaces, Roy (2003) considers that common-sense logic leads to teacher education ensnared by, '*limiting and worn-out representations and categories* [of] *accountability, professionalization,* [and] *efficiency'* (p.2). Roy's solution is to shift from '*recuperation and representation'* to '*a continuum of potentialities'* (p.3) through prioritizing *becoming* as the response of educators.

Wallin (2014) describes a similar situation in which the '*standardising impulse of education takes as its fundamental mode of production the reification of common sense …the territorialization of thought according to **that which is given'*** (Wallin, 2014, p.120, emphasis in original). For Wallin this creates a situation in which, '*the teachers are missing'* (p.119) as majoritarian concepts exclude teachers '*capable of inventing new techniques of thought and action'* (p.121).

Representational concepts rooted in common sense play a part in the participant encounters experienced. Resistance and compliance occur and

reflect the authenticity of participant action in the real-world ecology in which the Community Project unfolds.

3.4 Reimagining of Institutional-Community Space

While the Community Project explores the potential for non-institutional learning, it also needs to recognise other theoretical and practical responses that shift beyond normative and standardising approaches to teaching/learning. Reimagining emancipatory learning occurs in informal, online, and community approaches but several challenges to institutional orthodoxy also appear within institutions. The discussion here builds on the earlier contextualisation of the Project (section 2.2.4) and frames the research amongst other alternate, contemporary approaches to education.

3.4.1 Formal/Informal

A discussion around informal/formal learning highlights differing conceptions of value attached to distinctions between types of learning.

Laurillard (2012) distinguishes formal learning as that, '*we do in the context of education*' while informal is, '*the learning we do for ourselves*' (p.39). Between the two, a balance of power exists in which the informal is '*something we can all do*' through '*first order experience*' (p.41). Formal learning is described as more complex and in which we commonly fail to achieve understanding (ibid.), leaving us reliant on the expertise of teachers/ experts who, '*clearly have better models of some aspects of the world*' (p.40). Only formal education establishes '*proper knowledge*' (p.40) which becomes the responsibility of institution whose only problem is transmitting their expertise to a populace who do not respond to 'telling' (ibid.).

Such an approach denigrates learning not formed within institutions by professional experts. An alternative approach is developed by Hamilton (2013) who argues that knowledge must come from teachers in formal spaces being open to the lives, experiences and knowledge backgrounds of students. An approach based on pedagogies that,

> *'…keep in touch with change, that are responsive, exploratory, that ask questions, that are prepared to constantly challenge the institutional walls we build around learning, not just inviting others in but going out, barefoot into the everyday world.'* (p.136).

In experiencing lives beyond institutional concepts, knowledge is broadened and expertise distributed. Livingstone (1999) considers this outsider spaces exists as a,

> *'massive egalitarian informal learning society hidden beneath the pyramidal class structure of…schooling and further education'* (p.64).

With '*virtually no research*' into the '*hidden part of the iceberg*' (p.61) Livingstone questions the ways that such hidden learning spaces might be used to advance the top of the pyramid, the formal learning spaces. This Community Project research adds to knowledge in these hidden spaces while resisting automatically-ascribed hierarchical models of formal over informal. Livingstone and Sawchuck (2005) argue that informal/ formal are segregated on politicized class-based lines and that,

> *'working-class peoples' indigenous learning capacities have been denied, suppressed, degraded or diverted within most capitalist schooling …at the same time as working class informal learning and tacit knowledge are heavily relied on to actually run paid workplaces'* (p.110).

This, they suggest, is ingrained in the discourse around a '*Post-*

industrial…knowledge-based economy' (p.111) that operates from presumptions of *'increasing centrality of the expert knowledge'* (ibid.) located in capitalist hierarchies. Similar presumptions are made of a '*deficit'* (ibid.) in those further from the centre that can only be '*remedied through greater learning efforts'* (ibid.). In recognising the influence of power and structure beyond that of a simple, taken-for-granted distinction between formal/informal the Community Project supports a 'barefoot' engagement that challenges institutional ownership of expertise.

3.4.1.1 Informal and Community Online Education

The development of the internet has resulted in its appropriation by multiple informal learning communities. Rheingold (1993) identified the potential for Multi-Use Dungeons (MUDs) as informal, user-generated online spaces that provided users with, a '*learning colony, where everyone teaches everyone else'* (p.140). Despite two decades of use, research into the applications of informal learning spaces has been limited, with the focus of research on formal, institutional learning (Thorpe, 1999; Gray, 2004; Zeigler et al., 2014). A situation familiar to Livingstone's (1999) invisible icebergs of informal learning results from ill-fitting research models for exploring nascent, disordered, anonymous and often temporal exchanges.

Zeigler et al. (2014) argues that *'untapped sites of informal group learning'* (p.64) occur because adults are *'not aware that they are learning'* (ibid.). This echoes Laurillard's (2012) emphasis on informal learning as first order experience. Zeigler et al. argue that the visibility of the online narrative makes informal learning more conspicuous but difficult to research because of

anonymity. Using discourse analysis, they identified that conversations, '*are not guided by an expert, persist over time, and enable researchers to see learning as it is happening*' (p.74). The Community Project adds support to the findings around collective meaning-making occurring online, although the participatory nature allows greater depth than the anonymized, distant observation used elsewhere.

A familiar approach to much online learning discussion is a link to communities of practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Both Zeigler et al. (2014) and Gray (2004) use CoP to identify patterns of use and rationale for participation (Gray, 2004. p.25). While recognising CoP as a useful framework for research, it is criticised for ignoring wider issues of power and control Roberts (2006). For Roberts, CoP is, '*pre-disposed to the absorption of and creation of certain knowledge and the negation of particular types of meaning*' (p.629).

While recognising that no taxonomy of online community, '*fits under every circumstance*' (Lee et al. 2003. p.52) CoP highlights how commonly used analytical approaches often ignore issues of power. Porter's (2004) typology of communities online recognised the significance of commerce and that relationships formed around distinct responses to customer-provider relationships. Porter identified two types of online community (figure 3-1): '*Member-initiated*' in which, '*the community was established by, and remains managed, by members*' (ibid.); and, '*organisation-sponsored…that are sponsored by either commercial or non-commercial organisations*' (ibid.).
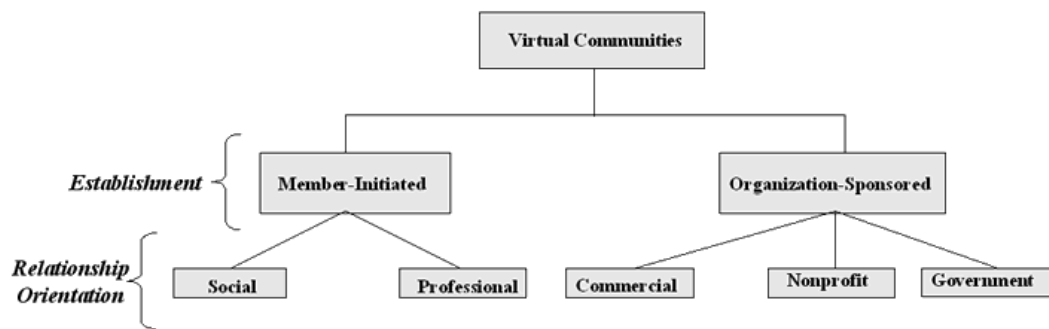
Figure 3-1 A Typology of Virtual Communities (Porter, 2004).

Both represent Porter's attempt at establishing a *'common ground'* (ibid.) for inter-disciplinary research and is important in recognising ownership of the communities as crucial. Later discussion outlines that distinguishing between types of community can be difficult (section 5.2.3.1.2) and that the onus on identifying controlling influence is significant in forming how communities emerge. Numerous attempts at defining learning communities have emerged that develop beyond the generic online community definition (Ke and Hoadley, 2009). There is a continued appreciation that definitions and typologies of such amorphous forms are limited in value (Porter, 2004; Ke and Hoadley, 2009; Zeigler et al., 2014) and that any definition reflects the theoretical or value-base of the researcher. While taxonomies, such as that proposed by Ke and Hoadley, offer useful parameters (Community-ness; Learning-oriented achievement; Usability of system environment) these suggest evaluative distance that is able to define unified purposes and processes within individual communities. The Community Project is a collection of multiple micro-communities across course-creators without singular definition of purpose.

Multiple approaches to online learning research indicate the importance of theory and framework choice. Zeigler et al. (2014) suggest that *'new research approaches may be needed to understand the informal group learning that is made visible…in online communities'* (p.62). It is argued here that an increased awareness of researcher philosophies-of-practice may be more useful. Choice of approach may then be aligned with ethos, value and purpose that does not argue for a singular, objective truth. Other research in online learning and rooted in popular education (Tygel & Kirsch, 2016) illustrate that shared theoretical impetus does not mean replication of research design, with researcher-focussed study also apparent in popular education approaches. What distinguishes this research from others (Zeigler et al., 2014; Gray, 2004) is the prioritising of co-participation that recognises the value of combining action and research and that theoretical choices need to be carefully selected to allow for new and unheard voices to be heard.

3.4.2 Occupy the Institution

Other research prioritises political concerns of power and control in educational space. The idea of occupying institutions is used explicitly in relation to the Occupy political movement by some (Wild, 2013; Neary & Amsler, 2012). It is not the transformation heralded by Laurillard (2012) or Beetham and Sharpe (2007) that view changing coming via the educators and the institutions. Instead, it takes from Wild's (2013) reimagining of the institution as the *'frontline of the struggle'* (p.294). For Wild, the teachers might be involved but only once they recognise the threat of standardising practices and *'reoccupy'* the classroom. The result is a reimagined institutional space where the,

> *'…teacher as squatter no longer perceives of themselves as prime occupier but one of many. The classroom becomes a cacophony of voices …all battling to be heard and often in conflict'* (p.294).

It is a position that has similarities to Freirean and Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts. The difference it offers to the Community Project is that the challenge comes from within institutions, and is acted out through existing roles.

It is a reimagining of the '*energy of the Occupy movement …extended beyond the most visible spaces and into the institutions and everyday practices of capitalism'* (Neary & Amsler, 2012, p.113)*.*

The Edupunk approach (Lamb & Groom, 2010) also considers the institution as fundamental as the basis for resistance to creeping commercialisation and data mining by privatised technology corporations. With an initial interest in the potential of the *Open Web* as a source of transformation, Lamb and Groom (2010) suggest institutions are ideally placed to realise their vision of,

> *'… higher education that embraces its role as a guardian of knowledge that energetically creates and zealously protects publicly-minded spaces promoting enlightenment and the exchange of ideas…Institutions of higher education…are in a unique position to create and preserve these spaces'* (p.56).

The significance of both positions is transgression and resistance to standardised norms taking place within institutions. Rather than the institution being fundamentally conservative or normative, they identify a population of teachers/students that can transform from within. The use of enlightenment is not perhaps that of *The Enlightenment* though Lamb and Groom's position aligns with a vision of knowledge as a precious commodity needing defending and preservation. The notion of *guardians* and *frontlines* suggest attack from a barbaric horde. Having established those defences around the fortress of the institution, the position of community and outsider educators remains unclear.

What Wild (2013) and Lamb and Groom (2010) highlight is that singular positions of institutional practice do not exist. Each approach argues for a reimagining of what learning is that comes from institutions.

Applied to the Community Project, these ideas posit transformation as internal reforming of institutional norms rather than moving outside them. Although this often involves a basic acceptance of the hierarchical role of the institution, it aligns with Freire's (1999) assumption of the institution as the means via which the state should meet its responsibilities to educate.

Hall and Smyth (2016) consider that the curricula of higher education are increasingly shaped through a concept of colonisation (p.3). The commercial influences that shape education lead to a restricting of any educational impetus not based on *'the compulsion to create and accumulate value'* (p.2).

Hall and Smyth quote bell hooks in asking,

> *'where are the curricula spaces inside formal HE that enable education as the practice of freedom, when the only freedom available is increasingly that of the labour-market?'* (ibid.).

The answer for many lies in seeking new dismantling processes and practices within the institutions.

Increasingly, the interplay between inside and outside becomes blurred, earlier reflection on porous universities (section 2.2.4.1) indicates that although small-scale the walls between community and institution are being pushed from both sides. Initiatives such as *Dismantling the Masters House* at University College London (UCL) establish a re-correcting of historical dominance and silencing of the institutions by academics adopting social justice-inspired practice. Yet, still the emphasis is on the institution as centre and the spark for change. The extent to which this transfers power to those outside, or marginalised, is not so

clear. The continuing value of non-institutional projects comes through arguing that social justice must also consider an authentic relocation of power away from institutions.

3.4.3 Alternative Pedagogies

The argument in this section is that alternative approaches, such as, '*punk*' (Parkinson, 2017), '*edupunk*'; (Lamb and Groom, 2010) and '*gonzo*' pedagogy (Bladen, 2010) posit a space for outsider pedagogies but tend toward institutional usage alone. This is important in distinguishing an authenticity of outsider experiences that are outside institutions, rather than modifications of existing practices.

The development of punk comes from the musical and cultural movement of the 1970s in the U.K and U.S.A (Parkinson, 2017) that defied the status quo and instead promoted a do it yourself ethos (p.1). Parkinson reflects that punk as ethos infiltrates institutional practice as 'punkademics' (p.2) enmesh minoritarian, outsider practices in designing education as individuals bring their own punk influence to their institutional roles.   Edupunk, a term coined by Jim Groom (Rowell, 2008), makes an explicit link between Web 2.0 technologies and the potential to disrupt traditional practice. Edupunk approaches combine, '*creative drive with a maverick attitude…in which the educator – or possible the student – designs the tools for teaching and learning*' (Rowell, 2008.np). The emphasis is on do it yourself approaches that challenge capitalist and authoritarian models of education and that might, '*empower teachers to hack together projects, platforms, networks driven by learning rather than profit*' (Hanley, 2011. p.3).

Gonzo has similar roots as a term, being most associated with the American writer and journalist Hunter S Thompson. Bladen (2010) identifies its characteristics as being '*enigmatic, poetic, raw and unedited*' (p.2). Often linked to counter-culture narratives, gonzo has been used as an adjective for alternate approaches to multiple disciplines although rarely with education (ibid.). As with the punk ethos, gonzo offers a '*rebellion against conformity to…an unjust political and social system*' (Bladen, 2010. p.1) instead promoting diversity with how otherwise familiar activities might be engaged. For Bladen, this might involve taking core knowledge and embellishing with humour, exaggeration and personalized, anecdotal story-telling to invigorate lectures (p.6).

While punk and gonzo description offer an alternate approach to education there place as part of the wider ecology means they are also often aligned with, and co-opted, by the hegemonic narratives they hope to dispel. In *Reclaiming Innovation* Groom & Lamb (2014) recognise the tension of innovation, largely from MOOCs, being, '*coopted and rebranded by venture capitalists*' (ibid.). The inference is of a series of innovative technologists creating new patterns of engagement but of these innovations being continually subsumed and standardised by institutional convention. They argue the '*democratic and decentralized network*' (Groom & Lamb, 2014, np) of the web has been lost to silos of corporate standardisation. Returning to their guardian metaphor (2010) the resistance to corporate standardisation relies on '*educators to play a decisive role in the battle for the future of the web*' (ibid.). A crucial difference in the Community Project is the identification of educators beyond, and literally outside, the institution having roles to play.

Similarly, Kamenetz (2010; 2011) advocates edupunks and edupreneurs as responses to expensive and elitist higher education that utilise a range of free-to-access online tools to escape a corrupt and exclusionary education system (2010). Yet, Kamenetz does not challenge the purpose or the content of the institutions, only the walls of finance and entry criteria that make them inaccessible to many. Rakich (2011) argues that Kamenetz's approach does not define a revolution in higher learning, but instead *'encourages the transformation of the student'* (p.3). The criticism Rakich offers identifies the '*guiding principle …is not what path to pursue, but rather the idea that schooling must be self-directed'* (ibid.).

The transformation of the student is one of outsider but one constantly seeking a less-expensive route to the inside. The depiction of a self-directed learner appears to challenge Laurillard's (2012) belief in an essential professional educator. However, both Kamenetz and Laurillard are rooted in an institutional concept of knowledge. While they differ in how this might be achieved, both prioritise formal educational attainment as the goal.

Additional approaches such as Bladen's (2010) *'gonzo lecture'* depict familiar contradictions of institutional space, suggestive of radical change but developed through improved lecturer performance. The spaces and contexts of knowledge remain expert-led and only the form of delivery is altered (p.4).

This highlights a complex space in which the ethos of punk and gonzo are often conflicted, an appropriation of terms that do not challenge, but reinforce institutional ideology. Bladen and Kamenetz describe situations in which no tension arises because the purpose of both edupunks and gonzo is shared with

an institutional ideology over what knowledge is. What they argue for is change in how this knowledge is transferred.

3.4.4 Nomadology

Nomadology suggests an approach to learning based on Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic principles (Semetsky, 2008; Holland, 2011; Cole, 2014). Although not a framework, nomadology prioritises plurality and authentic relocation of learning that encompasses non-institutional education. Cole (2014) argues that,

> '*far from unleashing random and chaotic notions of education that would be impossible to implement – nomadology should bring one closer to how learning actually happens and therefore connect policy to 'the real''* (p.91).

Holland (2011) proposes a *Nomad Citizenship* that is based partly on an affirmative nomadology related to nomos rather than logos. This begins by accepting multiple approaches to learning and knowledge. Holland defines how in affirmative nomadology,

> '*…freedom is a key problem of social organisation that admits to a wide variety of actual solutions some of which…realise greater degrees of freedom than others'* (p.xii).

Nomadology relates to practices that exist beyond predefined state-forms (p.xi) but to also emerge within it, not to destroy it. In effect,

> '*The point is to transform citizenship, not eliminate it. To renew, enrich and invigorate it by displacing the monopoly of the State citizenship with plural nomad citizenship, not abandon it altogether'* (p.xi).

The significance to the Community Project comes in viewing transformative practices existing alongside institutional practices. Holland's affirmative nomadology offers a route to plurality and multiplicity that brings change

through action although not through revolution. While nomadology reflects Holland's Deleuzo-Guattarian influence it also echoes Freire's resistance to sectarianism and castrating, reactionary circles of certainty that presuppose what can happen (Freire, 2005, pp38-39). In the CP context, nomadology suggests an opening-up of existing practices to loosen borders around community and institutions.

3.5   Conclusion: Significance of the Literature to the Thesis

The gap that the literature seeks to address is in asserting that transformation occurs with, and without, technological influence; that ideological positions define what shape transformation takes and what power/control hierarchies remain; that differing conceptions of 'common sense' serve to retain normative expectations of who teaches, and what is taught while also providing critical space to create alternative approaches; that existing discourse on formal/informal learning necessitate continued reflection about multiple directions transformation might take.

The emphasis is also on an active response to the situation rather than a passive, theoretically-located reflection. From Freirean popular education, the concept of praxis is significant in establishing the practice, the action of the research as fundamental. A gap might be seen then as the space between a traditional distinguishing of research from practice that this research combines by involving participants as researchers.

The foundation of a Gramscian view of common sense is open to challenge and the Deleuzo-Guattarian response considers a challenge to standardisation that might be countered through rhizomatic experimentation.   Deleuze (in

Wallin, 2014) raises the concern that a professor who '*acquiesces to forms of common sense and the reified categories of the s*tate' can be said to '*fail to teach'* (Wallin, 2014, p.122).   The review finds in Deleuze a resistance to notions of common sense as either lesser than philosophy, or inherently valuable and instead argues that common sense must be challenged to allow for emancipatory practice not already bound to pre-determined concepts of what is possible.

The domination of the MOOC field by the institutional and corporate xMOOC above the cMOOC highlights issues of power and control.   The Community Project is part of a challenge to dominant positions that reflects *purpose* as well as *practice.*   While sharing much with connectivism's desire to disrupt the practices of the institution (Siemens, 2005) the difference comes in recognising that purpose is based in wider social struggle not merely pedagogical innovation.   The Community Project research began with an interest in why disruption is necessary as well as an interest in how this might be achieved.

Braidotti (2006) describes a *'magician's trick'* (p.2) as new technologies help promote globalisation that results in,

> '*a totally schizophrenic double pull…the potentially innovative, de-territorialising impact of new technologies…hampered and tuned down by the reassertion of the gravitational pull of old and established values'* (p.2).

Recognising the enduring influence of established power structures requires critical awareness if existing patterns of control are to be resisted.   Calls to recognise philosophies-in-practice, technologies-in-practice, the emergence of porous universities, alternative practice and questioning common sense highlight a willingness to engage in change.

Instead of a one-way path of influence, from the centre outwards, the Community Project views both community and institution as relevant places for meaning-making with corresponding suggestions around what teacher/student/knowledge can become. The literature provides possibilities for reimagining education in the blurred spaces between institution and community. An appreciation of the complexity abounding in the literature is reflected in the multiple, often contradictory, findings that emerge from the empirical research. This chapter illustrates such messiness as an inevitable consequence in mapping practice across diverse and authentic community and extra-institutional space. The filling of gaps comes from shining the light of research into those spaces not illuminated and bringing social justice issues to the fore in technology enhanced learning discourse.

4 Methodology

4.1 Advance Organiser

McNiff and Whitehead (2009) suggest that action research operates around three key tenets, '*the story of the action', the story of the research and the 'significance'* this has to knowledge (p.53). This is particularly true of research in which multiple narratives are entwined through co-participation in the research and require a coherent bonding of these threads. This methodology chapter represents the *Story of the Research* and provides a detailed description of the choices made with an analytical approach to defining the rationale for these choices. Across this section, where literature relates to action research rather than specifically participatory action research, this is done so only where the themes are linked and relevant.

The chapter begins by **distinguishing between roles of research and project participant** and identifying how methodology **links to the research questions**. In **research design,** I describe how co-participant engagement was incorporated into the project through Participatory Action Research (PAR). I conclude with reflection on **robustness and validity**, **ethics** and **generalisability.**

4.2 Distinguishing Research from the Project

This section considers the issues that arise from my roles as Project Lead, Participant and Researcher. Each role acts simultaneously, often in single dialogic encounters. For example, instances of group discussion arranged to

collect data also led to issues that necessitated problem-solving and a shift from Researcher to Project Lead/Co-Participant responsibility. This interweaving of *project/action* and *reflection/research* provides a challenge to traditional research processes while also a crucial element of participatory action research.

While the action and research are distinct, both develop the purpose of the project as leading to positive change. The action creates the space for change while the research is the means of disseminating this to a wider audience. However, such merging of action with research can disrupt neat reporting of results (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p.2) and can lead to a '*double burden*' (p.86) of seeking change while researching with rigour. Locating both roles in the single person leads to some describing a '*schizophrenic stance*' of the researcher (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p.359)*.*

The distinguishing of the two roles was not straightforward and proved a concern in writing the formal thesis report. I took from Cohen et al. (2011) that researchers must '*stand back …and view with as much objectivity as possible*' (p.359). This was achieved through a systematic research approach that attempted clarity around where action stops and research begins. I understand that the distinction was never one of complete separation but made clear to participants where we were involved in research-based reflection through recording.

I used the *continuum of positionality in Action Research* (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p.31). Here, six approaches are defined that question where the researcher 'sits' in relation to participant action (*Insider; Insider in collaboration*

with other insiders; Insider(s) in collaboration with outsiders; Reciprocal collaboration; Outsiders in collaboration with insiders; Outsider studies insiders). Each has some relationship with '*insider*' and '*outsider*' research positions and locates 'insider' as often preferable through a dissociation with traditional research.

The various combinations of insider/outsider and participant–researcher relationship highlight significance in identifying position. I did not align clearly with any one model, though considered myself an insider to the project overall, while often an outsider when discussing other participants' courses and associated communities. Although not specific to, but inclusive of, participatory action research Herr & Anderson's continuum highlights the significance of collaboration and this is recognised as a crucial point of the research. The nature of collaborative action require a clear distinction between my role as researcher in relation to other participants.

The clearest expression of the distinction between researcher and participant roles comes through the establishing of a Main Author role (see section 4.7.1) that allows a distinct researcher voice to emerge and informs each research cycle. Although all action could be relevant to research, not all action was necessarily available to the research. I defined my role through establishing consent and ensuring clarity between action and research through continual dialogue with participants.

4.3   Links to the Research Questions

It was important that I could find in the questions a balance between tensions of theory (avoiding prescriptive, normative assumptions) and to remain commensurate with the values of the methodology (inclusive of participant views and resisting sole ownership).   To summarise, the questions were intended to:

1. Provide a structure of inquiry that creates threads throughout the thesis.

2. Allow participant interaction and contribution not curtailed or pre-determined and with an emphasis on emergence over prescription.

3. Prioritise a 'becoming' approach to the action, a possibility for new forms of practice that could be reflected through research.

4. Remain structured and meet the demands of robustness and authentic reflection required by a formal thesis.

The questions allowed for new practices, widening definitions and transformative approaches to learning and teaching to emerge and avoided common-sense definitions of our experiences. Using open questions reflected an *emergent* rather than *linear order* (McNiff, 2013, p.188) with an acceptance of generative and pluralistic themes.

The questions act as guides and influencers rather than rigid barriers that predetermine findings.

4.4 Research Design

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Attempting a project that challenges academic convention necessitated a methodology open to new and emergent practice. As an educator on teacher training programmes I had been aware of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and realised the potential for introducing often challenging and disruptive interventions. I was also aware of its contentious fit within traditional, normative academic research frameworks. It commonly links to socialist and democratic movements and insists on a view of research *with* rather than *on* people (McNiff, 2013; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Both the participatory nature, and the willingness to seek knowledge outside normative definitions, made it an appropriate model for this research.

Herr and Anderson (2005) point to the pressures on a doctoral student choosing a method that *'arises out of the critique of the very assumptions, values and approaches that ground traditional social science, university-based research'* (p. xii). My decision was based on a commitment to the Project's explicit value-laden purpose. Reason and Bradbury (2008) advocate PAR as fundamentally different to traditional research that goes beyond '*simply methodological niceties'* (p.4) and, '*has different ways of conceiving knowledge and its relation to practice'* (ibid.).

Schön's (1995) call for a '*knowing-in-action'* argues objectivity is a pretence used to reinforce normative ways of knowing divorced from actual practice. This leads to recognition of a landscape largely defined by an *'institutional*

epistemology' with fixed notions of '*what counts as knowledge'* (p.27). To escape these fixed knowledge states Schön considered that,

> *'The new categories of scholarly activity must take the form of action research. What else could they be?'* (p.31).

In this research, they could be nothing other than action research.

4.4.1 Mapping the Action Research Landscape

There are multiple approaches to PAR that often have little common purpose between them (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008, p.272; Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.2). My choice was driven by the necessity for participation with emancipation of ownership and potential empowerment of participants as intentional outcomes.

Maurer and Githens (2009) define three major approaches to action research; **Conventional,** which claims value-free interventions and is common to internal organisational research; **Dialogical,** concerned with finding space between different social groups; **Critical**, operating from a political, value-led approach to problem-solving (pp. 273-9). Each of these positions would allow a participatory approach although Critical AR is most appropriate for this project because of the emphasis on problem-solving. I also found the application of '*double loop learning*' (p.278) in Dialogical AR (DAR) useful as a reflection of how participatory action research must engage with participants. While organisations may consider DAR threatening as it '*…clearly fosters individuals' critical reflection upon foundational organizational practices'* (p.288), double-loop learning helped avoid any individualised domination of the Project's aims. Across the findings chapters, participants often challenge my position and are

critical of the Project aims and structure. This illustrates the value of dialogical approaches in establishing criticality across the participant body and the input of such dialogue in shaping both the project and the research of it.

4.4.2 The Ontological Basis of Participatory Action Research

The ontological basis of this research aligns with McNiff's (2013) view of research that that all people have, *'the same rights and entitlements'* (p.27). Research should begin from a '*commitment to action*' (ibid.) that defines a purpose stemming from equal access in shaping what is created.

My role here is driven by a desire to see positive change in the approaches to teaching and learning that places active participation above solely institutional concepts of expertise. The ontological significance of PAR comes through defining the purpose *of* the research as well as practices of it.   This leads to contention with research based in social change *'often held in disrepute'* (Argyris, 2003, p.1178) and based on '*different ways of conceiving knowledge and its relation to practice'* (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p.4). Recognising this as ontological vocation rather than methodological process relates to both the Deleuzean and Freirean theoretical approaches.   Such purposeful ontology necessitates '*courage'* to *'speak and act in ways that are often contested'* (ibid.). The ontological imperative is on research that leads to transformative action, as Gergen and Gergen (2008) describe, it is,

> *'not the task of the action researcher to describe **the world**
> **as it is**, but to realize visions of **what the world can become'***
> (p. 167, emphasis in original).

4.4.3 Aligning the Ontological Positions of Method and Theoretical Framework

This Freirean ontological view contends that people have a vocation to *'act upon and transform* [their] world*…individually and collectively'* (Shaul, 2005. p.32). In elaborating on this position, the ontological view is one in which fixed notions of reality are resisted and instead form *'a problem to be worked on and solved'* (ibid.).

Freire (2005) insists problem-posing projects see participants,

> *'…as beings in the process of **becoming** – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality'* (p.84).

The Project contends that change can be generated by our action and that, freed from institutional control, a problem-posing approach can lead to changes in individual and collective realities.

Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic thinking presents *becoming* as folding/unfolding that recognises autonomy, multiplicity and is resistant to arborescent practice (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Ontologically, it highlights a *'people-yet-to-come'* (ibid.) and leads to analytical approaches that suggest rhizomatic thinking can,

> *'…challenge traditional power structures, give voice to those previously unheard and open issues in messy but authentic ways'* (Grellier, 2013, p.83).

This messy authenticity is supportive of a research process and ontological base that suggests freely associating and fluid exchange is necessary in establishing the reality of what happens. I agree with a view of Deleuze's ontology being *'built upon the not-so-controversial idea that how we conceive the world is relevant to how we live in it'* (St. Pierre, 2004, p.285). I have also

found the *ontology of the virtual* (Lovat & Semetsky, 2009) offers space between the what is (the actual), and the yet-to-come (the virtual) by recognising an interplay between them that better reflects reality*; that,

> *'The actual…is not all there is. Behind, beneath, and within the actual is the virtual. The virtual gives rise to the actual, and yet remains a part of it in a manner of Japanese origami'* (Lovat & Semetsky, 2009, p.239).

The folding and refolding that creates difference is a crucial element of the Community Project's assertion that teacher/student/knowledge can be transgressed. Operating in the space between actual/virtual *'emancipates thinking from common sense'* (ibid.) and allows for new ways of conceiving of familiar concepts and terms that we might reframe and reterritorialise in acts of becoming.

4.4.4 Epistemology

The epistemology of the research approach sees knowledge as dynamic not fixed, emergent and unpredictable and aligned with McNiff's (2013) view that knowledge creation is,

> *'…a living process. People generate their knowledge from their experiences of living and learning …There are no fixed answers because answers become obsolete in a constantly changing present'* (p.29).

The dialogic encounters in the project help reform action through lived experiences and reflection. It is a view of reality that is not *as-it-is* or predefined but, *'a process of emergence, surprising and unpredictable'* (ibid.). Within the thesis this allows for epistemological fluidity realised as openness to multiple voices.

A useful outline for the way participant contribution helps form knowledge claims comes in Bamber and Crowther (2012) rules of argumentation (derived from Habermas) in creating a 'discursive pedagogy' (p.188). These outline an attempt to achieve Habermas's ideal speech situation (ibid. p.187) where communication is prejudiced through existing power structures. Their summation provides *'inescapable presuppositions'* (ibid.) that include everyone being able to contribute and an active resistance to any coercion that supresses contribution. The importance of this comes in including diverse participants while also being continually aware of the potential for powerful practice to obstruct alternatives in favour of preferred, conventional readings.

I have been influenced by Eubanks' work (2007; 2011) on *'epistemic plurality'* (2011, p.151) based in popular education that resists epistemic privilege and superiority. Eubank's work with women at a Young Women's Christian Society (YWCA) locates meaning-making amongst participants and reveals challenges to conventional views of technology as economically empowering. Eubank's revelation of conflict between rhetoric and reality helps recognise the possibility of being clouded by powerfully mediated, socio-cultural educational discourse. Epistemologically, we avoid this through understanding participant experience as vital in seeking perspectives beyond normative discourse.

4.4.5 A Cyclical/Spiral Approach to Participatory Action Research

The research structure is influenced by the earliest stages of action research (Lewin, 1946) to include research cycles that allow the research to be informed by, and shaped through, dialogue with participants.

Lewin's (1946) original '*Plan – Act – Reflect'* model acts as a guide to how each

cycle leads to the next, with Kemmis and McTaggart's (2008) cyclical model

(figure 4-1) a version of this designed to reveal changes in,

- *'What people do*

- *How people interact with the world and with others*

- *What people mean and what they value*

- *The discourses in which people understand and*

  interpret their world' (p.278)*.*

A diagrammatic depiction of the cycles (Figure 4-1) highlights how each

of the three stages informs each other, with participant action and

reflection   crucial elements in informing the next stage/cycle of the

process.
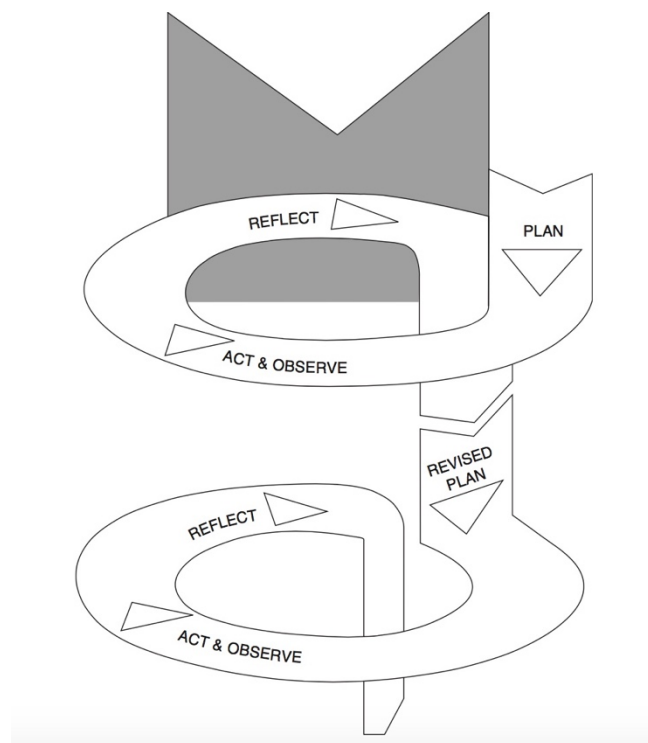
Figure 4-1 The Action Research Spiral (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007, p.278).

4.4.6 Defining the Cycles

Recognising the actual point at which cycles began and ended was not immediately obvious. For meaningful transition, it was necessary to have something to *reflect on* and to *plan for*.

Kemmis and McTaggart (2008) suggest that the '*criterion of success is not whether participants have followed the steps faithfully*' but whether there is '*a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices*' (p.277). To this end, decisions over what constituted a cycle occurred collectively through dialogue, and significant occurrences in the Project. For example, the collapse of the initial platform helped to distinguish between Cycles One and Two (Figure 4-2). Such action helped clarify distinction between stages while participant discussion identified what key influences were taken into the planning of the next.

4.4.7 The Cyclical Model Applied in this Research

Three cycles are represented (Figure 4-2) with four stages comprising each cycle, *Plan – Act – Observe – Research/Revised Plan.*

Cycle One	Cycle Two	Cycle Three
April – November 2013	December 2013 – May 2014	September 2014 – March 2015
Pre-development, launch and initial stages	Move from commercial website to community	Maturing stages.
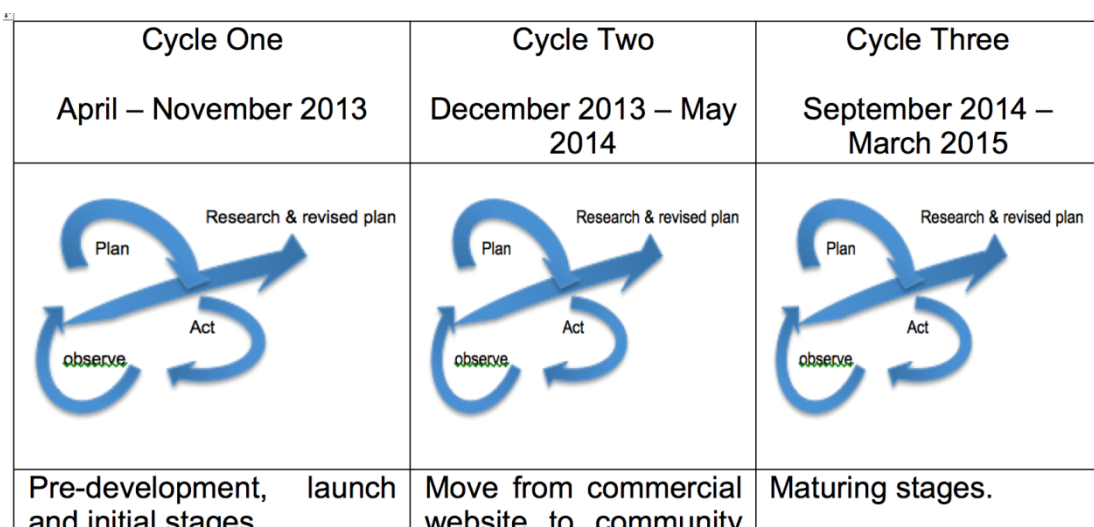
Figure 4-2: The Spiral of Action research in the Community Project research.

The plan-act-research process occurred *within* cycles as well as *between* them. Although self-contained cycles are important to structure the report, the boundaries were often permeable and reflection and negotiation occurred throughout.

4.4.8 Generative Transformational Evolutionary Process

Kemmis and McTaggart (2008) describe how this blurring between cycles is expected, that*, 'In reality, the process is likely to be more fluid, open, and responsive'* (p.277). To respond to such fluidity, I considered McNiff's (2013) '*generative transformational evolutionary process'* (p.66) that defines the first spark of the project as a *'generative power'* (p.55) leading to subsequent transformative action. This is useful in participatory approaches where multiple narratives can lead to distributed instances of significant action that are not necessarily those experienced by myself as main Author. This leads to a complex reading of multiple possibilities represented in Figure 4-3. Although difficult to imagine as a methodological structure, the concept of a generative power, a series of evolving sparks, seems to best describe how cycles were reached.

Figure 4-3: A Generative Transformational Evolutionary Process (McNiff, 2013, p.66).

This process reflects the '*messy swamplands'* that Schön (1995) describes; the intention is not to wallow in the swamp but to recognise the reality amidst which the analysis and findings have been generated.

4.4.9 A Deleuzean Enrichment of the Cyclical Process of Participatory Action Research

Popular education is well aligned to the political, emancipatory nature of PAR with both sharing roots in Critical Theory. How Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic thinking 'fits' with PAR is perhaps less clear. I have used Drummond and Themessl-Huber's (2007) *enrichment* of the cyclical process (Figure 4-4) to help establish a Deleuzo-Guattarian influence on, rather than process of, the research and identify with approaches defined as rhizoanalysis (Reilly, 2014; Cumming, 2014).
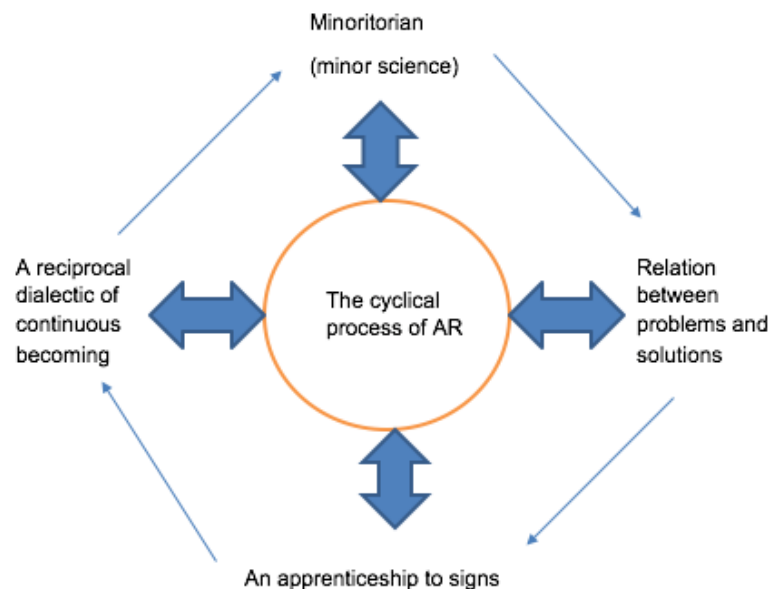
Figure 4-4: A Deleuzean enrichment of the cyclical process of action research (Drummond & Themessl-Huber, 2007, p.444).

The four analytical approaches are used within the findings to establish readings of the research not rooted in explicit political arguments that may characterise popular education. Briefly, the four stages are interpreted as:

Minoritarian relating to possible new concepts emerging from spaces away from the centre (Colebrook, 2002).

Relation between problems and solutions focuses on a *'continuously differentiating idea'* (p.444) of what learning might be, not determined by existing concepts.

This relates to the **'apprenticeship to signs'** in escaping pre-determined expected responses and to accept heterogeneity in how terms (courses, online space, and identities) are interpreted and responded to.

The **reciprocal dialectic of continuous becoming** contends that seeking neatness (i.e. between cycles) is itself a majoritarian concern, and instead looks at *flow* across lived experience. Ultimately, this additional layer provides an analytical space which affirms a resistance to the imposition of fixity from a dominant centre to a fluid and ever-changing ecology that includes under-represented voices. The emphasis on participatory action research design fits with such analytical purposes that emphasise the necessity for distributed, diverse narratives.

4.5 Sampling

This section details the processes involved in participant engagement overall; the findings chapters provide further detail on participant characteristics within each cycle. The 'story of the research' in this project was not my story alone

and was always part of a participating community. The distance between PAR and traditional research is most evident in the relationships emergent when working *with* people. Despite many advantages, this required substantial engagement from participants.

In traditional research the respondent/participant may be selected based on their engagement with an experiment/hypotheses/project. In PAR, invitations to participate includes concepts such as emancipation and empowerment that asks that they are open to personal change. Emancipation might include opportunities to create learning spaces beyond institutional roles or to develop online learning that do not exists in the participant's own lives. Empowerment reflects more a diversity of responses to the impact learning might have for participants themselves and also the groups with which they work. McNiff (2013) says the value of research comes from attempting to,

> '*…work with others … trying to influence their thinking and work toward fulfilling their human capacities…growing mentally, physically and spiritually*' (p.147).

This depth of interaction is partly reflected in the ethical concerns but also necessitates practical consideration in selecting the sample.

The sample frame acts as a '*collaborative resource*' (Bryant, 1998, p.113) that resists prioritising one voice over another. There was a danger my depth of involvement could silence voices farther from my values (Wimpenny, 2010). In response, I have taken from Bryant (1998) the concept of *plural structure* (p.113) in which reports from the research '*…will take the form of a collage rather than a linear tale to represent different views*' (ibid.) so that none of the accounts will be *the* authoritative one.

Participation was based on personal interest and included participant lives that were vital, central and not marginalised. No institutional definitions of marginal, excluded or disadvantaged people are used to avoid pre-defined status groupings, which aligns with popular education/Critical Theory approaches (Eubanks, 2007; 2011; McLaren, 1999). This helps avoid '*reinforcing stereotypes*' (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p.149) through repetition of familiar conceptions of marginalised groups. Crowther (2010) describes an *'iron law of participation'* (p.247) in which a professional, white and often male group dominates what constitutes participation in adult learning. In the early stages of the research this appeared in the formation of a Steering Group and demonstrates the ease with which familiar patterns of participation can be reproduced. Avoiding an 'iron law' was attempted by inviting all users to become co-researchers. It is understood that wider societal influences may define those choosing to participate at all.

4.5.1 Self-Selecting Sample Frame

In the Community Project (CP) no pre-existing group existed and we formed through creating the project. Our backgrounds ranged from institutional educators and students, third sector employees, trainers and individuals with no explicit links to education. There were no pre-requisite criteria to participation and the emphasis was on participants having ownership of their contributions. Stringer (2007) considers that participants in PAR have, *'…much more control than is usually accorded participants in a study'* (p.55). This was evident here, and participants were effectively volunteers whose actions defined what the CP was. Although daunting to think of the *project*, the *action* and the *research* needing to form through the collective efforts of voluntary

participation, this was also an essential foundation for an authentic project. Wimpenny (2010) suggests participation should be collaborative, form around a common problem and ensure participants have *'some investment in the study'* (p.91). Participant investment was both individual, and collective around developing the platform. Wimpenny's (2010) model (Table 4-1) illustrates how authentic participation was negotiated.

'Key Elements' of PAR engagement	How these were realised in the sample frame
Relocation of power, primary researcher responsibilities	The participants involved in development of processes – open invitation to development meetings/decision making. Research processes dialogic.
Development of a sound dialectic	Multiple approaches to engagement implemented to avoid silencing participants/reifying others. Cycles developed based on participant exchange.
Generation of knowledge and understanding	Knowledge generation sought at both the collective *and* the individual level (without assumption these would coincide).
Development of shared quality criteria to ensure validity	Participation included decision making across all levels of platform design. Code of conduct created collectively; findings allow disagreement/upset/compromise as valid and informative inclusion.

Table 4-1: Illustrating the 'Negotiating of Authentic Participation' adapted from Wimpenny (2010, p.93 – 96).

4.5.2 Practical Stages in Selecting Sample Frame

Three parameters were applied to describe the participant sample: *Recruitment*; *Criteria*; *Engagement*.

Recruitment gives an overview of numbers of participants and allows the reader to identify users via pseudonyms and changes in participation across cycles.

Criteria: No fixed criteria of participation existed and the Project remained open to use by anyone. However, categories emerged defining different backgrounds. These are:

- Organisational representative (OR)

- Working in adult education (WAE)

- Student in adult education (SAE)

- Community educator (CE)

- Community but not educator (C)

- Individual (no affiliation) (I)

The categories emerged during the research cycles and help in establishing some of the responses. Establishing those taking part in terms of category proved useful in highlighting influences of prior educational experience. Examples of individuals from each category are presented in Appendices 4a and 4b.

Engagement: A distinction is made between 'participant' and 'user'. Participants have pseudonyms and are actively involved in the action and the research. Users are registered on the platform, may engage in action but are not involved in the research. The 'user' numbers indicate the overall development of the Project, but do not inform research discourse.

The number of participants varies slightly between cycles, and shifts are described in an opening section to each cycle in the findings sections. Table 4-2 highlights the number of participants in each cycle (in parentheses), with overall course users included for context. Numbers of courses are also

included for context, and these are discussed in more detail in responses to the research question on types of course.

	Total Number of Users/ (Participants) at end of Cycle	Number of courses published (unpublished)
Cycle One	215 (19)	18 (4)
Cycle Two	118 (20)	21 (11)
Cycle Three	310 (23)	30+ (14)

Table 4-2: overview of each cycle.

Despite an initial concern with a local geographic area, the open, online access resulted in global participation. The illustrated map (Figure 4-5) highlights the diverse locations of Community Project registered users. While all registered users were invited to participate, most the participants are UK-based with the initial geographic area of North West England accounting for around half of the participants. A brief discussion and tables showing the involved participants opens each of the research cycles in the findings chapter (see sections 5.1.1, 5.2.1 and 5.3.1).
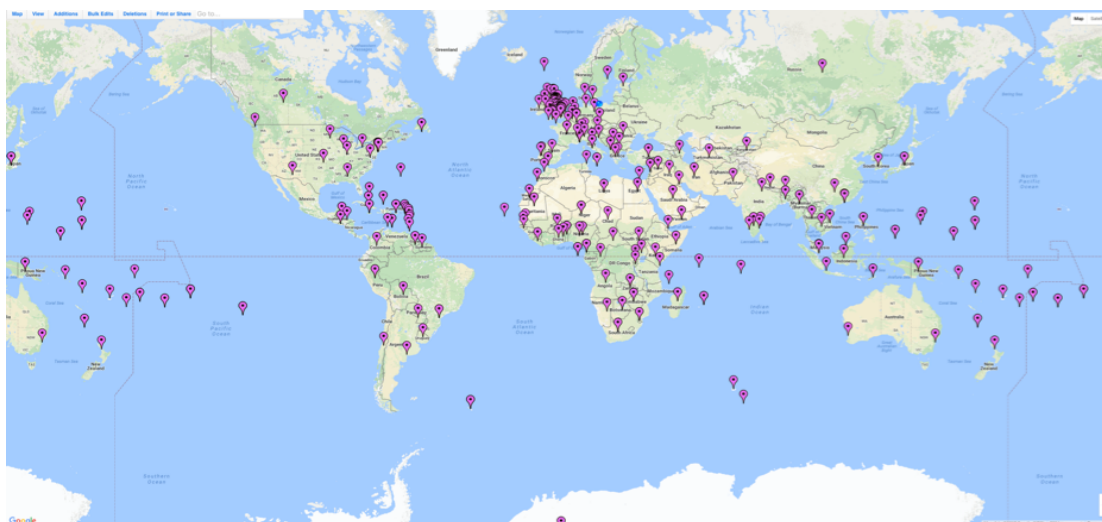
Figure 4-5: Illustrated world map identifying registered users of the Community Project (June 2017).

4.6 Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods are presented in three categories: *Reflective; Live; Documentary.* I had initially considered specific sessions around research processes to encourage engagement and to recognise the possibility that *'rituals of academic research are alien and unfamiliar'* (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Instead, an open dialogue around data collection allowed questions to be answered that included both content of the project, and the methods of inquiry. I had to ensure the exchanges were as familiar as possible both to encourage engagement, and also recognising that particpation was integral to the continuation of the project. I could not risk frightening people away, or as Grant et al. (2008) describe, enact a '*new tyranny'* (p.595). Appendix 5 provides detail of the occurrence of each data collection method distributed across the three research cycles.

4.6.1 Reflective
Journals/ blogs **(Cycles One/Two/Three)**

The use of journals had been anticipated as a valuable means of responding to the project being continuous and allowing for multiplicity in the range of voices.

I completed a journal over each of the three cycles, with a summary document completed at the end of each cycle.   These summaries form the basis of the main author narrative that open each cycle in the findings chapter (sections 5.12, 5.2.2, 5.3.2). Participant journals were not used widely, although some interview responses referred to occasional journal-type records.

Social media (Cycles Two/Three)

Participants created a social media page (Facebook) based around the Project and used for discussion related to course creation, suggestions and comments on their own and other courses. The advantages of anytime access and asynchronous discussion made this a well-used space and it proved the most frequently used space for group discussions based on questions I had added. Participants also created stand-alone posts that acted as journal entries, which were either shared publically or privately with me. Social media activity began slowly but increased across the second and third cycles (see Appendix 5).

4.6.2 Live

Interviews (Cycles One/Two/Three)

Interviews here are defined as one-to-one exchanges, either in-person or online, and specific to data collection. They are distinct from the many conversations that occurred in the design and running of the project. This allowed interviews to be signalled as data collection, and to separate out general discussion from research focussed purposes. Ongoing informal conversations could inform my questions but were not included as data.

In cycle one, three interviews occurred. In cycle two and three, most participants were interviewed for varying lengths of time, between 5 and 50 minutes. The research questions acted as guides, with the semi-structured approach allowing participant experiences to decide any additional focus. All interviews were audio-recorded and a selection of those felt most relevant to emerging themes were transcribed.

In Cycles two and three, online video interviews and online typed interviews augmented the face-to-face option and allowed for greater accessibility both in terms of time and distance. In-person interviews remained dominant, though video and spoken interviews allowed access to participants that would otherwise have been difficult to reach (see Appendix 5).

Focus Groups (Cycle One)

Two distinct focus groups were employed in cycle one. The Steering Group met separately from other participants and the discussion occurred on two separate occasions at the end of formal Steering Group meetings, both involved all 7 members of the SG and lasted approximately 30 minutes.

A separate focus group took place after a launch event for the Project. This involved 11 participants and lasted 30 minutes. While multiple voices are present it is difficult to ensure all are heard in what can be competitive and conflicting exchanges. A transcribed version of the focus group was typed to attempt clarity over different positions. SG members were invited to the launch focus group but did not attend.

In both groups, participants were engaged in real not hypothetical scenarios and issues of organisational responsibility or personal values were influential. The focus group approach worked as the primary data collection method with the Steering Group, but proved difficult to arrange with other non-SG participants. As a result, the single-issue focus group was replaced with use of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) and Delphi Technique (DT) in Cycles Two and Three.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) (Cycles Two/Three)

NGT is most often applied as a means of seeking consensus (Fink, et al.,1984) while also highlighting dissension and is considered appropriate to participatory action research for its openness to multiple contributions, and an interest in emancipation as a core value (Wimpenny, 2010).

The approach uses a face-to-face group discussion that encourages participants to contribute points of interest based on an initial prompt. The prompts here consisted of five flash cards with abridged versions of the research questions. These asked, '*What reasons did you have for your interest in the Community Project? What approaches to teaching and learning did you use? Why did you choose these? How would you describe your uses in relation to expertise, technology, accessibility?; What do you think of the ranges of courses on the Community Project? Overall, how would you describe your experience with the project?'*

The practice of the NGT approach used a four-stage model (Table 4-3; Cohen, et al., 2011. p.357) that prioritised individual contributions in the formation of a collaborative group response.

Stage One	Participants write their own answers to questions based on core interests of the project.
Stage Two	Comments added onto a flipchart sheet. All add anything further we think is missing/needs expanding on.
Stage Three	Participants (without my input) use collected comments to create 'clusters' of ideas which reflect a consensus/dissension.
Stage Four	The participants suggest a summary of key points.

Table 4-3: Stages of NGT using Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) model.

The fourth stage generates the data collected through participant dialogue, created and agreed by the group.

Two NGT sessions were held in both cycle two and three. The first occurrence occurred shortly after the beginning of cycle, while in cycle two the second was used at the closing stages and to decide key points for cycle three, informing the planning stage of the PAR cycle (see figure 4-2).   These tended to be significant 'coming-together' meetings and acted as bonding sessions as well as data collection opportunities.   Researcher bias was reduced through prioritising the collective group as the generator of key themes in response to the research questions.

The Delphi Technique

The Delphi Technique (DT) acts as a written version of NGT, and utilises a four-stage model (Table 4-4) allowing contribution and exchange from geographically distant participants. It offers a more private, confidential space for sharing ideas and several participants used both the NGT and DT approaches. Although one Delphi session occurred in each of cycles one and two, an advantage was that these spaces remained open for several weeks at a time. They could include ongoing reflection and also accommodate feedback from other online discussion and the NGT meetings.

Cohen et al. (2011) describe Delphi as a useful means of '*behind the scenes data collection*' (p.358).   The experiences we had support this as group discussion, written responses and merging of private/public comments highlighting differing perceptions. While it does prioritise familiarity with written/online responses, participants did not report any issues.

Stage One	Key areas of interest posted in online document - all participants invited to contribute privately (anonymous to each other).
Stage Two	Contributions added and returned to me as primary researcher. I then synthesised comments and supplied on a publically visible document (comments anonymised).
Stage Three	Participants invited to add to/modify the comments made on the public document – editing could be private or public.
Stage Four	I created a final document that summarised and categorised the comments. This was made available to all participants who were then invited to respond directly to me with their own responses.

Table 4-4: The process of the Delphi Technique developed from the NGT process.

The Delphi Technique differs from other social media discussion in being explicitly led by the core questions I had introduced rather than spontaneously created by participants.

4.6.3 Documentary

Website Data

Alongside the personal accounts of the participants, evidence was also gathered through collection of material from the Project website. The emphasis is on qualitative data: types of course; materials; and resources used in creating courses.

Pictorial/Graphic/Video Material

An important aspect of the data collection process was the potential for alternative modes of data collection. Images were included as a form of alternative commentary (section 5.2.3.4.3; 5.3.3.5).

Minutes of Steering Group (SG) Meetings

In cycle one, the most commonly-used form of data collection from the SG participants came through the minutes created from the meetings. These were supplemented by interviews that occurred after meetings.

4.7 Data Analysis Methods

The greatest challenge of PAR was at the analytical stage. This was partially because of the cyclical processes; the spirals of transformative and evolutionary becoming necessitated a merging of my voice and those of participants with continual reference to the research questions. It was also crucial that rather than a third person objectivity, the participants' voices *'must be clearly visible'* (Bergold & Thomas, 2012, np).

4.7.1 An Analytical Process

Establishing participant engagement was a necessary aspect to the analysis process. The diagram (figure 4-6) outlines the stages of analysis showing the attempts made to include participant reflection at the analytical, as well as the collection, stages.
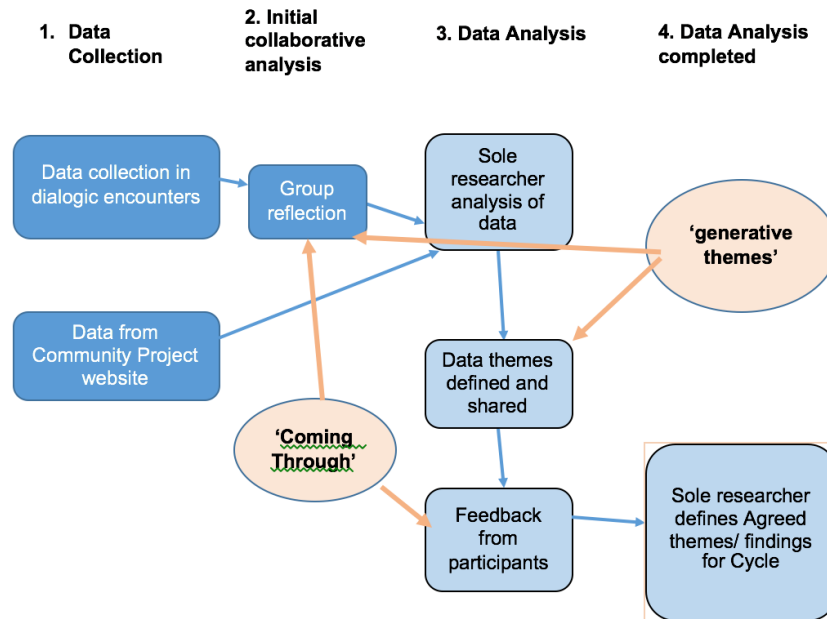
Figure 4-6: Graphic representation of data analysis approach highlighting stages of analysis and theoretical applications in establishing themes/ significance.

From Data Collection, the *initial collaborative analysis* stage involved audio and written feedback, and occurred in group discussion and through participant summary of the NGT and Delphi collection methods. The third stage, *data analysis* began through detailed analysis of audio transcripts, participant summaries and written and digital materials.

Much of this I completed alone then engaged others in the discussion of themes that had emerged, either using existing NGT and Delphi sessions or in group discussion and interviews. This led to agreed themes, as discussion often resulted in alteration of the original themes with participant feedback helping refine responses. An example occurs in cycle two (section 5.2.3.6.1) where a theme of utopian thinking was critiqued by two participants who challenged the theme as reflective of my own position in academia. While evading neat,

systematic analysis, their responses have been included as they are the authentic, lived experiences of the Project. In most examples, themes proved less contentious and analysis began with close readings of discussion, interview and written transcripts. These formed into themes and were presented back for discussion. All themes presented have emerged from processes of agreement. Where explicit disagreement occurred, this is explicit in the discussion in the Findings chapters. The vastness of the data encouraged a consideration of analytical software and training in both NVIVO and SPSS suggested that they would be valuable tools in storing, searching, labelling and ordering the data. While useful cataloguing tools, the analytical process and interchange between *participants-researcher-participants* meant technology played a minimal role in actual qualitative analysis.

Most analysis was based on print-outs of typed transcripts, highlighting of word processed documents and a physical highlighting of emerging themes, selecting evidence (pictorial, quotations) to illustrate themes and cross-referencing between the data to find variables within themes and identify developing sub-themes. This became a collage of printed, highlighted and annotated excerpts that I displayed on flipcharts for some feedback discussion. Quotes often proved emblematic of themes, but in many other instances there was no clear quotation or statement that reflected a significant theme. An example in cycle one included the 'alienation in a technological wilderness' theme (section 5.1.3.4.1). While neither alienation, nor wilderness, occurred in discussion, the feedback from my summary was that this did articulate experiences at that time.

Both interviews and group discussion were transcribed, wholly or in part, based on the value that exchanges had in relation to emergent themes. NGT sessions also include description of 'group discussion' in the findings to distinguish between consensus-finding activities (NGT) and formative exchanges (group discussion).

Participant quotations are used frequently across the findings as these provide the most direct link to the voices heard. Selection was based on several factors: the clarity of expression; recognition of idiosyncratic commentary that might be reduced by my re- interpretation; a desire to represent the participant voice as accurately as possible; the necessity of prioritising participant voices. Selection began with highlighting quotes in transcripts, often identified through reference to field-notes taken during interviews, or highlighted later in listening back to audio recordings. The collages created to share themes would also include samples of quotes selected for inclusion where possible, to check for accurate representation and add an additional layer of consent.

A version of the thesis was also available on the CP site, open to all participants, which I updated as each theme and chapter developed. A forum and editable document were included on the CP page and participants had full access to read, and make comments about the thesis as it developed. Feedback did occur, although this tended to be around single themes rather than participants reading large sections of the thesis. Feedback was largely verbal and took place face-to-face rather than using the online forum. Discussion revealed the act of sharing the thesis as a positive means of creating transparency, rather than providing a source of information or extensive reflection over the content.

Where significant disagreement over my interpretation was identified, a theme was omitted. While such a dialogic approach to themes was more complex, it helped generate a sense of ownership and authentic agency in the process. Although themes did not have to reflect a consensus-view, they did require my being able to justify choices made to participants. Returning to the research questions, establishing a process that prioritised the participant voice by building in reflective dialogue spaces and keeping open, non-manipulative forms of enquiry were all significant in establishing systematic analytical process.

4.7.2 Establishing Participant Voice through the Main Author Role

I was aware that I was a *main author,* a derivation of McNiff and Whitehead's, '*main actor'* (2009, p.53), of the research*.* My Project lead role led to a potentially broader view of our actions and demanded a position that was distinct from a role as purely that of participant (see section 4.2).

Ongoing dialogue with participants presents collective narratives as the closest evidence to what occurs; authenticity, truth and comprehensibility are maintained through closeness of data producers (participants) to the data recipient (main author). The Main Author role required my taking responsibility for the choices made across the thesis. While Dialogue was essential, and participant views and suggestions where vital, the establishment of this role could create a thesis that summarises my researcher position based on the interpretations of multiple voices.

Each of the cycles in the findings chapters opens with a *Main Author Narrative* and reflects the focus being open to diverse experiences but channeled through my own.

4.7.3 Theoretical Approaches

Popular education prioritises participant voice with generative themes reflecting the lived realities of those involved. Collaborative, dialogic action and a focus on emancipation is evident throughout this research.

Freirean *generative theory* prioritises '*people's thematic universe'* (Freire, 2005, p.96) to identify those aspects most vital in the lives of participants, and inform the generative evolutionary process referred to here. Participant generated themes act as the visible collective experiences that occurred on the Project. Popular education was challenged by some participants, yet remained a supportive influence for my interest in emancipation as a meaningful aim for education and research.   I have used rhizoanalysis as influence rather than process (Cumming, 2014; Carrington, 2011; Drummond-Themessl-Huber, 2007;) and recognise the complexity of attempting to fit rhizomatic thinking to institutional processes.

The concept of data '*coming through'* (Cumming, 2014, p.5), finding what *'jumped out'* or '*grabbed us*' (ibid.) has been influential.   This approach broadens the potential of what counts as data to include visceral responses; for instance, anxiety, enthusiasm and optimism help shape feedback to participants. This proved significant in several areas such as course choices and the anxiety experienced with technology (see section 5.1.3.4.1).

The feeding back and dialogic encounters around data were opened to include questions about what had 'grabbed' each of us. This did not necessitate an actual referral to a transcript or quotation but a general sense of what had appeared important to each of the participants, or to us collectively. As such, 'coming through' is useful in seeking *unthought questions'* (Cumming, 2014) that had not necessarily been verbalised, but teased out through reflective processes other than transcript analysis.

Organisation of Data

The amount of data generated meant that management of data proved challenging. Key to analytical vigilance was a cataloguing of data that allowed for access and various approaches to reading and highlighting material. I used electronic storage for almost all data, audio data collection was recorded and stored on a single computer with backup onto a secured hard drive. Handwritten notes were typed up, or photographed, and stored digitally. Images, photographs, documents and course materials from the CP site were submitted by participants and stored in files indexed by participant name. I could access the materials based on date/participant/context (interview/NGT/Delphi) which was essential for retrieval at reflection stages. Several participants withdrew from the study and although they remained open to their material being included in discussion this was readily retrievable, identified and withdrawn. The text from the Nominal Group Technique was photographed and stored digitally; this aided analysis by providing context (underlining/doodles/diagrams).

While much material was omitted, that which was used provides a collective, truthful and authentic account mutually agreed upon by those involved.

4.7.4 Criteria of Validity

The research followed McNiff and Whitehead's (2009) call to consider *criteria, standards of practice and standards of judgement* (p.63). Each combine to assert validity as being defined in relation to my own values, the theoretical literature, the participants, the educational sector and the formal processes of the university. Figure 4-7 highlights these as influences around data analysis.
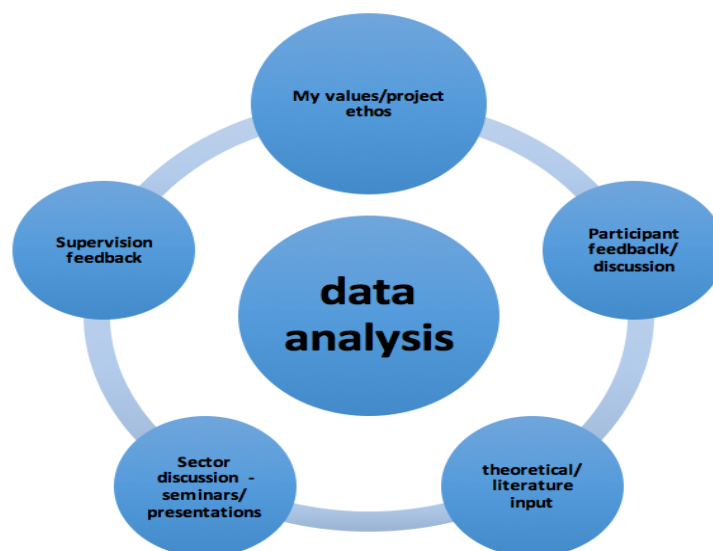
Figure 4-7: Aspects used in generating standards of judgment when validating the data.

4.7.5 Presenting Data

The voice of participants is heard through direct quotation. Participant pseudonyms are used to reference quotations, along with the form of their contribution (interview/ NGT/ group discussion) to add context to comments

made. Voices are represented based on words used not on pronunciation to reflect the danger of '*reinforcing stereotypes*' (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p.149) that clumsy attempts at representing accent/ non-standard pronunciation can bring. Tables and figures are included to present collective responses and written statements are included from individuals (including online written posts) and group comments (such as NGT statements). Images are used to represent individual description and analysis (section 5.2.3.4.3) and as collective responses from group discussions (5.3.3.5).

4.8   Robustness and Validity of the Research

To establish robustness, I used the following criteria in analysis:

- Cycles of research are developmental not longitudinal; analysis defines the cycles stages rather than pre-set time bound delineation of cycles.
- Participant engagement is across *action – data collection – data analysis*. Analysis involves participant feedback and dialogue.
- Theoretical influence is represented through rhizoanalysis approaches such as '*coming through'* that recognises instances of visceral and emotional response (Cumming, 2014, p.5) alongside a dialogic approach that reflects popular education's prioritising of participant voice in developing generative themes familiar to McNiff's generative evolutionary process.
- Recognising my own values and ethos in dialogue and exchanges with participants.

I apply Habermas's (1976) contentions for social validity as applied to Action Research by McNiff and Whitehead (2009). Here, the emphasis is on meeting

four key criteria: *comprehensibility; truthfulness; authenticity; appropriateness* (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p.115*)*. Each is embedded in the analytical process through prioritising of dialogue and the ability to contribute, discuss and disagree. The ongoing analytical process informs each cycle and avoids the dangers of a lone researcher making isolated interpretative summaries of the action. Although much analysis was completed alone, I was conscious of not contradicting the values of the, *'inescapable presuppositions'* (Bamber & Crowther, 2012, p.188) in which every participant contribution had equal potential value.

The use of PAR recognises that, *'conventional if unsupportable notions of objectivity'* (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p.3) remain significant. This research makes determined efforts to be robust with evidence to support claims made. While aware of the issues around objectivity, the findings are presented as honest, valid and valuable accounts of the research. I have used four forms of validity (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p.81) that are appropriate to a PAR approach and equally able to assert the strength of the findings as would conventional measures.

Catalytic validity: linked to Freirean *conscientization***,** catalytic validity is represented through clear focus around emancipation in terms of who owns learning spaces and empowerment of participants as agents of change, both influential to the research. Overt inclusion of these values allows participants to support or challenge these in their own reflections and responses.

Rhetorical validity: While my own word-choice is primary, other voices are used frequently. Whether from literature or participants, these are reported faithfully with the intention of revealing the story of action authentically.

Ironic validity: Significance in this Project comes from a questioning of common-sense and taken-for-granted approaches to education that continue to inform developments in online learning/teaching. The *action* we engage in is valid and appropriate in generating new themes and practices with no need to refer to established concepts to be considered worthwhile.

Educational validity: McNiff and Whitehead (2009) consider the emphasis of this form of validity is on '*encouraging others to think for themselves and make wise choices about how they should act'* (p.83). This research promotes a space for action but remains focussed on participants' responses, individually and collectively. In addition, I relate to Stringer's (2007) term of *credibility* (p.57) in asserting robustness in participant research. These include: *prolonged engagement* with dialogic depth occurring throughout the research and providing space for rich discussion; *member checking* insists on the participants being involved in the analysis of data with opportunity to comment on how they are represented in the findings; *referential adequacy* is achieved through the project taking place in a non-institutional space and able to avoid pre-determined schemas/conventions; *persistent observation* characterised by a deep and continuous engagement in both action and research. Triangulation has been achieved by asking a range of research questions that reveal different aspects of the project. This has been enhanced through varied data collection methods that allow multiple contributions and ensure the diversity of participant voices is represented.

Threats to Validity

Having established that participatory research is not only possible, but necessary to reveal often unheard voices, such an approach also presents challenges in relation to validity of the research. While McNiff and Whitehead and Stringer present a positive rationale for validity in participatory research, the practical encounters often revealed challenges in maintaining open channels of communication and inclusion. The hope was for an open and equal access to express experiences but this had to also contend with participants coming from unequal backgrounds and with varied experiences of being heard and speaking out. Despite continual reflection over the way dialogue was facilitated, some participants would be more familiar and confident with expressing their ideas than others. Multiple approaches, both online and face-to face, group and individual, written and spoken were made available to try and mitigate these differences. The extent to which participant background has shaped which voices were heard most is not easily defined.

An additional risk associated with PAR is that the main author may become as controlling as the oppressive forces from which emancipation is sought (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.351). In attempting to remain comprehensible, appropriate and authentic it was clear that these terms varied between participants. The ways that findings were written and disseminated had to cover participants with strong academic backgrounds and others with little or no formal educational experience. For example, findings indicate disagreement between participants around quality and ethics. It was important that all voices were included regardless of the wide difference in previous experience and depth of understanding around the terms. In attempting to include all

participants, efforts were made to identify and mitigate academic terminology where this may prove an obstacle to understanding. In summarising the threats to validity, the approach has been to remain authentic to the holistic nature of the research and to strive toward trustworthiness. Helping participants feel valued and being authentic and honest about their contributions has allowed for as close a reflection to their experiences as was possible in the research relationship.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical strands run through the research and include general ethical principles of research in education, ethics as applied to PAR and ethical concerns in online research.

4.9.1 Ethics in Participatory Action Research

The depth of participant involvement in PAR is perhaps greater than that encountered in other research methods. Clear guidelines were established around what data was inside (recorded) and outside (unrecorded) the research. The proximity of action to research meant distinguishing each was potentially difficult. To clarify the distinction, interviews, group discussions and specific online discussions were made explicit as research spaces through verbal, written, or online reminders. I also sought permission for some additional material that was not necessarily from these designated encounters. Examples include some social media postings and forum posts on the CP platform.

McNiff (2013) defines *'sins of omission/sins of commission'* (p.113) in what we decide to leave in (plagiarising, pedantry) and what we leave out (undisclosed

ideologies, ignoring conventions). I was unaware of anything that was omitted (undisclosed ideologies for instance), although through rich discussion personal values proved to be important sources of data. Over the cycles of the research it was clear that views and motivations changed and through continual dialogue it is hoped that such shifts are represented. As main author, I may have omitted some individual changes in opinion occurring across cycles. If this occurs the 'sin' was not of manipulation but a reflection of key themes in any given period moving across individuals. Participant involvement in analysis reduced the danger of subjective selection.   Stringer (2007) describes PAR research as one where participants are '*in effect engaging in mutual agreement about the conduct of the study'* (p.55). This is certainly how it felt in terms of the research, notably in Cycles Two and Three, once relationships had developed.

Ethical Procedure

The research was conducted in accordance with general research guidelines defining ethical practice (British Educational Research Association, 2011). I also followed Lancaster University's own ethical guidelines in the development of the research materials (Table 4-5).

Action	Resources	Appendices (where relevant)
Ethics submission made to University Ethics Committee at proposal stage	Ethical submission paperwork	
Ethics Committee agreement received	Confirmation paperwork	
Participant information material distributed to potential participants	Participant Information Sheet	Appendix 2

Consent Forms distributed and returned	Consent Form	Appendix 3
Research conducted throughout each of three cycles following ethical process (recorded material stored securely)		
Analysis stage: ethical process followed related to material and reporting of participant views		
Writing of thesis: maintain security of the stored data		

Table 4-5: Ethical procedure for the project.

Throughout the process continual contact with my supervisor informed decisions of data collection and analysis. *Community Project* (CP) is used throughout the thesis as a pseudonym for the actual portal following advice from the Department's Ethics Panel. Although all participants said they were happy to be named, the thesis has ensured anonymity by using pseudonyms for all participants.

4.9.2 Ethical Concerns in Online Research Spaces

The discussion around ethics in online spaces is emerging as an off-shoot of more established research practices rather than beginning as an entirely new approach. I was wary of a *lab rat experimentation* (Mackness, et al., 2016) in applying new technologies with little concern over how this impacted on ethical responsibilities. I agree with the authors that technological innovation may lead to new practices but that '*established ethical principles also persist'* (p.33).

The CP involved both online and face-to-face encounters and where online data collection occurred it acted as an accessible follow-up of face-to-face discussion, and as primary interaction for geographically distant participants. Dawson (2014) argues that online research might lead to a situation where

confidentiality and anonymity may not be possible. He concludes that, '*If we can no longer deliver on promises to provide anonymity, we should stop making them*' (p.436). In response, I have been transparent in stating the procedures used and the possible concerns over courses linked to participants being visible. I have referenced only those courses that participants agreed to be included in the thesis. A tangible threat to anonymity comes as social media quotations can be accessible via browser searches (ibid.). As a result, only direct quotations not searchable through search engines are included. Some social media posts have been included as they occurred in private spaces not visible to browser searches. Online material, such as courses, uploads, forum posts or other activity by a *project user*, but not a *participant*, have not been included.

Identity in online space can be more difficult to verify and in cases where this has been the only form of engagement, triangulation of multiple identifiers (email/social media/course information) has been considered. The Participant Information/Consent process was identical to face-to-face participants with consent accepted via email signatures. The overall aim was to maintain the safety and security of all participants and remain commensurate with the values of participatory action research. It was of equal importance to represent the ethos and values of the community as they engaged with the Project and each other to ensure a safe environment.

4.10 Generalisability and Link to the Findings Chapters

The choice of PAR is intended to respond to a situation found in MOOC research that '*learners' voices were largely absent*' (Veletsianos & Sheperdson,

2016, p.214). Selecting methods that seek input from the multiplicity means that reaching consensus, or establishing generalisable results, is not an appropriate goal. Valuing a range of idiosyncratic and often unrelated voices is crucial but also resistant to research traditions that seek clear-cut answers and recommendations. Relating to an emergent rather than linear order (McNiff, 2013, p.188) means disparate and loose connections are more likely than neat conclusions. However, the findings chapters that follow depict vibrant responses to the research questions. What might be argued for as a generalisable summary of participatory methodology is the importance of broadening who is involved in research and how that involvement is designed. Findings from authentic, non-institutional space based on genuine participation helps reveal voices often unheard. The themes generated will be of interest to any involved in online education outside tightly controlled and monitored spaces. Nuanced and idiosyncratic activity means generalisability is a slippery concept but these findings add a faithful account of what might happen when we shift the spotlight to activity outside mainstream education.

Part 2: Findings and Discussion

Part 2 of the thesis consists of two chapters:

Chapter 5 – Findings;

Chapter 6 – Conclusion;

In the findings chapter, the emphasis is on themes that emerge from the data with a focus on the key areas raised by the research questions.

The conclusion chapter summarises the research questions and brings together the threads of the thesis across participant data, literature and theory.

5 Findings

Introduction

The findings chapter is where the voices of participants, the '*action of the research*' and the '*research of the action*' (McNiff, 2013, p.25) are revealed. It is here that the research questions become enriched through lived experiences. Literature is included as both analytical lens and a discussion point with participants. As analysis involved the participants over several stages, the inclusion of literature and theory are not removed or distant concepts.

The research questions offered a potentially contentious fixing of what would be researched. Seeking an emergent, rather than linear, order allows the participant voices to shape the way the questions are interpreted rather than forcing responses into predefined categories. Here, the research questions act as markers between participant action and experience. *Emancipation and Empowerment* provided an overarching question at the outset, and remains a distinct theme that explore participant responses to these two concepts. The research questions act as a framework to organise extensive data across three cycles of research collected over eighteen months.

Outline of the Findings Chapter

The findings chapter is organised into three sections to distinguish the three research cycles. Table 5-1 outlines the internal structure of each section.

Cycle (One, Two & Three)
Each of the three cycles is presented as a sub-section of the Findings Chapter.
Summary Box
The Summary Box details: dates of cycle; number of users; number of courses; data collection methods; main project activity. This ends with a detailed section on participants in each cycle**.**
Main Author Narrative
This section is a narrative introduction based on my perceptions of the Project in each cycle. It helps distinguish my role as both participant in the Project and researcher.
Thematic Analysis
This section is structured around the six research questions, using Thematic Focus headings shown in Table 5b.   The themes are presented under the research questions based on 'best fit' with Table 5c giving an overview of theme headings under each research question focus.

Table 5-1: Structure of Data Presentation in Data Analysis chapter.

In Table 5-2 the research questions are repeated with the *Thematic Focus* added in an adjoining column. These thematic foci provide a refining of the key elements of the initial research questions. They provide a structure across the three cycles of research which gives coherence to the most significant thematic patterns occurring over the research.

Extensive and wide experiences from multiple participants leads to a messiness that Schön (1995) described. The thematic approach attempts to make the findings legible and coherent through cycles while forming a transparent and meaningful analytical narrative.

Research Question	Thematic Focus
To what extent are notions of emancipation and/ or empowerment evident in the participants' uses and experiences of the Community Project?	Emancipation & Empowerment
What range of courses emerge during the development of the Community Project?	Range of Courses
What reasons do participants give for their involvement with the Community Project?	Motivation and Rationale for Engagement
How do participants experience the Community Project in relation to issues of technology, expertise and accessibility?	Technology, Expertise, Accessibility
In what ways do participants apply teaching and learning practices in roles of both teacher and learner?	Teaching and Learning
How do participants describe their experiences on the Community Project with reference to positive and negative elements from their own involvement?	Participant Experience

Table 5-2: Research questions with thematic focus.

In Table 5-3 an overview of the findings chapter is presented with theme titles on a matrix based on the three research cycles and the six research questions.

	Emancipation and Empowerment	Q1 Range of Courses	Q2 Motivation & Rationale	Q3 Technology, Expertise, Accessibility	Q4 Teaching and Learning	Q5 Participant Experiences
Cycle One	Establishing a Code of Conduct	Outline of the courses created in Cycle One Discussion of course choices Traditional and non-traditional approaches to course design	Gatekeeping and the Division Between Types of Participant Engagement	'Alienated in a Technological Wilderness' Pyramids of Influence and Ideological Framing	Concepts of 'Free Knowledge' in course creation Alternative Concepts of Knowledge Amongst Participants Summarising teaching and learning	
Cycle Two	Single section	Outline of the courses created in Cycle Two Discussion of course choices New Categories	Concepts of Free Learning Out of the Comfort Zone	Creating Pathways in the Technological Wilderness Development of the New Platform Building Windmills in the Shadow of the Power Station (Cycle Two) Expertise through Informal Learning	Types of Participant Approach Defining the Learner on the Community Project Distinguishing Educators from Teachers	A Challenge to Utopian Thinking Vulnerability
Cycle Three	Single Section	Outline of the Courses Created in Cycle Three Discussion of Course Choices Reconsidering 'Outsider' Courses	Freedom and Authenticity as Minoritarian/ Majoritarian Concerns Emerging Patterns of Control and Minimum Standards	Technology in Relation to Accessibility – Skills, Environments and Availability Technology as Amplifier Technology as Pedagogical Choice	Campfires of Creativity Pedagogical Choice What Do You Want to Change, Improve, Develop? The Place of Theory: Three Philosophies of Practice Participant Approaches to Theory	Redefining Community and Resisting Common-Sense Definitions Participant Challenges to 'Trashy Baubles' and 'Unstrung Pearls' Vulnerability

Table 5-3: Categorising framework showing themes across cycles in relation to research questions.

5.1 Cycle One of Research

Period of Research	April – November 2013
Number of Users/Participants	215/19
Number of Courses	7
Data Collection Methods	Focus groups Interviews Participant discussion Community Project website analysis
Background Activity	Setting up of steering groups to co-design the learning platform Commission document created for web developers Website design agreed and built Significant issues with the commercial platform; registration processes failing/course not publishing Launch event held – 120 attendees Project established as stand-alone and non-institutional by the end of cycle

5.1.1 Participants in Cycle One

Cycle One			
Recruitment	Participant	Criteria	Engagement
8	George; Joanne; Catherine; Rob; Stuart; Sandra; Diane; Lee	OR/ SG	SG Meetings; Online questionnaire; Interviews
4	Jodie; Tony; Craig; Lisa	WAE	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups;
4	Bernard; Hannah; Adewale; Alex	CE	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups;
3	Kim, Taz, Alexandra	I	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups;

In overview, there were 215 registered users of the project at the end of Cycle One. Minimum data were collected to allow ease of registration and avoid issues of data collection and privacy concerns. It meant no universal age, gender or employment data were collected other than from consenting participants. Countries of origin were visible and numbered twelve and covered four continents. Of the 215 users, all were invited to take part in the research through a messaging service built into the platform, along with an open invitation on social media accounts created for the project. A launch event was advertised locally and open to anyone to attend. The launch event had 120 attendees, and from this eight people registered and responded to requests to participate in the research.

Several participants came as Organisational Representatives (OR) and these formed the Steering Group (SG).

5.1.2 Main Author Narrative for Cycle One

The Main Author section outlines my experiences of the *'story'* of the action and the research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p.53) as they emerged across the first cycle.

5.1.2.1.1 *A Schizophrenic Stance*

The development of the story of the research was complicated by a continual need to promote the Community Project while concurrently researching it. This *'double burden'* (Argyris & Schön, 1974, p.4) was understood as a feature of PAR.

Attempting objectivity proved difficult in the early stages of the research as the need to keep the Community Project going required positive reinforcement and support when objectivity might simply report the issues.

The '*schizophrenic stance*' that Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.369) highlighted proved emotionally and intellectually taxing and became lived experience rather than a distant, cognitive concept.

I was at once the person '*in charge*' (Jodie, participant) as well as a co-creator and aware of the need to view the Community Project as something informing a research thesis. The organisational aspects of the project, maintenance, networking, promotion and responding to users became vital and daily tasks. There was no space in which to retreat, to witness from afar and I often felt a need to offer solutions rather than record and observe.

Living the experience of the project proved significant in revealing personal pressures affecting participants, and myself.   The value of such a close researcher position came in seeing qualities of courage, tenacity and enthusiasm as key to the success in creating learning spaces. Potential compromising of objectivity was mitigated by the authenticity that such direct experiences allowed. To have reported a series of occurrences without recognising personal anxieties and responses would have been to miss a significant element of the research.

5.1.2.1.2 Two Tiers of Engagement

A criticism of participatory action research is that it often, '*…becomes as controlling as the controlling agendas it seeks to attack*' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p.351). In the first cycle of the research, I was aware that competing values had the potential to lead into a preferred account based on

presumption rather than actual activity. It became clear that several participants were involved *because* of our institutional affiliation, not *despite* it. In Cycle One, a two-tiered experience emerged between Organisational Representatives (OR) on a formal Steering Group (SG) and a group of participants using the platform and engaging in discussion around the platform. This distinction is discussed in detail (see section 5.1.3.3.1) but a crucial reflection was that the division that appeared reflected competing values and motivations.

Although the Steering Group was not the autonomous, free-forming group I had envisioned they were the reality of the research project and were key to the story of the action. My perhaps naïve expectation that opinions outside the institutional model of education would be automatically open to disruptive and transformative approaches to learning proved tenuous. This initial two-tiered approach to the Project revealed an attraction to potential funding rather than any interest in non-institutional practice.

5.1.2.1.3 The Significance of Technology in Cycle One

While the Steering Group indicated division internally, the role of technology highlighted a clash of values externally. The initial aim of a non-institutional platform (see section 2.2.1) faced significant hurdles from the outset.

The initial plan to include a website designed by community participants became untenable. The initial institutional funding team insisted on a professional web developer who could provide auditable evidence and be registered as a business. The legacy of this was reliance on a web developer that saw the Project in purely commercial terms and had little interest in the

ethos of a community-driven initiative. An increasingly fractious relationship developed as our goals, and those of the developers, proved wildly disparate. The tension between an external technology provider and the participant community highlighted divisions rooted in value and purpose (see section 5.1.3.3).

This first cycle was characterised by technology being both a familiar and open space with an increasing awareness of complex relationships of power that led to personal responses of anxiety (see section 5.1.3.4.1).

Alex summarised the situation around the relationship with the commercial web developer as, "*like buying a laptop from the shop, if you don't pay the extra for the warranty you are on your own*'" (Alex, focus group). The sense of being '*on our own'* defines much of the early stages throughout Cycle One.

5.1.3 Themes from Cycle One

The following section outlines the themes that emerged throughout the first research cycle. Despite applying the focus terms from the research questions, establishing distinct lines between themes proved difficult and blurring between themes is evident.

5.1.3.1   Emancipation and Empowerment

Emancipation in Cycle One illustrated the contention over the meaning of the term and the diversity of interpretation across participants.

In the first focus group meeting I introduced the influence of popular education on the Project. Subsequent discussion indicated some participants challenging

a politicized reading, with several Steering Group responses describing emancipation as a threat and necessitating controls.

Chloe (CE) argued that, "…*the socialist angle is prescriptive, it needn't be…it won't be for me, sorry, I like the freedom but it's my freedom not a defined freedom you might think it is'"* (Chloe, interview).

Bernard (CE) reflected that popular education was, "*not off-putting",* but nor was it instrumental to his involvement. He added that,

"Freedom always smells good, but often it's in the taste and the price you get to see that it isn't what you asked for. I love the idea of autonomy…but I won't be making a claim for solidarity comrades, sorry"
(Bernard, focus group).

I was reminded of Virginia Eubanks' (2011) admission in *Digital Dead End* that '*I was wrong'* (p.5) as she had to rethink her presupposition that technology access was the primary social justice issue. The early stages of my research reframed the initial contention that a free learning platform would be somehow linked to clear issues of oppression. While interest in emancipation emerged, it required a widening of what this might include to cover multiple interpretations of the term and concept.

Others were explicit, Jodie (WAE) described how,

"*my work is restricted and not the thing I expected it to be, it is managed to death, stripped…assaulted in the name of qualifications. I think using* this [CP] *gives some taking back of the real purpose, a revolution, a little revolution of purpose that gets rid of the dominating processes and replaces them with creative ones"* (Jodie, Interview).

Responses often demonstrated emancipatory overtones through seeking freedom for alternative practice, often within institutions. Despite little explicit mention of dominating or oppressive forces, calls for freedom and autonomy suggested there must be something to be freed from.

Rather than a rejection of popular education perspectives, the responses echo the significance of a Gramscian approach to common sense that '*socialist education must explore, identify and criticize – not prescribe*' (Landy, 2011, p.48). Part of a non-prescriptive approach included recognising the limitations of a rigid counter-hegemony.

Chloe, Jodie and Bernard's responses do not fit with ideological concepts although not aligning with Patnaik's (1988, p.2; section 3.3.1) identification of Marxist elitism. Instead, analysing common sense provides a foundation for avoiding prescriptive readings that reveals,

> '*…more complex understanding of the ways in which the subaltern is implicated in existing formations through mechanisms of both coercion and consent*' (Landy, 2011, p.40).

Simplistic versions of oppressor/oppressed are difficult to identify and seldom something participants attributed to themselves. However, the ways representatives of organisations saw other participants indicated that regardless of self-identification, we were subject to forces that sought to control action.

A division was evident between participants seeking autonomy on the one hand, and organizational representatives interested in control on the other.

5.1.3.1.1 Establishing a Code of Conduct

A split appeared between the Organisational Representatives (OR) on the Steering Group (SG) and individual and community participants around control and autonomy. The division became manifest in divergent approaches to rules of engagement on the platform. The OR/SG emphasis centred on how to

control non-institutional participation.   George (OR) suggested we needed terms and conditions and that these would have to define the roles of 'teacher', 'student' and the limits of 'courses' (minutes, SG meeting 3).   Sandra (OR) asked, "*freedom comes with responsibility, what do you do to ensure that?'* (Sandra, SG Meeting).

There was a perception of threat from a non-institutional body, exemplified by Lee's (OR) concern that courses might include "*random waffle, strange predilections, it's always a danger, it can be like herding cats…we need our boundaries clear*" (Lee, SG Meeting).   Additional concerns over "*right-wing infiltration*" (Diane) and the necessity for sanctions and rigorous monitoring illustrated a tendency toward looking outwards and seeing threats.   A tendency toward risk-aversion led to the proposal of a generic terms and conditions template accessed from a commercial website.   This was rooted in concepts of customer-provider and legal responsibility.

Beyond the Steering Group, participants rejected the proposal and instead offered a compromise through developing a *community code of conduct* (figure 5-1).

The community code was generated at the focus group meeting and contrasted with SG concerns.   Emphasis was on the individual and while safety and positive intent were included, there was no link to wider agendas around safeguarding and extremism that characterised SG discussion.

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Community Code

1. I will only use the Community Project to share learning with others with the aim of promoting positive development.

2. I will use material that does not name people without their permission.

3. I will only upload material that is for the benefit of others and does not cause harm or distress to any individual or group.

4. I will ensure that communication with others, as either tutor/learner, is appropriate and considers issues of politeness and supportive relationships.

5. I will act as a positive ambassador for the Community Project and help keep the site safe and welcoming for all users.

</div>

Figure 5-1: The Community Project 'Community Code'.

A growing disparity between reasons for involvement characterised two types of participant and a form of Crowther's (2010) *'iron law of participation'* (p.247) could be seen in a real-world context. These initial stages highlighted patterns of control coming from a SG group based in professional, representative and organizationally-located roles. These sanctioned community representatives created a manufactured definition of community that was inorganic, selected by institutional familiarity and that brought ready-made concerns of risk and responsibility. It was ironic that the community-located participants were not recognised as sufficient community representatives in these early stages when institutional governance partially remained.

5.1.3.2   Range of Courses

5.1.3.2.1 Outline of the Courses created in Cycle One

Table 5-4 below highlights published categories and any courses on the CP
platform and instances of non-participant created courses are labelled, '*User
(anonymous)*'.

Category	Courses	Course Creator
Art	1. *Making the Invisible Visible* 2. *The Studio*	1. Jodie 2. Alexandra
Education		
Mental Health	*Mad World: An Action Research*	Alex
Philosophy	*A Guerilla Guide to Philosophy Anarchogogy: Does Learning Need Teachers?*	Tony (both courses)
Sport	*Crown Green Bowling*	User (anonymous)
Technology		
Want to Know More about the Community Project?	*A Discussion About the Community Project*	Peter (Main Author), Jodie & Lisa
Literacy		
Numeracy		

Table 5-4: Sample of categories, courses and creators in Cycle One.

5.1.3.2.2 Discussion of Course Choices

The initial focus of this question was around what courses participants created.
To what extent courses replicated institutional content would be significant in
defining any divergence apparent in non-institutional platforms.   What was

coming through in Cycle One was clear division between the intended areas of interest suggested by the Steering Group (SG) and the actual courses created by participants.

The Steering Group (SG) suggested *Literacy, Numeracy, Education, Technology, Mental Health*, and *Sport*. This emphasis echoed a thread occurring across cycle one that organisational representation came with power to influence but without intention to participate. This resulted in strategic category choices indicating what *should* be included although the SG representatives never created any courses. It was significant that Organisational Representatives felt able to make suggestions without communication with other users, and with no participation in the categories.

The most populated categories, *Art* and *Philosophy* were added after the launch event following participant requests based on courses they intended to create.

5.1.3.2.3 Traditional and Non-traditional Approaches to Course Design

A key concern of the Project was the potential for teaching and learning generated through alternate voices. This was evident, although suggestions in some participant feedback mirrored formal, conventional practice and many early courses applied traditional concepts of teacher/student.

Bernard described creating courses based on "*delivery of professional packages*" and "*valid assessment routes that awarding bodies will recognise*" (Bernard, focus group). In a later interview, he highlighted this would take longer to develop because of the need for professional educators to become available.

In other courses that developed, there appeared to be a willingness to play with form and creators were spread across formal education backgrounds, community education and individuals.

None of the courses utilised a curricula approach, or specified length of time or entry criteria. Tony described how his courses gave him, "*free space that will generate free thinking …it is not possible to go where you want with an idea when that idea is already defined in a course …this allows me to play with form and process*" (Tony, interview). Course creation in the early stages was hampered by technology concerns but did suggest that process and content were influenced by personal choice as well as conventional models.

5.1.3.3 Motivation and Rationale for Engagement

The emphasis of this section is around the reasons participants gave for their involvement with the Community Project. Across each cycle, this question reveals participant purpose and provides some clarity around the aims people had for their involvement. In practice, this emphasis on initial purpose also exposed conflict and patterns of control from some, and a seeking of freedom for others. In the first cycle, a division between two distinct groups occurred and is presented here as a concept of gatekeeping.

5.1.3.3.1 Gatekeeping and the Division between Types of Participant Engagement

A distinction emerged between Organisational Representatives (OR) on the Steering Group (SG) and those participants who engaged from their own choice.

The nature of this distinction appeared to lie between conventional project management for the SG and a desire for authentic participation from participants. The focus on motivation helps explore how this division was experienced on both sides. Adewale described how he saw the SG as, "*above but apart from us, they are never involved…they are gatekeepers only*" (Adewale, focus group). Gatekeeping reframed the question of motivation with an emphasis on intrinsic motivation on the one hand, and professional requirements on the other.

The concept of gatekeeping revealed exchanges of power and control within the project. Three key features of gatekeeping emerged: *Distancing; Resistance to hierarchical structures of control;* and *Influence without participation.*

Distancing

Despite a generally positive approach to the Project aim, the SG group *spoke about* those they represented but gave no examples of their *speaking to* them during the research. The emphasis of OR input was on the development of procedure and management processes. George described how, "*the evidence trail has to be correct, above anything else here, get that right and things go smoothly*" (George, SG meeting).

Institutional language resonated with an '*ideology of the establishment*' (Sharpe, 1974, p.55), terms such as '*service users*', '*clients*' and '*stakeholders*', were commonly used to define individuals. Such collective phrases generated a double meaning in which the terms suggested specific/ individual, but the meaning was always generalised/ plural. Distancing occurred as ORs discussed others in these terms, but with no opportunity for represented groups

to attend or become involved. An inferred vulnerability emerged as an operational requirement for third sector organisations with the SG creating barriers to participation that meant only they could act as mediators. They proved resistant to efforts to widen access to directly include users of their services. As preferred partners and established representatives of 'community', the Organisational Representatives applied a well-established meeting and procedure structure. This proved complex, institutionally bound and often impenetrable for anyone unfamiliar with these processes.

The Steering Group (SG) relationship with wider participants contradicted what Eubanks (2011) described in her research with women at a YWCA that '*Popular education is learning about decision-making by actually making decisions*' (p.105). The types of decision made are equally significant and Mayo (2003) warns of '*tea, towel and toilet*' (p.40) involvement, rooted in menial concerns, that is risk-free and disempowering.

Despite an overt non-institutional purpose, early stages of the Project witnessed a developing hierarchy in which an ability to decide was limited through organisational processes. Additionally, the superficial attention the web developers gave to participant suggestions (section 5.1.2.1.3) over platform design proved dismissive and alienating. While advocacy had initially promised access to the people we hoped would use the Project, it appeared a protective sheen. The advocates were professional, distant and with limited communication to those they represented, reflective of Crowther's (2010) 'iron law' of participation in adult education. The processes of gatekeeping maintained hierarchical structures and vulnerability became a tool for distancing that risked silencing participants outside the Steering Group.

Resistance to Hierarchical Structures of Control

The impact of the Steering Group resulted in resistance to a growing hierarchical structure *within* the Project. Several participants viewed the SG as counter-intuitive to their involvement, and while I initially considered widening membership would help, participants suggested it was not something they could join. Jodie and Tony considered that joining the SG would *contaminate* the attraction of the CP and rejected invitations to join. They discussed this in relation to feelings of guilt and threat,

Tony: "*I felt a bit guilty about turning that down* [SG invitation) *but it was not what I wanted, I was surprised you had it really… the boardroom and an agenda…all too corporate for me"*

Jodie: "*Guilty? Not really, more threatened, like it was a contamination of the community thing, participation not expertise was what I was into, it was contamination having some that wouldn't participate … not guilty but definitely wanting to do my own stuff, but not in there, no boardrooms"*
(Tony & Jodie, paired interview).

Participants also argued for avoiding the SG rather than engaging with it. Kerry suggested that we, "*promote it* [the CP] *on social media, or do a leaflet drop, or just turn up at meetings or something, just by-pass the bosses" (*Kerry, social media post*).* Jodie agreed and responded that,

"they want to select who is involved. We won't change that so let's just promote the website, share courses and forget about them" (Jodie, social media post).

The negativity of 'contamination', and feeling 'threatened' followed by calls to 'by-pass' and 'forget about' gatekeepers created clear distinction between participant groups. The term 'bosses' reflected the gatekeeping role being hierarchical. Barriers formed around types of participation rather than merely participation alone.

Crowther argues that questions should not be around a blind emphasis on participation, but asking, *'…participation for what? Whose interests does it*

serve? Who benefits? What are the consequences?' (Ibid.). The motivational intent revealed in this cycle highlighted often incompatible purposes between those acting as advocates and others seeking individualised spaces. The value of this being non-institutional was that organisational representation could be challenged with alternative, and resistant, voices able to be heard.

Participation as Risk

Risk appeared as a theme that characterised the distinction between course-creating participants and the SG members. Representative but non-participatory involvement led to perceptions of being risk-free and subsequently inauthentic participation.

Jodie, described her own course creation experiences as,

"a performance …It was revealing of self…it is scary because the usual boundaries are no longer there. So, if we are still managed, or observed, or whatever by [SG Members] that pass comment, even positive attempts at comments, but they haven't done anything, revealed anything, they seem able to suggest things but, why should they? They have not risked anything…"
(Jodie, Interview).

The contention that course-creation was public and risky further distanced SG involvement that was hidden and therefore without risk. While reasons for involvement were diverse it was the resistance to distant, risk-free influence that distinguished one form of engagement from another. The minoritarian-majoritarian relationship (Drummond & Themessl-Huber, 2007, p.44; Figure 4.3) reflected SG influence infused with establishment ideas and practices that any non-institutional purpose had first to overcome. Gatekeeping had created a partial barrier but also a useful binary by which some participants started to define an otherness. For those in representative roles, familiarity of purpose was clouded by a non-institutional context. Others welcomed this context,

recognised and encouraged risk-taking and showed a willingness to challenge any imposition of control without their involvement.

5.1.3.4   Technology, Expertise, Accessibility

The emphasis of this question lay in establishing the extent to which technology acted as enabler or barrier to learning beyond institutional structures. Parchoma's (2011) '*e-learning singularity paradigm*' warned of unchecked technology leading to standardisation and unthinking compliance.   This question responds to Parchoma's subsequent call for '*continued exploration*' into routes of '*political, social, technological, pedagogical and philosophical creativity*' (p.81)*.* Additionally, approaches such as Eubanks' (2011) '*popular technology*' help identify criticality as an important factor in approaches to technology.

The first cycle identifies two key themes. First, *Alienated in a Technological Wilderness* highlights anxiety as a response to shifts away from institutional support systems.   Second, *Pyramids of Influence* reflects awareness of participant involvement as part of a complex and largely incomprehensible global system. Technology operates on two layers, as a series of tools and as a global mega-structure. Expertise and accessibility are interwoven through participant responses to each of these layers.

5.1.3.4.1 '*Alienated in a Technological Wilderness*'

 The contentious relationship with the commercial web-developer (section 5.1.2.1.3) created a non-functioning website and an anxious participant body.

Most participant discussion focussed on macro-technology, rather than technology-as-tools. The frustration of participants led to heated discussions as courses were lost and registration attempts failed for new users. A growing sense of helplessness stemmed from awareness that support and fixes for the issues required finance and that no support mechanisms existed without money. Even the most supportive participants commented that the process was "'appalling'. *I feel sick with it, it's just so bloody frustrating, we need some help, otherwise I cannot spend any more* [time] *on it"* (Jodie).

The significance of alienation came through recognising how complex relationships, networks and processes were when developing an online platform. The engagement with commercial technology platforms contradicted much of the self-directed, autonomous and contributory approach and presented us with difficult choices of compromise and modification to what was possible. While ownership of devices and broadband internet access had been factored in as potential barriers to participation, these proved only surface concerns. The skills participants had, through either professional or personal experience, came in the application of tools and practices on existing platforms. Finding the platform insecure, awareness grew of a network of commercial practices, corporate ownership and specialised gatekeepers creating hurdles that appeared more exclusionary than the institutional ones we hoped to avoid. Once beyond policy-bound institutions, the relationship was purely that of customer–provider and claims to fairness, inclusion and good practice had little impact.

The relationship echoed Roy's (2003) description of relationships between child and curriculum as '*asymptotic'*, that '*…there never is any meeting ground or*

correspondence between them' (p.67). His *'startling realisation'* (ibid.) could equally apply to a collective realisation in the CP that technologies with which we were familiar concealed layers of finance, ownership and control went beyond the application of tools that often appear as free.

Participants recognised a depth of ownership only partially seen when creating from the user interface end of the infrastructure. Lisa (WAE) commented that,

"I never really thought of this before, it's always done by the computer services lot [at Lisa's college]*, we just add our videos, use the forums, download the documents, upload work, but this is something else, it's always there, unless it breaks, now it is broke and we haven't got a clue'* (Lisa, interview).

The alienation experienced seemed most acute amongst participants with experience of online and distance learning and for whom this sense of powerlessness was surprising. A stripping of confidence pervaded the participant groups as the technology revealed only partial awareness of the human, commercial and technological networks that lay behind everyday applications.

5.1.3.4.2 Pyramids of Influence and Ideological Framing

While practical issues of personal use led to alienation, the second major theme reflected on broader influences depicted in a pyramid of influence and control (Figure 5-2). Responses here indicate an often-incomprehensible global matrix that participants were increasingly aware of and that developed as a critical reflection of our socio-educational landscape. The pyramid metaphor came initially from Tony, who argued that,

"*digital education is somewhere we find ourselves, nobody teaches it, they just lay it out there, expectantly, they don't provide a guide to the pyramid we are part of, the privacy and ownership issues, our place in the big picture …nobody teaches that*" (Tony, focus group).

Kim responded with an acceptance of the pyramid, but with less clarity over how it was structured,

"The pyramid I get, but not what we are in it, are we bottom or top? Who is the rest? I know that people own my data, is that true of the project too? But who are the rest and are they national or what? We are so tiny it can be off-putting, frightening…who is seeing us or using us for something we don't know" (Kim, focus group).

In the focus group, I drew a pyramid (recreated in Figure 5-2) and asked how this might be structured. The significance of the pyramid comes from participants' concerns that the Project existed in a hierarchical and often concealed landscape. The five layers highlight influential, partially concealed strata that were only partially understood or defined.

The consensus was that individual action was at the top and that this reflected smallness and having most exposure. Negative images of control and ownership prevailed and the creation of each layer came with descriptions of distance and vulnerability. The web developer/commercial layer was mid-point and reflected an amalgam of market-driven concerns and corporate frameworks. Tony (focus group) argued that the web developers,

"…are there because society creates a greed is good approach, they respond to that, a money first ethos that squashes social good".
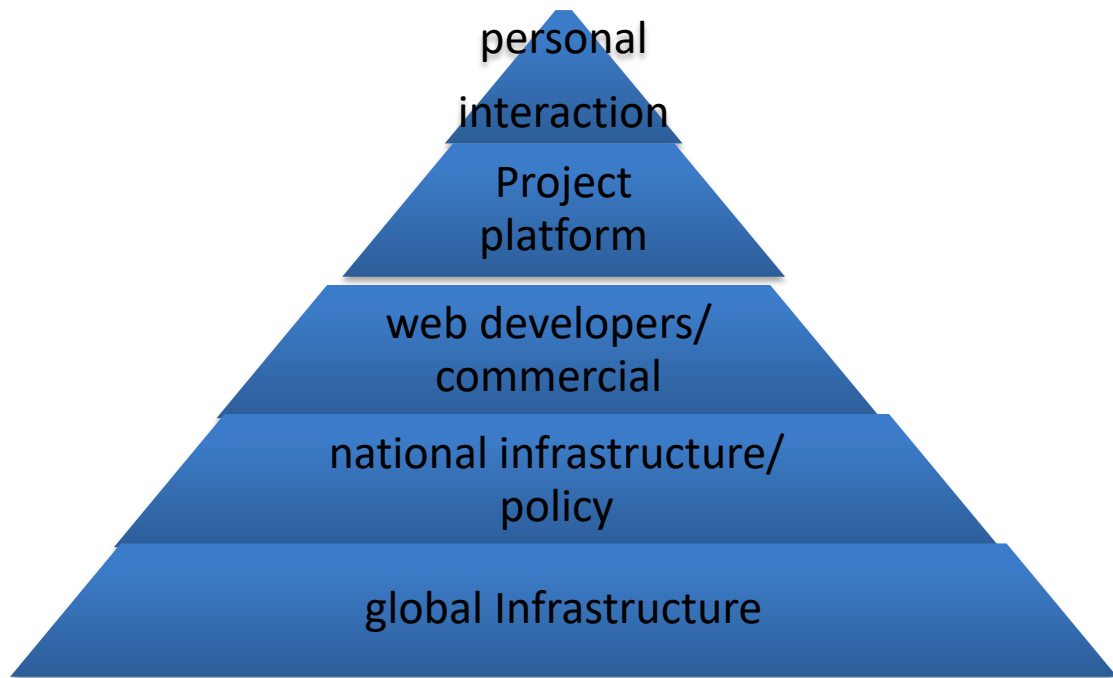
Figure 5-2: Graphic depiction of 'Pyramid of influence/ control'.

The negative characterising of the commercial often included a concern with it being hidden. Jodie discussed how she had experienced, '*a Wizard of Oz moment, when the curtain falls back, you see a horrible web developer and his invoice sheet'* (Jodie, interview). Chloe used the same metaphor, suggesting' "*we peered behind the curtain, which was traumatic, and you can't pull them back*" (Chloe, interview).

Such metaphors articulated a mysterious presence behind otherwise familiar spaces and reflected on technology-use being deeper than an ability to apply skills and tools as unproblematic, functional digital literacies. Participant experiences revealed a critical awareness that included a degree of ignorance around the structures of which we were part.

Alternatively, Adewale (focus group) countered that,

"*it makes sense, but it is not accurate…this 'big business is after you' description, it just is how the world is, not good or bad, just how it is*".

For Adewale, the problems focussed around censorship and security of technology, particularly across national borders. The *national infrastructure/policy* layer introduced influences from government and questions of surveillance. Alexandra responded that,

"I never even thought about that [censorship]*, I always see the internet as free, do what you want, but then that is ignorant, I have no idea what censorship exists here in England …I trust all the time, that my actions are open and honest, and that so are others"* (Alexandra, focus group).

A layer based on policy and national infrastructure was included despite there being little awareness in the group about how this affected the Project in any practical sense. This applied to the 'Global Infrastructure' tier which was suggested by Bernard, who defined this as, "*the pipes and wires men, who owns the infrastructure we rely on? ...the network itself before we decorate and embellish"* (Bernard, focus group).

While many participants had little explicit knowledge of these last two layers and rather than detailed or informed awareness, discussion emphasised concealed influence that was commonly experienced negatively. Both themes, of alienation and remote power, appeared as a recognition of an alternate and incompatible ideology permeating the structures in which the project was embedded. An ethos of self-generated learning and emancipation seemed bound within ecologies of commerce and corporate ideology.

5.1.3.5   Teaching and Learning

The research question asks about participant applications of teaching and learning practice on the Community Project.   In practice, all participants approached the project as course creators rather than students; this is reflected in the responses here.   Although several courses had been built in Cycle One, many participants had not yet created any. This section emphasises concepts of knowledge rather than pedagogical practice alone.   Through establishing patterns of intention, it is possible to reflect on emerging theoretical models despite limited courses at this stage.

5.1.3.5.1 Concepts of 'Free Knowledge' in Course Creation

The responses to the question around teaching and learning involved less about what participants did, and more about why they did it.   This differs from reasons for being involved and reflects on their pedagogical concerns and practical considerations over course design. The theme of 'free knowledge' revealed multiple approaches to teaching/learning and three approaches are presented here to help define different interpretations.

First, knowledge generation freed from restricted, elite expert-only models suggested support for a popular education ethos.   Wiggins (2011) defines knowledge in popular education emphasising equality of knowledge, regardless of where it stems from.   Wiggins (2011) argues that life experience creates wisdom, '*in no way inferior (and in some cases superior)*' (p.46) to formal study. Alex defined knowledge as something similar, requiring,

"*a diverse educational landscape which opens out opportunities, and what is emerging in the [Community Project] space is those very opportunities for people to be real stakeholders in knowledge production rather than*

communities which are 'instructed upon' by a narrowly governed system which is accorded with financial and social circumstance"
(Alex, social media post).

For Alex, the CP was part of his creating face-to-face, public and free lectures given by '*real stakeholders*' not professional educators. This position echoed through several participants' concerns over who decides, and what constitutes, knowledge. Chloe (interview) described her interest sparked by an example I used of a community bee-keeper, and that,

"*…it was that idea that anything can be knowledge, it…doesn't have to be sanctioned by some academic demi-god to be worthwhile".*

Much pedagogical reflection seemed to echo Freire's (2005) '*teacher-student contradiction'* (p.72)*,* where knowledge is separated between ignorant students and knowledgeable teachers. For Freire, this was reconciled by understanding that, '*both are simultaneously teachers and students*' (p.72)*.* Much of the discourse here considered knowledge could be created outside formal, educational organisations and reconciliation would begin by recognising the validity of diverse views.

A second approach appeared linked to Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts of rhizomatic knowledge creation.   This approach also transgressed teacher-student roles, but differed in that courses had abstract structures with the CP platform as one part of a network of social media and real-world spaces.

Some courses had only a title, such as "*Anarchogogy: does learning need teachers?".* This had no resources beyond a forum, a series of links to social media pages and some suggested means of communicating.

Tony described this as a challenge to processes of knowing and that,

"We didn't start this already knowing, that is returning to all-knowing experts, we start this with a willingness to create a collected knowing, we know together, create a space to know but one that is always open to change with every post or comment or idea" (Tony, focus group).

The distinction between the first two approaches is significant in highlighting how popular education and rhizomatic concepts were distinguished in analysis. Although similar, the first widens what knowledge can be included and by who; the second challenges the processes by which knowledge can be known, how it might be generated.

A third approach is less easily related to transgressive theories and highlights participants coming to their teaching-learning strategy via discussion.

The dialogue between Taz, Kerry and Bernard (Figure 5-3) highlights views being only partially formed in relation to what teaching/learning will look like. Practice often began from general views, an avoidance of right or wrong ways to teach and a willingness to play. Bernard's pragmatic responses do not resist alternatives, yet make apparent the influence of existing conventions.

Taz: *What I like most is the possibility that we can create without being* dogged by right and wrong attitudes all the time. I like that I can be playing with an idea or seeing someone else trying to form something without always being dragged back to someone saying, 'that's not how it's done' or 'do it this way not that way'.

Bernard: *Well, that sounds good but the convincing you will have to do is to* make that appear relevant. Sadly, right and wrong are the dominating models of our system of education…..

Kerry: *that's why I like this because it doesn't just look at that*

Bernard: *…yes, as I say, that is good in principle but our reality of the system* we are up against is that what we know is firmly entrenched in curricula and exams, and that's what we are used to.

Kerry: *I know, but that is not what I want to be involved in, that's why I want* to get involved more here

Bernard: *And to do that we need to convince people this is valid and that they are worth listening to, that's the main challenge as I see it.*

Figure 5-3: Taz, Bernard & Kerry from focus group.

This relates to Schön's (1995) definition of action research as escaping fixed notions of '*what counts as knowledge*' (p.27). The emphasis is on a willingness to create without a defined end-point that must first negotiate existing expectations.

5.1.3.5.2 Alternative Concepts of Knowledge amongst Participants

While the dominant approach to free knowledge included broadening concepts of responsibility, the Steering Group representatives largely saw free as linked entirely with access. In a Steering Group meeting, Diane argued that,

"*to make this applicable to what we do, the focus has to be explicit …It cannot be a free for all where anything goes. Staff and service users need to know their efforts will be spent learning what needs to be taught*" (Diane, OR/ SG, Steering Group meeting*).*

The emphasis on pre-determined learning targets was common to much Organisational Representative (OR) discussion. The resistance to *'free for all'* indicated a perceived threat from self-directed learning and reinforced the need for an agreed baseline over '*what needs to be taught'.*

The SG had been explicit about materials coming from professional sources where possible, with identified course creators also having clear roles of control. Such a view aligned with the suggested courses proposed by the SG (section 5.1.3.2) to include preferred ways of being taught as well as pre-determination over what is taught.

Stuart began as OR but became an Individual participant after finding the SG restrictive. He described being rejected when he suggested having service-users make videos on how to use assistive technologies. Stuart reflected that,

"*they* [service users] *use these things, they know what it feels like at the business end of the technologies we provide so who better to describe it, say*

what works and how to get best use of them. The response I got …was worse than patronising, they basically suggested they [service users] *couldn't know what to do without us"* (Stuart, interview).

Free Knowledge in this perspective saw the Community Project as an opportunity to disseminate material, but not to broaden who might create it. A Freirean banking educator approach is illustrated here, with Stuart describing a situation in which knowledge becomes, *'a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing'* (Freire, 2005. p.72). The significance to the Project comes in recognising how silencing occurs in practice.   Grossman (2005, p.79) argues that silencing is an active decision through selective deafness, accompanied by a '*presumption of the ignorance of those they cannot or will not hear when there is noise'* (ibid.).   The responses of Organisational Representatives indicate this happens often with an accompanying sense of doing the right thing. Oppressive practice is itself open to interpretation and more difficult to challenge because of this.

5.1.3.5.3 Summarising Teaching and Learning

 It was evident that speaking to participants about teaching-learning-knowledge there was little distinction made between purpose and practice. Regularly, participants described transgressing a teacher-student binary. This appeared largely as recognition of the value of widening involvement rather than responding to any theoretical impetus.

Multiple responses highlight participant awareness of their own knowledge as always in relationship with another, often an established and externalised knowledge. That is, the generation of knowledge reappears in examples as a

competing concept between the individual and others, with the 'others' tending

to be institutional.

The significance of these opening stages indicated support for McLaren's

(1999) description of a '*contraband pedagogy*' (p.32) which,

'*views identity as a contingent articulation amongst class interests, social forces, and signifying practices and that replaces an essentialist logic with a theory of otherness as a form of positivity based on notions of effectivity, belonging and the changing same*'
(p.32)

In McLaren's perspective, contraband or '*renegade*' (ibid.) pedagogy resonates

with class and wider social classification. The challenge to essentialist logic is

threaded through the CP participants' discussion although any shared ideology

is absent.   McLaren's inclusion of '*changing same*' relates to black identity, the

idea that a thread unites distinct black music genres. Regardless of difference,

they are bound by an *'implication of content'* (Robinson, 2005, p.2).

Here, participants were from multiple class, race and gender backgrounds,

but an '*implication of content*' indicates a unifying concern with emancipatory

teaching practices, that avoid hierarchical spaces.   That the organisational

representatives took an opposite view to most participants seemed to

reinforce transgression as a personal, rather than professional, interest.

5.1.3.6   Participant Experiences

Experience operates as a crucial element of both action and research. This section follows McNiff's (2013) consideration that, *'people generate their knowledge from their experiences of living and learning'* (p.29). The project itself was partly based on my own experiences in education (section 1.4.1) and an awareness that it is through experience we learn, and that this is at least as valuable, and often more valuable than academic learning (Wiggins, 2011, p.46).

An example in this first cycle comes in the tension between control and emancipation. Experience helps establish a sense of minoritarian response, or an awareness of domination that was not taught explicitly, but experienced. Such learning challenged Laurillard's notion that others had '*better models of the world*' (section 3.4.1) and that informal learning was based in *'first order experience'* (ibid.). Experience was a catalyst for reflection that evaded any formal educational response, which would miss these nuanced contexts.

There was a sense of hope in contributions as participants described feeling "let free" (Chloe), and *"in control of what we do"* (Kim). The focus of many was on previous experiences of education that dominated their attraction to the CP. A move away from past educational experiences was as significant as any draw to future possibilities.   Negative prior experiences seemed to provide the rationale for the clear resistance to the Steering Group that became a symbol of hierarchical control. The form of the relationship as distant and avoiding dialogic decision-making proved the most contentious. Formal education was less a theorised abstract and more a residual, experiential influence

The descriptions of negativity and resistance reflected opposition to any elevated strata of governance. Establishing categories and generating base-line standards proved familiar and accepted procedure for those on the Steering Group, yet there appeared little awareness of the potential distancing affect this might have on others. The roots of this division lay in previous experiences, of professional roles for those in the SG and with a dissatisfaction at being outside the decision-making spaces for others. It was evident that simply making a new space and expecting new practices to follow was impossible. Prior experiences were influencing most of the current practices and responses.

Experience proved difficult to distil from wider dialogue and practice. It was evident that the criticality of participants provided impetus to the ongoing design of the Project and both positive and negative responses helped inform what this might become. Experiences emerged as a key to the flow of participant responses and helped explain often changeable sentiment. McNiff (2013) argues that, *'there are no fixed answers because answers become obsolete in a constantly changing present'* (p.29). Through discussing experience, it proved possible to gauge a range of views that did not seek to fix answers, but did provide a sense of where similarities and differences congregated.

5.1.4 Summary of Cycle One

Cycle One provides a foundation for the Project both sequentially as the first stage while also revealing thematic direction. Internal division coupled with the issues of technology provided an often-uneasy platform for the development of the Project. The move in to Cycle Two was decided on as a period of change in the Project's technological infrastructure began to emerge, with significant

changes in participation that impacted on the internal division witnessed in these early stages.

5.2   Cycle Two

Period of Research	December 2013 – May 2014
Number of Users/Participants	245/20
Number of Courses	24
Data Collection Methods	Interviews Participant discussion Social media fora Journal/blog entries NGT/Delphi Technique Web material (from CP Platform)
Background activity	Commercial web developer emergency meetings Abandonment of web developer Community volunteer web developers take over site Costs for hosting move to independent funding/shifted to server on a gift basis Courses increase as platform is secured and accessible Steering Group dissolved Users increase significantly from 80 to 245

5.2.1   Participants in Cycle Two

Cycle Two			
Recruitment	Participant	Criteria	Engagement
1	Stuart;	OR/ SG	SG Meetings; Online questionnaire; Interview
5	Jodie; Tony; Craig; Lisa; Alan	WAE	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups; NGT; Delphi
4	Bernard; Hannah; Adewale; Alex	CE	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups; NGT; Delphi
7	Kim: Taz: Alexandra: Sami; Mavis; Jennifer; Ria	I	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups; NGT; Delphi
3	Banu; Saiqa; Jade	Student in Adult Education (SAE)	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups; NGT; Delphi

Table 5-5: Participants/ Criteria in Cycle Two.

In Cycle Two the Steering Group representatives left the Project as the SG was dissolved the SG based on participant feedback and awareness of the ORs that there would be no funding. This signalled a move to entirely non-institutional space. Participant numbers increased slightly, from 19 to 20, although only Stuart remained from the original OR category. New participants arrived, replacing the SG members that had left, and came to the CP through the online platform and via social media.

The change in participants was significant in highlighting a move away from organisational advocacy to a situation in which Individuals (I) became the largest criteria group. The three new participants in this criterion group came from outside the local area and found the project through online exposure. Sami (homeless charity), Jennifer (art and craft group) and Mavis (schizophrenia support group) had specific interests but considered they were not representative of any organisation and were all voluntarily involved in these areas.

Students in Adult Education (SAE) were represented for the first time with three Higher Education students planning to use the CP platform as part of degree-based projects. Derek (Appendix 4b) came to the Project as a community volunteer and worked with other participants to help resolve issues with the online platform. The change in participants reflected a distinct transformation in governance of the Community Project (CP). The previous distance of the Steering Group was replaced by distributed and discursive community-based decision-making. This appeared partly because of Derek's willingness to engage in discussion to inform platform design, as well as a renewed sense of responsibility across multiple participants following the dissolving of the SG.

5.2.2 Main Author Narrative for Cycle Two

The most significant development of Cycle Two came in the shift from the commercial web-developer platform to a community-designed version. This reflected a distinct shift from the funding stages of the CP funding and generated a renewed sense of authenticity around being non-institutional space.

The catalyst came as the commercial web platform stopped working completely and a collective decision was made to abandon the site. The final stage of the relationship with the commercial developers proved confrontational. Despite a fractious end to the commercial relationship, the community-designed platform encouraged increased use and a rise in morale across most participants.

While the opening stages of the research were characterised by tense relationships with commercial and organisational representatives, the second stage began with a change of direction from commercial/customer to community/co-design.

Frustrations felt by the ongoing failure of the original site had led participants to question their involvement. Jodie felt the original platform led to,

"*impoverished versions of the image of the course I wanted …irritating because the technology issues just get in the way, strip it of all but the basics*" (Jodie, interview).

The new platform began with fundamental changes in platform design. The community designer (Derek, Appendix 4b) discussed the ethos of the Project, made visits to discuss face-to-face and created a social media account that invited participants to make design suggestions.

This period of the Project was characterised by extensive discussions around the purpose of the platform and involved multiple participants' perspectives.

The move from earlier committee-based formal meetings to distributed discussion indicated a clear shift not only in how decisions were made, but who was involved and what was discussed.

While Derek's intervention provided hope of a functional platform, the accompanying discussion around design and purpose proved equally optimistic.

Jodie described how "*it is more real, the soil and the seed this way …just by knowing he* [Derek] *listens makes me feel more involved"* (Jodie, social media post).

Significantly, the discussions tended to reflect interests in ethos as well as practical concerns of use. Questions of ownership and ethical sourcing were common and the emphasis was on open source and free access software, limited downloads and technology that could be accessed in public spaces such as libraries. Eventually the platform emerged as a blend of WordPress and Moodle, both free, open source and able to operate without personal ownership of devices. The choice of Moodle raised some concerns with institutional participants (section 5.2.3.4.2) and highlighted critical approaches to the platform and subsequent influence on courses created.

The developing themes highlight continued concern over possible users and their technological environment that reflected limited access, financial issues and restrictions people might face with downloading in public libraries and access outside opening hours at public facilities.

Decision-making became based on plurality rather than that of a distanced expert(s); the importance of person-person discussion appeared central to positive exchange; participants became integral to the process as designers,

rather than subject to design-decisions; governance was visibly distributed and not located in a Steering Group model. The design was still led by a single individual, but the emphasis on co-design appeared to give participants a sense of involvement that proved motivating.

5.2.2.1.1 Researcher Role

Alongside the positives of increased distribution came additional complications in relation to my role as co-participant and co-researcher as well as Project Lead and Main Author. It was important that I could engage with participants without being distant, or driven by a separate academic research agenda. However, there was a sense of what Wolfgram-Foliaki (2016) describes as '*a foot in both camps*' (p.36). My intention of being part of a non-hierarchical collective space had to also reflect on the obvious difference that being a researcher had, the influence it brought on our interactions. Discussions illuminated participant awareness of some difference, in some cases providing suspicion of alternate, dubious motivation (section 5.2.3.6).

I had intended to be able to research as insider and exist in a flattened hierarchy. However, '*being in charge*' remained influential and affected relationships with others. Although Steering Group/commercial web-developer influences receded, dominating common-sense perceptions remained within our own actions and perceptions of each other.

5.2.2.1.2 Summary of Main Author Narrative

The second cycle saw a significant shift in the approach to research that prioritised design and creation from within a community of course-creating participants. Action and research often overlapped and defied neat division

while increased dissemination of the project helped find new participants and revealed complex relationships around my researcher role and engagement with co-participants.

Choices of research methods proved more than tools chosen with cool neutrality. Instead, a continual flux of ideas stressed the necessity for reflective participation, engagement with co-participants and a willingness to communicate based on community thinking rather than through established research methodologies. While I had always intended to engage with an '*emergent*' rather than '*linear*' order (McNiff, 2013, p.188) dramatic changes in project action led to this being essential rather than aspirational. To have attempted an established order of prescribed and anticipated action was impossible and the researcher response had to be reflective and adaptive.

5.2.3 Themes from Cycle Two

5.2.3.1   Emancipation and Empowerment

The shift from the Steering Group (SG) to participant co-design did not result in consensus over what emancipation meant. Instead, institutional concerns remained prevalent and the theme *A Struggle for Emancipation* outlines differences around whether we had collective, or individual, concepts of engagement.

5.2.3.1.1 A Struggle for Emancipation

The arrival of new participants sharpened the appreciation of diversity around what emancipation meant. Jennifer had recently joined the project as

'Individual' (I) but had previous extensive experience as an academic and in public education. Jennifer had revisited the community code and thought it needed to be developed as an ethical framework, something to "*clarify what we mean when we say emancipatory, emancipatory for who and from what'* (Jennifer, interview).

Jennifer argued for a more rigorous approach to how users might be encouraged to follow the spirit of the community code. She commented that,

"*I see the value of the openness, the authenticity of a genuine commitment, but the danger of different interpretations of key terms leads often to conflict…We needn't instruct, we need to nudge…in such a way that users are able to think how best they can remain open, inclusive, purposeful".*
(Jennifer, Interview).

Jennifer argued for a shift from multiple individual approaches toward a defined framework of meaning around emancipation and freedom. This would be based on *'not telling how to do it'* (Jennifer, interview) but based in rigorous and explicit ethical statements that would replace the collectively created community code (Figure 5-1). This reflected the Steering Group's concern around whether individual or collective definitions of emancipation were needed. That this came from a participant 'on the ground' did not seem to make it any more acceptable.

Jennifer created a course to run on the CP platform where examples of ethical frameworks could be shared, discussed and modified. It included a series of materials in contexts of technology, community and democratic movements in Europe and the UK. The course included a forum for discussion with invitations sent to all participants. The significance of the course came from its intention to move a free-flowing and organic series of concepts to one more explicit in

form. Emancipation was represented as a process that could be defined and that Jennifer highlighted would, "*establish the project's…ethical basis and not leave these open to random interpretation*" (Jennifer, interview).

This was the first collective course and at the end of the cycle only Jennifer and I were enrolled, with no responses from other participants.

Initially, the lack of engagement was considered a result of apathy. However, later discussion indicated resistance to the purpose of generating a definition of emancipation for all. Lisa (interview) said she, "*didn't get the point of it, we have the code and that works*". Jodie described how she thought we*, "must have been told to do it by the university, an ethics panel instruction*" (Jodie, interview). Bernard agreed with the creation of standards but also considered this something he might do better in his own course, tailored to specific user groups. A tension seemed played out between those who saw a need for standards, and others that resisted this and saw it as interference.

Jennifer (interview) defended the course as a means of avoiding '*dangers*' and '*conflict*' that might arise in a multiplicity. Such concerns were based on her previous engagement in projects and were well-meaning and valid as concepts. Regardless of potential benefits, there appeared little interest in developing any standard model of engagement. Alex argued that, "*the* [community] *code is perhaps the ultimate, not the most depth, the ultimate in letting people agree over human traits of positive engagement and support, while not being too prescriptive*" (Alex, interview). He mentioned being open to the idea of the ethical framework but that, "*I develop my own, a continual refining of what I see as right, fair, just…I would not make this mandatory for anyone else, we all must do this for ourselves*" (ibid.).

Other participants considered that a single code was likely to exclude many and could not apply to all. Sami related to her work with a homeless shelter, arguing that,

"*what is right when you are safe and warm is different when you're cold and hungry… it often sounds bad, but maybe a course on fiddling your leccy* [electricity] *is OK if you're cold and skint with kids*" (Sami, interview).

Sami and Alex present two different positions that reveal an ongoing development of emancipation based on context and circumstance. Sami argued that ethical concerns are non-neutral and that arguing for courses that discuss stealing electricity will be immediately contentious. Although not a course that was created, it did reveal that seeing others as potentially dangerous, and 'nudging' was based on a conviction that one position could decide what was appropriate, and reposition others somewhere along that line of appropriateness.

Jennifer's course had illustrated that within a multiplicity the concepts of ethical engagement and emancipation evaded singular definition. Tony argued that while we might all agree that a course by the English Defence League, a far-right activism group, would be inappropriate, "*…is that because of politics or what? Could we have a course on Marxism? Even if half of us don't agree ideologically, can we still have it?* (Tony, interview).

Establishing what emancipatory meant to participants became increasingly one of individual context and seemed rooted in identity and circumstance. The value of the multiplicity was the disruption of hierarchy, this seemed to also come with a resistance to any singular models with consensus difficult to reach. Instead, the preference was for numerous, individualised approaches that sought only loose connection or agreement with others.

Ria described her interest being based in empowerment and establishing social justice for those she considered disaffected. Ria defined emancipation coming, *"from my own interest in social justice as something we can do ourselves…not charity but activism"* (Ria, interview). The direction of such activism defied any collective definition and meant concepts of emancipation remained disparate.

5.2.3.1.2 Summary

Freedom from a pre-determined concept of emancipation might be considered a success in escaping Hill's (2007, section 3.3.1) rejection of thinking as the preserve of those, *'stood above and to the side of the majority'* (p.76). Rather than replacing an oppressive structure with a unified and emancipated version, the resultant definitions of emancipation appeared fragmented, individualised and often contradictory. This sound of freedom echoes Wild's (2013) *'cacophony of voices'* (p.294; section, 3.4.2) as classrooms are occupied. The seeking of emancipatory spaces appears as random and chaotic when analysis is based in establishing unity or standard. Such unified readings, a seeking of cohesion, might be the result of reading through a traditional, conventional logic rather than being open to what multiple voices sound like in reality.

Porter's (2004) two types of online community, *'organisation sponsored'* and *'member-initiated'* (p.62; section, 3.4.1.1) appeared less than clear-cut in actual practice. Even in non-institutional space, the individuals brought with them a range of influences, expectations and varying predilections towards standards. Consensus proved elusive and loose ties between participants highlighted that definitions of emancipation was often based on contexts and identities that

were themselves in flux.   Finding liberation from singular, common-sense definitions of emancipation appeared to occur but came with some confusion and conflict.

5.2.3.2   Range of Courses

5.2.3.2.1 Outline of the Courses Created in Cycle Two

Category	Courses *CP = Community Project	Course Creator
The Arts	*Singing Lessons*	Jade
Education	1. *Education in a Digital Age for ALL* 2. *CP* Talk* 3. *Urdu for Beginners*	1. Jodie/ Lisa 2. Sami 3. Saiqa
Mental Health		
Learning Moodle	1. How to Design and Facilitate an Online Course 2. Moodle Course Assessment 3. Exchange Samples	1. Derek 2. Derek 3. Derek
Philosophy	*A Guerilla Guide to Philosophy*	New teacher: Jade
Sport	*How to Motivate in the Gym*	Taz
Technology/ IT	1. *Making Animation for Your Website* 2. *Using MatLab*	1. Kerry 2. Alexandra
Hearing Voices and Unusual Beliefs	*No courses published this cycle*	Mavis
Environmental	*Project*	User (anonymous)
An Equal and Fair World	*No Published Courses*	Sami/ Alexandra/ Chloe
Poetry and Words of All Kinds	*Ernst Bloch and Utopia*	Kerry
Literacy	1. *Literacy Boot Camp: Guide for Parents in Key stage 2 Literacy* 2. *Understanding Dyslexia*	1. User (participant) 2. User (participant)
Numeracy		

Table 5-6: Sample of Categories, Courses and Creators in Cycle Two.

5.2.3.2.2 Discussion of Course Choices

In Cycle Two, the learning platform was now Moodle rather than the original website. This gave a much greater range of applications than the previous, failed platform. It also provided a risk of being an open-sourced platform that was largely designed by institutionally-focussed designers. This meant that while course creators had increased choices of applications, this range of applications came largely from designers responding to institutional practices. This was significant in introducing choices already shaped in the image of institutional orthodoxy while also appearing as naturally occurring and giving an illusion of self-directed selection.

5.2.3.2.3 New Categories

New categories and courses had fewer links to institutionally-located roles of teacher-student, although the influence of the institutions remained.

New participants provided some radically different approaches than the professional advocates of the original SG. The SG selected categories remained, but where courses were created they did not follow conventional lines of literacy education or skill-based learning. *Social Studies* and *Literacy* categories attracted courses based on institutional uses but were designed for non-institutional audiences. Literacy courses for schools were built for parents without access to school materials and unfamiliar with updated school literacy approaches. A sociology course was developed for potential students considering a higher education programme that used the CP platform to avoid the password protected institutional VLE.

Mavis's addition of *Hearing Voice and Unusual Beliefs* was significant because the category was named specifically to distance it from the *Mental Health* category already in place. Mavis considered this allowed freedom from pre-ordained concepts of schizophrenia, discussed in more detail later (section 5.2.3.3.1).

Several categories emerged based on specific contexts that participants felt might be corrupted by adding to existing titles. *An Equal and Fair World* and *Poetry and Words of All Kinds* were created to distance from *Literacy* and *Education* categories considered too conventional. Where courses were placed appeared as significant and meaningful, even before courses were created. The significance of the developing courses and categories was far from clear. Often seemingly random and unrelated, courses appeared a blend of specific community concerns with others echoing formal approaches to learning. The diversity indicated some seeking of non-defined space for creation, such as Mavis's schizophrenia support group that began with an emphasis on a localised concern but that indicated broader significance around evading institutional categorisation. The emphasis of Cycle Two was that course creation was often aware of an institutional influence and attempted to amend this, either through creating a new space outside this influence entirely, or finding some additional space to better support what occurred inside institutional space.

5.2.3.3 Motivation and Rationale for Engagement

In the first cycle, the concept of gatekeepers proved a significant influence and separated two types of user, the Organisational Representatives (OR) and the course creators. In this mid-cycle, the ORs had left the Project and the

emphasis became focussed on participants that were creating courses. The range of purposes was diverse, but two distinct themes reflect some coming together around motivation.

First, *Concepts of Free Learning* highlights some of the different interpretations of 'free' across participants. There is some similarity here to the *Concepts of Free Knowledge* (section 5.1.3.5.1) in cycle one, but the emphasis has shifted to free as a motivation rather than an element of teaching and learning.

Second, *Out of the Comfort Zone* finds significance comes in finding new learning/teaching spaces that often prove challenging.

5.2.3.3.1 Concepts of Free Learning

Several new participants described their attraction to the Project coming through social media and participant blogs that emerged after the redesign of the platform. Sami and Mavis, two recent participants, used the terms *emancipation* and *free learning* to describe their attraction to the Project. Each used the terms to describe different scenarios and reflected a continuing diversity of interpretation.

Mavis sought a space for a schizophrenia support group describing how she felt, "*always categorised, the first thing everyone does when you mention schizophrenia*". Mavis considered categorisation lay in either medical or social service definitions and that her alternative was to,

"come at hearing voices as inevitability, as natural, not something to be solved but to be understood and lived with …the [CP] *might let us make that space without immediately sticking us in one box or another, a kind of free learning, … free because we can begin from scratch, say what we know and not always have to put it into the conditions box"* (Mavis, group discussion).

Mavis considered the emancipation of the CP space came in its potential for non-restrictive definitions and had nothing to do with the online space or any

potential pedagogic freedoms. Attraction was based on, *"design without interference…now we don't even know if the course is necessary, maybe the forming of ourselves is enough"* (ibid.).

Conversely, Sami was attracted to using technology to allow people at a homeless charity to create courses. Sami described her interest coming from,

"…realising that every time we go [college] they are great …but the course is fixed…this made me think what if we could get those coming to us to design their own courses …make their own lives centre ground, learn technology doing that, that would be our goal" (Sami, group discussion).

For Sami, the technology offered potential for developing awareness through 'doing' in less rigid courses. For Mavis, motivation came from the opportunity to develop a network in which technology was incidental.

Alternatively, Bernard considered 'free' was significant around cost and access, not in terms of content. Bernard's approach continued along the development of management courses for professionals and would use the CP to tailor courses for specific businesses. This suggested an adaptability that was able to tailor the course and was not dissimilar to Mavis's seeking of space. Both suggested liminality, a transformation of existing space that suggested benefits from adapting conventional approaches to fit less traditional spaces.

Motivation appeared partially intrinsic, beginning with participants' interests, but often shaped by extrinsic motivation from disparate groups outside conventional learning expectations. A virtual ontology helps define participants' willingness to imagine and create alternatives rather than remain constrained by ill-fitting, formal provision. In thinking about why courses were created, several participants indicated course creation that responded to real-world

gaps. Individual contexts were drivers and it was apparent that standardised, institutional courses could not easily fit such nuanced purposes.

5.2.3.3.2 Out of the Comfort Zone

This stage of the research had foregrounded participants' feedback and choice in the design of the platform. It was apparent that many participants sought opportunity to create individualised, small community projects. Sami highlighted a need "…*to let people make their own decisions beyond what others say is worthy or good"* (Sami, interview). Mavis said that her own motivations were based on "*some freedom to be ourselves, meet others on our own terms"* (Mavis, interview).

In several cases the phrase *'comfort zone'* appeared and this indicated a distinction between reasons for creating courses. Bernard and Tony both suggested they were looking to challenge the people they hoped to attract to their courses. Bernard said he was *"looking to get them out of their comfort zone, give an example of being active around recruitment that asks the company to self-evaluate, not rely on best practice and gold standard thinking"* (Bernard, interview). Tony described a "*thinking based in comfort zone logic, what we know, what thinking is, what philosophy is, what I am, what they are"* (Tony, interview). Here, the onus was on course users being transformed by the input of the course creator.

Other participants described their own comfort zone being shifted. In a group discussion, I had introduced the concept of comfort zone. Chloe considered her involvement was, "*all about leaving my comfort zone, trying something new"* (Chloe, interview). Lisa and Jodie mentioned similar personal experiences, with Jodie arguing that "*the whole point is to challenge my conventionality… to*

try and rethink who I am as a teacher and what I am hanging on to" (Jodie, NGT).

The impetus to create courses based on some form of disruption was common to many participants. Although offering different perspectives on who was to be disrupted, themselves or their intended students. Tony and Jodie both mentioned a sense of being stripped of status as lecturers. Jodie (NGT) reflected on *"feeling naked, stripped of my metaphorical gown,"*. She considered that this was emancipating but also *'threatening'*. Tony (NGT) described *"having to find a new purpose …to engage based on interest not compulsion, no registers …it is rethinking what we are doing, why we are here"*. The emphasis on motivation across the participants was one of change and disruption. Both themes indicate multiple rationales for engagement and revealed a willingness to make changes in practice and a resistance to familiar, institutional models.

5.2.3.4   Technology, Expertise, Accessibility

5.2.3.4.1 Creating Pathways in the Technological Wilderness

The mid-cycle of the research reflected a move from Cycle One's *alienation in a technological wilderness* to the building of pathways. These pathways reflected greater self-direction but highlighted continuing concerns with hidden influence. A general characteristic of Cycle Two came through increased participant involvement in design of the platform. Despite an increased community-design, three sub-themes emerge that highlight often contentious approaches to technology.

The first theme considers the *Development of the New Platform* and the range of responses this triggered. Second, *Building Windmills in the Shadow of the Power Station* depicts awareness of concealed influence in technological environments. Finally, *Expertise through Informal Learning* considers participants routes to developing their own sills and those of intended course-users.

5.2.3.4.2 Development of the New Platform

The introduction of Moodle raised issues of institutional influence and highlighted previous experiences impacting on expectations. Participants' critical reflection developed beyond technological skill to include personal responses at emotional, intellectual and skill-based levels. Jodie (group discussion) described how, '*it feels like failure, back to default, the college approach…is it cheating?'*. Similar responses came from others who used Moodle professionally, indicating a view of technology itself as somehow embodying institutional status. This was not what the developer (Derek) had intended as he described choosing the platform because, "*it is open source and seems built with teaching and learning in mind, it has a wide network, it really fires the ethos of the Community Project"* (Derek, group discussion). Derek was unencumbered by any previous institutional experiences and selected based on open source and free access, practically as we had no funding, and ethically in terms of the basis of the Project.

The resistance to Moodle was revealed during discussion and was surprising after earlier positive responses to Derek's co-design ethos (section 5.2.2). It was evident that negative institutional influence had altered perception. Tony described his professional experiences on Moodle as, '*torturous attempts at*

standardising … no ownership our end, lots of control their end" (Tony, group discussion) but later considered Moodle in the Community Project was, *"different…we can add what we want and nobody is looking and monitoring"* (Tony, interview).

The resistance appeared not from any inherent qualities of the technology but from the spaces in which it had previously been experienced. Although the overall design of Moodle was likely to reflect global institutional uses, it was the local and individual experiences that caused most concern.

Additionally, while Open Source Software (OSS) had been selected as a neat fit with the CP ethos, Jennifer offered a mixed response based on her experiences.   She described how,

"I love OSS …But I also have mixed feelings about it because of male domination …[and] *commercial partners trying to use community volunteers as part of their paid-for service"* (Jennifer, interview).

This offered a more direct experience in running Moodle, and introduced commerciality a part of open source software.   A more positive acceptance of the platform came from users outside institutions where concerns were around personal skills and expertise. Sami commented that,

"my own worries are can I use it? Is it going to be hard to learn? I want others to be able to use it when I start sharing and without skills, is it becoming exclusive now, techno-babble?" (Sami, interview).

Kim and Ria had requested training in the use of the software and emphasised the need for independence, *"something I can do on my own"* (Ria, NGT) while Kim (NGT) described being *"independent"* and *"not reliant".*

The theme developed awareness of multiple levels of exposure and experience, with approaches to new technology varying in depth as a result.

Establishing positive or negative responses proved complex and revealed that diversity of previous experiences was significant in forming current concerns.

5.2.3.4.3 Building Windmills in the Shadow of the Power Station

> *'Whereas mechanical machines are inserted into hierarchically organised social systems…the Internet is ruled by no one and is open to expansion or addition at anyone's whim…This contrast was anticipated theoretically by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari …they distinguished between arboreal and rhizomic cultural forms. The former is stable, centred, hierarchical; the latter is nomadic, multiple, decentred - a fitting depiction of the difference between a hydroelectric plant and the Internet'* (Buchanan, 2007, p. 10).

Figure 5-4 Building Windmills in the shadow of the power station (created by Alexandra, participant).

The quote from Buchanan aligns with Alexandra's pictorial summary of a discussion that occurred in this cycle. The image of '*building windmills in the shadow of the power station'* (Figure 5-4) reflected Alexandra's contention that the efforts on the CP were always overshadowed by the conventions of institutional education. While Buchanan describes a rhizomatic internet and

arborescent hydroelectric-plant, Alexandra's definition of the internet is itself binary; a space for network and creation and, simultaneously, a series of protocols and systems that can be manipulated and controlled by dominating forces.

Alexandra argued that the internet provided a space for creative freedom, but one already rooted in systems of power and control. She described the CP as a place that could generate, "*collaboration…as we spark each other, attract each other... even repel*" (Alexandra, interview). Alexandra mitigated this as a purely positive response, describing how we would be,

"*overly simplistic if we don't recognise the protocols and algorithms that define the* [CP] *landscape … like here* [the art gallery] *to show in the gallery you need to know the background routes to get on this wall …you need to recognise the ways selection occurs*" (ibid.).

The emphasis was that the CP platform was itself part of a wider network of technologies. Alexandra described how,

"*…my courses rely on other already having this awareness, knowing how to access and read my work, share their work …all the time we are minor players right next to the massive outpouring of the art aristocracy …we are building windmills in the shadow of power-stations*" (ibid.).

While recognising the internet as rhizomatic, emancipatory and offering potentially free space, Alexandra's experiences describe the internet as one facet of a complex technology framework. It highlights that calls toward criticality need to begin with awareness of technology itself as part of that analysis. Kanuka (2008) argues that,

> '*Knowing our personal philosophy helps us to understand why we act and think the way we do about using e-learning technologies, as well as why others think and act the way they do*' (p.92).

However, attempting to distinguish open source applications from the broader technological framework is complex. Alexandra's depiction of the windmill

reflects a realisation of power and influence that is often at odds with the ethos of the educational purpose. Kanuka warns that '*unbridled – but uninformed-enthusiasm'* leads to disagreements that '*revolve around the means rather than the ends of education'* (p.111); the implication being that becoming informed will lead to meaningful practice. Multiple participant responses highlighted that disempowerment and marginalisation are not ended through acquiring skills to engage with technology.

Separating the ends from the means of technology enhanced learning is complicated by technologies created through processes of privilege that reflect broader societal injustice. Seeking to reposition and deterritorialise may be the goal we envision with technology but this becomes problematic when the tools we choose are already infused with a logic of domination and control.

5.2.3.4.4 Expertise through Informal Learning

Participants indicated technology choice was often rooted in individual experiences while always part of wider socio-economic ecologies. It seemed clear too that the way expertise developed as participants created courses was also based on individual backgrounds. Random patterns of learning mirrored Tough's (1983) description of informal learning, that,

> '*…the learner plans the path …often a zigzag path …but the learner does decide from one session to the next what and how to learn'* (p.143).

It is a description of learning familiar to rhizomatic and connectivist approaches, developing skills along routes difficult to define without established models to follow. What seemed evident across the CP was that zigzag patterns of developing technological expertise applied to both professional educators and those creating courses for the first time. Developing expertise in using Moodle,

making/editing film, sound recording, creating documents, and multiple aspects of course design, came through multiple learning pathways, always self-taught and invisible beyond their description of these often-idiosyncratic processes.

Using internet communities and networks meant almost of all this learning occurred outside institutional or formal learning space. Livingstone and Sawchuck's (2005) iceberg of informal learning metaphor resonated, with participant engagement happening without leadership, institutional accreditation or any external measures beyond the individuals. Much that was concealed in this iceberg was not merely beyond institutional space, but also beyond institutional conception. In many of the informal learning spaces the basis of what learning is, who it involves, what it is for and how it is measured evaded recognised institutional norms. Tough's (1983) zig-zagging pathways appeared more than random, chaotic depictions of informality. Instead, they offered an accurate description of how participants learned to use technology in non-linear, quick-moving and regularly direction-changing ways.

It was also apparent that technology provided opportunities for informal networks to emerge, often involving globally distributed sources of knowledge, as well as more local connections. These were often the first places that participants accessed and indicated a broad awareness of their existence, despite their not being named or branded. Learning seemed accessed spontaneously, from anonymous providers and knowledge-creators, and with no institutional access involved.

Sami defined technology as "*a link …to other ways of communicating that being on the street does not really allow for but could do, we can see what might be useful …what bits stick, what bits don't*" (Sami, interview). What *'bits stick'*

necessitated a fluidity in what was meant by learning, how it might occur and an ability to navigate technology as a tool to shape such non-institutional, emergent learning.

5.2.3.5   Teaching and Learning

The emphasis in this section is on links to the theoretical framework and the extent to which these characterised approaches to teaching-learning.

Three sections distinguish between *Types of Participant Approach*, with an emphasis on variation in how roles of knowledge and teacher were envisaged. *Defining the Learner* attempts to establish the significance of learners amongst a participant cohort largely made up of course creators. A final section provides some detail around an emergent division, of *Distinguishing Educators from Teachers.*

5.2.3.5.1 Types of Participant Approach

Across participants, each demonstrated idiosyncratic approaches to teaching and learning. It is through analysing some of the diversity that it becomes possible to identify *'changing same'* (McLaren, 1999, p.32; Robinson, 2005, p.23), where difference comes together to form a picture of the collective whole.

An initial recognition was of participant need to define what types of teaching-learning they sought distance from. Jennifer considered that establishing her own online teaching approach would need to distinguish itself from *'hidden institutionalism'* (Jennifer, interview). This Jennifer defined as,

"who is allowed to speak, what is 'liked' or responded to, what is ignored, how the subjects of discussion are tacitly agreed on" (Jennifer, interview).

Jennifer's approach to teaching was based on establishing authenticity between participants. This necessitated recognising that conventional affiliations and practices often remain dominant, even in online spaces that claim to be outside these norms. Having come to the community platform after experiences on a cMOOC, Jennifer described her wariness of those advocating emancipation, describing,

"networks [that] *remain rooted in existing relationships, while others are ignored, marginalised and sometimes actively excluded. We have to make sure we are what we say we are and not let freedom of engagement slip into an institutional model"* (Jennifer, interview).

The defining of authenticity in practice as well as in rhetoric echoed the espoused theories/theories-in-use (section 3.2.1) described by Barr and Tagg (1995, p.15). Instead, Jennifer suggested the CP should emulate *"working men's clubs, religious groups, 'Philosophy in Pubs' groups, grass roots, bottom up learning spaces that value the local, not standardised approaches"* (Jennifer, interview).

A bottom-up approach, without hierarchy or collective purpose, was significant in this approach.

Jennifer did agree with other participants about Moodle leading to a potential *'creeping institutionalism'* (ibid.). She also argued that with clarity of purpose and a genuine non-hierarchical structure, her courses could avoid this replication of existing networks by clear focus on what roles involved.

Alan described seeking a similar freedom from institutional constraint. He described his course as an opportunity to escape a sense of exploitation in his

professional role, of, "*…being pimped when we use technology at college*" (Alan, group interview). This came with a description of technology enhanced learning as the "*search for a gold standard, proof that we are legitimate claimants for corporate expertise, it is …familiar corporate branding*" (ibid.). The focus of Alan's teaching approach on the CP platform did not differ widely from his professional role, it was the places in which it took place he thought valuable. He described shifting the emphasis from branding as this meant content was reduced in attempts to make courses 'gold standard'.

Across these institutionally-based participants, top-down influences were resisted, although the actual practices seemed little changed. Significance came in understanding roles of teacher/student as not necessarily radical departures from more formal/institutional approaches in terms of practice. It was in the valuing of the relationship, and the evading of branding/marketing/customer-provider relationships that appeared important. Some institutionally-based participants did develop radically different approaches in the CP space. Jodie's course design had proved contentious in terms of being incomplete and left open for others to engage with, and add to. This was an attempt to depart from an insistence on the teacher-student binary, and a realigning of responsibility for creation and content.

Jodie described how,

"*even knowing what we want to know, what we mean as knowledge …that comes with meeting authentically on our own terms, then we decide what we know from what materialises*" (Jodie, group interview).

While her practice had altered, Jodie argued that the value of this transgression applied to her formal, under-graduate students. Emphasising participation and an engagement with others beyond formal assessments

demonstrated what Jodie argued, "*is what an artist is, what they do*" (ibid.).

The CP space beyond institutional convention would therefore add rawness and authenticity beyond protected practices.

For those outside the institutions, traditional roles were not explicitly rejected. However, Mavis and Sami both described their approach being a peer-to-peer relationship. It was evident that teaching practice was forming as a group decision, with other users integral to course design and purpose.

Online courses appeared significantly slower to develop in community spaces. This appeared partly a result of the unfamiliarity with the technology, but more explicitly through purpose beginning first in face-to-face encounters. The immediacy of the course creators with users was more important with human interaction prioritised over the development of the online courses.

It was significant that no resistance to existing models occurred with those participants outside the institutions. This institutional discourse was not considered relevant. The tendency to prioritise people-interaction over technology-interaction also occurred most in those outside institutions.

5.2.3.5.2 Defining the Learner on the Community Project

Although non-participant, registered users were the majority on the Community Project, they could not be included in the research. Despite their silence, the users' presence was altering and shaping the course creators' actions.

Courses were often created as individual projects and participants described being surprised that anyone had signed up to them. Tony reported being *'embarrassed'* after leaving a course for several weeks, until,

"someone sent an email saying where the hell are you …I had twenty odd people signed up. I was stunned, but gutted I had let them down" (Tony, interview).

Others reflected on their courses attracting others as sparking surprise. Alexandra (interview) said that *"I knew I had three people on there …then someone from France joined and I was freaked, it was brilliant but I thought how did they know?"*.

Several instances echoed this sense of surprise and responses based on embarrassment when courses had attracted unexpected students. It became apparent that often courses were created without students in mind. Jodie was explicit that this was the case for her courses, but that her reaction changed once she noted new users. She described *"mainly doing it for myself …indulgent creation … it was a reminder that this is public, I needed to think differently"* (Jodie, interview).

Other participants were highly specific about intended users. Mavis considered that on her proposed schizophrenia support course, *"I will need to know who people are …it can be sensitive stuff, I need to know so we can be comfortable with each other"* (Mavis, interview). This informed Mavis's reticence in making her course available online.

The approach to students at this stage suggested often loose relationships based on increased responsibility and distributed ownership. In practice, it often appeared as fragile and careless, showing little initial concern over student experiences. On community courses in which significant face-to-face encounters were anticipated, this was less prevalent and more time was spent identifying users and forming community-meeting spaces.

Where the traditional student role seemed to remain most strongly was in those courses that targeted professional training. The student as consumer was

significant in maintaining the student at the centre of the course design but for a commercial purpose rather than an emancipatory, ideological one.

Bernard considered that his approach was, "*… more efficient than institutions, we want quicker, better, more accessible communication …I suppose we want the same thing* [as institutions] *but we will do it tailored, better'* (Bernard, interview). Bernard's courses were proposed as both non-institutional yet also rooted in commercial relationships.

5.2.3.5.3 Distinguishing Educators from Teachers

Partly as a response to the continuing concern over students and uncompleted and untended courses, an NGT meeting focussed on what the role of teacher should be. Initial emphasis on resource production was replaced by concerns over communication, purpose and how relationships with course users should be governed. This became a discussion focussed on a distinction between 'teacher' and 'educator'. These terms seemed markers for debate rather than deeply-held concepts. The Moodle site allowed for altered titles for 'teacher' and 'student' but these were not changed on any courses. However, it was clear that while the term 'teacher' remained, there was significant discussion around what it might mean on CP courses.

Chloe described 'teacher' as professional, motivated by pay and status, while 'educator' might be motivated by broader purpose. Mavis agreed and thought that educators would "*become part of their community*" while teachers tended to *"behave as experts" (*Mavis, interview). The distinction centred around a potentially negative institutional application that was corrupted by values of

external agency and control. This contrasted with a generally positive free-form educator able to demonstrate enthusiasm, participation and passion.

This reflects Colebrook (2010) and Roy (2003) applying nomadology and rhizomatic principles that disestablish teaching as necessarily part of a logos, a hierarchical and institutional controlling position (section 3.3.5). It was not in course design or resources that difference was explicit here, but rather through espoused purposes and approaches to teaching that reflected a loosening of authoritarian configuration. Many participants' depiction of educator reflected resistance to instructional 'do as I do' models and closely resembled Deleuze's (1994) contention that, '*Our only teachers are those who tell us to "do with me" … rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce'* (p.26)*.*

Despite this, the relationship with users was often indiscriminate and haphazard. While often based on an espousal of alternate, non-hierarchical approaches, there was significant evidence that this was also resulting from lack of interest and vagueness over intended purpose beyond the creation of materials.

5.2.3.5.4 Summary

A redefining of the teacher/educator comes with consequences that included often overlooked students/users. It may be considered that a result of changing definitions of student was the shift in the responsibilities of the teacher. Seeing this as a weakness might mark a residual, institutional mind-set in which the student is vulnerable. The value of participant-led research allows for multiple approaches to speak, without necessarily returning to established benchmarks of responsibility. However, the emphasis of teaching and learning in this cycle

seemed altered by the practical and lived experiences of courses being open and online. Many espoused concepts seemed contradicted by actual practice. Although significantly different from professional teacher roles, the distancing from the institution also led to loosened connections between course creators and course users. Although this was the intention of some, it appeared surprising to others. This is significant when compared to the two polarities where the strongest links between teacher-student appeared. In the community examples, the relationship seldom found online practice beneficial but did continually focus on the relationship and impact of roles on the users. This was matched by the commercial courses that saw the roles as responsiveness to student-as-customer. Despite two disparate purposes, this suggests that clarity over purpose leads to lucid conceptions of what a teacher is and does.

Skill-based and well-defined fixed knowledge seemed to fit neatly with transient, loose-touch online relationships. Course interests based on people and with strong concerns with consensus-building and collaboration approached online communities more tentatively.

Reflecting on theoretical influence, participants did not describe any collective, ideal condition, although interest in establishing their own voice, and helping others do the same, was common. The transgression of the teacher role indicated a flattened hierarchy and a direct relationship to critical pedagogical interests in remodelling the relationship between teacher-student-knowledge (Freire, 2005; Wiggins, 2011). It seemed clear that outside the institutions, as with formal, institutional learning, espoused theories did not easily become theories-in-use.

5.2.3.6   Participant Experience

This section reveals experiences of multiple interpretations of the purposes of the Project as well as the processes of the research. This is significant in revealing participants' responses shaped by their perceptions of my role, and discussed in **A Challenge to Utopian Thinking**. Dialogic encounters highlighted the impact we had on each other and while often uncomfortable these impacted on my experiences and led to re-evaluation of my role as co-creator, main author and researcher. A second theme around **vulnerability** continues participant interests in responsibility and individualised resistance to hierarchy.

5.2.3.6.1 A Challenge to Utopian Thinking

An example of participant challenge came from discussion with Bernard and Adewale who felt that the project was rooted in utopian concepts. Bernard suggested my own approach was unrealistic and based,

"*in an idea of utopia, you are our utopia maker I think Peter, I wonder about the flipside, mortgages, getting paid, a job, the virtual elephant in this virtual room*" (Bernard, NGT).

The notion of a project without financial reward was repeated, occasionally with a feeling that my position was compromised. Adewale asked,

"*are you aiming for the comfortable chair in the big university Peter? Is this the end goal for you?*" (Adewale, NGT).

An emergence of pay and a shift toward status and professionalism was echoed by Bernard's questioning of us being "*champagne socialists*" and "*ignoring that everyone gets paid by the universities that they pretend need changing*" (Bernard, NGT). The sense of inauthenticity appeared based on experiences

of projects in which outreach initiatives were seldom focussed on benefits to the community.   This was significant in highlighting potential contradiction between *'espoused theories' and 'theories-in-use'* (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p.15) and the dangers of becoming *'pseudo-educators'* (Freire, 2005, p.17). It was through experiences rather than more tangible observation that this inconsistency was manifest.   The CP platform had no paid staff or explicit institutional links, but it was a focus for a PhD thesis.   It was clear that experiences were informed by every aspect of the Project, our interactions with each other and our interpretations of each other's roles and positions.

Majoritarian and minoritarian influence was demonstrated through lived experiences that evaded theoretical neatness. Within participant description, it often seemed as if resistance to hierarchy could simultaneously accompany desire for commercial freedom. There was no clear split between an oppressed voice and an easily identifiable oppressive force.   For some, the oppression came in restrictive commercial practice.   For others, they appeared closer to that of popular education.

Craig, a college lecturer (WAE), described how,

"*the option is take part or do nothing, not taking part because it might not be perfect is to remain invisible, or at least to only remain visible through being the same as we always were*" (Craig, NGT).

The *virtual elephant* of paid employment proved controversial and many participants followed Craig's approach, that participation was crucial.

Sami reflected that payment was inconsistent with many courses, that collaborative courses created a situation where, "*We make it together so which one of us says, pay me?*" (Sami, interview).

Contradiction and conflict over roles reverberated across many discussions and encounters. This often resulted in compromise and a sense of personal frustration at emancipatory content being commodified and repackaged.

5.2.3.6.2 Vulnerability

Vulnerability had been a significant concern in the early stages of the research but appeared to alter as the research progressed. Rather than the distancing effect of earlier research stages (section 5.1.3.3) it began to emerge as something owned by participants as a positive, rather than a problem assigned by others.

A contention in the first cycle was that advocacy led to what Grossman (2005) described as advocacy operating from '*a presumption of the ignorance of those they cannot or will not hear*' (p.79). Vulnerability is subsequently applied from above as a definition of others who need to be guarded from harm (section 5.1.3.3). Across Cycle Two, numerous examples of play and experimentation reframed the use of the term *vulnerability* to mean increased exposure and a valuable means of developing experience. Banu and Saiqa described the purpose of having publically accessible courses as "*real-life*" (Banu, interview) and as "*exhilarating, sometimes frightening…better because of that*" (Saiqa, interview).

A focus on experiences highlighted positive and developmental responses with responsibility replacing vulnerability. No participants defined themselves as vulnerable and responsibility and exposure appeared choices made by individuals rather than categorisation assigned by others.

Reflection on these experiences identified elements of risk but ones responded to based on individual tolerance of what these hazards might be.

Alexandra considered that the move to self-direction was "*the real difference about this* [project] …*we are playing but it feels good that it's play, not something constantly criticised …we play and find out*" (Alexandra, interview). Experiences often appeared focussed on a willingness to try approaches in real-world contexts, not controlled or managed externally. Sami described a "*letting go …just saying have a go, I want to be able to do that with them, without fear*" (Sami, interview).

The '*doing it with them*' model echoes Deleuze's (1994) call for teachers to say, '*do with me*' (p.26) while '*without fear*' highlights changing concepts of vulnerability. The significance of both comes in recognising learning as active but also taking place in authentic situations in which risk is a valuable element.

5.2.4 Summary of Cycle Two

In Cycle Two, advocacy was replaced by collaborative decision-making as the platform shifted from commercial to community design. Divisions created by internal governance were replaced by a greater sharing of decision-making which led to significant changes around styles of governance. Despite this, a sense of hierarchical influence remained prevalent, often through residual institutional and professional experiences.

Rather than consensus, this cycle also reminded of the value of conflict in research as a means of exposing my own presuppositions. Challenges to our relative positions often led to greater clarity around choices made and helped shape future action.   The move into the final stage of the research provided a complicated ecology of experience and practice where singular conceptions of oppression, resistance or shared ideology were not evident.

5.3   Cycle Three

Period of Research	September 2014 – March 2015
Number of Users/Participants	454/ 23
Number of Courses	52
Data Collection Methods	Interviews Participant discussion Social media fora Journal/ blog entries NGT/ Delphi Technique Web material (from CP platform)
Background activity	Site platform running without serious issue Continued rise in registrations, UK and internationally Rise in courses created and unpublished courses

5.3.1   Participants in Cycle Three

Cycle Three			
Recruitment	Participant	Criteria	Engagement
1	Stuart;	OR/ SG	SG Meetings; Online questionnaire; Interview
6	Jodie; Tony; Craig; Lisa; Alan; Sheila	WAE	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups; NGT; Delphi
5	Bernard; Hannah; Adewale; Alex; Sophia	CE	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups; NGT; Delphi
8	Kim: Taz: Alexandra: Sami; Mavis; Jennifer; Steve; Andrea	I	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups; NGT; Delphi
3	Banu; Saiqa; Jade	Student in Adult Education (SAE)	Course Creation; Interviews; Social Media; Focus Groups; NGT; Delphi

Table 5-7: Participants/ Criteria in Cycle Three (all participants as pseudonyms**).**

All participants from Cycle Two remained, with four additional participants joining.

5.3.2 Main Author Narrative for Cycle Three

In this final cycle, earlier concerns over a *schizophrenic stance* and *double burden* described in cycle one (section 5.1.2) and cycle two (section 5.2.2) were reconsidered following experiences with participants.   Rather than objective neatness, the findings continue to find contradiction and conflict as integral components in participatory research.   Braidotti's (2006) schizophrenic double pull (p.2) and Schön and Argyris' '*double burden'* (1991, p.86), depicts much of the Project's findings coming from emergent ideas continually forming and reforming against '*the gravitational pull of old and established values'* (Braidotti, 2006, p.2).

My original use of '*double burden'* (section 4.2) considered my part in the action researcher's dilemma of seeking change while bound by institutional convention.   The findings continued to offer contradictory experiences that challenged student-demand and student-led rhetoric of formal educational discourse.   It was clear that many participants challenged the need for professional educators, while simultaneously demonstrating an enduring organisational influence.   Aspects of conventional education remained and discussion around where emancipation might appear proved often incomplete and confusing.

My own focus on technology enhanced learning was not easily separated from wider educational concerns.   A schizophrenia support group (Mavis), free lecture spaces (Alex) and art courses (Jodie) highlighted deterritorialisation of

conventional approaches, but that were not necessarily tied to technology. Technology did provide the means of reaching out to new people but also brought additional concerns that were as problematic as they were liberatory. Non-institutional, non-hierarchical space emerged within participants' narratives and in their courses and dialogue. What was 'coming through' was fragmented approaches as positive representations of diversity in the project, not a problem to be solved.

Participants continued to describe the CP platform as a means of escaping their own institutional experiences in which identity was shaped without significant opportunity to talk back. Jo's art courses had introduced slow-learning to evade confusing duplicity in institutional models that promote 'new' technology, yet remain rooted in conventional assessment. Mavis's micro-community sought space beyond the stereotyping conventionality of medical and social service views of schizophrenia. The early commercial concerns over the platform had been largely resolved. While we were still a part of the pyramid of ownership and control (section 5.1.3.4.2) this appeared less frequently in discussion. It appeared that the problem-free operation of technology led to uncritical acceptance of its use.

5.3.2.1   Main Author Summary and Researcher Position

The emphasis of the main author narrative attempts to establish researcher positionality while recognising the Project as a loosely-connected collective often difficult to envisage. User numbers had increased beyond 450 people, and the geographic reach continued to reflect international usage. This was a dramatic shift from the initial focus on a community-based development with

regional relevance. It reflected the influence of online dissemination and raised further questions of community and what, if anything, bound these disparate groups. Most of the activity took place in spaces invisible to myself and the other co-participants in the research. Individual courses remained small, with most having registered users under 5 people and the largest having 35 people.

While participant numbers rose slightly, the modes of communication remained familiar and appeared well-established. The increased user numbers meant research participants were a smaller percentage of the Community Project. This final cycle of the research appeared more settled but this was perhaps as much a result of my own familiarity with the people, the processes and the relationships that had formed.

A growing sense of the necessity of messy realities had come alongside awareness of the impossibility of researching large sections of a project without resorting to big data sets. The richness of the smaller, qualitative approach to co-participant research convinced me of the value of looking closely at experience and purpose. It also came with a recognition that such closeness would be impossible in online models that seek thousands of users. The Community Project presents a challenge in asserting such person-centred analysis as essential, but raises questions of how this can work at scales envisaged by massive courses.

5.3.3 Themes from Cycle Three

5.3.3.1   Emancipation and Empowerment

The two earlier cycles revealed multiple and complex interpretations of emancipation. The community code provided a thread that exposed resistance

to hierarchical concepts in Cycle One, and a later concern with establishing whether a multiple or defined definition was necessary in Cycle Two.

In this final cycle, Lane's (2016; section 2.5) tripartite model of emancipation (Figure 5-5) is used to structure emergent participant responses to emancipation.

Emancipatory Approach (from Lane, 2016, p. 33)
*Emancipation **through** organised education systems*
*Emancipation **within** organised education systems*
*Emancipation **from** organised education systems*

Figure 5-5: Tripartite model of Emancipation (adapted from Lane, 2016, p.33).

This tripartite model structures discursive analysis and is supported by participant evidence, but it reveals fluidity between these three approaches rather than confirming clear distinction.

1. Emancipation Through Education Systems

Those participants that saw emancipation coming through established education stressed the importance of personal responsibility rather than ideological purpose. The difference to the individual pathways of institutional education came in scepticism about the ability of institutions to meet diverse requirements.

Bernard proposed commercially-based courses that "*allow flexibility based on professionals' lives, everyday pressures and practicalities…to let them get ahead…but not have to abandon their day-job to do it*" (Bernard, interview). It

was a concept of emancipation based on autonomy, independence and an acceptance that this might occur more easily in spaces outside physical institutional space. It appeared not a question of rejecting the educational institutions but of developing flexibility that mirrored their purpose while widening access. Other participants initially appeared likely to take an outside organisational system approach, but in dialogue considered that institutional contexts were preferable. Lisa had begun her interview describing the "*excitement…with flattening hierarchies, experimenting, discussing …taking control*" (Lisa, interview). She later moderated this approach and argued that,

"…but I have to be the one that says when we do stuff and when no, don't I? yes get rid of, amend, all the qualification emphasis …but who wants to be the first to take that risk? Who wants their children in the very first classes that abandon what has been established before?" (Lisa, interview).

Lisa's initial interest in "*creating learning outside the walls*" (ibid.) appeared in conflict with her understanding of a powerful socio—educational agreement that such a position would challenge. While able to hypothesise about resistance, this was something she was uncomfortable at realising practically.

Lisa commented that "*I will not …insist on an act of resistance to the lives of families and children just to further my own values*" (Lisa). Technology proved the means to '*share independently, operate freely*' (Lisa) yet included "*warning of danger*" and reduced the zeal of an emancipatory approach. On an individual level risk might be accommodated but is resisted in relation to the lives of others. Lisa offered a clear indication of emancipation being bound by individual context that often contradicted individual values.

2. Emancipation Within Education Systems

A resistance to convention and reimagining relationships of teacher-student, student-student occurred without necessarily concluding this meant leaving education systems. Instead, a repurposing of those spaces to reflect diverse values and perspectives emerged. Significantly, this repurposing had sought the non-institutional space of the CP rather than taking place within established organisations. In most cases this was due to difficulties in accessing the institutions, yet still reflects a desire for change **within** those systems than emancipation needing to be **against** them. Two distinct approaches appeared, one around seeking emancipation within system that proved difficult to access. A second developed amongst participants working inside institutions seeking space to evade restricting institutional convention.

Adewale created English courses for asylum seekers who could not attend local college provision and had difficulty meeting for class-based sessions. These courses he considered practical, that,

"*the materials I have …help them practice phrases to get by, to function, to survive …who will ask them of their lives, their interests beyond this, right now? They need to eat and to move around … it is practical not radical' (*Adewale*, interview).*

Any emancipatory concept came in accessing free-of-cost learning to those without access to state-funded classes. While Adewale's emphasis was on everyday English, the act of creating opportunity was itself radical, taking ownership of a need for learning that had been reduced through funding changes in institutional space. Education was an opportunity to take part in society for people with a desire to become part of this, not challenge it or establish new enclaves based on a perceived ideal. While popular education

as theoretical concept was never named, the emphasis on social justice, dialogic encounters and real-world problem solving remained. Resonant with the purpose of Freirean generative themes, Adewale's response highlighted his approach based in real-world concerns of isolation and alienation. Adewale argued that,

'once we …begin to try, to establish who we are as outsiders, then we are already something we don't want to be. We are individuals and want to take part in society as ourselves, not find a niche for asylum seekers" (Adewale, interview).

Sami offered a similar view, that resistance was not political but practical. Her work at a homeless charity proposed courses created by the people there, based on their lives providing a means of teaching others about the realities of becoming homeless. Sami argued that,

"if you're sleeping rough there's nobody on your side, nobody, they only talk about you as 'the homeless' …so when we create stories it is not about resisting authority it is about striving for survival …for existence" (Sami, interview).

Adewale and Sami represent participant responses that seek space to develop learning for those excluded from conventional routes. Neither suggested being against organised education, but for establishing routes into education currently denied them.

Other participants based within institutions sought greater autonomy to develop new practices while still within the organisation.   Alan, Jodie, Tony and Sheila described diverse approaches to learning **not** constrained by "*a limiting focus on employability"* (Sheila), a "*predetermining concept of art as artefact production"* (Jodie) and "*old-school models of thinking …which ideas are most important"* (Tony). Here, emancipation is *within* education and is based on

individual awareness of restriction, of seeking approaches that do not tie with macro-institutional drivers, such as employability or national curricula.

3. Emancipation From Education Systems

Several participant contributions explicitly sought distance from the institution-led organised education. Across these, Alex's description of the Community Project as "*an experiment in letting go*" (Alex, Delphi) echoed across other participants.

Alex's approach was entwined in his own free education project, with the CP platform adding to a free lecture and face-to-face courses running in third spaces, such as public houses and libraries. Alex's attraction to the CP had parallels with popular education as ideology and his resistance to establishment spaces found value in *"the opportunity to understand the value of knowledge which comes from outside the rehearsed narratives"* (Alex, Delphi).

The Project's outsider space was significant in avoiding '*knowledge being co-opted by market values'* (Alex, Delphi) and offered several key advantages,

"*(a) use the same technology as many universities to share their knowledge (b) learn through teaching - a dialogue approach to knowledge building (c) engage with a community of peers"* (ibid.).

Prioritising technology as the means, and the dialogic approach as the purpose, resonated with a critical approximation of emerging digital landscapes.

Other participants came to the CP platform with the specific intention to avoid institutions. Mavis's 'Hearing Allowed' schizophrenic support group found emancipation through avoiding the consensus of medical and social models that she considered formed in institutional isolation. The ability to form learning

in spaces away from *"the mouthpieces of the doctors, the social workers, they all come from the universities first"* (Mavis, interview) was central.

Summary

These three themes offer an overview of the approaches to emancipation that reflect patterns emergent across the participant body. Emancipation remains ill-defined in relation to specific models but appears as a purpose and rationale for engagement.   Biesta's (2017) identification of a '*modern logic of emancipation'* (p.5) highlights the dangers of theoretical and distanced approaches to identifying critical purpose.   Research within the participant body identifies emancipatory intent fitting no singular interpretation but with each context revealing authentic, diverse and complex reflection.

5.3.3.2   Range of Courses

5.3.3.2.1 Outline of the Courses Created in Cycle Three

The number of courses rose significantly in Cycle Three. The participants in the research were most active and accounted for 22% of the courses created although they numbered only 5% of the total user group. Approximately 11% of non-participant users (those registered on the CP platform but not participant in the research), created courses with around 60% registering as students.

The range of courses did not indicate a political or ideological focus. However, an emphasis on flattening hierarchies and relocating knowledge within

communities suggested shifts in location and in relationships of teacher-student-knowledge.

Category	Courses *CP – Community Project	Course Creator
The Arts	*Art History*	Alex
Education	1. *Learn Urdu for survival* 2. *Family Learning Network* 3. *7 new Courses on philosophy of travel; Maths revision; Study Skills; Brownies & Me; Education in Digital Age; children and international awareness; e-learning.* 4. *Ethics in CP* Courses*	1. Saiqa 2. Banu 3. Users (all anonymous) 4. Jennifer
Mental Health	1. *Feel Good Floristry*	1. Ria
Learning Moodle	1.*Teaching with MOODLE* 2. *Step by Step with Lesson* 3. *Moodle recipes for Educators*	1. Users (Anonymous) 2. Users (Anonymous) 3. Users (Anonymous)
Social Studies	1. *Learning Anarchy Through Practice* 2. *What to expect when coming to study in* [town] 3. *Empathy – The course of choice for CIPD and HR Professionals* 4. *Social Studies 12 - Mangefrida*	1. User (anonymous) 2. Alan 3. Alan 4. User (anonymous)
Environmental	1. *Project: I can change the World*	1. User (anonymous)
Becoming Animal	1. *Introduction to Deleuze and Guattari* 2. *Rhizomatic Learning*	1. User (anonymous) 2. User (anonymous)
An Equal and Fair World	*Diversity in Football*	User (anonymous)
Hearing Voices and Unusual Beliefs	*Hearing Allowed*	Mavis
Poetry and Words of All Kinds	*The Book Club*	Andrea
Hack the Library	*Starting to use Online Learning*	Steve
Sustainable Acre	*Some gardening tips for beginners*	Andrea
Bethany Project, Tanzania	*Volunteering*	Sophia
Tutor Voices	*Critical; Pedagogy*	Users (anonymous)
Philosophy	*No new courses*	
Sport	*No new courses*	
Technology/ IT	1. *Ragged Uni: Create Your own WordPress Site* 2. *Build your own Website* 3. *Design & Development Studio*	1. Alex 2. User (anonymous) 3. User (anonymous) 4. User (anonymous)

	4. *Socially Networked Learning* 5. *Functional Skills ICT Quiz*	5. School user group (anonymous)
Want to Know More about the Community Project?	1. *Online Learning from a CIPD and HRD Perspective* 2. *How to Use CP** 3. *Structuring a CP* Course* 4. *How to Make a CP* course* 5. *Master fine Indian Cooking*	1. Alan 2. Jodie/Alan/Lisa 3. User (anonymous) 4. Jodie/Alan/Lisa/Alex 5. User (anonymous)
Literacy	1. *Crap Detection* 2. *Digital Literacy: Exploring Key Concepts*	1. Saiqa 2. Banu
Numeracy	*No courses*	
Technology Enhanced Learning	*Interactive Essay project*	User (anonymous)

Table 5-8: Sample of Categories, Courses and Creators in Cycle Three.

5.3.3.2.2 Discussion of Course Choices

Categories	Online form responses
familiar to institution	*"it helps expand the course within the mainstream programme, gives an extra dimension to assignment, to independent study"* *"I wanted a Business category, but didn't ask, thought it was not what it was for"* *"something we can do before we get to class, in the summer, prior to interviews even. A welcome and meet us place"* *"it … gives a freedom to create beyond that which is measures, or assessed, but by sharing here it helps those final products to develop free of concerns of monitoring"*
Not related to institution	*"it's a building site and something to develop between people interested in philosophical ideas, just thinking"* *"Ours is a course about nothing but for something, to meet and decide what comes next in our group"* *"a simple machine, a soft machine maybe, a blending of mind and group via a free and friendly space, with learning as something we produce"*
Resistant to term 'course'	*"it's not a course, I keep saying that, it is not a course. But then, what is it? I consider it to be a meeting house but online"* *"I struggled to answer this because a course means something else, this is a forum, nothing else, nobody runs it"* *"it is a community meeting ground outside the ready-made community places that are not really community, like the social services groups. This is only us as a community, not a course but a community"*

Table 5-9: Three categories of course on the Community Project platform

In attempting to establish any diversity over what constituted a 'course', participants were invited to give their own short definition. To reflect the potential relationships between participant definitions and the project, three categories were created (Table 5-9).

First, **familiar to institution** suggested course descriptors easily replicated in existing educational organisations. Second, **not related to institution**, included those descriptions that did not fit easily into the institutional convention. Third, **resistant to term 'course'**, was included as a reflection of several participants that were explicit around their production was not a 'course'.

The comments that support *familiar to institution'* describe pre-study courses, experimentation with assessment and additional, enhancement study-spaces. They are 'familiar' only in that they make explicit links to formal, institutional study but were unlikely to occur within institutions. No courses made direct links to institutional measures such as attendance, entry criteria or assessments. The common characteristic appeared to be the enhancement of learning within institutions, offering alternate non-password-protected resource access, or developing non-mandatory enrichment spaces. The emphasis was around student engagement rather than enhancing or reinforcing the model of teacher-in-control, although all course creators here were professional educators. Alan created courses with a professional remit (Human Resources and Professional Development) but added '*Empathy'* to shift focus from teacher-led to current and past students informing potential future students. Alan described his course showing *"what it's like behind the*

soft-focus videos and empty promises of tourist-style promo crap that they send out on the [institutional] *website*" (Alan, interview).

In the categories '*not related to the institution*' and '*resistant to the term course*' there was resistance to measures aligned with traditional, institutional learning. Incompleteness was presented as a value, not as a deficit. The metaphor of "*building site*" (Jodie) was applied with a suggestion that this was less intimidating and more open to change and participation.   The discussion was around thoughtful and reflective choices in which building sites, meeting houses/places and the enigmatic 'soft machine' were offered as meaningful and purposeful alternative approaches.   Participant contributions indicated a willingness to publish without concerns over 'wholeness' or completion. Courses were published that had little or no content and appeared to lack maintenance or engagement. Often, only through dialogue was it possible to distinguish which were experimenting with form and which were simply published and abandoned.

5.3.3.2.3 Reconsidering 'Outsider' courses

Despite being outside formal definitions of education, courses were not located in hobbyist *and 'something we can all do'* (Laurillard, 2012, p.41) concepts of knowledge (section 3.4.1). The significance of this challenge to Laurillard's contention that informal learning is lesser, not rooted in '*proper knowledge*' (p.40) appeared in two ways.

Firstly, course-creators were often aware of formal approaches to their subjects but chose the non-institutional space to develop alternative approaches. While Laurillard argued for the necessity of professionals that '*clearly have better*

models…of the world' (ibid.), participants' courses defied expert-centric discourse.   Many courses suggested alternate readings of the ways that subjects were conceived. Saiqa created '*Learn Urdu for Survival',* that she considered offered immediate practical benefit for people working in frontline people-service positions.   It offered no certificates, did not align with any frameworks of progression and offered a space for Urdu speakers and non-Urdu speakers to ask questions of each other.   Mavis, Sami and Tony offered similarly complex courses that moved away from fixed or expert-led curricula.

Secondly, any notion that informal courses would be simplistic or revert to transmission models of '*telling'* were unfounded. An experimental approach to design was evident in numerous courses and conceptions of teacher-student and meaning-making were open to transgressed roles. Tough's (1983) description of a '*helter skelter'* and '*zigzag'* (p.143) view of informal learning could describe some free-flowing experiences.   These did not appear free-of-thought or haphazard and several courses reflected experimentation, depth of thought around roles and attempts at meaning-making that escaped narrow or derogatory perception of an institutional other.

The significance of many professional educators using the CP to escape rigidity and 'telling' models imposed within formal spaces comes in establishing individual approaches differing from organisational approaches.   Hamilton (2013) suggested formal educators would benefit from '*going barefoot into the everyday world'* (p. 136) and developing their informal capabilities.   The CP experiences suggested this was happening, but more importantly indicated the potential for this transferring of knowledge working both ways. That outsiders have much to bring to the practices of those within the institutions.

5.3.3.3　Motivation and Rationale for Engagement

Motivation in the first cycle had been dominated by the distinction between representative gatekeepers and a non-institutional group. In Cycle Two the central feature had been general motivational impetus over why participants had joined the project.

The final cycle indicated two distinct themes. First, *Freedom and Authenticity* identifies reasons for engagement indicating an interweaving of minoritarian with majoritarian concerns. Second, *Emerging Patterns of Control and Minimum Standards* reveal a growing concern with standardisation.

The significance of this section comes from recognising the potential influence of institutional convention in shaping those efforts to move away from traditional approaches. Both themes provide evidence of the complex intertwining of formal-informal, institutional-non-institutional and insider-outsider concepts of learning.

5.3.3.3.1　Freedom and Authenticity as Minoritarian/Majoritarian concerns

Across a range of individual and micro-communities the motivation for course-creation evaded commonality and instead highlighted diversity of purpose. Individualised, nuanced and specific in nature, many courses responded to temporal need, specialised circumstance or personal initiative.

The significance of a multiplicity came in recognising the impossibility of establishing a motivational unity or any collective inspiration. Instead, the participant experiences describe minoritarian concerns in areas of teaching approach, audience and purpose. A realisation of nomadology, of '*how*

learning really happens' (Cole, 2014, p.91) characterised courses built to reflect resistance to majoritarian approaches in many cases. For some, an institutional course was clear and foundational. Alan described how,

"…I was interested in making choices outside the [formal institution] *course, beyond management, organisation, awarding bodies, even students sometimes, their expectations can be narrowed by the blurb we send them and their drive for a certificate above anything else"* (Alan, group discussion).

'Even students' indicates standardising institutional practice shaping student expectation. While understandable, conventions that generate specific concepts of what learning *is* which then define what students envisage learning *should be,* create biased expectations before learning has even begun.

Alan's approach was to develop courses that reframed the institutional course focus in an individualised way: *empathy* introduced as a focus that developed purpose beyond awarding bodies' functional emphasis; a student-created description of the campus town that provided a closer-to-reality depiction than marketing and persuasive rhetoric. It was not creativity or innovation in course materials that Alan sought, but a location that could escape narrowed expectations.

In other examples the interplay between majoritarian and minoritarian indicated a revision of institutional course focus (majoritarian) to meet nuanced perspectives (minoritarian). Courses in *Literacy* (Steve, Saiqa, Banu) and *Technology* (Steve, Derek, Alex) altered intended audiences to include parents, non-institutional users, unspecified users and approaches to learning to include student perspectives, community dialogue, and idiosyncratic teaching approaches. Institutional courses provided a basis but not the motivation for course-creation, acting as a catalyst but one requiring reformation for non-

traditional audiences. The emphasis appeared to be developing a minoritarian subtext woven around institutionally-based courses rather than introducing marginalised subject matter.

These outsider spaces ran parallel to the majoritarian. Gregoriou's (2004) '*minor philosophy of education*' (p.244) emerges from a multiplicity that relates to, but differs from, institutional interests. Other courses created small, nuanced groups that had no clear reflection of an institutional catalyst. Courses based in libraries but created and run by library users, sustainable growing and wellbeing courses highlighted participants developing learning within specific communities. The emphasis was often on sharing and seeking communal approaches to learning. The motivation suggested a recognition of specific micro-concerns inappropriate for mass response either through distinctive subject matter or requiring tailored responses for specific communities. Sophia described how her volunteer course was "*only maybe 6 people a year, but we know nobody else would do this, so this is valuable …value for us in shaping what they say they* [volunteers] *need most*" (Sophia, interview). In Sophia's case, the content, the people and the processes define a learning space that could not occur in any institutional structure and would have no expert on which to rely. It is not the small-scale that makes these course minoritarian. This comes from a willingness to see knowledge as fluid and emerging in multiple spaces, a '*continuously differentiating idea*' (Drummond & Themessl-Huber, 2007, p.444) that comes *from* people and is not imposed *on* them.

5.3.3.3.2 Emerging Patterns of Control and Minimum Standards

It was significant that as the Project developed several participants questioned what constituted a course and what minimum expectations might be introduced. The developing concern with collective standards appeared to conflict with experimental approaches that sought freedom from external criteria. This differed from content as the stimuli, and instead reflected purposes split around *how* learning on the platform took place, rather than *what* it included.

The motivational impetus shifted from individual courses towards the inclusion of platform-wide interest. This division reflected tension between those continuing with inward-facing purpose and others seeking a collective convention over how course creators should behave.

For some it was to "*have more responsibility, a chance to create, for real*" (Banu, group discussion). Sami and Mavis found responsibility as a key attribute in engaging marginal and unheard groups, avoiding exclusionary practices of being spoken about, but not to. Course creation was motivated by a willingness to engage with others beyond theoretical, academic guidelines.

Elsewhere, Bernard's view was that "*responsibility …is the difference between the amateur and the professional*" (Bernard, group interview).

This was a view echoed by others. Adewale reflected that "*going on a course that somebody sets up yet never attends or develops and respond …they are not course makers they are time wasters*" (Adewale, group interview). Taz suggested a similar concern, "*they had an idea, ooh, let's make a course, that'll be good, but then never bother doing anything afterwards, nothing happens on*

half of them… just rubbish" (Taz, social media post).   Andrea argued other course creators negatively affected her courses, that,

"…when you look at others, just a title and rows of empty topic boxes! What if people go there first, then see mine and think, no, that'll be crap as well" (Andrea, social media post).

The irritations reflected expectations seemingly based on a familiar institutional common-sense. Bernard argued that "*some of you might want it to be free and experimental but eventually it all takes place online …comparisons will be made"* (Bernard, group discussion). The comparison seemed to be with familiar institutional educational formats. Jodie's earlier justification for a *'building site'* approach (Jodie, section 5.3.3.2.2) came from the platform allowing emergent and alternate approaches. However, some participant discussion began to contradict such interest in freedom of course design. Instead, ease of access and the free-of-cost platform were questioned as leading to poorly created and incomplete courses.

This suggested a shift from concerns over autonomy toward ones of control and imposed levels of responsibility. Hannah suggested that,

"we should have something, if it was paid for, that would do it, I know, you don't want that, but then perhaps a check-up every week and if courses have nothing on we email them and say sort it, or we delete it" (Hannah, group discussion).

While a move towards a baseline of what constituted a course was apparent, this differed from calls for the expertise of a professional educator (Bayne & Ross, 2014; Laurillard, 2012). However, it did appear to relate professionalism with responsibility and make *'building site'* approaches less likely to occur without resistance.

5.3.3.4   Technology, Expertise, Accessibility

A key characteristic of the Community Project was the intention to explore uses of technology outside the structures, resources and specialisms of institutional education. Earlier cycles of the research revealed alienation and a developing awareness of a complex techno-cultural ecology.   Digital skills emerged as only a small component of the expertise and awareness that is necessary to develop technology enhanced learning for different people and communities.

An enduring feature of the Project was the lack of technological expertise in many participants. Rather than see this as deficit, the range of skills aided an exploration into how technology operates as an educational tool in spaces away from the institutional centre.   In this section, the themes reflect a technology as personal challenge, a useful tool for networking and a complex means of creating space to teach and learn. Additional discussion of technology directly applied to pedagogy occurs in the next section (section 5.3.3.5) and builds on some of the themes here. This third cycle frames technology use across three themes:

1. Technology in relation to accessibility – skills, environments and availability
2. Technology as amplifier – how existing power imbalance shapes uses of technology
3. Technology as pedagogical choice

5.3.3.4.1 Technology in Relation to Accessibility – Skills, Environments and Availability

Initially, technology appeared to operate as catalyst and enabler. Participants frequently discussed technological possibilities and regular online and group meetings discussed skills, software and devices.   However, individual

interviews related more to problem-solving and finding technology to fit multiple purposes. What I had initially perceived as technology-focused discussion became a content-focus often struggling to bridge diverse virtual-real world gaps.

The participants' responses regularly challenged the tendency to consider technology as beneficial, with problems only arising because of deficits in skill, access or attitude. Participants remained interested in technology and saw many possibilities. They also expressed awareness that integrating technology to enhance could also lead them away from the fundamental purposes of the learning intended.   Andrea described how on her sustainability courses,

"the course with technology as a concept was a struggle, it really helped spur me on…thinking I could reach a wider world, but it was hard to make real, it was all about getting into the soil, getting kids away from the house and into the dirt, putting their hands in, smelling it, being covered in it, knowing what it did, that it had worms and woodlice. Trying to sanitise that was hard with techy things … I didn't know how to begin" (Andrea, interview).

There was distinction between the learning experiences, getting *"into the dirt"* and the value of technology in wet and dirty conditions. Technology highlighted the limits of online learning and reflected much technology as a distancing mechanism from the value of lived experiences, of the dirt and soil of learning.

This was not the same as technology as barrier, but a more reflective approach that highlighted a tension when gauging the ends and the means of the educational purpose (Kanuka, 2008, p.111). Andrea's example indicated that seeking of networks was enticing, but the location of this, in virtual space, could contradict the real point of the learning being distributed.   Although other courses were not literally separated from the soil, a split between individual purpose and the appropriateness of technology was evident.

These are not unique to the Project participants, but they did reveal a tendency toward narrowed technical solutions to diverse real-world needs. For example, forums were applied to professional courses to share materials, in the schizophrenia group to introduce each other for the first time and the sustainability group to respond to questions and give advice. Despite the differences and the need for a diverse set of environmental enticements (warm, welcoming, closed and secure, friendly, business-like) the forum was a standardised format. It became clear that discussing technology had always to be considered in relation to content and purpose. While embracing technology offered multiple benefits, there were frequent examples of it altering intended purpose and requiring a depth of reflection that went beyond simplistic notions of technology as naturally beneficial or enabling. It seemed clear that concepts of digital literacy were most-often rooted in institutional definitions and applications which were not easily transferred to other models of learning. It was not teaching how to use technology, but reflecting on its value and limitations, that was most necessary and hardest to find.

5.3.3.4.2 Technology as Amplifier

Developing from Andrea's experiences, the direction of the research led to reflection over Toyama's (2011) contention of technology as *'amplifier'* (p.75) that acts, '*as magnifier of existing institutional forces'* (ibid.).

Two aspects were significant here. First, that of participants seeking to evade institutional approaches that they saw as restrictive. Second, experiences echoing Andrea's in which technology solutions were difficult unless they fitted with an institutional image of what learning was. Alan and Tony described

finding spaces beyond the marketing of their college courses that they felt masked reality. Their courses were attempts to reach beyond the official face of their professional identity and emphasise human experiences from current and past students. This approach may reflect Toyama's concern that fixing '*broken or missing institutional elements*' (2011, p. 75) was a less successful use of technology. It seemed Alan and Tony's approaches were based on redressing their professional issues. While they considered them useful, the ultimate result was users having to readapt to the core institutional approaches once enrolled.

Descriptions of success came mostly from educators with an institutional application, such as Jodie's innovation with head cameras that began outside, but was later used inside, her professional programme. In other cases, it was the ease of replication that led to technology-solutions. Learning that was easily transferred on Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) would be chosen despite it being not necessarily well-suited to the course users (Andrea, Delphi).

The concern with the amplification of existing inequalities was most significant in those with groups furthest from an institutional centre. Mavis and Sami described struggles with technology and finding ways it might fit with groups unfamiliar with creating online learning. Mavis's group began online and soon became a purely face-to-face community; Sami's attempts at course creation had to contend with infrequent access to technology alongside fluctuating interest and indiscriminate attendance at the shelter. Mavis described how technology on the CP platform, "*was never really what we needed. It got me thinking…what we really needed was each other, a building and somewhere to share, meet up, talk*" (Mavis, group discussion).

Alex provided a notable exception, making positive use of technology while remaining entirely outside institutions. Alex's CP courses included regular contributions to forums and discussion spaces that supported public lectures in real-world public spaces. Alex had self-taught the technology used on his project and he described a wide demographic of accessing users, but considered that many had significant exposure to technology. The third spaces (libraries, public houses and cafés) allowed a dissemination of knowledge, while the online space tended to be where speakers were recruited and had lectures advertised. The value of technology appeared to come in matching online users with real-world, often non- proficient users of technology (Alex, interview).

A significant finding was that while most participants were outside the institutions, the most attended courses came from the smaller institutionally-based (WAE) participant group. This might suggest support for those advocating the superiority of the institutional, professional educator (Laurillard, 2012; Bayne & Ross, 2014). However, the research echoed Eubanks' (2011) findings, that technology was a useful tool but that access to it had little impact on rectifying social injustice. Professional educators would continue to dominate so long as digital literacy and technology enhanced learning remained focussed on institutional models. They also benefited from being part of existing networks of active students and educators. Participants starting courses from scratch were initially faced with the problem of creating networks or identifying ways to attract existing communities.

5.3.3.4.3 Technology as Pedagogical Choice

Despite a preponderance of familiar institutional practices there was evidence of alternative approaches. This often differed not in *what* technology was applied but in *how* it was applied. Technology choices were often similar regardless of the participant rationale, course area or educator type. Where difference was most notable came in whether they chose additional spaces, such as social media or blogs, and in those cases where no technology was selected. Parchoma's (2011) call for a *'critical philosophy of technology' (*p.74) related to the questioning of '*which philosophies of teaching …are underserved by common technological options'* (p.74). Findings from this non-institutional space suggested that while technology could be considered a means of finding free and autonomous opportunities of learning, the choices of technology hardly differed between educational philosophies. The functionality of Moodle had broadened the options originally available on the Project. However, the Project participants' choices were limited by whatever the platform allowed. Despite efforts to distance the platform from institutions, there was still a password-protected login that added time and affected access and reflected institutional closed spaces. In several cases, social media that began as attempts at developing networks to promote courses had replaced the need for the CP platform at all. Andrea described how she would "*still use it* [the CP platform]*, but not so much now, because it is easier on Facebook … links sent, notification sent, invites sent, I won't let the* [CP course] *disappear, but it's only one part of the community"* (Andrea, interview).

Alternatively, Sami had avoided social media as it threatened some of her intended users with exposure, of "*lives that might have gone wrong"* (Sami,

interview). In this approach, the platform being closed meant that sharing was a safer option and offered potential relationships based on a shared understanding of circumstance.   Sami described how she hoped to,

"just say to the people at the [charity]*, just make one, add a video, write something and stick it up there …some brilliant stuff comes that way, just stories but all kinds, brilliant stories"* (Sami, NGT).

For Sami, the videos were an attempt to reach out beyond a closed group that met face-to-face but that still afforded some sense of control over who viewed and commented. This had proved problematic with access to cameras and opportunities to upload difficult to arrange. The overarching response was one of technology access being shaped by social forces beyond the project. Sami described how it was,

"not easy to get the wifi or the cameras …but not having a bathroom, or a bed, that is maybe more pressing than a camera, really" (Sami, interview).

Technology choices reflected a space in which participants rarely reflected on specific tools or approaches being significant.   Tools appeared to mirror traditional teacher-learner exchanges (forums for seminars; chat-rooms for discussion; documents/slide share for lectures; video for presentation/lecture). Technology offered little that distinguished courses based on their means or ends, or alternative ideologies. Without supporting discussion, courses tended to look similar in terms of technology and it was content, ethos and purpose that offered distinction.

5.3.3.5   Teaching and Learning

In the previous cycle, teaching and learning revealed multiple approaches to roles of teacher and a concern that espoused theories were not necessarily

theories-in-use. Amidst flattened hierarchies and distributed knowledge, participant discussion highlighted that shifting responsibility was not always positive and often led to disconnected students and seemingly neglected courses. This final cycle of the research produced significantly more data around teaching-learning than the previous two periods. Perhaps because of the prolonged course development or an increased familiarity and confidence with the dialogic process, this cycle added depth to multiple approaches to teaching/learning/knowledge. A manifestation of this comes in the opening section, *campfires of creativity*. This is significant in highlighting the participants' increasing ownership of the research foci as they generated sub-questions of their own. From these *campfire* discussions, the section *Pedagogical Choices* explores how teaching and learning occurred as lived practices. This then leads to *The Place of Theory: three philosophies of practice* that links to the theoretical framework. Here, the data helps establish how participant responses align, or contrast, with rhizomatic, popular education and conventional approaches.

5.3.3.5.1 Campfires of Creativity

The responses to the question around teaching and learning provided a critical space in the thesis. It was here that concepts of pedagogy, technology and theory converged and where participants created self-directed responses to their experiences. The campfire metaphor was first introduced by Chloe as we began this stage of the discussion. She described how we might,

"…begin round a campfire, real or metaphorical, but a place where you ask people why, why do you want to be an educator ...not as subject, not what do you want to teach, but why do YOU want to be an educator, campfires of

creativity not just where we only agree to agree" (Chloe, online post, emphasis in original),

The emphasis on '*why'* rather than '*what'* shifted the discussion toward a criticality of process as well as content. In a later group discussion, the participants came to some consensus that,

"*it is important that we consider all points of view and do not fall into a default position of those teaching for a job being immediately the most important people in discussing teaching …Let's say we have some questions to begin with:*

What is this for?

What do you want to change/improve/develop?

Who is going to do it and why are they all involved?

Who does what in this course or community?"

(NGT statement, Alex, Jodie, Alexandra, Lisa, Sami, Bernard, Adewale, Lisa, Alan).

These questions helped locate the discussion around *why* pedagogical choices were made, and consider the potential for individual action amongst the collective. Other options were available, including analysing course detail and/or pedagogical discussion from participants. However, the central focus takes from the participants' emphasis on 'why'. The *campfire of creativity* called for voices beyond the professionals and the structure here attempts to reflect that.

5.3.3.5.2 Pedagogical Choice

The uses of technology indicated little difference between CP use and institutional use (section 5.3.3.4.3). This did not preclude alternative approaches to teacher roles, and these did appear, although often proving contentious. Despite some concerns over uncompleted courses, some participants maintained that an emphasis on experimentation was justified.

Jodie described how she had,

"re-evaluated what this is for …I mean, do I need students, really? It is open to anyone …It is, what I think of as selfish sharing, I give this out, it is for anyone, but it is… mainly for me I suppose" (Jodie, NGT).

Jodie's concept of '*selfish sharing'* indicated that course creation was not based around a perceived student need. Instead, it began with a concept personal to the course creator, that made this available publically, but without any compulsion of others to agree, or participate.   Alan asked Jodie if this made it more of a hobby, if nobody had to engage with the ideas, if there "*was no intended outcome" (*Alan, NGT)*. Jodie responded that,

"*no, it's learning, learning for me with others, real learning that recognises that this, it can't be outcome learning, because who knows what they will be if we seek process not product? There is no right way, I need to find a way and doing this in public spaces is open to others to be part of that process, we learn together, teach together"* (Jodie, NGT).

Such course-creator-at-the-centre scenarios might be considered micro-sized versions of the centripetal MOOCs. Both generated course direction in isolation, and designed in opportunities for students to create their own responses to this initial topic (Knox, 2014). What distinguished these CP courses from the institutional MOOC came in the proximity of participants with users.   There was no hierarchical status attributed to the initial CP course, no suggestion that the course creator was the pinnacle. While MOOC users respond to the institutional location and design by asking *'where are the professors?'* (Knox, 2014, p.46) the CP course begins with no claims for expertise.   The Dislocation of an expert-teacher on the CP provide a distinct difference to the institutional MOOC approach, although resulted in a similar absence of teachers for users. The difference came in the intention of no-expert but this required a user-student ready to accept this approach.

Jodie's *selfish sharing* insisted on resisting external pressures to transgress traditional relationships between student-teacher. The *what* and the *who* of the course were clear; it appeared that the distance these had from common-sense concepts of a course were more challenging for other participants, and Jodie's students, to accept. Discussion around incomplete and unpublished courses continued from cycle two and participants whose courses did not meet the expectations of others found pressure to justify these in group discussions. In cases where an identified group existed, such as Mavis's schizophrenia group, Alan's HR courses or Adewale's asylum seeker classes, this was not an issue; an established relationship between users and creators met expected models of interaction. It was clear that the more experimental a course, the further away from convention, the more likely it was to attract attention and raise questions from other participants.

Many courses echoed Jodie's abstracting of roles and purpose and began with multiple points of view. While courses had recognised foci in areas such as mental health, literacy education or technology, these often came from idiosyncratic perspectives. It was not the case that expertise did not exist, but that the expertise at the heart of courses was localised, specific to a context and not necessarily recognised in terms of status or profession. It was significant that creating such alternative practice had to not only establish acceptance for potential course users, but also convince other participants that this was valid and purposeful. This additional layer required innovators to have the confidence and willingness to face explicit challenges to their courses. The subsequent impact on community co-design was the requirement for community decisions to potentially shape consensus. Alex described the

process as deciding what '*learning matters to us, not anyone else, but this community …to come together and agree, or perhaps not agree and say so*' (Alex, group discussion).   This was not universally accepted and Jodie considered that micro-communities could easily replicate standardisation, that consensus could lead to, *"grand visions …false and plastic creation, I want to be authentic and teach and learn in spaces that are mine'* (Jodie, interview).

Both approaches suggest learning as a means of establishing individualised ways of seeing the world that has little if anything to do with the topic or subject area that the academy may follow. It appeared that while some saw consensus as emancipating and supportive, others sought a freedom based on individuality.   Kop's (2011, p.19) assertion that fundamental change in education would come from the free associations made possible by the web was challenged here.   Participant experiences suggested that a residual, institutional view of what learning looked like remained familiar and acted as a common-sense logic.

5.3.3.5.3 *What Do You Want to Change, Improve, Develop?*

This section uses the participants' question to focus on how knowledge was perceived. Gramsci's (1972) '*trashy baubles'* and Bourdieu's (1984) '*unstrung pearls'* consider knowledge outside the academy commonly viewed as diminished and impoverished. Participant responses suggest that beyond the academy the concept of knowledge can be self-referential and does not necessarily seek alignment with, or measure itself against, any institutional benchmarks.

As with Cole's (2014) interpretation of nomadology (section 3.4.4) diversity did not appear as *'random and chaotic'* but instead offered some clarity over '*how learning actually happens'* (p.91). Cole suggests this learning '*for real'* should inform policy (ibid.) and participant concerns with the what, why and how of their courses highlighted that real-world impact was the most common catalyst. This was true of social-issue based courses, but also of art and philosophy courses that were linked to changing practices excluding many people from engaging with these topics. The evidence from the research project argues for viewing the internet as a means of accessing information and increasing possibilities for micro, atomised and minoritarian voices to be heard. Although this is not a coherent or unified resistance, it reflects '*how learning actually happens'.* The research suggests that seeking unity might come not from developing gold standard or good practice examples of pedagogy or teaching technologies, but in establishing purpose as the driver for whatever learning took place. This appears to be in direct contrast with institutional policies based on accreditation and meeting economic targets.

5.3.3.5.4 The Place of Theory: Three Philosophies of Practice

As a participatory researcher, I was interested in the extent to which theory meant anything in lived learning experiences. Earlier discussion (section **Error! Reference source not found.**) considered the extent to which theory might act as obfuscation rather than illumination. Popular education was preferred to Critical Theory because it sought concrete, real-world engagement rather than seeking merely to build a convincing theoretical argument.

It was clear that a unified or explicit political intent was not present in participants' motivations or practices. That was not necessarily apolitical, perhaps reflective of Giroux's (2017) interpretation that popular education was not about *'techniques and methods'* and does not involve *'political coercion'* (p.xii). Instead, politicised intent came through enabling *'students to explore for themselves …what it means to be engaged citizens'* (ibid.).

The introduction of rhizomatic principles was also intended to realise resistance to a common-sense *'ideology of the establishment'* (Sharpe, 1974, p.55). This risked becoming seen, *'only as a metaphor'* (Gregoriou, 2004, p.240) for learning practices that decentre and challenge hierarchies. The possibility that Deleuzo-Guattarian virtual ontology, *'emancipates thinking from common sense'* (Lovat & Semetsky, 2009, p.239) also insists on individual perspectives having validity, and able to challenge amidst grand theoretical narratives.

Despite the risks of being dominated or distracted by theory, introducing theoretical approaches allowed discussion to take place that helped inform participant-as-researcher and researcher-as-participant interaction. This section outlines how theories were considered and interpreted. The immediacy of participants to the research, and the value of PAR as methodology, allows theory to become part of the lived experience. This form of collective analysis reflects on how theory works for real, rather than being applied afterwards, and at a distance.

5.3.3.5.5 Participant Approaches to Theory

In this section, I used explicit references to institutional, popular education and rhizomatic ideas to spark discussion. These were introduced through the

sharing of literature, discussion between participants, a presentation at Alex's free education event and participants' independent reading around the subjects. Two images (Figures 5-6 and 5-7) were produced following group discussion to illustrate responses to theory. As in previous cycles, problem-solving approaches followed a Freirean popular education lead and considered problems from real-world community and micro-community issues, not abstracted, fabricated problems used as pedagogical games. The two tree-like images (5-6) highlighted an interpretation of the arborescent nature of institutional and popular education. The images represent a perhaps well-defined notion of arborescent modelling of hierarchical top-down structures, the merger of this same model, of a tree of knowledge, is modified in a popular education approach. The core, the trunk, replaces curriculum with social justice. The foundation of the popular education tree is rooted in socialist ideology in comparison to an establishment/institutional ideology. Socialist was a term used positively by Jodie, Alex and Sami, but with more negative connotations by Alan, Bernard and Chloe.
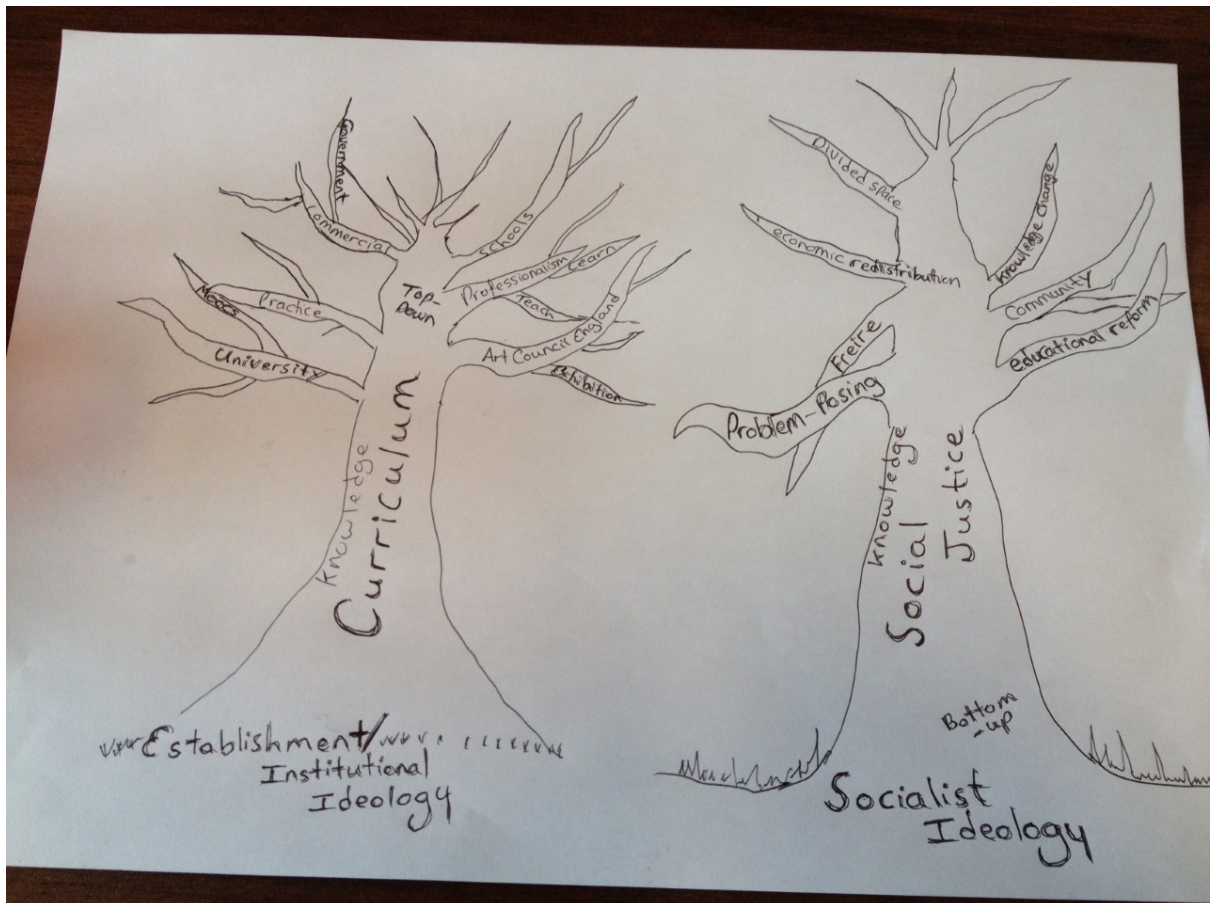
Figure 5-6: Drawn picture showing NGT distinction between institution and socialist ideologies.

Although both arborescent in form, the branches offer clear distinction. A significant difference came in the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' descriptors that came from discussion around the place of ownership and control in each 'tree'. Some specific examples, such as Alexandra's inclusion of Art Council England, gave real-world depiction of how the competing ideologies were manifest in participants' lives. Neither of the models was considered exclusively positive or negative in application and suggested participants were likely to discuss theory without recourse to any personal, ideological bias.

Bernard added *professionalism* and *practice* to the institutional 'tree' and considered these as positive benefits. Others supported this inclusion, but Alan considered that 'professionalism' could also be misconstrued and could depict

"a cynical, cold approach, teaching as a job …customers rather than students"

(Alan, group interview).   Most participants agreed with the idea that teaching

involved more as a practice than might be captured by professionalism as a

term. '*Community'* and '*educational reform'* were added as counterweights on

the social justice image.   Although both could apply to an institutional

community, the emphasis remained on both being more closely aligned with

social justice.   The extent to which praxis was realised as a blending of practice

and theory proved less clear and purpose was often dislocated from

subsequent practice.   It was clear that purpose and practice were often

combined, but this seldom linked to wider issues of social justice beyond the

immediate concerns of the participants. For example, Sami and Mavis both

prioritised user-engagement in their course design, but felt this was because it

felt right, rather than because it was a conscious design effort based on merging

theory with practice.   In the third model (section 5.3.1) a representation of the

rhizome depicts a shift away from structure as representative of ethos.

Although discussion began with ethos, how the rhizome related to

emancipation, this too became embroiled in common sense notions around

stability, maintenance and levels of responsibility.
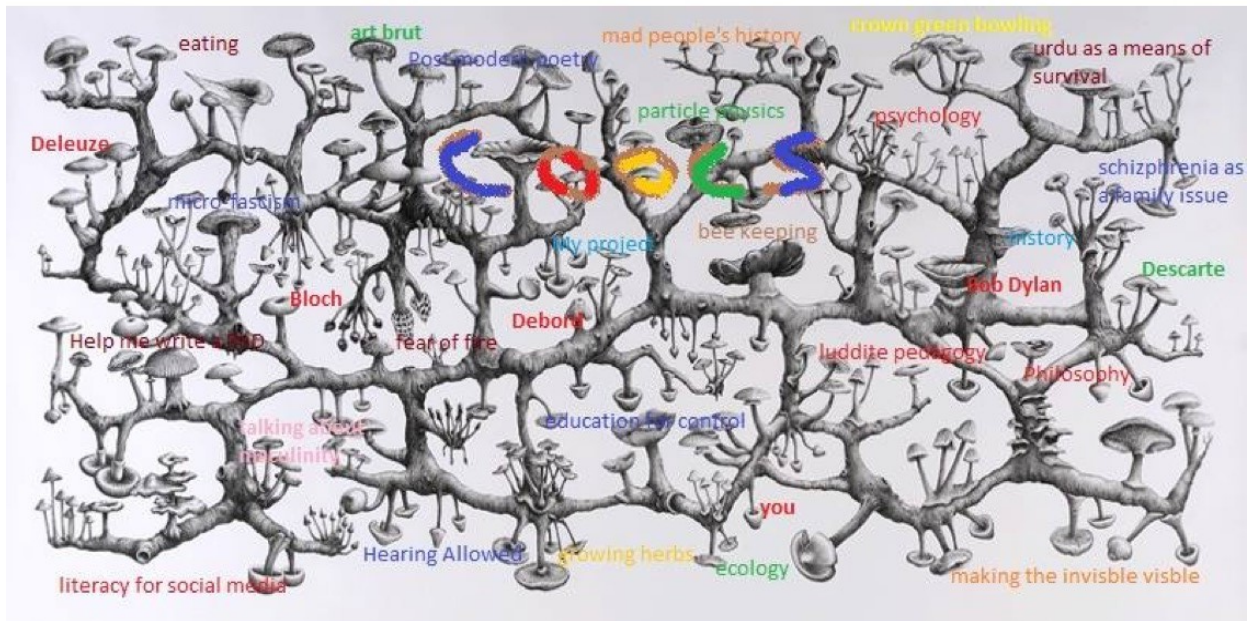
Figure 5-7: Image created by participants and shared on Social media to illustrate rhizomatic interpretation of the Community Project.

A rhizomatic position that rejected institutional common sense and any ideological concepts of what social justice should be, proved controversial. It was the first time I had discussed the rhizome with people not already familiar with educational theory or academic application of the concepts. As a complex set of principles, I had used some online materials to describe the approach (Cormier, 2008), and included some quotes used in my own research.

The intention was to offer an outline that would allow participants to see the differences to institutional, or popular education approaches. This appeared to work in that we created an image collectively, and applied principles to participants own courses. Chloe described a sense of being *"lost in possibility"* as the rhizomatic, taken as a model, would mean that,

"every act, every thought, every idea links to all of us, none of us, some of us, nothing could be prescribed, nothing anticipated and everything just floating and being adopted when it suits" (Chloe, social media post).

Chloe considered this would make her course impossible and that the idea of rhizomatic education was too abstract to be applied as a tangible model. While rhizomatic approaches might provide freedom and autonomy, shifting from a residual common sense proved difficult to attain, even at the level of dialogic reflection. Issues arose around who could make decisions in a truly non-hierarchical approach. Alexandra had created the image, but thought she was "*making it up as I went along, it was liberating but it was also just random, just what felt right*" (Alexandra, group discussion). It was a randomness that others found in applying rhizomatic thinking. The responses contended that in attempts to abandon from rigid conformity, learning might become "*shapeless*" (Alexandra, ibid.) and *"anything to anyone"* (Chloe, group discussion).

Others found it was a means of creating new approaches. Jodie suggested it as *"more like the free approaches we need …look to ourselves and not to how others do it"* (Jodie, group Interview). Alan's courses were influenced by his institutional role though he also saw his individual interest as one shaped by a relationship with other course creators that promoted more fluid approaches. Alan commented that,

"*I see students coming to this* [CP course] *for knowledge, not sure how much of rhizome thinking is in that, I post materials, they read them"* (Alan, NGT). Alternatively, Sami had no institutional role and considered the rhizomatic was beneficial in allowing her '*permission'* (Sami, interview) to open her course to contributions from anyone. It was discussion around free learning that had encouraged Sami to take part initially, with the theoretical concept of free education providing the catalyst for open forum, anyone contributions.

While an attraction to the rhizomatic was common to many participants, a sense of being "*lost in possibility*" proved challenging for others. Returning to Cole's (2014) assertion that beyond potential for chaos, the rhizomatic was the reality of, '*how learning actually happens*' (ibid.) it was unclear as to the extent this might include any theoretical awareness by those involved. The exercises had proven that participants were willing to consider theoretical alternatives, but also highlighted that often the clearest thing to follow are established models. It seemed that teacher – student – knowledge were frequently challenged in terms of any common sense, institutional models. However, their dominance comes from being visible and reflected in most materials and practices available online. Theoretical alternatives proved elusive and difficult to visualise beyond abstracted images and hypothetical discourse.

It was not surprising therefore that several participants considered the need for standardised course standards and guidelines for course-creators. This call came from both institutional and non-institutionally-based participants. It appeared that a freedom from standardised approaches might come most easily from those not already practiced in more institutional models of learning. Without recourse to familiar standards it was easier to imagine alternative roles and responsibilities. Jodie, although institutionally-based, related most to rhizomatic approaches but did so with a conscious decision to resist guidelines she felt were restrictive. It was significant that theory had prompted more discussion than pedagogy as the resultant actions seemed to avoid the multiple purposes and contexts and often seek a standard format. It may be that theory allowed for communal discussion, a seeking of general patterns that might bridge the gaps between diverse and unrelated topics.

One summary statement from the NGT meeting helps focus the findings of this final cycle. The participants wrote that,

"Theory should create spaces for experimentation but not signposts for what should be created. There should be open access to theory and ways of learning" (NGT summary points).

Even where participants expressed desire for clearer standards, the ability to make choices freed from institutional control remained crucial. The complexity emergent in this question came in questioning how much we can see how our own common-sense values are rooted in grand narratives so fully absorbed to be inseparable from our own sense of ethos and purpose. Introducing theory in this way was able to prompt discussion but also highlighted that 'how learning actually happens' is 'felt' and occurs intuitively rather than something theorised and designed based on distant concepts.

5.3.3.6   Participant Experience

This third cycle highlights three key features of participant experience:

1. redefining community and resisting common-sense definitions

2. resistance to denigrated concepts of community knowledge

3. vulnerability

5.3.3.6.1 Redefining   Community   and   resisting   Common-sense   Definitions

In this final cycle, the reflection was often around the ways in which the Project ethos aligned with, or contradicted, existing views. Alex described how concepts of community were something he felt he had to regularly challenge. He described that,

"we …get the ridiculous concept of people saying, 'what community is it your working with? Drug users? Unemployed? Below average wage earners? I think they really believe that people all live together in classified aspects of being – that the communities they define in their little offices actually exist" (Alex, interview).

Alex's description was familiar to other participants who described negative experiences of being categorised. Collectively, these experiences seemed often a rejection of knowledge from one space being more intelligent, deeper or more valuable than knowledge from other spaces. This was more apparent as participants described being the subject of categorisation which resulted in an experiential, rather than purely cognitive, response. The significance for the research is that experience offered individualised concepts of learning. It was through experience that participants shaped their actions and subsequently influenced those of other participants. The resistance to categorisation came through experience rather than theory or pedagogy. While each of these offers tools for reflection, it was experience that bound these most strongly to participant purpose.

5.3.3.6.2 Participant Challenges to 'Trashy Baubles' and 'Unstrung Pearls'

A crucial recognition of the Project was the sense of ownership and validity of knowledge that existed, regardless of how localised or small-scale this was. Gramsci's (1972) *'trashy baubles'* (p.636) and Bourdieu's (1984) *'collection of unstrung pearls'* (p.328) provide powerful metaphors of a dismissive hierarchical centre ground. It is easy to fall into the trap of ignoring that autodidacts and outsider knowledge holders do not necessarily see their expertise as diminished or lesser. Taz's work with community involved women largely denied access to formal education. Taz described how,

"what we do is for us and by us, and even when we don't know what will happen we know we will find the way out, the way that works for us, it's not outside or low down or anything like that, it is us doing it for us" (ibid.).

Experience of learning and teaching was based on the interaction between people. While technology had broadened the potential of small learning communities to collaborate with other CP participants, this did not indicate perceived positions of weakness.

Both Bourdieu's depiction of the autodidact and Gramsci's '*man-of-the people'* (1972, p.650) suggests that the institution actively denigrates knowledge beyond the academy. Gramsci's man-of-the-people is trapped by having '*no theoretical consciousness of his practical activity'* (p.640). In both cases, while the general texts might be read as supporting the development of distributed knowledge, both Bourdieu and Gramsci emphasise the starting point being one overshadowed by an institutional dominance. The significance of participant experiences was their questioning of theoretical approaches that predicated their knowledge as marginal and their experiences as lesser. Prior negative learning experiences had led to many seeking additional, non-institutional space based on an awareness of their own value, regardless of this often not fitting with established norms. This is different to feeling that wherever they create, they are somehow compared to institutional conventions. For those learning communities, the knowledge was valuable and significant *within* that community. For institutional educators, one knowledge form was not considered superior to the other. Jodie reflected that,

"*we have to operate where we can, where space exists, not just slink off and say no it's not perfect, it isn't perfect no, obviously, but the two things, the course and the* [CP] *work differently, free in one and closed more in the uni, but both give something"* (Jodie, interview).

As with Biesta's (2017) contention around a *'modern logic of emancipation'* (p.5) applying abstract theory onto lived lives can be alienating if beginning with presumptions of ignorance. Such an insistance of ignorance in one group and wisdom in another can only be oppressive, regardless of any emanciptory intent. Experiences were the spaces that levelled hierarcies and reduced theoretical models to hypothetical supposition. My own interest in popular education was not shared by all participants, with most participants alining with no theory of learning. Jennifer considered much value lay in institutional practice, but that in either institutional or community practices evidence must come, *"through behaviours not beliefs"* (Jennifer, interview). For Jennifer, many institutions were often already radical and autonomous compared to web-based organisations that claimed autonomy while based in commercial and corporate networks. This meant that,

"if you look at what people create, not what they say they create and their often-rose-tinted views of their actions, you can see how many are based in truly radical action and how many are just a reification of individualism" (Jennifer, interview).

The impetus, Jennifer argued, had to be, *"real world not just virtual"* (ibid.). The core concern in how technology operates as a learning environment has to include experiences of the people that use it as a fundamental start to research, rather than an untidy outcome to be managed.

5.3.3.6.3 Vulnerability

The inclusion of vulnerability as a thread throughout the findings had been unanticipated. It proved significant as a realisation of humanisation by highlighting that lived experiences were not easily slotted into grand narratives or theoretical perspectives.

A visceral and emotional component of taking part in the project enhanced the dialogue. That is, how the Project was experienced did not rely on theoretical awareness to generate its value. It was through experiential exposure that a concern with vulnerability moved from discussion about others and became focussed on *being* vulnerable, within the participants and within myself.   In earlier cycles, vulnerability was something assigned to others and defined the distinction between representation and participation. In this final cycle, being vulnerable characterised a project based on people as participatory and exposed to risk. It seemed a dramatic shift, from identifying others as being removed yet able to assign risk, to becoming involved and being able to experience vulnerability. The concern with vulnerability and experiences of it moved from being,

"…treated as incapable …by people who you know are just filling forms in" (Mavis, group discussion) and toward approaches that were about, "*being open, say first off, "who are you?" Let people say who they are, be interested, start there"* (Sami, group interview).

Vulnerability as a theme indicates that the challenges of technology enhanced learning are rarely around simplistic notions of access and skills. A move towards Freirean humanisation may be considered political, but in lived experiential space, it appears as natural, innate and obvious.   Where participants created their purpose for learning they were empowered, able to make critical reflections and consider the extent of their own vulnerability.

5.3.4 Summary of Cycle Three

The final research cycle revealed the Project as an example of the depth and complexity involved when beginning to explore learning beyond the institutions. Theory often suggests this as a hidden space, frequently marginalised and

lacking cohesion and relevance because of this. The evidence from the CP suggests this may be due to most research being based on dialogue between institutional researchers that too infrequently engage directly with educators, course-creators and learners beyond the campus walls.

Here, experiences reveal that approaches to learning are seldom neat or slot satisfactorily into compartments of theory, action or process. This is equally true of those institutional spaces that seek to achieve a partitioning, system-design approach to learning and teaching. The variables involved in the exploration of what constitutes a learning space, or a course-creator's motivation, revealed myriad, competing ideologies and purposes. The means and ends of education appeared as individualised and micro-sized responses to the world as it is experienced. It includes aspirational thinking, functional and practical concerns, social and organisational reflection and personal interrogation around identity and motivation. As the research concludes and the conclusion begins, the reflection on lessons learned seems most telling; that the depth of this inquiry should be applied to all educators and not just those outside the institutions.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the research and provide a concluding discussion around the three cycles of the research.

This final section begins with a restating of the *initial focus of the research* before moving onto a *review of the methodology*. Both sections provide a platform for the discussion of the *contribution made by the research*. A *framework for action* (Trowler, 2012) section returns to the initial research questions to consider the theoretical and conceptual implications raised by the research. *Final Comments* reflect on how the original concerns might now be understood following the research.

6.1   Initial Focus of the Research

This research started with a question around how learning might occur in a non-institutional, on-line learning space. The creation of the Community Project (CP) platform was not straightforward but did provide a learning-teaching platform that offered free access to create courses for anyone with the requisite technologies.   The CP platform remained non-institutional and over the eighteen months of the Project provided a functioning, no-cost space operated collectively by registered users. The goal had been to see who such a space would attract, what motivated their involvement and whether a non-institutional alternative would make a difference to what types of learning and teaching took place. A question around the role of technology was included to gauge the extent to which web-based networks played a part in transforming education. A key and overarching question of the research asked whether participants

experienced some form of emancipation in this non-institutional space. Each question remained significant in helping to shape the structure of the three findings chapters and remains significant here by providing the structure for the *Framework for Action* section (6.4).

6.2   Review of the Methodology

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was selected as the most appropriate means of exploring experiential responses to a non-institutional space. A political, value-led approach (Maurer & Githens, 2009, p. 273) was '*Critical*' (ibid.) rather than conventional, and prioritised an emancipatory focus that developed as research 'with' rather than 'on' people (McNiff, 2013).

A *'living theory of practice'* (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009, p. 20) was significant in insisting that multiple approaches be considered in forming what happened. The participatory methodology could respond to developments rather than dictate what these should be. Common to other aspects of the research, a 'letting go' of control was key to developing this dialogic methodological space. Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic thinking and Freirean popular education made links to emancipatory education. The intention was for this framework to not overshadow our own experiences but instead to validate the research claims in relation to wider educational space. Seeking out an '*emergent*' rather than '*linear order*' (McNiff, 2013, p.188) provided a fluidity to the plan-act-reflect model of action research applied. It also raised the questions of when one cycle ended and another began which highlighted the importance of the Main Author role. Recognising multiple threads, diverse approaches to the Project were fundamental. The Main Author role became significant in identifying what

constituted a thread, tying threads together and revealing threads as valid representations of the action. Although continually informed by collective dialogue, a central authorial pivot proved essential in developing this report as a thesis. This resonance of conventional structure, a residual institutional presence, pervaded the research. Whether this influence on *how* things are reported has altered *what* has been reported is not obvious. Without the conventions of a thesis, the research would still have required some form of reporting, of sharing what happened. The review of the methodology echoes that of much of the Community Project experience in general. That is, a recognition of an interplay, a counterbalancing of forces. On the one hand, a conventional, institutional logic and on the other a developing, emancipatory practice outside of the institutions.

The generalisability of the findings is difficult to ascertain as the value of PAR came in allowing multiple, idiosyncratic and nuanced voices to emerge. The argument is that through developing a participatory approach to research, the need for generalisable models is reduced. In its place is a process of engagement that seeks breadth of experience rather than singular responses and commonality. The methodology proved a valuable tool for this and a powerful characteristic of this research is the significance given to participants.

6.3   Contribution made by the Research

This research has made a key contribution in recognising rich and diverse learning practices that occur beyond institutional and conventional spaces. This is not to say that richness and diversity cannot occur within institutions. However, the research highlights that those institutional responses that see

individuals and small communities being able to teach and learn outside institutions as '*a kind of nonsense*' (Laurillard, 2012, p.4) are wide of the mark.

This research highlights that people create learning across multiple spaces, both within, without and across the fuzzy hinterlands between institutions and communities. Seeking singular definitions of learning is neither practical nor purposeful. What the research identifies is the need for a rebalancing of where learning and courses might emerge. Institutions can find ample opportunities for meaningful partnerships and liberated learning space which does not rely on the centrality of a singular location of expertise. This is important because funding, support and resource tend towards an institutional centre and create a sense of periphery for any people/activities located elsewhere. A rebalancing would begin to establish an equal relationship, a recognition of communities and outsider spaces being not 'outside' but across. Community outreach, such as service learning, can gain authenticity and make real-world change by involving people as co-authors, co-creators and co-participants. This requires not 'out' reach, but partnership and mutuality as a basis for learning.

6.3.1 A Framework for Action

To develop the contribution further I return to the six research questions to develop this '*framework for action*' (Trowler, 2012, p.37). This provides, '*conceptually and theoretically informed guidance which highlights significance issues to the reader in their own situation*' (ibid.). This responds to what Stringer (2007) describes as '*"so what" section*' that '*articulates newly emerging understanding of the issues*' (p. 182).

The research questions act as threads throughout the thesis and this structure continues in the framework for action. Participant voices remain crucial although the Main Author role is perhaps more pronounced at this concluding stage. My analysis has responded to multiple voices but the concluding comments are my own. Following the conclusion to each question an **implications** section tackles the 'so what' question directly. Table 6-1 (below) illustrates the framework generating concluding comments and implications in direct response to the initial questions.

Research Questions	Framework for Action
To what extent are notions of emancipation and empowerment evident in the participants' uses and experiences of the Community Project?	Conclusion Implications
What range of courses emerge during the development of the Community Project?	Conclusion Implications
What reasons do participants give for their involvement with the Community Project?	Conclusion Implications
How do participants experience the Community Project in relation to issues of technology, expertise and accessibility?	Conclusion Implications
In what ways do participants apply teaching and learning practices in roles of both teacher and learner?	Conclusion Implications
How do participants describe their experiences on the Community Project with reference to positive and negative elements from their own involvement?	Conclusion Implications

Table 6-1: How the thread of research questions reaches across the thesis and shapes the conclusion.

This framework expands the *contribution made by the research* section (6.3), emphasises the key messages from our experiences and suggests possible routes to action for other educators, outside and inside institutions. The *Implications* section concludes each question focus, responding to Trowler's (2012) call to relate the significance of findings to other educators and Stringer's

(2007, p.183) reminder that research should help others improve their own practice.

6.3.2 Emancipation and Empowerment

In responding to this question, two approaches are necessary. First, my own experiences of emancipation that relate to the initial catalyst for the Project and are described in *Becoming Educator* (section 1.4.1). Second, a discussion of emancipation that reflects on major themes emerging from participant research and related to theoretical concepts of emancipatory education.

6.3.2.1   Emancipation experienced as Main Author

At the start of this research I reflected on Furedi's (2004) idea that, '*research takes academics into territory where they have to rethink, rework, explore and test fundamental concepts of their discipline*' (p.11). The conclusion illustrates the complexity involved in leaving disciplines behind to consider learning outside institutional security. Emancipation was experienced not as liberating and unproblematic freedom, but as often messy and confusing. Metaphorical use of schizophrenia occurred across multiple reference points (Ball, 2003, p. 221; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 359; Buchanan, 2014; Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Concepts of split identity reflected my own experiences of the research helping reveal multiple, often conflicting, identities across researcher and co-participant roles.

At this concluding stage, it is important to reflect this messiness as ongoing and not resolved by the completion of the research process. As participant, researcher, doctoral student and customer, my roles veered between power-

powerless; in-control-no-control; strong-weak. A temptation to seek one side of each binary, of being strong, with power and in-control, did emerge. A common-sense understanding of these as preferred states appeared and was perhaps the cause of any anxiety. What the research taught me was that holistic appreciation must begin with accepting that neat, coherent solutions do not exist. Confusion, messiness and conflict are natural and significant outcomes when engaging with projects that challenge common-sense approaches. While empowering, this recognition was also destabilising when recognising the value given to more solid and affirmative solutions that often ignore or mitigate incompleteness.

6.3.2.2 Emancipation Emergent in Participant Discussion

A major theme of **institutional gravity** indicates the continuing pressure of learning organisations and conventions influencing the actions and experiences of the Project. An institutional ideology permeates attempts to redesign learning even beyond campus walls. Braidotti (2006) reflects on the '*potentially innovative, de-territorialising impact of new technologies* [being] *hampered and tuned down by the …gravitational pull of old and established values'* (p.2). Some influence was felt and discussed, such as Alexandra's depiction of *'building windmills in the shadow of the power station'* (5-4). Other conventions seemed more firmly entrenched, established common-sense not open to change. Examples of our own participant group indicates change being difficult. Incomplete courses were variably seen as a problem to be eradicated (section 5.3.3.3), or *'building sites'* (Jodie, section 5.3.3.2) of creative endeavour.

The earlier establishment of emancipatory education frameworks (section 2.5.1) introduced Biesta's (2017) concern with a '*modern logic of emancipation*' (p.5) that is itself far from empowering and begins with a deficit model for those requiring emancipation. Within the Project, there was no universal agreement about what emancipation was, or whether it existed at all. The idea of an emancipatory logic was resisted, as Biesta suggested it might be.

Locating research amongst voices often unheard found that the resultant feedback can be a cacophony of diverse and conflicting views.   Rather than being a deficit, this suggests that allowing challenges to a theoretical basis is a fundamental necessity when questioning educational practice. Bennet and Oliver (2011) describe how learning technology research is often driven by rhetoric and leads to '*missed opportunities to speak back to theory*' (p.179). The CP experience suggests that when control and decision-making is given at the integral levels of platform design, course choice and purposes of learning meaningful emancipatory learning can take place. This does not suggest transformation follows wherever such decision-making is made possible. It does, however, argue that without such a depth of involvement emancipatory learning remains impossible.   Advocacy and institutional approaches, regardless of well-meaning intent, often stifle participation from non-traditional spaces. Gramsci's (1972) criticism of baseline conventions being taken-for-granted leads to pedagogical solutions obscuring the community involvement they hope to inspire.

In arguing for spaces that are not already predetermined and not subject to measures framed around institutional norms, the CP platform indicates new forms of participation are possible. The theoretical framing of education that

retains the core educator roles is already doomed to repeat tradition and convention. Participation as open in terms of free and accessible online was only a part of the necessary emancipation. Opening the 'who' and 'what' of learning appeared most significant, that courses could emerge in any community and with anyone leading and creating shifted the emphasis away from the same educators adapting to new models. Between Knox's (2014) MOOC participants asking, '*where are the professors?*' (p.46), and Wallin's (2014) suggestion that '*the teachers are missing*' (p.119) lies a question of purpose.   Seeking professors on MOOCs reveals a clamour toward a conventional relationship. Wallin's contention is that teachers unable to move beyond majoritarian concerns are effectively missing in terms of purpose or value. The value of the Community Project highlights that teachers are not missing, but they are easily missed, existing beyond the usual spaces and harder to find. While Knox's participants seek expertise in the usual places, they miss the possibility that they themselves are the experts.   Establishing a clear distinction between community space and institutional space allows alternate practices to emerge. This often proves difficult in theoretical discourse that begins with, and is involved almost entirely in, education as an institutionally-bound convention. Significance comes from recognising that authentic practice outside institutions must be allowed to form new practices and relationships that do not have to replicate institutional models to be valuable.

6.3.2.3   Implications of Developing Emancipatory Approaches

A key implication of this research is that with reimagined teachers will remain easily missed if we search for them using only traditional, established measures

of who they might be. This research adds to the evidence of meaningful learning and teaching occurring beyond institutions alone.

In the introduction to this thesis, Edwards et al. (2007) asked,

> *'why should we worry about whether learning is taking place outside the academy and why should we bother researching it?'* (Edwards, Gallacher & Whittaker, 2007, p. 4).

The response in relation to emancipation is to develop awareness of what learning and teaching are, and can be, for the benefits of both those outside and inside the learning organisations.   In practical terms, the research highlights that if teaching beyond the campus walls is in any way a core concern of institutions then this requires new ways of seeing what lies beyond. Institutional MOOCs and outreach that sees itself as a civilising mission can only begin by degrading those it hopes to civilise.   In place of this, the CP research highlights emancipation coming from autonomy, nuanced expression and a mixture of new and experienced course creators finding free spaces to do their own thing. Where xMOOC creators witness students asking, *'where are the professors?'* (Knox, 2014, p.170) the response needs not to focus on the students as the problem. Instead, educators should question xMOOC structures that insist on lecturer presence while inauthentically claiming the value of their absence. Widening concepts of education cannot be left entirely to the same people, places and codes of practice as before.   Our early experiences with preferred partners and steering groups highlight the tendency toward convention. These can be resisted but in doing so they alter trajectory and are suggestive of a common-sense way of doing things.   The contention that tradition can so dominate educational practice that in effect, *'the teachers are missing'* (p.119) requires research outside institutions and must begin by

recognising that relying on taken-for-granted concepts of teacher-student-knowledge will obscure alternative approaches.   The goal must be to create partnerships and not alter the *outside* to look and act as the conventional *inside.*

6.3.3   Range of Courses

Course choices on the CP were important indicators of the extent to which non-institutional space might alter *what* learning focussed upon. These highlighted clear patterns over what *was* created and what *was not* created.   Early Steering Group suggestions of courses that appealed to organisational representatives found little or no interest.   The emphasis on top-down suggestions acted as *'othering practices'* (Broadfoot, Munshi, & Nelson-Marsh, 2010, p.807) and attracted no interest.   Participant courses were rarely explicitly political/ideological in terms of content and were often based on personal and community interests rather than external curricula.   They also highlighted that ill-fitting external curricula might be reframed to better reach local communities.

Political activism was not evident through explicit politicised discourse but the act of creation in non-conventional space remained a political act.   The lack of overt political discourse did not mean that action was missing.   Instead, course choices reflected Lovett's (1988) concern that education as political resistance comes '*from a small but growing section of the population involved in various forms of social and community action'* (p.143).   Through asserting autonomy and revealing alternative approaches to learning such educational approaches heeded *'a call for people, oppressed people, to have more control over their own lives, to shape their world and to use modern technology to do so'* (ibid.).

The issue was the extent to which participants saw themselves as oppressed.

The range of courses was perhaps more a *'community of loose ends'* (Holland, 2011, p.xxiv) which involved, *'being-with multiple others rather than belonging to a unified whole'* (ibid.). There was no singular enterprise or purpose, as such politicised interpretations come in establishing spaces in which under-represented groups might exist beyond silencing practices. Small-scale concerns ignored by institutions emerged, and it was clear such course knowledge needed space to develop, rather than expert-led pathways to follow. Such a small cohort might suggest a lack of transferability to other places. Yet, the breadth of participant interests suggests that this would be replicated anywhere and would include professional and non-professional educators. The diversity here reflects a distinction between a reframing of existing courses in new ways and new ideas/courses being created with no *a priori* definition. A disruption to common sense comes through the development of a minoritarian approach with non-hierarchical, non-institutional choices reflecting the potential for new voices to be heard.

6.3.3.1   Implications for Partnership working around Course Creation

What proved most significant was the opportunity for people to create courses that would be awkward fits with larger organisations having to operate at scale. Temporality also proved important, with courses emerging and disappearing based around immediate, often transient need. While institutional responses are developing alternate means of engaging with communities (Schuler, 2015; Neary and Winn, 2017b) these are at nascent stages of development. The CP evidence suggests that given space and opportunity, courses can be created independently in communities. Models of pedagogy and purpose may be unfamiliar and require an expansion of what is understood as 'course'. This

broadening requires much wider community involvement in choices of design, content and purpose. Often idiosyncratic, micro-sized and based on highly specific purposes such subject choices may challenge fundamental institutional ideology. Knox (2014) argued that replacing *massive* with *community* led to the disconnection of learning '*from the contaminations and disputes of the populace'* (p.174). This research suggests the opposite. Only when communities are engaged in learning design and choice can learning be said to become transformational.

To massify learning does not lead to transformation and if such spaces are to represent widening access they must also facilitate two-way exchange where community/ies are able to inform and select content and purpose. This insists on a loosening of control and power by the institution and a willingness to recognise divergent expertise and a reconsideration of what learning might include and by whom it may be driven. For transformation to exist at all it must embrace such disruptive potential. Distributing responsibility over course choices avoids alienating scenarios where specialist, distant representatives select irrelevant and standardised learning. Multiple, small-scale courses based on micro-sized context would be impossible to manage using replication of current mass education models. The research supports Neary and Winn's (2017b) consideration of a '*co-operative of co-operatives'* (p.100) where diversity can emerge in multiple directions, bound by loose-ties. Such governance, decided and created based on mutual respect and a recognition of distributed expertise would avoid circles of certainty. Two-way responsibility enriches both inside and outside institutions and may achieve greater authenticity of purpose.

6.3.3.2   Reasons for Engaging with the Community Project

The initial purpose of this question lay in discovering why participants chose to engage with a non-institutional platform.   It was anticipated that this would include issues around social justice as well as interest in technology as enabler/ barrier.   Participants created courses for small-scale and temporal concerns easily missed by institutional methods and structures.   It was evident that participants brought awareness of hierarchical and distancing structures in their own lives, personal and professional, that they hoped to redress in the CP.   The participants demonstrated multiple approaches to teacher-student roles and reflected how crucial this relationship is in assigning power, defining purpose and establishing the nature of whatever learning followed.   This was no utopia and occasions of conflict arose within our own practices.   Initial resistance to a hierarchical Steering Group (section 5.1.3.3.1) in Cycle One developed into internecine conflict over course standardisation by Cycle Three (section 5.3.3.3).

Multiple motivational intent was demonstrated, through meeting professional partnership obligations (Organisational Representatives), to blurred institutional-individual spaces and those interested in entirely non-institutional spaces with temporal, micro-sized or individual roots.   Regardless of initial purpose, a resistance to hierarchy was evident in all but the Steering Group representatives. Rather than subjugation and powerlessness, participants shared a purpose of change and agency.   By the third cycle, some contention over what a course *should be* had emerged.   These might be considered quality concerns that may share, but not necessarily replicate institutional models, of common standards.   Crowther's (2010) point is relevant, that,

> *'the more powerful the discourse the more deeply embedded in our common sense are its problems, its definitions of learning, its understanding of participation and the range of appropriate 'solutions''* (2010, p. 480)*.*

Several participants simultaneously claimed freedom of expression in their own courses while calling for controls and minimum expectations for others. This did create conflict with those participants playing with form. That this did not escalate seemed based on creating opportunities to discuss alternate ideas and consider that incompleteness was not necessarily abandonment. Similarly, discourse revealed that domination behaved differently across the participant body, dependent on context. This is significant and highlights some distance to Crowther's (2005) contention that popular education would be *'overtly political'* and *'committed to progressive social and political change'* (p. 2)*.* The diversity of approaches indicated such social and political change could be contradictory across users and did not define any single purpose.

Such contradiction does support a politicised view of praxis, that through participation the participants break *'circles of certainty'* (Freire, 2005, p.39) by engaging and challenging 'iron laws' (Crowther, 2010, p.247) of participation.

A shared interest in establishing the right to participate, and of mutual respect was evident despite some courses advocating a commercially advantageous purpose for engagement (section 5.1.3.2.3). This posed questions over what might link participation engagement if not a shared ideology. There is a resonance with Freirean concepts of love as a unifying condition that evades ideology. Freire (2005) writes that,

> *'True solidarity is found only in the plentitude of this act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis'* (p. 50)*.*

Freire (1998) also recognised the risk of love being considered *'ascientific if not anti-scientific'* (p.3)*.* Yet, participants' motivation was often rooted in a desire for autonomy, creative freedom and a desire to change their worlds.   An ontological concern with 'love' presents problems in models of research that prioritise alignment with scientific visibility. In the reality of research, part of the messiness comes in recognising such intangibles as crucial, if difficult to quantify.

6.3.3.3   Implications in encouraging Participation

In such a fledgling initiative, it was clear that involvement required personal impetus not easily defined by existing models of professionalism or vocation. Alongside an ontology of love, Deleuzo-Guattarian virtual ontology and Freirean *'untested feasibility'* (Souza de Freitas, 2015, p.xxvi) prove poignant. The 'people-yet-to-come' (Carlin & Wallin, 2014, p.xxi) that underpin rhizomatic approaches align with untested feasibility as that which is '*not yet fully known and lived, but dreamed of'* (Souza de Freitas, 2015, p.xxvi).

An implication is around being aware of the personal qualities and motivations that lead to participation beyond professional, accredited routes to becoming educator. This also includes recognising the importance of learning not already defined by cost, location and qualification as outcome.   Wallin (2014) defines the '*standardising impulse of education'* coming through the *'reification of common sense …the territorialization of thought according to **that which is given'*** (p.120. emphasis in original).   The ramifications of this are that educators beyond institutions require more commitment, motivation and vision to establish learning that is not already defined by institutional convention.

Praxis is crucial in avoiding continually returning to the familiar and conventional. Innovative course design necessitates 'building sites', which subsequently generates resistance and calls for standardisation.

Two key factors allow innovation to continue. First, a shifting of responsibility to allow educators the choices of purpose based on immediate and contextual concerns. Second, the dialogism of praxis that ensures educators can explore ideas of incompleteness and alternate structures with each other. The research rejects the singularity of Laurillard's (2012) unchanging *'what it takes to learn'* (p.7) and argues that non-institutional, outsider spaces are powerful and essential routes to meaning-making and engagement. Amidst standardising practices that reify a western, white, middle-class normative approach, the expansion of why people create learning requires a letting-go of narrowing expectation and an opening up to multiple purposes.

6.3.4 Technology, Expertise, Accessibility

The initial emphasis of the question around technology, expertise and accessibility was founded in an interest in the ways that participants might be enabled, or restricted, by their own technology skills. In practice, the research revealed a complex relationship in which how to use technology was often a minor concept of expertise. Instead, expertise necessitated awareness, adaptation and negotiation of philosophies and motivations in an ecology of competing purpose and diverse interests. Understanding how technology plays a part in the creation of learning goes beyond the algorithmic structures of Laurillard's (2012) design science, or taxonomies of learning that respond to significant change coming from the technology itself (Anderson & Dron, 2011;

Kanuka, 2008). In this beyond-the-institution space, the key concerns began with developing an awareness of purpose that had to often include an incompatibility with prevailing technological conditions. A central claim for the research is that the participant uses of technology indicate a willingness to engage with a complex technological infrastructure. Such engagement goes beyond simple adoption of predesigned technological solutions. Instead, choices and uses highlight a repurposing of technology for small and temporal concerns with flexible and original applications based on localised adaptation.

The explicit political resistance of some definitions of popular education (Crowther et al., 2005.; Lovett, 1988; Eubanks, 2011) was not always obvious. However, it was clear that problem-solving was central to many participants' experiences. The echoes with Freirean calls for active participation, technology became something on which to reflect and not merely acquiesce to dominant patterns of use. Rather than transformation occurring because of technological innovation (Anderson & Dron, 2011; Facer, 2011; Siemens, 2005), the evidence from this research indicates the most useful transformation comes through awareness and critical reflection that enables people to make changes previously denied them. Where transformation may best be found is through empowering learning structures in which people can select and evaluate technology based on their own contexts. This, rather than increasing access and digital skills to better adopt the practices of dominant others, would be transformational. It was clear that technology did not define what learning is, though it formed part of the contemporary landscape in which learning occurs. Part of this learning would need to include the selecting, repurposing and often rejecting of technologies based on different contexts.

This resists the dislocation of teaching from distributed users toward a design science (Laurillard, 2012) that prioritises professional specialists. It also questions the value of Massive Open Online Courses in meeting diverse needs when remaining located in institutional logic, practice and purpose. Both are rooted in the continuation of centripetal models of knowledge, the reification of institutional concepts of who teaches, who is taught and who decides of what knowledge consists. Design science approaches that '*attack*' as '*nonsense*' (Laurillard, 2012, p.4) the possibility of alternate, non-professional spaces are reductive. Design of this kind requires a tightening of ownership and a familiarity of roles and power. It does so at the expense of multiplicity, of diversity in approach and the possibility of wide approaches to what teaching/learning looks like, and who it involves. Providing tailor-made solutions that address exclusion and promote widening access privilege does not tackle issues of expertise and institutional dominance. Rather, such a focus on making learning accessible, but missing out questions of where such knowledge emerges, leads to unproblematic acceptance of standardising models. This is clearer on a global scale in which English-speaking, Western cultural and educational models dominate and exclude. It seems equally true that dominating language forms and cultural values marginalise local, nuanced voices within developed, as well as developing, countries.

6.3.4.1 Implications Emerging from Participant Experiences with Technology

Crowther (2010) argues that '*…we need to start rethinking the relationship between education and people's lives and how the two may interconnect*' (p.481). Technology may provide the means of connection but in doing so

creates necessary reflection over the implications this has for people and their educational intent.   Technology is already a part of a power discourse.   This research illustrates that to achieve multiple aims that challenge a habitus of conformity we cannot rely on the same models being ever widened, reaching out blindly through the internet.

Instead, it is necessary to think of learning as something that occurs everywhere and involves everyone. The capacity to learn and to teach lies in each of us, although it is only recognised in those closest to institutional convention.   The domination of technological infrastructure by corporate mind-sets is not easily changed.   The contention that alternate 'edupunk' practices can lead to transformation within institutions may be overly optimistic.   Although for those who suggest these approaches, it is a practical development of their own lived experiences with technology and institutional education.   Those beyond this academic dialogue must also be included as a part of shaping practice to avoid merely altered pedagogical models that maintain the status quo. The institutional and professional are part of the discourse, but cannot be the only voices.   It is also necessary to consider the difficulties inherent in this. Costa (2015) contends that *'apparent freedom for individuals to re-invent the logic of academic practice … tends to clash with the conventions of a rather conservative academic world.'* (p.194). Non-institutional becomes significant through its authenticity in finding real-world purpose rather than narrowed institutional conceptions of learning.   It is necessary to recognise alternate voices, collaboration and negotiation of these spaces rather than being swept along unthinkingly in grand technological narratives. Virtual ontology allows the imagining of new vistas but these must find foundations in the here and now,

regardless of how inhospitable the current ecology might be. Freirean concepts of *'untested feasibility'* (Souza de Freitas, 2015, p.xxvi) also promise new models of learning for social justice. Learning that emphasises digital access and literacy need to be analysed in relation to what these terms mean. If they remain skills and access designed only to better function in institutional space, they serve to reinforce a habitus of conformity.

Small-scale and idiosyncratic learning spaces can develop technological skills that better reflect the needs of all, rather than adapting the majority to the practices of an institutional few. Such 'Conscientization', from a Freirean perspective, would include asking critical questions about technology as a part of the socio-economic reality in which any act of resistance might emerge. In designing challenges to the location of power, privilege and decision-making, and a redistributing to communities and individuals, there is a wider societal implication. Moving away from the centre brings challenges to institutional power-bases that may see any such shifts as detrimental to their interests. In discussing the Community Project approach at conference, I was asked 'what is in this for the institutions?' The answer lies in first accepting the role of education as offering authentic development for all sectors of society. This may conflict with business models and interests in developing international employability figures or PISA rankings. Instead, implications for change would require changing concepts of knowledge, a re-ordering of the role of expert, widening networks and a raised awareness of distributed expertise. This is not a call for the denigration of institutions and instead advocates concord with Holland's (2011) affirmative nomadology, that,

> *'The point is to transform citizenship, not eliminate it …not abandon it altogether'* (p.xi; section 3.4.3).

Aligning with Freire (1999, p. 91), institutions are the clearest representation of meeting the state's responsibility to fund education. However, this must consider non-institutional spaces as essential in allowing for exploration of multiple perspectives, of minoritarian voices and problems, over diverse contentions over what is possible.

Left to a purely institutional common-sense, the risk is of obliterating such alternative landscapes and leading to the continued standardisation of the manufactured spaces of learning. This impoverishes both, the alternatives left floundering in inappropriate and silencing models; the institutional moribund and stripped of necessary creativity and opportunities to remodel and analyse. Establishing new and emergent pathways across blurred borderlands would help enrich both sides of the campus walls and may lead to the dissolving of the walls altogether.

6.3.5 Teaching and Learning

This question built from the overall research interest in what happens when we try to create learning spaces outside of institutional norms. Technology may act as the catalyst, but it is through teaching, learning and approaches to knowledge that change was most evident. The research demonstrated the willingness of people beyond professional roles being able to generate courses, create communities and explore what works and what does not. There was no evidence of misplaced faith in transmission models, that Laurillard suggested would result outside professional models (Laurillard, 2012, p.4; section 1.2). The participants continually highlighted reflection and practice that rejected the

need of a distant, professional other *'asking what learners need'* (ibid.). Instead, the participants regularly asked this of themselves and involved their own communities in finding the answer. Professional educators often came to the CP platform with the intention of playful creativity that evaded professional constriction. Rather than the outside being a barren place of ill-considered, rote learning, it became a place to escape transmission and teacher-led practices they experienced in their own institutions.

The potential for technology transforming teaching and learning institutionally provides a significant discourse around shifts from tradition (Anderson & Dron, 2011; Bayne & Ross, 2014; Beetham & Sharpe, 2007; Kanuka, 2008; Knox, 2014). This research questions whether the residual prioritising of the institutional, the professional-in-charge, acts as a slip-knot that always pulls back transformation at the point it considers non-institutional spaces. The evidence of participant creativity and developing practices suggests closer alignment to those advocating broadened concepts of teacher/student and of institutions (Cormier, 2008; Crowther, 2010; Facer, 2011; Siemens, 2005). The authentic space of a free-to-access platform highlighted experimentation and creation that occurred freely, rooted in community, individual and micro-sized groups. It is accepted that researchers writing from institutional spaces will often emphasise institutional practice. Only through becoming aware of the *'gravitational pull'* (Braidotti, 2006, p.2) and actively seeking spaces beyond this can practices outside the institutions become valued and help inform what happens inside. Participants provided multiple examples of courses and practices that addressed problems invisible to institutions. Partly through exasperation at being continually overlooked, courses such as the

schizophrenia support group, the homeless shelter courses and community wellbeing responded to real-world, essential social need. Throughout, the participants described the need to find a space in which they were not marginalised or categorised. This emphasised Livingstone and Shawchuck's (2005) observation of working-class knowledge being *'denied, suppressed, degraded'* (p.110). It would be easy to follow Laurillard's (2012) dismissal of this as informal learning, as *'something we can all do'* (p.41). Such an institutionalised approach ignores that such responsive courses required in-depth knowledge, acute awareness of nuanced contexts that too often resist learning as something for others. Course creators in the community designed learning through critical awareness of the potential users, of their own purposes and identifying gaps and meaningful approaches to filling these. It was clear that course design was often answering social needs falling in the peripheral shadow of institutional lights. Livingstone and Sawchuck (2005) identified the irony in dismissed knowledge simultaneously being '*heavily relied on to actually run paid workplaces'* (p.110).

There was evidence amongst participants that reflected this. That community courses were generated by those close to the ground who saw what macro-educational approaches could not. Participants continued to demonstrate a willingness to challenge their environments, to resist forces that imposed marginalising narratives on their lives. Many sought spaces to develop their professional practice away from macro-state policies and a prevailing wind of employer-led, outcome-based and grade-related assessment. There were those with better models of their worlds and these were often not institutional.

6.3.5.1 Issues around Teaching, Learning and Knowledge

Across the research cycles, my own experiences of teaching and learning were not always positive. Despite being labelled a 'utopia maker' (section 5.2.3.6.1) it was clear that an institutional *'gravitational pull'* was a continual presence. Teaching and learning require resources and these had to be almost entirely people-based. Beyond the practical support networks that institutions can provide, a continual reflecting back to a 'significant other' proved disruptive.

The institutional degradation of outsider learning, a process of making-informal, seemed part of every one of our experiences. Reflecting over the three cycles, the resistance to utopian visions informed multiple concerns over validity and subsequent experiences of questioning our efforts. Without any pay, external recognition and often without students on courses, the tendency towards familiar teaching practices was perhaps inevitable. These familiar approaches at least promised some sense of being connected.

Micro-communities and individualised concerns are valuable but can also be isolating and appear fragile. The role of teacher was so embedded that almost every discussion began by establishing what participants did not want to do, what they hoped to avoid. This institutional presence seemed often omnipresent and no doubt even our most transgressive moments were shaped by an acknowledgement of those practices with which we were familiar. Challenges to free-space occurred within participants and calls for course standards and user-guides indicated that free practice was always likely to face challenges, regardless of where this took place. Innovation would seem to need smaller steps and a slower pace to proceed.

6.3.5.2   Implications

Answering 'so what?' when reflecting on teaching and learning practice, the emphasis must include recognising the value of participant exploration, while being aware of the restrictions and limitations that were experienced. The approaches to learning were often challenging a dominant world-view, not simply through traditional teaching and learning practices, but also around lives constrained by wider conventional expectations. The Deleuzean concept of '*concordia facultatum*' (Deleuze, 1994, p.133; Roy, 2003, p.23) was introduced to describe the limiting aspects of common sense (section 3.3.5). In response to this confining of thought, Roy (2003) argues teacher-training needs to move away from '*worn-out representations*' (p.2).   A redevelopment of teacher-training to consider the breadth of learning should include how teaching-learning might work for whole communities, from multiple perspectives and on their own terms. This would help dislodge historical, exclusive views that lie at the heart of what it takes to learn.   Rhetorical explication for innovation and widening participation will always prove marginalizing and empty if the core values and structures remain untouched. Teachers trained as agents of the state cannot be simultaneously accepting of alternatives to institutional education.   Redesigning teacher training would be challenging; widely-held concerns with vulnerability begin with a sense of doing the right thing. The participant experiences indicate that this also comes with a disempowering, patronisation that strips responsibility from at least as many as it offers security. The research highlights that responsibility-first-approaches can work. In the spaces that such a 'letting go' would make possible, new concepts of teaching and learning can flourish. This would not be a diminishing of professionalism,

but an enhancement of it. A playful and experimental gonzo education might help spark newly energised approaches that can help break Crowther's '*iron law of participation'* (Crowther, 2010, p.247). Recognising that communities already create knowledge, have diversity of expertise and the willingness to explore the means of sharing this, is crucial.

Allowing authentic non-institutional space to emerge and be a mutually beneficial partner to institutional learning requires a sea-change in how teaching, learning and knowledge are viewed. While unlikely, and unhelpful, for this to occur first at policy levels, a bottom-up approach would help create teaching/learning in the image(s) of a multiplicity. Personal qualities of tenacity, courage, reflection and cultural awareness would need to become recognised as more valuable than those of organisation, compliance, and discipline. The CP participants were a small group but the experiences we faced supported the mantra of the Community Project, 'that everyone can teach, and everyone can learn'.

6.3.6 Participant Experiences

The question around experience was intended as a space for reflecting on positive and negative responses. It proved much more important, providing an insight into experience as the binding force between practice and theory. While theoretical and pedagogical concepts provide tools for reflection, it was experience that added the crucial individual and community context. Seeking out experience often appeared distinct from the neat eloquence of theoretical models. The significance of this question was in recognising experience was distinct; it was not neat and could not fall into generalisable models of practice.

Yet, by understanding the ranges of experiences, including these as key spaces for reflection, then the theoretical and pedagogical could become enriched by exposure to lived experience.   Across the conclusion, what it means to educate/be educated is variously shaped by external factors and internal/individual choices. The final question around participant experiences focuses on this latter, often personal, influence. Experiences pervade the research, my own and that of the participants. Separating them out for analysis is valuable in illuminating a reflective, personal analysis that recognises human responses as critical to any understanding of education research. The shift from external measures toward internal reflection focuses on two key areas:

- Risk, responsibility and vulnerability
- Trashy baubles - establishing worth and value

6.3.6.1   Risk, Responsibility, Vulnerability

The multiple approaches to vulnerability served as a reminder of the ways power is enacted and often disguised. The right to attribute vulnerability comes with power even when this appears as philanthropic authority. Participants described experiences of being marginalised in their own lives, encountering definitions of their own circumstances which they had no part in describing. Grossman (2005) describes the '*presumption of the ignorance of those they cannot or will not hear'* (p.79) that characterises the power – powerless relationship. Concepts of vulnerability indicate such imbalance silences while also attributing helplessness alongside ignorance. The authenticity of experiences '*rooted in real life'* (Banu) allowed for redefining of who attributed vulnerability.   There was understanding of risk being valuable, creating

responsibility and escaping assigned weakness. Jodie defined her courses beyond the college as, '*my risk and not a cost implication'.* The notion of risk being financial indicated the influence of economics, of escaping confining practices that must be cost-effective. Vulnerability is part of a power exchange that is itself reflective of an emergent common-sense rooted in cost and models of economy. Wallin (2014) describes people 'yet-to-come' as necessitating freedom to create new rhizomatic pathways to emerge. Escaping confining models of vulnerability is part of realising yet-to-come as always infused with elements of risk. This may not sit easily with representative approaches to education and would necessitate qualities such as courage at a personal level. A willingness to assess probability and engage with less than certain futures is a crucial aspect of authentic learning.

6.3.6.2 Trashy Baubles – Establishing Worth and Value

The research highlighted community educators had to be driven by personal and community motivation as paid opportunities are sparse. A continual ambiguity was inevitable, between authentic outsider space that was always aware of any institutional influence. Challenges to utopian idealism reflect clashing ideological positions, of "*champagne socialism"* (Bernard, section 5.1.3.6) that indicated acute awareness of where institutional roles and research highlight privileges not easily afforded outside these spaces. Such challenge seemed practical rather than ideological. Sustaining 'free education' relies on self-funding, of replacing the institutional recipients of state, third sector and corporate funds with small-scale community resourcing. Experiences proved authentic spaces in which the reality of ideological practices met the harsher reality of funded/unfunded education.

Deleuzean virtual ontology, of imagined possibility shaping what might become, supported a revealing of synthetic concepts of change always rooted in institutional dominance. The perception of *"comfortable chairs"* (Adewale, section 5.2.3.6) behind any learning spaces is something to consider in projects that seek non-institutional relationships. Majoritarian influence was often suspected of infiltrating minoritarian activity for inauthentic purpose. Whitehead's *'living contradiction'* (1996) proved a lived reality that reflected our own values being challenged by experiences on the CP.

6.3.6.3   Implications

The most significant contribution that participant experience brings will be around future research practice. Looking beyond the theoretical and pedagogical revealed a real-life application of concepts that provided the glue that bound the Project together. Through participant experiences, the benefits and limitations of this Project appeared at their clearest. Yet, experience can appear as a messy, individualised and changeable variable that is easier to leave out when carrying out research. This is evident in Massive Open Online Course research where the human aspect is sought as a data-set, and as such misses the lived experiences, narratives and the reality of the learning spaces.

Ensuring sufficient time and space to include experiences is neither a luxury, nor even an ideologically-influenced quirk of the researcher. It offers a depth of analysis that can sharpen the view of theory and pedagogy. Both the latter, stripped of human experience, become redundant in meaningful analysis of learning. This is perhaps more significant now, with technology an increasingly powerful influence on how we learn. Ensuring a human perspective must

include multiple human perspectives, and not that of isolated learning designers or technology-focussed coders. Concepts of knowledge did not fall neatly into categories of marginal, established or emergent. Understanding of risk and responsibility appeared as value, personal and idiosyncratic rather than clear-cut and standardised. Not only was no single view prevalent, no single view could work for the range of courses and values evident in any diverse space. Taking risks might also be considered alongside courage and multiple rationales for creating courses that evaded common-sense notions of cost and economic value. Instead, somewhat intangible motivation was driving learning that sat outside the funded institutional space. The Freirean concept of love reappears again as an ethereal experience, if not easily understood then an attempt at explaining why people engage in learning beyond self-interest. The implications for future research relate to the human qualities that are less discussed in models such as Kanuka's (2008) types of educator. Courage, tenacity, altruism and propensity for risk/responsibility reflect some attributes that impact on any educational project. Establishing outsider spaces allows some reclaiming of risk/responsibility while also providing additional questions of safety and exposure beyond institutional models. It would be fair to argue for a blending of both: an increase in the influence of all involved to ascertain what risk/responsibility and subsequent vulnerability is; and participation on establishing models that defend and protect all involved across multiple levels of risk. The significance for future work comes in understanding this complexity when engaging in co-creation. Expecting the act of creating spaces to reveal hidden and silenced voices is simplistic. Co-design and co-creation may begin to recognise the value of distributed knowledge and expertise. However, this

must begin by understanding that consciousness already exists and does not need to be introduced by '*master explicators'* (Biesta, 2017), either institutional or emancipatory.

6.4   Final Comments

At the start of this research I was interested in what would happen in learning spaces outside institutions. My own experiences led me to consider that the links between learning inside and outside institutions was at its best when recognising they are inextricably linked. 'What it takes to learn' is something innate and universal and is not solely rooted in institutional, professional designed models.   The Community Project added to the evidence of rich, diverse and energised learning in many areas of life. The research reveals the difficulties inherent in defining concepts such as emancipation while also providing support for continuing to seek what varying definitions exist to find learning as it is experienced, where it is needed.   Further importance comes in recognising the resistance to grand narratives, of both institutional ideology and of emancipatory narratives. Establishing multiplicity becomes a case of letting go, not of developing better adherence to established thinking.

Participants did not identify as marginalised, poor or vulnerable and were vocal in resisting such definitions. The challenges faced led to contradictions, of individual values, and across participants. Andrea's belief that "*our work was our shared commitment to each other"* (section 5.3.3.6) offers a positive summary. This was no simplistic contention of community, of shared effort. Instead, such a statement recognised the contention within participants, of any communities, and the need to continually reassess what community is and

does. The commitment to continue to participate was shared, not an agreement over what was shared or what the purpose should be.

The project reflected common-sense as problematic even in its most sympathetic and supportive definitions of community, as well as its denigrating and patronising ones. Significance comes from understanding that authentic projects seeking redistribution of power and knowledge must begin with a willingness to lose what power they currently have. The xMOOC models highlight a rhetoric of redistribution and reality in which reification and centripetal ownership remains. Future research in technology and community spaces must be prepared to question the extent of institutional risk and courage when discussing the reality of change. If transformation is considered a meaningful and desirable pathway, this must have depth to consider funding, organisation, location, redistribution of power and influence and a genuine will to consider 'letting go'. This research focussed on a microcosm of 25 participants on a platform experienced by five hundred others. Even in this small example, the range of views, the contradictions, revealed the impossibility of consensus. Accepting messy and nuanced approaches as the norm, not as ill-defined copies of an institutional ideal, is crucial. This avoids the errors of seeking mass models of education that are based in enduring market-driven ideology but do not respond to the vast diversity across local, national and global communities.

Several initiatives grew alongside the Community Project and demonstrated similar interests in free, community and online education (section, 2.2.4). The findings here help to illustrate the complexities and difficulties faced by those not in supported, institutionally resourced space. As such, this research offers

valuable outsider perspectives as approaches to porous universities and free and cooperative education emerge and re-emerge. Across the Project, the influence of the institution has been felt and proved difficult to escape. Reaching the end of this small-scale research, learning within institutions is shown as well-developed and complex. Learning *without* institutions is much less researched and appears widely misunderstood and reflected on in relation to institutional norms. Institutional discourse, even when based in social justice, reinforces a centripetal knowledge formation. Learning outside these spaces is often acknowledged rather than ignored. This acknowledgement comes at a price, often the acceptance of convention of role and purpose of education, even where learning takes place becomes distributed. The Community Project highlighted a rich and often fervent desire to play and uncover idiosyncratic approaches to learning. Approaches to the community begin with concerns over what has been left undone, of the gaps left unfilled by solutions to problems that come not from communities but hierarchical contentions over what communities require. This research proposes renewed efforts at research and practice that begin without institutions, whether they are empathetic and supportive or not. An authentic practice requires freedom of creative potential that is not drawn back to an established centre.

It might be that what occurs is the loss of the binary, that outside and inside become increasingly meaningless. A porosity of borders will help develop learning and teaching practices that are based on mutuality and collective endeavour. Reframing learning/teaching/knowledge does not give voice; instead it must insist on voices being heard. Instead of pockets of silence, this research revealed many voices that required only space to be heard.

A key claim of the Project is that learning occurs in multiple places, and is an innate and integral feature in all aspects of society. The need is for recognition, not of inspiration. Institutions may play a key role in helping develop spaces, but as partners in a two-way exchange of views. The ability of the institutional space to attract resources can help the communities in which they sit. This must be as hubs of learning, not as charitable outreach programmes that insist on power lying at the centre.

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Appendices

Appendix 1a – Outline of Popular Education Concepts

The terms applied from both theories offer opportunities to rethink common sense notions and to allow for a creation of new concepts and ideas across the project. The terms themselves provide often complex tools of analysis and the tables (Appendices 1a and 1b) attempt to locate the key theoretical terminology in the context of the Community Project research.

Popular Education Terminology	
Conscientisation	Raising of oppressed people's consciousness; once raised, oppression is challenged and resisted.
Dialogue	From dialogical learning, based on discursive engagement between educator and learner in a non-hierarchical exchange. Based on authenticity of words rather than eloquence that might employ inauthentic word use.
Banking System	Freire's description of transmission education that prioritises educator knowledge and diminishes the student's own knowledge. Describes learners as empty vessels filled by the educator.
Problem-Posing Education	Problems are identified by people based on their own lives with learning focused on seeking solutions to these problems.
Massification	Creating educational opportunity based on massive scales that reduce any localised/individual/community significance in favour of macro models of standardised knowledge.
(de)humanisation	Humanisation is the ultimate purpose of education in a Freirean approach. Dehumanisation is the result of banking education and oppression when reductive educational practice diminishes people's humanity.
Praxis	A merging of theory and practice to achieve meaningful learning. Gramscian 'philosophy of praxis' incudes ideological awareness as a crucial element.

Appendix 1b – Outline of Deleuzo-Guattarian Rhizomatic Concepts

Deleuzo-Guattarian terminology	
Nomadology/ Nomadic Thinking	learning/teaching that occurs through wandering and creation; it differs from institutional/arborescent fixed knowledge. Distinction is made between *logos*, (rule of law) and the *nomos*, (heterogeneous and avoids quasi-logical progression points) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).
Multiplicity	***Multiplicity*** negates insistence on centripetal definition of knowledge allowing the project/research to engage with diverse concepts of knowledge and those creating it. Can be linked in various ways in an assemblage.
Assemblage	The ***assemblage*** differs from the fixed knowledge of the root-book (a symbol of the arboreal). Represents new and emergent ways of interacting and creating knowledge spaces and exchange. They '*are complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning*' (Parr, 2010, p. 18).
Territorialisation Deterritorialisation Reterritorialisation	The three terms define a continual shift as meaning is given to terms/concepts (***territorialisation***), how this meaning is challenged and transgressed (***deterritorialisation***) and how new meanings are attached (***reterritorialisation***). Each recognises the challenge to terms of teacher/student/knowledge that emerge across this project.
Minoritarian/ Majoritarian	***Majoritarian*** reflects concepts of standard (such as 'Man') that has stable attributes and represent a 'norm'. ***Minoritarian*** reflects a state beyond norms, in a process of becoming and not chastened by standardisation.
Virtual/Actual Ontology	The methodology section applies virtual ontology as an influence of the 'not-yet' in shaping actual acts and practice.
Asignifying rupture	The idea that a rhizome can emerge anywhere and has no beginning or end. Suggests renewed emphasis on connections not established binaries.
Connection & Heterogeneity	The emphasis is on creating connections that disrupt traditional links and seek to connect across heterogeneous diversity; avoiding hierarchies and creating new connections.
Smooth/Striated Space	Smooth space is free of prior definition and open to creative activity and movement. Striated space is

	defined, framed and populated with pre-existent purpose and expectation.

Appendix 2 – Participant Information Form

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Participant Information Sheet

Working Title of Project: A participatory action research investigation into how a non-institutionally based, open and online learning platform can create pathways of teaching and learning in community environments

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*Date:*____

Dear _____,

I would like to invite you to take part in my thesis research with the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning in the Department of Educational Research at the University of Lancaster.

Before you decide if you wish to take part you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

This document includes:

- Information about the purpose of the study (what I hope to find out).

- Information about what participation means and how to withdraw when and if you wish (what you will be doing).

- Details of what notes, recordings and other sources of information may be used as 'data' in the study - for the group and with you as an individual.

- Information about how this data will be secured and stored.

- Information about how any quotes will be used and how you will be involved in checking, agreeing and consenting to their use.

- How the information will be used in the thesis and for other purposes such as conference presentations or publication.

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The purpose of the study

This research is for my thesis on the PhD in Technology Enhanced Learning programme with the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. The research may also be used for journal articles and conference presentations.

My research aims to develop a learning and teaching website that will allow *community teachers* to develop courses in their own area of interst and share these online. I am intersted in seeing how people without formal teacher-training backgrounds approach opportunities to share knolwedge and how they develop courses, resources and materials. The focus is on people chosing things that interest them, not necessarily from an academic, or formal college based set of interests. I will be looking at what technologies are used, what approaches to teaching and learning people bring to the project and what issues and challenges do people face when creating online learning. There is no expextation that youb have taught before or accessed any learning online. The purpose of the study is very much abiout finding out what happens when many different people, from different backgrounds, start to teach and learn online.

What participation involves and how to withdraw if you no longer wish to participate

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited because you have demonstrated an interest in some form of community learning/ teaching or have responded to a request to take part in the Community Project. By showing your interest and choosing to be involved this makes you an excellent candidate for demonstrating what experiences, choices, issues and solutions you go through. This research is based very much on what actually happens when people interact with online learning and as an involved participant I would value your input in developing the research. This is a participatory action research project which means that I want to research with you as you try things out. The value comes from learning together and not on 'getting things right'.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, then please let me know. If you do not wish to be observed or recorded, please indicate this. Every effort will then be taken to ensure that your data/voice is removed from recordings by editing out where possible or excluding such data from any transcription. (Delete above as applicable)

You can withdraw at *any* time during the study and there is absolutely no obligation on you to continue nor penalty for withdrawing. Your related data (recordings, notes) can be destroyed and all reference removed at any time.

You are welcome to continue on the Community Project, contributing material and being a teacher or learner even if you decide you do not wish to be involved in the research element of the project.

What would taking part involve for me?

Your involvement would be in two parts: firstly, I would like to be able to look at the materials you create and display and see what technology and what teaching and learning approaches (labeled *pedagogy* for this research) you use, what technologies you introduce and how you choose to interact with students/ teachers on the website.   Secondly, to help explore your experiences and any issues and challenges you have faced, I would like to interview you (face to face or online, as you prefer) and invite you to take part in some discussions/ focus groups from time to time. I will also offer you the opportunity to keep a journal about your time on the project and it would be useful if you would agree to share some of your thoughts from this when we meet.

What will I have to do?

The project itself asks you to involve yourself in teaching and/or learning in courses on the Community Project website. That will continue as normal. All I would ask additionally is that you keep a journal that you update with reflections on your experiences, and that you agree to let me speak to you about your project at a time that is convenient. I may ask if I can record our meetings so that I can listen again to what we said, but this will never be made public.

Protecting your data and identity
What will happen to the data?

'Data' here means the researcher's notes, survey results, workshop outputs, audio recordings and any email exchanges we may have had. The data may be kept for one year after the successful completion of the PhD *Viva* as per Lancaster University requirements, and after any personal data will be destroyed. Audio recordings will be transferred and stored on my personal laptop and deleted from portable media

Identifiable data (including recordings of your and other participants' voices) on my personal laptop will be encrypted wherever possible. With devices such as portable recorders where this is not possible identifiable data will be deleted as quickly as possible. In the mean time I will ensure the portable device will be kept safely until the data is deleted.

You can request to view the field notes or listen to the audio at the end of the interview and any parts you are unhappy with will be deleted, or disregarded from the data. Data may be used in the reporting of the

research (in the thesis and then potentially in any papers or conference presentations). Please note that if your data is used, it will not identify you in any way or means, unless you otherwise indicate your express permission to do so.

You have the right to request this data is destroyed at any time during the study as well as having full protection via the UK Data Protection Act. The completion of this study is estimated to be by March 2015 although data collection will be complete by March 2014

How will my identity be protected?

A pseudonym will be given to protect your identity in the research report and any identifying information about you will be removed from the report. If I use any details from your online courses I will seek to anonymise it as far as possible; where this is impossible, say your course is the only one about a particular subject, then I will ask for your express permission to use any details in the final report.

Who to contact for further information or with *any* concerns

If you would like further information on this project, the programme within which the research is being conducted or have any concerns about the project, participation or my conduct as a researcher please contact:

Prof. Mary Hamilton, PhD TEL & e-Research Course Director

>   Tel: +44 (0)1524 592861
>   Email: m.hamilton@lancaster.ac.uk
>   Room: County South, D27, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YD, UK.

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

Kind Regards

Peter Shukie

Appendix 3 – Consent Form

Department of Educational Research
County South, Lancaster University, LA1 4YD, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 1524 592685

LANCASTER
UNIVERSITY
Department of
Educational Research

Consent Form

Title of Project: Can Community Open Online Courses offer new ways of teaching and learning?

Name of Researcher: Peter Shukie

		Please Tick
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated _____for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I understand that my participation in this research study is voluntary. If for any reason I wish to withdraw during the period of this study, I am free to do so without providing any reason. I understand that my contributions to interviews, focus groups and any online or face to face activities will be part of the data collected for this study and my anonymity will ensured. I give consent for all my contributions to the workshop to be included and/or quoted in this study.	
3.	I consent to the workshop observation being audio-taped.	
4.	I consent to the interview being audio-taped	
5.	I understand that the information I provide will be used for a Ph.D research project and may be published. I understand that I have the right to review and comment on the information provided before the final submission	
6.	I agree to take part in the above study.	

Name of Participant:

Signature

Date

Appendix 4a– Participant profiles in Cycle One

Stuart (OR and CE)

Stuart was originally an organisational representative for a national charity with responsibility for the local authority district. The charity worked with the elderly and people in assisted living spaces. Stuart was the only one of the ORs to continue as participant after the initial Steering Group folded. He continued as a Community involved participant as he worked with groups outside his professional role in establishing spaces for people to meet and talk. He ran small group sessions and while not an educator he was involved in running small, informal knowledge-sharing events in the town. He created one course in this cycle, although it was not published due in part to technical issues.

Age: 45 - 54

Jodie (WAE)

Jodie worked as an Art Lecturer at a local college based Higher Education institute. Her engagement happened from the start and although asked to take part in the steering group, Jodie declined although making regular meetings with myself about the technology issues and the platform design. Jodie made three courses based around the processes of creating art. These informed the wider aspects of her formal courses but were not part of the required learning. Jodie used her experiences to generate some research she used in conferences around making the invisible visible. Although all three courses were published, these were partially lost through technical failure.

Age: 35 – 44

Kerry (I) Kerry came to the launch event having been invited to accompany her friend. Kerry was currently working in public transport, but had been a volunteer teaching assistant in primary schools. Kerry's initial interest was in developing learning based around the ways that children learned in schools and letting parents and grandparents access this at home. It was an issue she had experienced in her own family and she created two courses that were published. These lost materials through technical issues although Kerry recreated them at a later stage of the project. Kerry did not consider herself an educator and had no experience in online learning. She described herself as being motivated through seeing the way social media had changed the way people communicated.

Age: 18 – 25

Alex (CE) Alex came to the Community project after reading about it in an online blog. He was based in Scotland and ran a free education initiative that operated a website, a blog, and ran free lectures in third spaces in cities across the UK. Alex was interested in helping to develop the concept of free education and he created courses in economics, austerity and mental health. Alex is described as educator here, although he describes having no formal qualifications at the time of the research. His vast knowledge and breadth of literature was often commented upon by other participants, and Alex considered his education was self-taught and from informal meetings with professionals, academics and the speakers/writers using his free education site.

Age: 35 – 44

George (OR/ SG)

George worked for a Community Volunteer organisation in Recruitment and management. He was on the board of governors for several local colleges and was invited to the SG by one of these. He considered his organisation would be able to coordinate the recruitment of volunteers for the CP. George did not register for the CP or attend the focus group. He consented to an interview and considered his role as *"advocate for multiple groups and potential partner organisations"*.

Age: 45 – 54

Appendix 4b – Participant Profile, Derek, Cycle Two

Derek was introduced to the Community project via Alex, both being involved in a free education project in Scotland that ran public lectures in third spaces. He designed the new website interface with a merging of a website and an open source Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Moodle.

Derek described himself as a 'product of the university of life' with no formal adult educational experience. He had used informal, self-taught and community approaches to develop high level skills in computing technology and web-based tools. He was self-employed as a developer and worked with community organisations and individuals to create their online presence for multiple purposes.

He was described as a 'perfect fit' (Alexandra, interview) in the group discussions as we considered the abandonment of the commercial website to go it alone with a community designed platform. Derek offered an intellectualism to the project missing from the commercial contract. He provided several options for us to consider and did this all for free. He offered training to several other participants to help maintain the website and his only payment was a few nights' board in a spare room as he came to England to meet users and build the platform. The 'perfect fit' came from his ability to discuss the technology in terms of community ethos, of engagement and diverse user experiences.

Appendix 5 – details of data collection methods

This appendix details the occurrence of each data collection method across each of the three cycles.

Data Collection Method	Occurrences in Cycle One	Occurrences in Cycle Two	Occurrences in Cycle Three
Journal/ Blogs	1 x main author	1 x main author 2 x participant blogs	1 x main author 1 x participant blogs
Social Media	No use	23 x group discussions 8 x individual posts	13 x group discussions 17 x individual posts
Interviews (one-to-one)	3 x interviews (spoken)	11 x interviews (spoken) 4 x online interviews (video) 2 x online interviews (typed)	12 x interviews (spoken) 3 x online interviews (video) 5 x online interviews (typed)
Focus groups	2 x focus groups	Not used	Not used
Nominal Group Technique (NGT)	Not used	2 x NGT	2 x NGT
Delphi Technique (DT)	Not used	1 x DT	1 x DT
Documentary	• Original website platform • Minutes of steering group minutes	• Co-created website platform • Images from participants (individual)	• Co-created website platform • Images from participants (group)