Participatory Book Art: Establishing Connections with Dialogue, Representation and Value

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Abstract

This thesis provides visibility to a series of projects that I term 'participatory book art'. Participatory book art involves artists collaborating with particular social groups in the creation of book art. This thesis argues that participatory book art projects represent a new form of collaborative book art and participatory art practice. To form this argument and investigate the participatory book art case studies within this thesis, I constructed an original critical framework from the fields of 'book art' and 'participatory art'. This framework acknowledges the formal properties of the books (composition, content and texture), whilst explaining the social and collaborative processes surrounding their making. The framework also allows case studies to speak to the theoretical communities practicing in these fields, whilst contradicting and expanding some of their dominant narratives.

Chapter one contextualises participatory book art within a history of community arts and art education to readdress how they are often absent in participatory art narratives. I contest writing which treats the workshop as a neutral or predictable format, by investigating how the design and management of the method in participatory book art is imbued with certain ideologies that influence collaboration. The final three chapters are focused on distinct participatory book art case studies. Each project is investigated through a thematic lens, including: Representation in *The Homeless Library*, Dialogue in *Unfolding Projects* and Value in *Crafting Women's Stories*. Case study analysis utilises the theoretical framework and wider literature to account for the various operations, processes and methods occurring in projects.

Chapter two addresses the homeless participant's use of book art in *The Homeless Library* to deconstruct or reiterate essentialist depictions of homelessness. In chapter three on *Unfolding Projects,* I explore how the books as gifts creates an emancipatory dialogue between two groups of women who never physically meet and challenges existing theories that assert face-to-face interaction and spoken word as the primary emancipatory form (Kester, Bourriaud and Lacy). Chapter four on *Crafting Women's Stories* problematises evaluating participatory art through predetermined values. Utilising the theoretical ideas of Barbara Hernstein-Smith and Erin Manning, I trace how value is 'contingent' in this project on a range of interacting variables and agent's personal economies which are emergent, fluctuating and sometimes difficult to predict/recognise.

Contents

Introduction

The research for this project stemmed from a somewhat fleeting online conversation I had when writing my Masters' dissertation. I was investigating feminist artists books and started a forum posting on the website *Artist Books 3.0*. I initiated a discussion that encouraged individuals to post comments on why they believed women are drawn to making book art. I wanted to consider whether artists thought that gendered modes of making existed and whether there had been a cultural and political shift which encouraged women to create book art. On the forum, artist Gali Weiss linked her recent *Unfolding Projects* (2010), which involved her Australian colleagues sending image-filled concertina books to women learning to read and write in Kabul, Afghanistan. The books were an invitation for dialogue and the Afghan women responded by writing their stories over and around the imagery. This act of writing their stories was deemed political, as the Afghan women were often working in an oppressive patriarchal environment with limited opportunities for self-expression. Weiss suggested that the book, for her, was a space of dialogue and a catalyst for bringing together the women's stories. Although this project was mentioned in the introduction to my dissertation, it was not until I revisited my Masters research for a PhD proposal that I began to take renewed interest in the project. My hunch was that this project represented a new form of political and social engagement through the book form. *Unfolding Projects* used the book as a political tool differently from the 'democratic multiple' that was prolific in the book art field of the 1970s and 1980s. The books were one-off codices rather than multiple editions and their content (often autobiographical experiences of Afghan women) is politicised through their display in specific conferences or publications. In *Unfolding Projects* how the books were shown and framed, even if to small audiences, was seen as a more effective way of challenging stereotypical representations of Afghan women in western media rather than relying on mass dissemination. The books were also moving away from collaborations prevalent in the book art field between artists and writers, encouraging participants who were not practicing in these fields, 'non-artists', for want of a better word. Furthermore, although *Unfolding Projects* appeared connected to the contemporary development of socially engaged art practice, the

project was not focused on 'dematerialised' processes such as conversation, which were gaining increasing popularity as a primary emancipatory process. Rather, dialogue and the building of social relations was being developed through the pages of the book.[1] My feeling was that this form of collaborative book art production enabled a particular social relation or type of participation that might expand potential uses of book art, as well as bring original contributions to the participatory art field. How agents participate in projects, under what conditions, and the importance of book art to the development of artistic and social outcomes become key enquiries that form the basis of this research.

Taking *Unfolding Projects* as my starting point*,* I soon identified a series of interrelated projects occurring in the last twenty years that involved artists employing book art forms to empower participants, challenge essentialist representations and encourage social relations. I call these projects 'participatory book art', and through case study investigation this thesis provides much needed visibility and contextualisation to these practices. As a brief definition, participatory book art involves artists collaborating with different social groups (the homeless, communities formed around place and women's groups) in the production of books, to investigate ideas of identity, modes of individual expression, political concerns or skill sharing. Book art examples reinvent the traditional book form by utilising unconventional formats, alternative materials and experimental compositions of text and image. Participatory book art practices frame these books and the project's aims as a collaboration between artists and participants. These aims are often entangled in claims to empower participants through bookmaking skills, collaborative production and encouraging self-expression. The resultant book forms are also utilised to draw attention to a political or social concern connected to the project, usually by displaying the books in specific contexts. These contexts might include exhibitions, publications, conferences or websites and they frame the projects under particular narratives.

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[1] I use social relations in this thesis to describe relations formed between individuals (both positive and negative), often assisted through some form of communication. This term is increasingly used in socially engaged art practices as an intrinsic part of the art process – relations might be formed through artwork production or as a catalyst of the artwork (part of the interaction of the work).

To highlight the richness and variety in projects that are encompassed under the term participatory book art, I have decided to focus on three case studies rather than attempt to survey the entire field. It is useful at this point to introduce the three case studies that comprise this thesis: the first is *The Homeless Library* (2014), a project initiated by artists Lois Blackburn and Philip Davenport of Arthur + Martha. The project involved workshop sessions in different homeless organisations in Manchester, UK, which provided an opportunity for participants to narrate their own histories through book art. The completed library of books is modelled as the first ever history of homelessness from a first-person perspective. The second project is *Unfolding Projects* (2010), which entailed the artist Gali Weiss and her Australian colleagues sending image-filled concertina books to women learning to read and write in Kabul, Afghanistan. The books were an invitation for dialogue and the Afghan women responded by writing their stories over and around the imagery. The final project focuses on artists Melissa Potter and Miriam Schaer's *Crafting Women's Stories* (2013). The artists ran five, two-day workshops making felted autobiographical book art with women participants across various destinations in rural Kakheti in the Republic of Georgia. At the end of the project, the books were sold to raise money for the participants' families.

These three projects are bound together by a set of similarities: the use of book art, the creation of book art as a collaborative process, the projects being run by artist/s with input from members of a particular social group and the desire for the project to have both a social/political and artistic outcome. These three case studies also reveal an interesting array of collaboratively produced one-off book art examples and a varied approach to encouraging social relations between participants (either through dialogue, book-making or skill sharing). What all three projects reveal is that when book art is used as a form of participatory art practice, it creates specific conditions for social interactions and art making that expand and contribute new understandings of participatory art. The aim of this research is to build a critical framework that assists with unpacking how participatory book art projects 'do' participation differently.

My approach to analysing these case studies has been to develop a responsive critical framework. This responsiveness acknowledges the emerging nature of my research, whereby certain themes came to light as important topics to understand the various

book art, processes and social relations taking place in individual case studies. These topics are given importance in the chapter headings and title, with themes of representation, dialogue and value framing case studies. It also notes that, whilst there are strong similarities in projects, the variety of involved agents, book art, social processes and contexts requires case studies to use slightly different methodologies, source material and drawing out of themes. This difference of approach is an aspect I will expand on later in this introduction.

The critical framework is comprised of literature and practices from 'book art' and 'participatory art' fields. The aim of the critical framework is twofold: On the one hand, it allows participatory book art projects to speak to and be positioned within the relevant theoretical communities of participatory art and book art fields. Thus it allows for this research to expand, add to and problematise some of the practices and theories in the two fields. Its second aim is to draw on literature and practices from participatory art and book art to develop an investigation of some of the processes and outcomes occurring in case studies within this thesis. These theoretical fields, therefore, are important; book art accounts for the importance of the book as an object in case studies, allowing a study of the content, materiality, tactility and formal properties of examples. Participatory art accounts for the social and emancipatory processes surrounding the books' making. It grants entry into exploring the multitude of questions regarding dialogue, agency, participation, empowerment and representation that emerge across participatory book art case studies.

Placing participatory book art alongside the practices and literatures developed in participatory art and book art fields also results in this research expanding upon, contesting and interacting with some of its key narratives. As these two fields currently remain fairly separate, one of the key contributions of this thesis addresses how participatory book art projects can bring new knowledge to how these fields might interrelate or speak to one another differently. As a consequence of this, the majority of this introduction will be spent expanding and outlining the importance of the critical framework developed through the research and the term participatory book art. I want to emphasise that much of my research was emergent and responsive to the specific projects that I was investigating, as I wanted to see what themes and questions grew

from projects, rather than approach the research with a preconceived hypothesis. Therefore, although I see the projects in this thesis as sharing similarities (particularly the use of book art to explore a political and social concerns and also their basis in collaboration occurring between artists and 'non-artists'), the ways in which the projects unfold and explore issues of power, participation, value, dialogue and representation vary between the case studies. As previously explained, this is why the different case studies are framed under the concepts of representation, dialogue, and value. These themes highlight that, although a critical framework can present an approach to analysing book art, it must also be responsive to the context and influences in which projects take place, noting how they might diverge and differ. I will begin the introduction by outlining my research questions, followed by an expansion of the term participatory book art and an explanation of my methodology.

Research Questions

There are several similarities that emerge from the three case studies addressed in this thesis, which group and emphasise key features of participatory book art. I start by listing these research questions, followed by a description of how these questions emerge and assist with an understanding of participatory book art; in particular, focusing on how this research will investigate participatory book art as a new form of collaborative book art production and participatory art practice. The research questions consist of:

How do participants partake in the decision-making process or enact certain modes of making, against the 'control' of project outcomes by artist/s?

How is the workshop space planned, constructed and manifests in participatory book art?

How does the context in which the books are displayed and their framing in supporting documents effect their meaning?

How are participatory book art projects interacting with and speaking to book art and participatory art communities?

In what ways does participatory book art do participation differently?

In the following discussion I will clarify the importance of these questions and how they assist in an investigation of participatory book art. Explaining the research questions also draws out the similarities between case studies, showing a shared terrain between projects and a foundation for the term 'participatory book art'.

Participatory book art projects are initiated, organised and run by artists and involve the participation of different members of a social group in the production and circulation of book art. These social groups are selected by the artist and are defined by an identity such as 'homeless' or 'Kakheti women'. Certain ideas or understandings of these labels (including essentialist definitions) can come to influence how artists and organisers plan projects, as well as be critiqued by participants to challenge stereotypical designations. In case studies such as *The Homeless Library*, these labels can become a key concern not only in terms of who is invited to participate in the project, but also in thinking about how ideas of homelessness are represented and framed through the book art.

Generally, participatory book art projects are claimed as a collaboration between artists and participants, where the book art and the project aims are deemed to be jointly authored. I utilise the term 'participant' to suggest that there is a difference between the artist/s and those invited to create the books (the participants), often because the participant is invited from a particular social group (under a designated label) and is not necessarily in control of the funds or initial planning of the project. This term is not used to distinguish participants from those funding the project or linked to its development due to provision of knowledge or resources (such as NGO's or funders). Thus, I use 'agents' as a collective to note these three different positions: participant, artist and funders/organisers. These different levels of involvement from agents highlights that collaboration in participatory book art is often far from a straightforward mode of equality, as the artist/s is granted a certain authority in designing and implementing projects. The artist normally selects the book materials, designs the workshop layout, steers the activities and teaches bookmaking, with these aspects supported by the

funder. An integral part of this thesis, therefore, is to investigate and unpack how the collaboration manifests due to the specific conditions and involved agents within each case study. It requires questioning: *How do participants partake in the decision-making process or enact certain modes of making, against the 'control' of project outcomes by artist/s?* It requires a questioning in the case studies of how participants might speak back to the frameworks and aims laid out by the artists. Furthermore, as projects are also funded or supported by a wide variety of organisations, it is also essential to address the parameters and restrictions that organisations can impose on the outcomes. To account for these values and desires various agents bring to projects, the framework will respond to how authority or project aims are written into the project development, are enacted and challenged by various agents and given visibility in individual case studies through organisers and funders publications and outputs.

Connections between projects also surface in the artist/s encouraging participants to make books as self-expression. Autobiographical narration can be directed and encouraged around a theme (such as experiences of bravery in relation to homelessness), self-reflection on identities (such as being a woman) or concerned with participants understanding of their communities (such as rural Kakheti). The production of books also occurs within a shared social space, whether that is the workshop in *Crafting Women's Stories* and *The Homeless Library*, or the classroom in *Unfolding Projects*. These spaces are designed to encourage discussion, conversation and debate around particular issues that relate to the project aims, issues which then influence or are fed back into participants' books. As the workshop is a dominant method for book art production in the case studies, one of the key enquiries of this thesis is: *How is the workshop space planned, constructed and manifests in participatory book art?* This enquiry addresses how the space and workshop approach might influence social relations and the book art produced. This research question is approached primarily in the first chapter and feeds into individual case studies. Chapter one is crucial in establishing the relationship between participatory book art (1990s – present) and the era of community art (1960s – 1980s). Establishing this relationship is important, because although the workshop is continually employed across these periods as a method of art creation and idea generation through the involvement of multiple agents in non-hierarchical and collaborative approaches, there is little theory

which addresses how the workshop approach might establish certain relations or ways of making. I also investigate wider issues regarding how influences on the funding of workshops might shape how the method is performed and designed, as well as impact the ability of the participant to alter the project outcomes.

A final similarity surfaces in the use of the completed books to emphasise a political or social cause. In *The Homeless Library*, the books are displayed at the Houses of Parliament to advocate support and draw attention to current policy around homelessness in the UK. Additionally, in *Unfolding Projects* the funds from the sale of the books are used to support the assisting charity's Vocational Training Centre in Kabul, Afghanistan. These contexts of display are far from neutral and need to be investigated to consider how they frame projects within certain narratives. Furthermore, many of the projects have supporting documents often authored by the organisers and artists that translate and present outcomes (and participants) in particular ways. With this in mind, another research question arose: *How does the context in which the books are displayed and their framing in supporting documents effect their meaning?* This question also accounts for how the narratives which support book art are often entangled in a political climate in which funders of projects increasingly demand evidence, evaluation and accountability for art practices. This climate of evaluation is discussed in chapter one in relation to a history of community arts.[2] It is also a recurring discussion point in the case studies, as I question how the parameters or commissions set by funders might constrict, encourage or promote certain developments and outcomes in projects.

To approach the analysis of case studies and answer these research questions, one of the key contributions of this thesis is a critical framework comprised of book art and participatory art fields. The literature from these fields allows for a discussion of projects that not only addresses the content, materiality and formal properties of the books, but

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[2] I will draw on a range of different literature to account for the influence of impact studies on the arts in the 1980s and 1990s. I also take note of Rimi Khan's suggestion that a neoliberal climate of accountability demands artists to continually evidence a projects success. See chapter one for this discussion, which uses the theoretical ideas of: Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty (eds.) (2017) *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing.; François Matarasso. (2013) *All in this Together: The Depoliticisation of Community Art in Britain 1970 – 2011.* Rotterdam: ICAF. [Online] [Accessed on 1st November 2018] Available from: https://arestlessart.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/2013-all-in-this-together.pdf.; Rimi Khan. (2015) *Art in Community The Provisional Citizen*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

also accounts for the different questions regarding dialogue, agency, participation, empowerment and representation that are raised in relation to the social processes taking place. Whilst these questions are asked of all the case studies, the framework is utilised in a responsive approach and considers how these elements emerge in the specific context of the project and accounts for why some themes may appear dominant in certain case studies. By reading projects through participatory art and book art fields, I am also contributing and expanding to some of their well-iterated narratives. Thus, one of the crucial investigations raised by considering and positioning case studies within these fields is: *How are participatory book art projects interacting with and speaking to book art and participatory art communities?* For example, as participatory art practices gain increasing popularity within art historical discourse, connecting this field with book art addresses the latter's continually marginalised position. This marginalised position could be because the field of book art has struggled for a long time with a crisis of terminology, and there are continual debates over what counts as book art – forcing writers to persistently define which boundaries they are working within.[3] It may also be due to a persistent hierarchy of art forms in the canon, in which galleries and museums tend to favour displaying and collecting high art forms of painting and sculpture over book art.[4] As books do not always display easily under glass cases, many circulate in art libraries, changing the ways in which they are engaged with and given value.[5] Whilst writing in the book art field is useful for an analysis of thematic and formal concerns when researching examples (interpreting a book's meaning through considerations of structure, tactility, composition, colour, movement, etc.), when it comes to participatory book art these approaches do not allow a discussion of

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[3] It is also worth noting that many definitions have emerged from libraries and galleries, due to the need to form collections under specific policies. This particularly comes through in: Maria White, Patrick Perratt and Liz Lawes. (2006) *Artists' Books a Cataloguer's Manual.* London: ARLIS.

[4] Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Morton suggest that there is a 'hierarchy of museum values'. Although speaking from the context of photographs, they highlight that certain art forms or 'masterpieces' are valued above others in both collection policies and in what is displayed. These hierarchies are often entangled in the concept of museums as 'knowledge systems', which react to social and political ideologies on what items are of historical or artistic worth. I argue that a similar premise is in operation in the lack of valuing or giving visibility to book art. Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Morton. (2015) *Photographs, Museums, Collections Between Art and Information.* London: Bloomsbury, pp.3-7.

[5] Nola Farman suggests that engagement and readership with artists' books lies primarily with the art world. However, I would assert that this is often due to their context in art libraries, rather than 'traditional' gallery collections. There are significant UK based collections of artists' books in library settings including the British Library, the National Art Library, Tate Library, Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections, Glasgow School of Art Library and Winchester School of Art Library. Nola Farman. (2007) 'Artists' Books: Managing the Unmanageable.' *Library Management,* 29(4/5), pp.319-326.

the social processes and labour models involved in the act of co-creating.[6] To consider these latter processes it is useful to connect these projects to a growing field of theory around participatory art. By bringing together these two fields, new knowledge is contributed to the book art field in an address of the contexts in which books circulate, considerations of 'non-artist' authorship and accounting for the collective processes involved in book art production.

The responsive critical framework further situates participatory book art within the participatory art field. Participatory art surfaced in the 1990s to address a proliferation of practices which attempt to diffuse and blur the supposed boundaries between art and life. These practices are difficult to define and might best be understood under Tom Finkelpearl's notion of a 'spectrum of activity'.[7] Finkelpearl's concept of the spectrum attempts to account for the varying ways artists are co-producing with a range of different institutions and participants. As previously mentioned, in the case of participatory book art, agents can range from artists to funders, participants or NGO organisers. Finkelpearl suggests that practices can employ a variety of mediums from conversation through to urban design and often claims the work has a particular aesthetic as much as produce 'real' social changes, whether through advocating a political issue or improving social cohesion between individuals.[8] The multiple disguises of these practices have resulted in varying supporting theories and names, including: relational art, dialogical art, participatory art, socially engaged art, social practice, littoral art, new genre public art, and social cooperation.[9] Although these terms have different

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[6] There is a dominance of reading book art through formal/compositional concerns, even if concerns with democratic distribution emerge in the use of cheap, multiple editions at the end of the 1970s. I raise the issue here to suggest that most critics garner book art's meaning from interpreting the content and its relation to formal/compositional arrangements. Arguably, this precedence was set by Johanna Drucker in Johanna Drucker (1994) *The Century of Artists' Books*. New York: Granary Books. However, it also emerges in: Renée Riese Hubert and Judd D. Hubert. (1999) *Cutting Edge of Reading Artists' Books*. New York: Granary Books and Riva Castleman. (1994) *A Century of Artists Books*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.

[7] Tom Finkelpearl. (2013) *What we Made Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation.* London: Duke of University Press, p.4.

[8] Ibid., pp.4-5.

[9] Maria Lind's essay on 'The Collaborative Turn' provides a good indication of the many terms emerging in current theory. Certain terms are also connected to particular theories. For example, 'dialogical art' emerges from Grant Kester to describe works which generally utilise verbal conversation. 'New Genre Public Art' is Suzanne Lacy's term for large scale, collaborative public art. 'Relational art' is from Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* to describe gallery-based participatory works. Finally, 'socially engaged art' is used in Nato Thompson's *Living as Form.* Grant Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces Community + Communication in Modern Art.* Berkeley: University of California Press; Maria Lind. (2007) 'The Collaborative Turn.' *In* Maria Lind, Johanna Billing and Lars Nilsson. (eds.) *Taking the Matter into Common Hands On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices.* London: Black Dog Publishing; Nato Thompson. (ed.) (2012) *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011.* New York: Creative Time Book;

meanings, and are connected to particular histories and methodologies, they also relate to a narrative of a changing political and social climate at the end of the twentieth century. This change is cited as being brought about by the 1968 student uprisings, anti-Vietnam protests, civil rights, queer theory, feminism, the community arts movement and a general anti-establishment wave of activity.[10] It is, therefore, not surprising that these art practices tend to have a feeling of urgency, even if taking place over prolonged periods of time – with many feeding off a desire to produce change against a backlash to forms of capitalism and privatisation within neoliberal agendas.[11] Whilst I will later clarify that the use of participatory art has a specific meaning in this 'spectrum of activity', there are certain themes that appear in this field regarding agency, authorship, representation, dialogue and value, which, as previously discussed, present useful approaches to analysis of the case study.[12]

My research also acknowledges that participatory book art projects do not simply mirror or reiterate practices and theories developed in the participatory art field – highlighting the importance of questioning how these practices relate to this body of theory. I suggest that participatory book arts focus on making objects (making books) constitutes new understandings of participation, dialogue and value in the participatory art field. A key example of this is chapter three on *Unfolding Projects*. I consider how writing on participatory art tends to advocate conversation and the physical meeting of individuals as the primary practice for building social relations. Grant Kester, Nicolas Bourriaud and Suzanne Lacy are the primary authors in this strand of thought and suggest that verbal conversation and physical meeting is a means of both strengthening the social bond and encouraging communication.[13] Whilst I would not entirely disregard this statement, the author's approach tends to dismiss other less direct contexts for

Nicolas Bourriaud. (1998) *Relational Aesthetics.* Dijon: les presses du reel; Suzanne Lacy. (1995) *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle: Bay Press.

[10] This list of social changes is cited by Alison Jeffers, who suggests a counter culture was a defining factor for influencing the emergence of the community arts movement. Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. Op. Cit., p.39.

[11] Suzanne Lacy also states that art concerned with social change also has a degree of urgency. Suzanne Lacy. Op. Cit., p.31. Nato Thompson also suggests the rise of neoliberalism and the private sector in the 2000s had a large impact on art practices. He lists a series of influences including: unrest due to the Afghan and Iraq wars, formation of the European Union, genocide in Rwanda, the events of 11th September 2001 and a more general move to precarious labour and increased racial divisions. Nato Thompson. Op. Cit.

[12] Tom Finkelpearl. Op. Cit., p.4.

[13] I will discuss the author's different arguments in the chapter on *Unfolding Projects*. Grant Kester. Op. Cit; Nicolas Bourriaud. Op. Cit; Suzanne Lacy. Op. Cit.

participatory art practice. Thus, one of the dominant questions that is asked throughout this thesis is: *how does participatory book art do participation differently?* To answer this question I depart from the position defined by Kester, Lacy and Bourriaud and argue through the *Unfolding Projects* case study that book art sent between two groups of women from different geographical locations (whom never physically meet) can be equally as empowering and involve the formation of connections between individuals. This emancipation occurs because book art presents the participants with a certain freedom and autonomy to voice their opinions, in a society where they are often spoken for or re-represented. Furthermore, the social connection occurs without the women ever meeting due to the book's presentation as a gift, which implicates a circle of return – developing and furthering the dialogue. It highlights that participation in dialogue and development of social relations can grow through the creation of books and is not stimulated solely by face-to-face meetings and verbal exchanges pedestalled in participatory art theory.[14]

I will also question understandings of participation by problematising a straightforward system of evaluating participatory art practices through predetermined notions of benefit or best practice in the chapter on *Crafting Women's Stories*. These evaluation systems often judge projects against fixed criterion which create extreme values in participatory art practice. For example, renouncing artistic authorship is always deemed ethical. Or, exploiting participants is viewed as the dominant means of awakening audiences to the issues of a capitalist system.[15] By drawing on the theories of Barbara Hernstein-Smith, I argue that values cannot be predetermined or whittled down into a

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[14] Morgan Quaintance's article highlights how socially engaged art projects are increasingly focused on dematerialised processes and generally refrain from, or move away from, traditional art making methods. Morgan Quaintance. (2012) 'Private Moments.' *Art Monthly,* 354, March, pp.7-10.

[15] Claire Bishop questions the notion that projects in which artists renounce their authorship are always 'beneficial' or morally superior in providing agency to participants (arguments she suggests come from the theoretical ideas of Grant Kester and Maria Lind). However, Bishop's work has also been used to suggest those practices which use participants as material or implicate spectators in participant's exploitation are more valuable to revealing a capitalist system. I argue that in either of these project models, they suggest certain values/actions can be easily transferred to any project, without acknowledging the specific context and involved agents. Furthermore, I also dispute Vid Simoniti's suggestion of a pragmatic approach to evaluation where projects are judged both by artistic values and against projects from other discourses. It still relies on ideas of absolute or fixed criteria – I show that values are fluctuating and emergent. Claire Bishop. (2006) 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents.' *Artforum International,* 44(6), pp.178-183. Vid Simoniti. (2018) 'Assessing Socially Engaged Art.' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 76(1), pp.71-82.

singular account of a project's outcomes or benefits.[16] Instead, value should always be seen as 'contingent' on a range of different factors and account for interacting agents and their 'personal economies', as well as the influence of the contexts in which projects take place.[17] Hence, in *Crafting Women's Stories* I trace (as far as possible) the various values that different agents bring to the project, noting where these collide, emerge and gain visibility. I also argue that values are not always obvious or easily recorded and that a different approach to evaluating projects needs to be considered which is responsive and acknowledges absences. Although the discussion on value occurs in the chapter on *Crafting Women's Stories*, it emerges as an issue in several of the participatory book art case studies in this thesis. In particular, I draw on the theoretical ideas of Erin Manning to address how bodily actions, gestures and non-actions in case studies are often the 'minor' narratives which are overwritten or unrecorded as they do not conform to the 'major' or predetermined values.[18]

The preceding discussion has revealed a series of research questions which both acknowledge the similarities between projects, as well as accounting for how the differing agents, power relations, book forms and approaches to participation in case studies can raise specific themes and differing outcomes. My aim is to challenge and expand some of the dominant narratives in book art and participatory art fields, through contributing original notions of dialogue, representation, participation and value through case study analysis. It is also worth noting that my research intention from the beginning was never to force projects within a framework of 'good' or 'bad' participatory art practice. Instead, I am concerned with analysing and unpacking the claims that participatory book art makes and seeing how they interact with literature in book art and participatory art fields. Unpacking the claims of the projects also requires taking the artists aims for the project seriously. For example, in *Crafting Women's Stories* the aim is to empower Kakheti women to voice their experiences in the workshop through verbal means and within the pages of book art. This notion of autobiography as emancipatory

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[16] Barbara Hernstein-Smith. (1988) *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*. London: Harvard University Press.

[17] Ibid., pp.30-31.

[18] The notion of major and minor values appears in *The Minor Gesture.* Erin Manning. (2015) '10 Propositions for a Radical Pedagogy, or How to Rethink Value'. *Inflexions*, (8), April, pp.202-210; Erin Manning. (2016) *The Minor Gesture*. London: Duke University Press.

materialises in reaction to a Kakheti community where individual expression is limited. It also emerges in the artist's belief in feminist ideals of self-expression through art as empowering, and the social benefit of collective spaces of production. To analyse this project, therefore, requires a reading of how these claims may be enacted, enforced and disrupted by considering them against the various project operations, participants' responses and entangled ideologies. Hence why a significant aspect of this research has been to develop a responsive critical framework in which to read participatory book art, which engages with concerns as they surface within individual projects. This is not to dispose of the shared characteristics highlighted through the term participatory book art or the theoretical fields of participatory art and book art, but rather use this as a grounding or springboard for tracing how projects might transform values, authorship, representation and dialogue and book art. To emphasise this grounding, I will now expand on the term 'participatory book art' and review some of the literature from the fields of 'book art' and 'participatory art' to highlight how the case studies begin to speak to and interact with these fields.

Participatory Book Art: Advocating a Term

After establishing the predominant research questions and aims of this thesis, I now want to advocate the various histories and ideologies entangled in the term 'participatory book art'. Unpacking the term presents a useful method of reviewing some of the surrounding literature and loosely position participatory book art practices. I approach this definition by breaking down the term into 'participation' and 'book art' as a way of complicating a fixed meaning by considering the specificities of these two fields, whilst noting where these two terms converge to contribute new knowledge. 'Participatory book art' is by no means a perfect label, but I use it to establish an anchor from which to start threading the various processes, methodologies and agents that participatory book art case studies move across and within. When interpreting individual case studies, I scale-out from this foundation to draw on literature which assists in analysing the different operations taking place, including: gift theory, media and

academic narratives on Afghan women's emancipation, representation in social documentary, pedagogical approaches and organisational space theory.

The term 'participatory book art' was difficult to arrive at. Like with most labels, it can end up presenting a false cohesiveness which fixes certain attributes of projects and does not necessarily capture the intricacies and variations of individual practices. Initially, I employed the term 'socially engaged book art' to explain the projects within this thesis, with 'socially engaged art' gaining increased popularity and use in the 21st century to designate collaborative art practices.[19] Nato Thompson states that socially engaged art projects are 'both poetic, yet functional and political as well. They engage people and confront a specific issue. While these participatory projects are far removed from what one might call the traditional studio arts – such as sculpture, film, painting and video – which field they do belong to is hard to articulate.'[20] To attempt to present some similarities and articulate practices, Thompson works through the methodologies and approaches socially engaged art projects employ. Whilst some of these relate to participatory book art, such as DIY forms of making, projects taking place outside of traditional art establishments and as a reaction to hegemonic representations, many socially engaged practices continually focus on dematerialised processes.[21] This focus on dematerialised processes is at odds with the projects in this thesis, as the attention is on making books using traditional art methods and the social processes are gathered around book production. Whilst the use of the term socially engaged may have validated participatory book art projects with an on-trend demarcation, it soon became clear that case studies focus on object making and the workshop as the site of production linked these practices to community arts. Hence, in chapter one, I accentuate how participatory arts practices have stronger relations to community arts than socially engaged art. To consider these historical connections and emphasise the use of the term participatory book art, I begin by investigating the relevance of book art, before considering what the term participation implies.

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[19]Vid Simoniti's recent article emphasises the shift in the last twenty-five years to a popularity of work by 'politically committed artists.' He addresses some of the key terms, theories and artworks to fall under and around the term 'socially engaged art'. Vid Simoniti. Op. Cit., pp.71-82.
[20] Nato Thompson, Op. Cit., p.18.
[21] Ibid, pp.21-28.

As previously stated, the term participatory book art gives significance to the social and artistic processes directed toward the production and circulation of books. Book art is a terrain of constant invention, where books are not constrained by traditional formats of the paperback structure but range from elaborate, textured, flower-fold books, to book boxes with a disparate array of loose pages which can be read in various orders. Although I have not had physical access to the books within case studies (having viewed examples through secondary publications), I analyse (as far as possible) their compositional, textual and visual compositions in case studies. Often, much of the frustration when reading book art from secondary sources comes from not being able to experience the tactile and sensory aspect of the books – particularly those examples which play with unusual page sequencing or the textures of materials. However, this does not prevent an analysis or understanding of book art as a performative form which demands physical and sensory *participation* from readers to interpret its meaning. I write about how *the Homeless Library* books demand a haptic engagement through their altered, unique and handwritten format. Furthermore, how the textures of the felt books in *Crafting Women's Stories* must have formed a far more sensory reading engagement than with a traditional, paper codex. It highlights that in this thesis I account for reading as a multi-sensory activity and address how each page interacts with the entirety of the book to form meaning.

a) Book Art

Situating participatory book art projects in the book art field also provides a wider acknowledgement of the medium in art history discourse. This situation is important, because although materialising out of the 1970s and gaining a growing establishment through centres, fairs, libraries and exhibitions, book art remains somewhat of a niche field, regularly deemed to circulate amongst an elite audience of those 'in-the-know'[22]. This elite readership is often because book art demands a different form of reading, challenging the audience's interaction by playing with the traditional format of the book in the production of more sculptural or non-linear narrative forms. Even if employing the more traditional paperback structure, text and image can perform differently, with

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[22] Hubert and Hubert suggest that readers of book art are part of an elite. Renée Riese Hubert and Judd D. Hubert. Op. Cit., p.242.

traditional uses of paint, print and photography or more obscure materials such as hair, lead or lace utilised; light, shadow, movement, space, absence, sound and tactility all interact to produce meaning. This field is, therefore, far from static and has resulted in various terminologies including: artists' books (with or without the apostrophe), bookworks, biblio-objects, book objects, and even the 'not-book', often used in accordance with examples or in support of arguments.[23] The scale of debate over definition is particularly evident in Stefan Klima's *Artists' Books: A Critical Survey of the Literature* (1998). Klima reserves a whole chapter on definitions in his book, reiterating the different terms and highlighting the continual debate over their suitability well into the 1990s.[24]

Rather than reiterate this well-trodden discussion, for this thesis it is useful to turn to book art drawn from Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden's *A Manifesto for the Book* (2010).[25] Unlike 'artists' books', book art moves focus away from the creator as an artist. It allows participants within case studies to have a claim to authorship, even if this does not operate in a straightforward manner. Within the manifesto, book art as a term encompasses a wide range of different formats to not only include books made by artists, but also sculptural forms, stickers, pamphlets, digital examples and ephemera.[26] Acknowledging this range of book forms is important for an analysis of participatory book art, as examples in case studies range from badges, to repurposed bottles as book surfaces, felt codices, concertinas and more traditional pamphlets.[27] Sowden and Bodman see book art as a continually expanding arena, much like Johanna Drucker's suggestion that artists' books are a 'zone of activity'.[28] Drucker asserts:

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[23] Although an old article, Simon Ford's account of artists books in libraries lists twenty-five different artists' book definitions and alternative names. White, Perratt and Lawes have also suggested that authors select terms as they interact or support their collection policy or theoretical argument. Their argument is visible in certain texts. For example, Drucker focuses on artists' books that generally employ a traditional book form, are published in multiple editions and consist of experiments with text and image. Stewart Garrett utilises 'bookworks' to accentuate examples shown in gallery spaces that are more sculptural and make reading conditions obsolete: Johanna Drucker. Op. Cit; Maria White, Patrick Perratt and Liz Lawes. Op. Cit; Simon Ford. (1993) 'Artists Books in the UK and Eire Libraries.' *Art Library Journals,* 18(1), pp.14-25; Stewart Garrett. (2011) *Bookwork: Medium to Object to Concept in Art*. London: University of Chicago Press.
[24] Stefan Klima. (1998) *Artists Books A Critical Survey of the Literature.* New York: Granary Books, pp.21-40.
[25] Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden. (2010) *A Manifesto for the Book.* Bristol: Impact Press.
[26] Ibid., pp.5-6.
[27] Participants create badges in *The Homeless Library* – I raise this point because I do not analyse the badges in my case study, but do consider them book art.
[28] Johanna Drucker. Op. Cit., p.1.

> If all the elements or activities which contribute to artists' books are described, what emerges is a space made by their intersection, one which is a zone of activity, rather than a category in which to place works by evaluating whether they meet or fail to meet certain rigid criteria.[29]

Through Drucker's concept, the introduction of participatory book art - which currently lacks in-depth analysis – can be understood as pushing and expanding the zone of book art. It also becomes dependent and interrelated to other fields of practice, such as writings on participatory arts and the emerging literature drawn upon in individual case studies.

b) Participation

In comparison to book art, participation is a far more complicated term. When utilised in collaborative and socially engaged art theory it can be employed to suggest various agents are taking part, with this neutrality masking the coercion and problematics behind participation. It suggests that when artists invite participants to 'activate' an artwork or collaborate on a project it involves a straightforward process of equality or consensus, which lacks any form of tension or power dynamics. To attempt to complicate this understanding of collaboration, theorists have presented several different models or levels of participation from audiences. These can range from participants as 'materials' for the artist, to the co-authorship of ideas between artists and participants. Pablo Helguera whittles participation in arts down to four types: nominal, directed, creative and collaborative.[30] These span from 'nominal participation', which describes audiences simply 'contemplating' the work in a reflective manner, to a more involved responsibility from participants in 'collaborative' projects in which they develop the structure and content of the work with and alongside the artist.[31] Others, such as Finkelpearl, have drawn on Sherry Arnstein's 1969 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' (figure one). [32] Arnstein's ladder sets out a hierarchy of forms of

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[29] Ibid., p.1.
[30] I should be clear that Pablo Helguera does not term collaborative practices 'participatory arts', but 'socially engaged art'. However, he does write a section on 'participatory structures' – hence, the discussion on the different levels of participation; Pablo Helguera. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art A Materials and Techniques Handbook.* New York: Jorge Pinto Books, pp.14-15.
[31] Ibid., pp.14-15.
[32] Tom Finkelpearl. Op. Cit., p.11.

participation in an attempt to re-think the flow of information and the more active involvement of citizens in the decision-making process (often used in urban planning and architecture). The ladder depicts 'citizen control' at the top and 'manipulation' and 'therapy' at the bottom.[33] Whilst these categories or ladders are useful for thinking through the different roles or individual's level of involvement, when used to understand projects they can be fixed and systematic in their depictions. These models suggest that projects can be read or categorised into a singular form of participation, with the top 'rung' of the ladder always cited as beneficial. However, I argue that participatory book art projects move across different models of participation and that the artist or participant's control or valuing of the project outcomes varies. For example, in participatory book art projects the workshop structure may be established and facilitated by the artist (falling into Helguera's concept of creative participation), but the content and structure of the book art is determined by the participants (moving closer to collaborative participation).[34] Furthermore, although the workshop may be designed and run by the artist with a particular outcome in mind (suggesting an element of control), in many participatory book art projects the participants challenge these aims, or artists are reliant on both the input, or occasionally, the skills of the participants. Therefore, it is perhaps more useful to envision 'participation' as a constantly moving and renegotiated dynamic. As Claire Bishop states: 'The artist relies on the participants' creative exploitation of the situation that he/she offers, just as participants require the artist's cue and direction. This relationship is a continual play of mutual tension, recognition, and dependency.'[35] Bishop's statement presents a need to investigate the way in which participation shifts, and account for how it might be read and evaluated. It requires an understanding of participation as more than action or involvement and as not always clear, or easily evidenced. For example, not partaking, or simply benefitting from being in a shared space, can count as participating, even if not easily captured in documentation or reports on the project. It also recognises that following an artist's instruction or an artist having a primary authority over the project, does not always imply

[33] Ibid., pp.11-12.
[34] Pablo Helguera states that creative participation is when a 'visitor provides content for a component of the work.' Collaborative participation is described as a process wherein 'the visitor shares responsibility for developing the structure and content of the work in collaboration and direct dialogue with the artist'. Pablo Helguera. Op. Cit., p.15.
[35] Claire Bishop. (2012) 'Participation and Spectacle: Where are we Now?' *In* Nato Thompson. (ed.) *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art From 1991-2011.* New York: Creative Time Books, p.41.

a strict mode of oppression on participants. What is important is to consider the different agents' actions (or lack of action) as they manifest across the project, as well as how these are granted and validated (and on whose authority).

c) Conditions of participatory art's emergence

It is also essential to address how the term participatory arts gained popularity in discourse, by investigating the conditions that supported its emergence as they interact with and set the scene for participatory book art projects. Although Mark Webster and Glen Buglass suggest that participatory art was used interchangeably with community art, participation appears to indicate a particular social and political climate influencing collaborative art works.[36] For example, François Matarasso states that participation references a shift to the more depoliticised practices of the 1990s. He states:

> The path from 'community art' to 'participatory art', whilst seen as merely pragmatic by those who made it, marked and allowed a transition from the politicised and collectivist action of the seventies towards the depoliticised, individual-focused arts programmes supported by public funds in Britain today.
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> Of course, this is a simplification. There was non-political community art work in the 1970s and 1980s and there is challenging socially-engaged arts work now. But the trend of the past 40 years has been from radicalism to remedialism.[37]

Whilst I believe this unfairly categorises all post-1990s participatory art as unradical and individualist, it does suggest a need to acknowledge the changing funding streams and institutional uses of art preceding the community arts movement. These changes are eloquently traced in Alison Jeffers' account of the shifting climate surrounding community arts, of which a brief summary is worth repeating.[38]

Jeffers highlights that the rise of Thatcherism and privatisation in the 1980s left many community arts organisations unable to transform or maintain funding streams. Community arts organisations could not rely on diminishing government funding or

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[36] Mark Webster and Glen Buglass. (2005) *Community Art Workers: Finding Voices, Making Choices Creativity for Social Change.* Nottingham: Educational Heretics Press, p.19.
[37] François Matarasso. Op. Cit.
[38] Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. Op. Cit., pp.40-43.

compete for funding with the larger art institutions. The larger organisations were able to generate money through box office or merchandise sales, responding to the rising pressure on institutions to employ a 'mixed economy' model.[39] Community arts organisations' not-for-profit status often left them in a financially unstable position, and many were experiencing stricter control on their radical or activist possibilities through pressures to register as charities and restrict their political campaigning ability.[40] As funding avenues decreased and competition increased, criteria by which to judge and select projects became commonplace.

By the early 1990s, organisations increasingly utilised the project brief and commission to select, and arguably enforce, certain models of participation and best practice.[41] These forms of monitoring have resulted in funding stemming from what Sophie Hope terms the 'socially engaged art commission'.[42] Hope explains that the brief is written by the organisation who provide the funds and is mainly comprised of objectives, timescales and budget, with the artist responding or fulfilling the brief.[43] These briefs do not encourage longitudinal or organic progression, but construct projects through a model of short-term, professionalised and 'self-sufficient' development.[44] This discussion on the short term brief model will re-emerge again in chapter one, where I investigate how the workshops in participatory book art involve funders utilising the brief to enforce certain time restrictions that limit a project's potential. These restrictions model the funders as having a certain authority over the project development, often by using the brief to fix or control outcomes, as well as through dictating capital and resources. For example, a similar brief model emerges in *Crafting Women's Stories* in which the artists responded to a grant call-out, with their application later used by the funders to hold the artists to account for the divergences in the project. Holding the artists to account is an aspect Hope criticises, as she conceives of commissions as contrasting to the actual practice. She asserts: 'While community or socially engaged artists might embrace fluid,

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[39] Ibid., p.143.
[40] Ibid., p.40.
[41] This is drawn from Jeffers chapter on 'The British Arts Movement 1968 – 1986'. Ibid., pp.140-142.
[42] Sophie Hope. (2017) 'From Community Arts to the Socially Engaged Arts Commission.' *In* Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. (eds.) *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 203-221.
[43] Ibid., p.204.
[44] Ibid., p.204. Alison Jeffers also raises a similar concern with self-sufficiency. Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. Op. Cit., p.143.

overlapping and messy encounters, the commission as a semi-visible frame is defined by funding, timescales, agendas and expectations.'[45]

The construction of expectations by funders is also entangled in a dictation of money as an 'investment' rather than a 'subsidy', indicating a demand for a return and fixed parameters on the project.[46] Webster has suggested that this control is to monitor and utilise art for funder's own gains and to constrict radical or emerging possibilities. He asserts: 'Many institutions, better able to see the advantages of being seen to give up power rather than actually give up power, have thus seized on participation as a very effective tool of legitimation.'[47] It is important to be aware of these discussions, as this image of giving up power surfaces in several of the chapters in this thesis, such as the use of book art in *Unfolding Projects* being employed to fulfil the charity's monetary needs rather than to empower the participants. It highlights that institutions may appear to implement policies or run projects which encourage inclusion or empowerment of the public, yet often use this as a marketing ploy that does little to alter their structure and hence maintains certain hierarchies and exclusions. What this discussion also emphasises is the diverse array of participatory book art projects funding sources - from the Heritage Lottery Fund to a small charity – indicating how arts has gained increasing use value in institutional agendas. It underlines the growing importance of the cultural industries in a service economy, but also that art continually relies on numerous sources from 'local government, charitable giving and business sponsorship.'[48]

The use of fixed criteria by which to judge and monitor projects is also entangled in the growth of several 'impact' studies surfacing towards the end of the 20th century, which encouraged an increased instrumentalization of the arts.[49] Arguably, other uses for art materialised as early as 1974 in the Community Arts Working Party Report, which rendered community arts a 'service to society' and highlighted how local authorities

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[45] Sophie Hope. Op. Cit., p.204.
[46] Alison Jeffers. Op. Cit., p.143.
[47] Mark Webster and Glen Buglass. Op. Cit., p.20.
[48] Jeffers writes about the benefits of National Lottery funding, which was introduced in 1994 and distributed by the Arts Council. She explains that the National Lottery's 'Arts for Everyone' scheme was the first to promote revenue spending, asserting: 'This was advantageous for participatory arts because the aims of this scheme were to encourage new audiences, develop participation in the arts, actively engage young people in cultural activities, support new work and encourage training and professional development.' Unfortunately, the National Lottery money depleted due to the Olympics. Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. Op. Cit., pp.143-146.
[49] Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett. (2010) *The Social Impact of the Arts: an Intellectual History.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

were already supporting practices through 'leisure committees' and 'other channels'.[50] However, this use of arts for welfare surfaced predominantly in Britain in the third-way politics of the New Labour era, where evidence-based policy became a mainstay of artistic practices. Art began to be used to fill the gaps of diminishing welfare services due to increased privatisation, and operated through targets, fixed commissions and policies of 'inclusion'.

This use of art to fulfil or interact with wider social concerns is also apparent in participatory book art projects. For example, Sheelagh Frew Crane's bookmaking workshops are a reaction to a climate of service cuts to the National Health Service in the UK and encourage participants to keep book art diaries to improve mental health. Additionally, Thompson's discussions on socially engaged art's interest in the decontextualized spectacle produced by dominant powers emerges in *the Homeless Library*'s concern with the media's fixed image of the homeless as alcoholic, rough sleepers. Thompson explains that the 'decontextualised spectacle' is part of the increased array of 'advertising in a more media-rich world', which draws on some of the avant-garde art tropes of shock and 'symbolic manipulation'.[51] Rather than being critical, these images are entangled in a neoliberal order that is focused on maximising the private sector and utilising visuals for sales. Thus, Thompson draws on Guy Debord's term the 'spectacle' and suggests that it 'refers to the process by which culture, expressions of a society's self-understanding, is produced within a capitalist machine'[52]. A decontextualized spectacle, therefore, is one that is removed from the actual experiences of those experiencing homelessness and is more concerned with maintaining a dominant hegemonic representation, which interacts with the 'capitalist machine' to highlight how the homeless fail to 'contribute' to society.[53] *The Homeless Library* attempts to negotiate and challenge this image by allowing different representations from participant's first-hand experiences of homelessness in the pages of book art to emerge and disrupt this stereotype. Hence, the case studies within this thesis are concerned with challenging dominant representations, as much as they are

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[50] Community Arts Working Party. (1974) *The Report of the Community Arts Working Party.* London: Arts Council of Great Britain.
[51] Nato Thompson, Op. Cit., pp.29-30.
[52] Ibid., p.29.
[53] Ibid., p.29.

about creating experiences or services that the artist considers to be missing from the current climate or participant's existence. It is important to note that these projects also interact with a growing service economy and, although the production of books signifies a return to materiality, dialogue taking place through objects does not simply create empty or 'simulated interactions', an aspect often criticised of digital or online interactions.[54]

Many participatory book art practices are also connected to a history of community arts. As a brief description, community arts is a movement which attempted to practice more inclusive participation by involving audiences in the art making process and challenged high art forms.[55] The relation of community arts to participatory book art emerges in the shared use of the workshop as a method of pooling the various agent's skills, producing book art and encouraging social relations. I link participatory book art to these histories in chapter one and readdress discussions over cultural democracy and forced participation, which were key debates within the community arts movement. These debates underline the idea that parachuting cultural forms into communities (historically into working class areas) can overwrite localised forms of culture or reiterate a limited range of cultural practices validated by the art establishment. I address the notion of cultural democracy in the chapter on *Crafting Women's Stories*, unpacking the effect of parachuting book art into a Kakheti community where it is not practiced or potentially valued. It also raises the need to be cautious of suggesting that participation only occurs in certain spaces and events (often those connected to 'high art' categorisations), rather than understanding that culture emerges in a range of different practices from cooking through to attending a sports tournament.[56] Being aware of these discussions does not require a dismissal of the term participation but rather to

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[54] Brogan Blunt highlights Nicolas Bourriaud's critique of electronic interaction seeing it as 'simulated interaction' that prevents genuine potential for social dialogue and participation. Brogan Blunt. (2009) *Bourriaud and the Aesthetics of Electronic Interaction*. New South Wales: University of Wollongong Research Online. [Online] [Accessed on 10th December 2018] Available from:
https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1261&context=creartspapers
[55] Alison Jeffers argues that community arts was a movement between the late 1960s and early 1980s. Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. Op. Cit., p.1.
[56] A discussion on widening the notion of culture is well addressed in: James Bau Graves. (2005) *Cultural Democracy The Arts, Community and the Public Purpose*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

'stay with the trouble', as Haraway might say, and address these concerns as they materialise in individual case studies.[57]

Alongside community arts, there could also be a case for linking museum and gallery education techniques to participatory book art practices. For example, Felicity Allen lists a series of feminist strategies that have been continually used in gallery education since the 1970s.[58] These strategies include: 'to be collective, egalitarian and to create alternative networks', 'to challenge the technical and aesthetic conventions of fine art' (highlighting how this relates to an increase use of postal art and 'folk' crafts), 'to create open-ended works and develop dialogues with audiences', 'to represent hidden histories' and to 'critique and demand change of mainstream institutions by both interventionist and separatist strategies'.[59] Allen's list of strategies aligns comfortably with some of the projects within this thesis, from *The Homeless Library's* concern with 'hidden histories', to *Crafting Women's Stories* use of 'folk craft' to challenge aesthetic conventions – even if none of the projects take place in a museum/gallery space. Furthermore, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's account of museum learning as an exploring of ideas of play, immersion, experience-based, co-creation and deconstructive techniques are highly related to aspects of contemporary participatory art[60]. Hooper-Greenhill's concepts surface in Nicolas Bourriaud's playful laboratory and works-in-progress within *Relational Aesthetics* to Nato Thompson's co-creative, deconstructive techniques materialising in socially engaged art methodologies.[61] The subject of education in museum and gallery spaces interacts with many of the ways I approach the analysis of the workshop in chapter one. I stress these histories as they are also often written out of narratives about the influences on contemporary participatory art practices. The writing out of gallery education is because of the increasing popularity of the 'educational turn' in curatorial departments, in which pedagogical techniques are seen to be employed in more critical and radical approaches once freed from the entertainment and service-

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[57] I am aware that Donna Haraway is using this term in the specific context of challenging the negativity of the Anthropocene, but I believe it is useful in terms of not dismissing an issue as finite, or unchangeable, but rather use 'trouble' in a generative approach. Donna J. Haraway. (2016) *Staying with the Trouble Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Durham: Duke University Press, p.3.

[58] Felicity Allen. (2011) 'Situating Gallery Education.' *Tate Encounters.* 2, June, pp.1-12.

[59] Ibid., p.10.

[60] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. (2007) *Museums and Education, Purpose, Pedagogy, Performance.* Abingdon: Routledge.

[61] Nicolas Bourriaud, Op. Cit.; Nato Thompson, Op. Cit.

fulfilling requirements of institutional and academic education.[62] Furthermore, this rupture from histories presents a method of maintaining the avant-garde claim to newness, perhaps accounting for participatory arts popularity in such contexts as the biennial.[63] Recently authors such as Michelle Millar Fischer, Carmen Mörsch, Helena Reckitt, Felicity Allen, Pablo Helguera and discussions within *Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics* (2012) have challenged museum education and community arts as being naïve and co-opted, asserting their often radical nature, relation to socially engaged practices and methodological and theoretical benefits to participatory and collaborative fields.[64] This is a substantial discussion, and likely to be better addressed in a separate study. However, I believe it is important to mention as it acts as a background to much of my thinking – not only because I have experience in museum education, but also because there is certainly a relationship between its methods and participatory book art projects.

Before outlining my methodology, it is worth summarising this discussion of participatory art and book art to accentuate and ground the definition. Participatory book art is a term

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[62] One of the best sources for understanding the educational turn in curation is an anthology of writings on *Curating and the Educational Turn.* Michelle Millar Fischar highlights how 'due to its increased professionalisation, the role of museum education has been largely exercised from institutional and scholarly histories of contemporary art. Instead, a theoretical and philosophical focus on "pedagogy" linked to the artist and curator has been forged within critical art histories.' Furthermore, in Carmen Morsch's essay 'Contradicting Oneself: Gallery Education as Critical Practice within the Educational Turn in Curating' she expands on Fischar's comment by showing that curatorial practices often draw on 'emancipative pedagogical approaches' from Paulo Freire, to Bell Hooks and Jacques Ranciere – rather than highlight connections to museum educators: Carmen Morsch. (2013) Contradicting Oneself: Gallery Education as Critical Practice within the Educational Turn in Curating.' *In* Kaija Kaitavuori, Laura Kokkonen and Nora Sternfeld (eds.) *It's All Mediating: Outlining and Incorporating the Roles of Curating and Education in the Exhibition Context.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p.13; Michelle Millar Fischer. (2011) *Museum Education and the Pedagogical Turn.* Summer. Artwrit. [Online] [Accessed on 1st January 2018] www.artwrit.com/article/museum-education-and-the-pedagogical-turn; Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson. (eds.) (2010) *Curating and the Educational Turn.* London: Open Editions.

[63] This is apparent in the popularity of Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*. Bourriaud's role as a curator is inseparable from the work he promotes in both galleries and biennales. As the curator is now the figure who 'makes or breaks' an artist's career (rather than the critic), participatory art becomes a crucial 'new' art form in contexts of display. To keep the scene fresh with 'new' works (and stimulate the market), curators respond by pedestalling particular art practices and adding them to a canon of 'relevant' works. For more on this discussion see: Michael Brenson. (1998) 'The Curator's Moment: Trends in the Field of International Contemporary Art Exhibitions.' *In* Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal and Solveig Øvstebø. (eds.) *The Biennial Reader*. Norway: Bergen Kunsthall, pp.222-239; Claire Bishop and Jennifer Roche (2008) 'Socially Engaged Art, Critics and Discontents: An Interview with Claire Bishop.' *In* Holly Crawford. (ed.) *Artistic Bedfellows: Histories, Theories and Conversations in Collaborative Art Practices*. Plymouth: University Press of American, pp.202-209.

[64] Carmen Mörsch. (2011) 'Alliances for Unlearning: On Gallery Education and Institutions of Critique*.' Afterall*, 26, Spring, pp.4-13; Felicity Allen. Op. Cit; Helena Reckitt. (2013) 'Forgotten Relations: Feminist Artists and Relational Aesthetics.' *In* Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry. (eds.) *Politics in a Glass: Case Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, pp.131-156; Marijke Steedman (ed.) (2012) *Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics.* London: Whitechapel Gallery; Michelle Millar Fisher. Op Cit; Pablo Helguera and Helen Reed. (2012) *Bad Education interview.* Living Archive, the Pedagogical Impulse. [Online] [Accessed on 26th June 2016] www.thepedagogicalimpulse.com/a-bad-education-helen-reed-interviews-pablo-helguera/.

that stresses and centres book art production in projects. Whilst book art discourse will be drawn upon to engage with the formal properties of books (composition, text, image etc.) and the tactile, multi-sensory and participatory modes of reading, 'participatory art' theory needs to be employed to understand the social and dematerialised processes surrounding its making. Participatory, therefore, signifies the involvement of participants from various different social groups in the book's production. The form of participation in projects cannot be encompassed under a single model but is understood as a moving dynamic, in which the project aims and books materialise under various different levels of involvement from artists and participants. Thus, writing from the field of 'participatory art' is employed to understand what relations and forms of participation are occuring in participatory book art case studies.

It is also beneficial to address what roles and forms of authorship agents are granted and perform, the wider political and social influences on the claims and outcomes, and how spaces of making may be designed, organised and manifest – with a focus on the workshop. These readings will be conducted in the specific context of case studies, diverging and reacting to the variations in projects, rather than judging participatory book art by fixed notions of 'beneficial' or 'good' collaborative practice. Critical analysis of participatory book art practice will also be responsive to the contingency of value, rather than reading case studies through predetermined criterion. I also thread projects to a history of community and participatory arts rather than socially engaged art practices, with the former stressing participatory book arts focus on object making and the workshop as method. To expand on this theoretical framework, I now address my approach to reading participatory book art projects through their documentation. I also clarify my choice of cases studies and the ways in which this thesis is structured.

Approaching Participatory Book Art: A Methodology

I began this research into participatory book art projects without a set hypothesis to prove or a concrete pre-conceived idea on what analysis might bring about. I wanted to be responsive to the particular contexts and practices of individual case studies and

respond to the themes and questions that would emerge as I gathered information. My primary methodology is researching case studies through documentation, interviewing artists, conducting workshop observations and reading relevant literature that helps to draw out some of the emerging themes. These multiple approaches draw from both art historical and social science methods and account for the diversity of artistic and social processes occurring in participatory book art projects. In this section, I discuss both the benefits and potential issues of these methods, outlining how they interact with the critical framework. Furthermore, I spend a significant proportion unpacking how researching case studies primarily from documentation requires a discussion of how this documentation might frame projects under certain narratives, and how these might be unpacked and problematised.

At an early stage in the research process it became clear that participatory book art projects were interacting with the fields of book art and participatory art, and that a critical framework comprised of these fields would allow them to speak to these theoretical communities as much as contain useful literature to address some of the key themes emerging in projects. Literature from the book art field is useful to analyse the formal and tactile aspects of book art. It emphasises that an approach to participatory book art projects must account for the books as artworks, considering their compositions, materials and processes involved in their making. This focus on the processes of making rather than the final outcome is also an aspect that links both the book art field and participatory art field together. In chapter two, I use the work of Andrew Eason to argue that the touch of the maker and the processes of making are visible in book art, even if the final outcome (the book) is still giving precedence. This has similarities to participatory art practice, where the process of making an artwork, group collaboration and idea generation are always valued and discussed, sometimes over the importance of an outcome. Book art literature, therefore, recognises the importance of touch in reader's interactions and is an aspect I explore through ideas of authenticity, uniqueness and materiality within individual case studies – acknowledging how haptic interactions are explored by both the makers and readers of book art.[65]

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[65] My case study on *The Homeless Library* addresses how the book art is modelled by the artists as 'authentic' through providing readers access to the 'touch' of the makers through their handmade qualities. I am not necessarily stating that handmade products are more 'authentic', but exploring this portrayal of the book art.

When book art literature is linked with the participatory art field, enquiries can also be made into how the space in which participatory book art projects are created (often the workshop) can influence the content of the books, how the various involved agents interact, potential power relations and the political and social potential of projects. As the case studies all take place in different locations, with different agents, timescales, materials and aims, it is often to take themes of power, collaboration, participation, value, representation and dialogue (which are issues well discussed in the participatory art field) and to question how they might operate or are explored in the specific conditions of the project. By using this responsive method, certain themes become dominant in particular case studies or are reinvented or explored differently in individual chapters.

To employ the critical framework in this research and investigate the book art as both objects and the social processes involved in the case studies, I draw on methods from art history (analysing book art, documentation and the book's display) and social science (conducting interviews and observing workshops in action) for this thesis. Utilising methods from these two disciplines acknowledges that participatory book art projects are dynamic entanglements which make various claims and are performing a mixture of traditional artmaking methods and social explorations. Therefore, in case studies I investigate both the books and their context of display, which tells us something of the materials, content and the processes behind their making (which draws from art history), as well as conduct observations of the workshop space and speak to artists (social science methods) allowing me to consider participants' involvement in the books and project aims, hierarchies between agents, how authority was being enacted, the physical impact of the workshop space and the potential influence of funding bodies. This is not to advocate this mixed-methodology or approach as complete. There are certainly future investigations into space theory and many narratives or experiences (particularly the participant's), which could contribute to the perspectives and understandings of participatory book art. As the projects involve many agents (and on different levels) there are many perspectives to unpack, confusing the idea that there is one 'narrative' or understanding of outcomes. This understanding of the complexity of perspectives often results in my case studies holding and exploring these various views and experiences of agents, rather than providing a singular

explanation of what occurred. In this section I will explore how this mixed methodology is related to larger issues around recording participatory art practices in terms of needing to draw on wider theoretical practices and stances and working out how these might come together.

Reading participatory book art through the fields of book art and participatory art is particularly useful for drawing out answers to those dominant research questions which underpin this thesis. In particular, it allows a consideration of how participatory book art might be contributing a new form of collaborative book art making or participatory art practice. However, the variation in case studies suggests that, whilst literature from the critical framework creates a useful foundation, there are emerging themes coming from each case study which require a wider pool of theory. For example, in *Unfolding Projects* I address discussions on Afghan women's rights, in *The Homeless Library* I draw on social documentary theory and, in *Crafting Women's Stories,* I draw upon feminist understandings of gender and cultural practices. The research into the case studies in this thesis, therefore, draws on various theoretical approaches in what I once heard David Cooper call a 'magpie approach', or sometimes referred to as bricolage, whereby theory is drawn upon as required to help construct a *responsive* critical framework through which to read participatory book art.[66] Magpies are, after all, resourceful creatures and will build their nests out of any suitable materials – from wire to tape.

Although focusing on three projects may seem limiting, this scaling in has also allowed a more thorough investigation of the minute operations of case studies – from the planning and funding of projects, to the spaces of making, the books as objects and the way in which these books circulate and gain potential readerships. Due to this, many of my case studies begin with a description of the project, both to explain the details to the reader, but also to use this as an anchor for engaging in analysis. This act of describing is also an approach to critical looking, which is an art historical method explained by Dave Beech as a constant, circulating process of describing, writing, reading around

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[66] I heard Dr David Cooper speak at a Provocative Theory session as part of the Manchester Metropolitan University Research Development Framework. David Cooper. (2017) *Provocative Theory Presentation.* Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, 15 November.

and observing the artwork.[67] Descriptions in this sense, expand, become analytical and

begin to draw on the bricolage approach I previously described. Furthermore, it also

acknowledges that the texts made in book art, as is the case in documentation, are not

abstracted but embedded in objects. Therefore, in the chapter on *Unfolding Projects* I

partially trace the books' journeys, considering how their production and reading is a

bodily act mediated by the physical experience, which is further influenced by the

spaces in which books are housed, bought and consumed.[68] Although it is difficult to

fully trace the books' journey in every case study, acknowledging that the books'

meaning changes in reaction to the contexts in which they are read and displayed

presents an understanding of participatory book art that acknowledges its varying

narratives.

The selection of case studies within this research emerged from both a personal interest

in specific projects, as much as how examples interact with, highlight and expand a

definition of participatory book art. Each case study is critiqued within and against a

theme, which include: Dialogue (*Unfolding Projects*), Representation (*The Homeless

Library*) and Value (*Crafting Women's Stories*). These themes materialised as the

research progressed and became a lens through which to conduct analysis, as well as a

useful method of structuring and directing the writing within chapters. Whilst these

themes manifest more prominently in particular case studies, there are certainly

discussions of value, dialogue, representation and, as an addition, authorship, which

appear across all projects. Rather than dismiss these themes as being 'covered' by a

chapter, I also read them through each project's circumstantial specificity, against

differences in collaborating agents, book art, sites, processes of production and

emancipatory ideals. It is also important to note that the choice of themes interacts with

the claims that the project (or more specifically the artist/s) is making. *Unfolding

Projects* is modelled as concerned with *dialogue* between two groups of women,

whereas *The Homeless Library* enacts claims to *represent* a first-person history of

homelessness. Although *Crafting Women's Stories* did not claim to focus the project on

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[67] Dave Beech. (2008) 'Include me Out!' *Art Monthly*. 315, April, pp.1-4.
[68] These ideas are influenced by cultural historians understanding of texts bound up with their material manifestations, rather than considering texts as 'abstracted' from books, which is often the case in literary theory. Karen Littau. (2006) *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies and Bibliomania.* Cambridge: Polity Press; Roger Chartier. (1994) *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

value, this theme became a way of negotiating the various views and desires that the participants and artists brought to the project which, as will become apparent, were a point of tension as much as a catalyst for change.

I also did not approach every case study with the same method of gathering research. For some case studies I interviewed the artists, for *The Homeless Library* I observed a workshop and, for nearly all the case studies, I read the projects through secondary documentation. These choices on what to include in my research were partially dictated by time and availability. Participants were often difficult to interview due to the location and accessibility of projects; workshops might have already occurred or there was limited funding to go and see the project in action. Nevertheless, what these variations of object analysis, involved agents, funding sources and workshop unfolding's suggest is a methodology for approaching participatory book art that employs or pulls from both art historical and social science approaches. Therefore, in case studies such as *The Homeless Library* ethnographic approaches were used for workshop observations, where I considered the layout of the space, the unfolding of the activity and the different roles and enactments participants and artists performed. Writing a report on this experience also led to an exploration of how my presence as researcher might impact the books produced during the workshop. For all three of the case studies I interviewed the artists, providing a rich perspective on the issues and development of projects. Whilst these various perspectives are useful, there is always an absence of a particular voice or perspective partaking in the project. For example, having a rich narrative from the artists can also produce a dominant perspective that might obscure other participants' experiences, requiring recognition within my research. Developing relationships with the artists in interviews also created a further responsibility to do something useful and beneficial for these practices – to provide them with the visibility they deserved – whilst being critical and wary of the issues and absences that might result. These experiences interact with ethical issues and suggest a greater need to be aware of my own influence as researcher on the content within this thesis.

A traditional art historical approach is also integral to ensuring the books as objects were sitting at the forefront of research. Although contemporary participatory art theory has brought new perspectives on considering the processes of art creation and the

involvement of other disciplines outside of art, perspectives that I draw upon in the critical framework, traditional object-analysis from art history (and book art fields) can still be useful for this study. From the outset this caused issues as access to the codices was restricted by their location in certain geographical places, or due to the constraints of time and funding. Although images of the books could be viewed on websites or in publications, there was a distinct loss of the book in its entirety. The physical engagement of turning pages and interaction with the book's textures, sound and rhythm were lost. However, what did transpire was a wealth of artist - or funder - created documentation on projects, including blogs, essays or publications. These are the most accessible forms for secondary or outside audiences, and often frame participatory book art within certain narratives - nearly always in relation to the artist's or funder's political and artistic aims. Noting the dominance of these secondary resources, a research enquiry emerged into how the documentation (artist's blogs, books or pamphlets on the project) mediated, framed and presented projects to outside audiences – particularly as they were often written by the artists and organisers, and not the participants. I want to spend a significant section of this methodology addressing the role of documentation in my research and explore how it altered my approach to projects: What does it mean to read projects primarily from secondary documentation? And how might this approach benefit readings of other participatory book art projects?

Before embarking on the role of documentation in this research, it should also be mentioned that several texts on community art are written from the perspective of practitioners.[69] I want to make it clear that I am not a participatory book art practitioner, even if I have run bookmaking workshops as part of my PhD research.[70] There is also an increasing demand on critics of participatory art practices to be involved in the projects they are critiquing through a longitudinal process of observing, assisting and reflecting.[71] Whilst I do not disagree with these arguments, it does somewhat reiterate anthropological notions of 'being in the field' as a more authentic site of knowledge.[72] It

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[69] Alison Jeffers mentions the strong body of writing by community art practitioners. Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. Op. Cit., pp.25-26.

[70] These bookmaking workshops will be drawn upon in chapter one, but mainly took place in academic conferences with researchers and artists. See appendix one for abstract.

[71] Mick Wilson (2007) 'Autonomy, Agonism, and Activist Art: An Interview with Grant Kester' *Art Journal.* 66(3), p.109.

[72] Doreen Massey. (2003) 'Imagining the Field.' *In* Michael Pryke, Gillian Rose and Sarah Whatmore. (eds.) *Using Social Theory Thinking Through Research*. London: Sage Publications, pp.75-76.

can obscure the idea that access to these projects is often for a limited audience, and that the 'products' from these engagements can be an equally insightful and beneficial location of enquiry.[73] I prefer instead to see this research as a cluster of different approaches, which are often dictated by when the project is occurring, and the ways in which they can be accessed.

a) Analysing Projects Primarily through Documentation

Documentation surrounding participatory book art is varied in its use, arrangement and content. Examples range from a blog diary on the artist's daily activities in *Crafting Women's Stories*, to the glossy *Two Trees* publication with high resolution images of the books and contextualising essays. As participatory art projects increasingly take place in locations outside of the traditional gallery or museum space, documentation becomes an important record and facilitator for outside audiences to view what has occurred. In the case of participatory book art, there appears to be a general absence or mediation of the participants' voices whose experiences are translated by the organisers, or only visible in the book art they produced. It suggests that an approach to reading documentation needs to take note of these absences, whilst investigating how these narratives frame projects.

To analyse participatory book art projects predominantly through their representation in documentation is to ask certain questions about the 'stories' these texts tell, and the claims or ideas they are advocating. This might be understood through Donna Haraway's question of 'what stories tell stories?' Both in the sense of, how are these stories being told? What stories are used as validation? And, what do the authors want readers to pay attention to?[74] To answer these questions is to recognise that documentation often operates in a specific manner, consciously and unconsciously framing events in a particular narrative. Records might focus on certain values and

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[73] Ibid.

[74] *Talk: Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti – March 25, 2017.* (2017) Stedelijk Museum. [Online] Available through Vimeo. [Accessed on 5th May 2017] https://vimeo.com/210430116.

outcomes and can also re-represent participants in specific ways. As Suzanne Lacy explains:

> In the role of the reporter, the artist focuses not simply on the experience but on the recounting of the situation; that is, the artist gathers information to make it available to others. She calls our attention to something. We might divide this practice of presenting information along lines of intentionality. Some artists claim simply to 'reflect' what exists without assignment of value; others "report" implying a more conscious, less random selection of information.[75]

One of the questions underlying Lacy's analysis is *when* the process of documenting should occur, and through what method. Claire Bishop has argued that the best documentation is often 'time-based' as it is more likely to capture disruptions and tensions between agents.[76] Bishop often advocates film as an effective means of documenting as it is likely to capture spontaneous, organic project processes (even if she is aware of films edited sequence).[77] Stephanie Springgay argues a similar point in relation to the Artist Placement Group's (APG) documentation, stating that documentation can 'congeal' and 'crystallise' projects, which turns the APG's school residencies into 'fetishized objects' or 'a kind of aestheticized encounter with distant others.'[78] Here, there is an issue with the supposed fixity of documentation, which loses some of the fluidity or tensions within the main event and forms the 'other' (often the participant) as a mere spectacle. Yet, this seems more related to questions over the way in which documentation is edited and authored as a means of controlling its appearance, narratives and circulation. Is it authored by the artist? Or should documentation be conducted by an independent reviewer? How might one incorporate the perspectives of the participants? These questions are entangled in the use of documentation, whether it is for the funders to monitor the project outcomes, as part of the artwork, or whether to garner discussion and visibility for the project to outside

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[75] Suzanne Lacy. (2010) *Leaving Art Writings on Performance, Politics and Publics 1974-2007.* Durham: Duke University Press, p.176.

[76] Claire Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship.* London: Verso, pp.257-259.

[77] Ibid., pp.257-259.

[78] The Artist Placement Group materialised in London in the 1960s, and placed artists in various 'social contexts' such as schools, steel works or environmental systems. Stephanie Springgay. (2013) *The Pedagogical Impulse: Aberrant Residencies and Classroom Ecologies*. Unknown place of publication: C Magazine for Art and Culture, p.22 [Online] [Accessed on 8th September 2018] Available from: https://thepedagogicalimpulse.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Springgay-C119-Residencies.pdf

audiences. As previously discussed, it is also to acknowledge the connection of documentation to a neoliberal climate of accountability, which materialises against a political environment of proof and objective outcomes.[79] Artists are, therefore, continually pressured to produce 'positive' or easily digestible documentation. This pressure can surface because of enforcements from supporting funders and organisations, or, as Helguera suggests, because artists feel the need to validate their work or 'see the outcomes through', which results in documentation twisting or fictionalising project occurrence.[80]

Reading projects primarily through documentation also readdresses the concept that it is periphery to the 'main event', wherein documentation is modelled as an afterthought or as a more minor form in the project structure. However, I assert the idea that documentation should not be investigated as a separate form, or a replacement or simple repetition of the main event. Instead, it is useful to consider documentation in line with the experiences happening within the project and attention paid to how it gives value to certain operations and actions. In this sense, documentation can add a further critical and aesthetic layer to the project.

Foregrounding documentation in this way challenges Lacy's construction of the various 'levels' or types of participation occurring in projects, which she states interact with different audiences. [81] Lacy visualises these audiences through a concentric diagram, wherein the audience of documentation or media literally stand on the margins (figure two). Yet, documentation is often seen by a wider audience, not only allowing the project greater visibility, but in terms of critical reception, can impact its potential classification and placement of projects in particular disciplines. In the case of participatory book art, this placement is particularly led by the figure of the artist, as the projects exist on their blog/websites or they act as signed authors on publications. This presents the author with a certain authority – whereby naming acts as a form of

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[79] Rimi Khan eloquently traces the relationship of community arts and participatory arts to governmental agendas. She states: 'This need to demonstrate arts' impact emerges from a political premise that is not acknowledged often enough. The pressure to generate 'evidence' is part of a neoliberal demand for accountability that informs many areas of public policy beyond the arts'. Rimi Khan. Op. Cit., p.15.
[80] Pablo Helguera. (2011) Op. Cit. p.74.
[81] Suzanne Lacy. (1995) Op. Cit., p.178.

classification, determining how texts circulate and gain meaning.[82] As will be discussed in relation to individual case studies, this may implicate these projects under a straightforward sense of artistic ownership; the artist's role anoints and legitimises the work as art and determines its existence and reception within artistic networks. As Irit Rogoff asserts:

> …questions regarding the very nature of ownership of an image or an idea, of how a simple object comes to stand in for an entire complex network of knowing and legitimating and conserving and 'anointing with cultural status' – all of which operate under the aegis of ownership[83]

Ownership over projects is, of course, far more complicated in individual case studies. Particularly as many of the books are presented as being authored by the participant, but the entirety of the project is depicted as authored by the artist/organisation. Furthermore, in *The Homeless Library* towards the end of the project many of the participants were also presented as 'artists' and 'curators' confusing a straightforward division of roles. What is highlighted here, is an enquiry into how and where documentation and book art circulate, under whose name/identity this operates, as well as what narratives and representations they construct.

One approach to answering these questions is to draw on aspects of Gillian Roses' 'Discourse analysis'.[84] Discourse analysis draws on Foucauldian and wider poststructuralist theory to consider the ways in which subjects are structured through and within discourse. Rose describes discourse:

> It refers to groups of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking. In other words, discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it.[85]

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[82] This also draws on Michel Foucault's notion of the author's name acting as a form of classification, determining the discourse in which their work circulates. Michel Foucault. (1998) 'What is an Author?' *In* Donald Preziosi. (ed.) *The Art of Art History A Critical Anthology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.321-334.

[83] Irit Rogoff. (2010) 'Turning.' *In* Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson. (eds.) *Curating and the Educational Turn.* London: Open Editions, p.38.

[84] Gillian Rose. (2007) *Visual Methodologies An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials.* London: Sage Publications, p.141.

[85] Ibid., p.142.

In this definition discourse is defined through language, often taking a particular form with rules and conventions used by institutions to validate, circulate and produce knowledge. This is highly visible within the art establishment, where 'knowledges, institutions, subjects and practices' come to define some works as art, and others not.[86] This is also a central tenet of literature on participatory art practices, where arguments are not only made about what counts as art, but theories are formed around 'good' and 'bad' artistic practices, related to wider ethical and political concerns with democratic processes and determination of suitable subjects (often marginalised) as collaborators.[87] As will be considered in the chapter on *Crafting Women's Stories*, this creates certain value systems whereby participant's actions, book art and self-representation are translated and designed within certain discourses (such as second-wave feminist ideals). It also interacts with larger narratives in participatory art discourse, in which certain objects, dialogues, actions and gestures are deemed as enhancing or repairing the social bond between individuals, over others, with a trend emerging in conversational, dematerialised and longitudinal practices.[88] As mentioned previously, projects that are still focused on making objects such as book art, or those in which dialogue is mediated through books such as *Unfolding Projects*, might easily be seen as disempowering or isolating individuals, or encompassed into capitalist modes of production. Whilst there is a need to be aware of these criticisms, the 'writing out' of participatory art practices which utilise objects should be readdressed, to conceive of how these might operate differently.

Rose also asserts a requisite to enquire over how discourse articulates itself through both visual and verbal forms and gains meaning through its intertextuality and constant citation. Rose suggests this approach can be used for visualisations, such as book art or documentation. She quotes Fyfe and Law whom state:

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[86] Ibid., p.142.
[87] As previously suggested, this is a debate that Claire Bishop raises in her article 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents.' Bishop asserts that participatory art projects are increasingly judged by ethical criteria, with 'good' practices often renouncing artistic authorship. I also attended the Winter Symposium titled 'Legacy: How and Why Should Artistic Research Create a Legacy?' as part of the Nordic Summer University's 'Practicing Communities: Transformative Societal Strategies of Artistic Research' circle (9 – 12 March 2017) in Ricklundgården, Saxnäs, Sàpmi. In one of the question and answer sessions one of the delegates asked: "why do we never create socially engaged art projects with rich or privileged individuals?" This question may highlight how ideas on whom artists work with are loaded with notions on whom may benefit or require assistance. Claire Bishop. (2006). Op. Cit., pp.178-183.
[88] As previously mentioned, this trend appears frequently in Grant Kester, Suzanne Lacy and Nato Thompson's theories. Grant Kester. Op. Cit; Nato Thompson. Op. Cit.; Suzanne Lacy (1995) Op. Cit.

To understand a visualisation is thus to enquire into its provenance and into the social work that it does. It is to note its principles of inclusion and exclusion, to detect the roles that it makes available, to understand the way in which they are distributed, and to decode the hierarchies and differences that it naturalises.[89]

In relation to participatory book art documentation, this raises questions over how it may include or exclude the participants' voices, the way in which it frames roles in projects, and the ways in which it naturalises the hierarchy of these roles and differences between agents. As documentation also frames book art, it comes to mediate and influence how book art is read – translating its provenance, the forms of dialogue it encourages, and modes of production. To understand how this might operate, it is useful to briefly sketch out how I approach my analysis of *The Homeless Library*.

As will be discussed in chapter two, the circulation and framing of essentialist representations of homelessness throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in documentary photography produced a certain aesthetic. The aesthetic often drew upon well-curated images of the slum or the 'rough sleeper', employed to both mark certain bodies as homeless, as well as produce a dominant public imaginary of homelessness through its reiteration in documentary photography, charity work and artistic images. To consider an analysis of book art from *The Homeless Library* within these documentary practices is therefore to enquire over how book art might reiterate these essentialist depictions or allow different representations or understandings of homelessness to emerge. To consider these issues, the case study not only works through some of the formal compositions and content of the book art, but also considers how the books are made, and how the space of their production designed by the artists and organisers could have influenced and coerced, as much as encouraged and supported participants' stories. To conduct this analysis, I read the project both through its presentation in documentation, as well as against and alongside my own observations of a *Homeless Library* workshop in action. Thus, it draws together art historical and social science methods to consider the various project narratives and

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[89] Gillian Rose. Op. Cit., p.17.

contrasting actions of the involved agents – holding these in tension, rather than suggesting one of these narratives is the correct rendition of the project outcome.

As discussed above, due to the artists planning and design of the workshop space, and their potential influence on the book art produced by participants, there is nearly always an issue of power underlining an analysis of participatory book art. It is here that feminist theory has been particularly useful, not only as a foundation in which much of my thinking draws upon, but as a way to consider the agency of participants and locations of power. In this thesis, I understand agency not as something we necessarily 'have', or can be 'given', but rather as Karen Barad highlights – agency is something enacted.[90] It has, therefore, been useful to observe *The Homeless Library* workshop in action, to consider the ways in which agency, much like power, is a constantly moving dynamic that is difficult to notice and pinpoint due to the variety of ways it is enacted by the various agents. Drawing on feminist writings of Sara Ahmed, Audre Lorde, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Donna Haraway and bell hooks, not to mention my PhD colleagues, has also helped in considering that it is not only the who that is speaking that is important, but how and where that speech or dialogue is articulated, which is integral to how it is heard, constructed and designates meaning.[91]

Thus, the space of production, in particular the workshop, is imbued, organised and managed with certain discourse around gender, class and race which influences its design, and the enactment of agency. It also means being aware that certain utterances, in their contextual specificity, can gain validation as 'truth' statements – whether that is the academic discourse of Afghan women's subjugation, or the 'expert' footnotes underwriting the first-hand experiences of homeless participants in documentation. Thus, the analysis of participatory book art requires questioning how representations or narratives in documentation are used as truth, or to validate claims (such as those of the artist or funders), as well as asking what the absences in these

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[90] Karen Barad. Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (2012) *Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers*. New Materialism Interviews and Cartographies, Open Humanities Press, University of Michigan Library. [Online] [Accessed on 5th May 2018] https://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/11515701.0001.001/1:4.3/--new-materialism-interviews-cartographies?rgn=div2;view=fulltext
[91] Some key texts include: Audre Lorde. (1984) *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches by Audre Lorde*. New York: Ten Speed Press; bell hooks. (1991) 'Essentialism and Experience.' *American Literary History*, 3(1), pp.172-183; Chandra Talpade Mohanty. (2003) *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonising Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. London: Duke University Press; Sara Ahmed. (2000) *Strange Encounters Embodied Others in Post Coloniality*. London: Routledge; Sara Ahmed. (2017) *Living a Feminist Life*. London: Duke University Press.

narratives may reveal about subversion or how some forms of agency are dismissed. This is often to consider issues in their contextual specificity, to ask how 'at that moment', in those conditions, is discourse being performed in the actions and statements of individuals and organisations. As Foucault states: '*How? Not in the sense of "How does it manifest itself?" but "How is it exercised?" and "What happens when individuals exert (as we say) power over others?"'*[92] This exertion of power is not always obvious, and the effect of projects on individuals can often present unexpected results. I would also argue that viewing participatory book art projects from a distance and through documentation often means a certain image of those projects is viewed which disguises the minor occurrences that artists and agents involved have witnessed or experienced. Therefore, when reading the book art from this distance, I also need to consider how participants may reclaim the 'I' to disrupt fixed historical narratives or essentialist representations through autobiographical storytelling – a key element to many participatory book art practices.[93]

On a final note, it is worth highlighting that one of the difficulties, as well as the enjoyments I have found from writing this thesis is the time artists and organisers have provided through regular emails, Skype interviews, and face-to-face meetings. It is, I should imagine, often difficult to talk about a project that you have invested much time and passion in, and I have found many of the artists to be self-reflective, both in positive and critical ways of their project's unfolding. To share this information provides one with a sense of responsibility to do something productive with it. And whilst at times it may appear that I am being critical of the projects, particularly in relation to ideas of authority and speaking for others, I am also aware that there are much larger discourses and agents in operation that mean freedom to manoeuvre is not as apparent or straightforward as it would first seem. My overall aim, both at the start of this research journey and continuing to the end has been to try and give visibility to these projects, or even act as a link between practitioners. In some ways, I hope that this comes through in this thesis where many voices, alongside my own, are apparent – both in terms of

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[92] Michel Foucault. (1994, reprinted 2002) *Power Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Volume 3*. London: Penguin Books, p.337.
[93] I will discuss this further in the chapter on *The Homeless Library* – utilising Ahmed's ideas around contextual reading. Sara Ahmed. (1998) *Differences that Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

those that have informed and provided information for this research, and those that have influenced my thinking. I once heard an academic suggest that sometimes writing is having a sense of different people looking over your shoulder, a metaphor that I think manifests in both an authoritative and beneficial way.

Overview of the Thesis

Each chapter within this thesis aims to investigate and situate within theoretical fields a series of connected, yet under-analysed projects which fall under the definition of participatory book art. This thesis is predominantly comprised of specific, detailed case study analysis that gives visibility to particular projects, and unpacks the differences in book art, processes behind their production, themes, forms of agency and modes of collaboration. To contextualise these projects, chapter one will focus on the history and the ideologies behind the use of the workshop in participatory book art.

The workshop is a crucial element to both *The Homeless Library* and *Crafting Women's Stories*, and acts as the site of book art production and a way of encouraging socialisation and discussion between participants. In this chapter, I show how the workshop method stems from the community arts movement and was considered the ideal approach to pooling resources, practicing cultural democracy and improving access to the arts. These concepts emerge in the continued and growing use of the workshop in more contemporary participatory arts practice. However, due to its well-reiterated use the workshop is often an under-theorised and taken for granted method, particularly in terms of a consideration of its operation and design. I challenge this acceptance of the workshop as a predictable or neutral method, by conducting an in-depth analysis of how it is designed and unfolds in participatory book art projects and relate these findings to my own experience of running bookmaking workshops. By drawing on these examples, I investigate how the workshop can be a highly organised space that is constructed with specific materials, sites, arrangements, time constrictions and texts that can influence participant's behaviours and the books that they create. These parameters can constrict the freedom and ideas participants bring to the

workshop, confusing it as a straightforward method of equality between the involved agents. However, I also argue that there is an element of unpredictability and criticality emerging within the workshop, where participant's reactions can be unreadable, spontaneous and antagonistic, changing and altering the original aims and proposals the artist/s plan. How these elements of organisational control and unpredictability interact, and from what political and economic context (such as the service economy, edutainment and modulated content), is a key aspect investigated. I also use this chapter to construct the role of the artist as a 'facilitator' in participatory book art projects. How this role is enacted through directing activities or forming the workshop as a critical or responsive space, is investigated with the educational theories of Paulo Friere and Chantal Mouffe's concept of agonistic art contexts.[94]

Following on from establishing the operations and design of the workshop, chapter two analyses the first of the case studies - *The Homeless Library* - through the thematic lens of 'representation'. *The Homeless Library* is a project planned and initiated by artist collective Arthur + Martha (Philip Davenport and Lois Blackburn) and involved the artists visiting various homeless centres around Manchester to produce altered, autobiographical book art with homeless participants. To analyse this project, I investigate how participants' representation in the pages of book art might interact with larger discourses of homeless imagery in media, fiction and policy. As the project claims to be 'the first ever history of homeless from a first-person perspective' the books are granted a certain authenticity in their closeness to actual or genuine experiences of homelessness – a closeness which is exacerbated in the one-off, handmade quality of the codices.[95] To unpack this claim, I begin by considering a history of homeless representation as it emerged in social documentary and artistic practices stemming predominantly from the 20th century. I draw heavily on the work of Martha Rosler and Steve Edwards to highlight how social documentary photographic practices produced a fixed, well quoted image of the homeless as the rough sleeper or related to such sites as

[94] Paulo Freire. (1970, reprinted 2013) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Bloomsbury; Chantal Mouffe. (2013) *Agonistics Thinking the World Politically.* London: Verso.
[95] Arthur + Martha. (2017) *The Homeless Library (2014-2017).* Arthur + Martha artist's website. [Online] [Accessed on 16th December 2018] https://arthur-martha.com/portfolio/the-homeless-library/

the soup kitchen.[96] The reiteration of these stereotypical images, even if used to encourage charitable giving, did little to disrupt the system of oppression, but formed a 'homeless aesthetic' that suggested one could survey and distinguish individuals as homeless. This discussion of photographing 'others' will be read alongside the more contemporary, socially engaged photographic practices of artists Anthony Luvera and Faye Chamberlain who attempt to alter this voyeurism by passing the camera over to homeless participants to capture their own image. Rather than being wholly emancipatory, I argue that these practices are still entangled in issues relating to artistic ownership of images and highlight the tenacity or skill of the artist to work with 'others'.

Establishing the context of homeless representation will present a useful way to engage with how *The Homeless Library* book art might be read against, through and alongside this history. Initially, this will involve an analysis of the photographs taken of the participants against my own experiences of a *Homeless Library* workshop. I address the problem of photographs omitting tensions and employed solely to validate the 'energy' or 'positive' aspects of the project. I follow with an analysis of some of the book art pieces from *The Homeless Library*. I am particularly concerned with whether the identity of the books' authors is present in the text and imagery of the book art, and how homelessness is framed or represented. To approach this enquiry, I utilise the writings of Sara Ahmed to argue that the 'I' that writes is not necessarily a string of endless citations as suggested by Roland Barthes, or a straightforward indicator of the writing subject.[97] Rather, reading the 'I' through the context or label of homeless (which is pointed to through the project's title), can form a location or lens that challenges, reiterates or confuses stereotypical representations.

Chapter three approaches *Unfolding Projects* through the theme of 'dialogue'. In 2010, artist Gali Weiss and her colleagues were funded by the Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan (SAWA) to send several concertina book art pieces to the Vocational Training Centre for women in Kabul, Afghanistan. The books were filled with a variety of different printed, drawn and stitched material relating to the artists' own practice. The books were an invitation for the Afghan women (who were learning to

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[96] Martha Rosler. (2006) *Martha Rosler, 3 Works*. Halifax: Novia Scotia College of Art and Design; Steve Edwards. (2012) *Martha Rosler The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems*. London: Afterall.
[97] Sara Ahmed. (1998) Op. Cit; Roland Barthes. (1977) *Image Music Text.* London: Fontana Press.

read and write) to respond to the images by writing over, across and around the artworks with their stories and interpretations.

Unfolding Projects frames book art as a conduit for non-face-to-face dialogue and claims to build solidarity between two groups of women from different geographical locations through a shared belief in women's right to education. I am particularly interested in how this focus on dialogue sent through words and images moves the encounter with book art away from spoken word and the engagement of participants with a physical space. As previously discussed, authors Nicolas Bourriaud, Suzanne Lacy and Grant Kester, albeit in different ways, advocate these latter processes as the primary emancipatory method of building relations between individuals and understanding difference.[98] To contend this dominance of face-to-face interactions, I draw on Jacques Rancière's theory of the 'emancipated spectator' to show how Afghan women's ability to 'enter the realm of the aesthetic' and voice their own stories problematised a climate in which they are often re-represented or spoken for.[99] To emphasise this argument, I first consider how Afghan women are continually portrayed in academic and media accounts either as veiled, voiceless victims, or their identities gathered around a certain narrative of women's rights. These western narratives interact with *Unfolding Projects* book art, as the books are displayed and contextualised in the State Library of Queensland and mediated through the Australian-based charity's publication on the project. I also confuse a straightforward reading of the project as wholly emancipatory by tracing how the books are presented as a 'gift' to the Afghan women, exploring how this gift may form an obligation on the recipient to write certain stories or 'make a return'. The latter enquiry not only accounts for the content of the books but involves a literal tracing of how the project was conceived, to the book's delivery, the Afghan women's responses and the creation and reception of the books once back in Australia. By charting this journey through drawing on gift theory, notions of hospitality and the women's situation within Kabul, I follow the artistic and social manifestations of *Unfolding Projects*.

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[98] Grant Kester (2004) Op. Cit; Nicolas Bourriaud. Op. Cit; Suzanne Lacy (1995) Op. Cit;
[99] Jacques Rancière. (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator.* London: Verso.

I address the final case study on *Crafting Women's Stories* through the theme of 'value'. *Crafting Women's Stories* was a project organised, designed and delivered by US artists Melissa Potter and Miriam Schaer and involved running workshops in rural Kakheti in the Republic of Georgia. The artists were funded by the philanthropic Open Society Foundation and used the workshop method to teach women participants to make felted, autobiographical book art. The aim of this chapter is to problematise the idea that participatory book art projects can be read through fixed, singular notions of 'good' or 'bad' practice. Or, that there are certain actions or responses that have more value as the primary site of change in participants. *Crafting Women's Stories* presents a useful example to consider these issues, as the artists original plans were challenged by the Kakheti women during the projects unfolding. The participants were more interested in making book art as a commodity to raise money for their communities, creating examples with communal content rather than out of individual self-expression. To understand these differing values that agents bring to projects, I approach *Crafting Women's Stories* through Barbara Hernstein-Smith's notion of the 'contingency' of value.[100] Hernstein-Smith argues that interacting variables of self-interest, community trends, institutional structures and classifications of art work in dynamics to produce values that cannot be fixed or predetermined – or deemed absolute. Taking as the starting point this concept of 'value' as in no way objectively evaluated or fixed, but rather constantly negotiated and variable, this chapter analyses how, at distinct stages of *Crafting Women's Stories* values are 'written into' the planning through the funding and artists own self-interests and utopian ideals. Furthermore, addressing how these values are constantly reinvented and challenged by the participants and the context in which the project materialises.

To conduct this analysis, I first consider how the image the OSF promotes conflicted with the restrictions they placed on the project. I build on some of the discussions in the workshop chapter to show that these restrictions are entangled in a climate of participatory art briefs and regulated funding language. Following from this discussion, I investigate how the artists' ideals of self-expression as emancipatory are imbued with 1970s western, feminist practices. I investigate how parachuting these ideals into

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[100] Barbara Hernstein-Smith. Op. Cit.

Georgia may have presented tensions with existing feminist practices, as well as influenced the participants' reactions to the aims of the project. The latter part of this chapter will emphasise how the artists' feminist ideas also emerged in the texts that littered the workshop space (feminist banners and book art examples) which may have come to influence project outcomes. I also investigate how the conditions of the workshop space in terms of facilities such as running water or room layout presented an unexpected challenge for the artist, raising issues over the need to understand the localities and groups that artists are responding to or working with prior to the project development. Lastly, I draw upon a specific example of how the project presented an unexpected, emerging value for one of the participants. I use this example to show its relation to Erin Manning's claim that in projects there are always hidden values, or values that are difficult to articulate.[101]

I conclude this thesis with a reiteration of the contribution of a critical framework to read participatory book art and provide answers to the research questions posed in this introduction. I account for how participatory book art projects have expanded both the fields of book art and participatory art, as well as contend some of its well-rehearsed narratives. The conclusion returns to some of the key themes and research questions surfacing at the beginning of this introduction around the social processes and book art production in projects. These themes will form the structure for the conclusion, as I summarise and return to how participatory book art addresses book art, representation, dialogue and value. I also stress further possibilities for this research in participatory library projects and other participatory book art projects.

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[101]Erin Manning. (2015) Op. Cit.

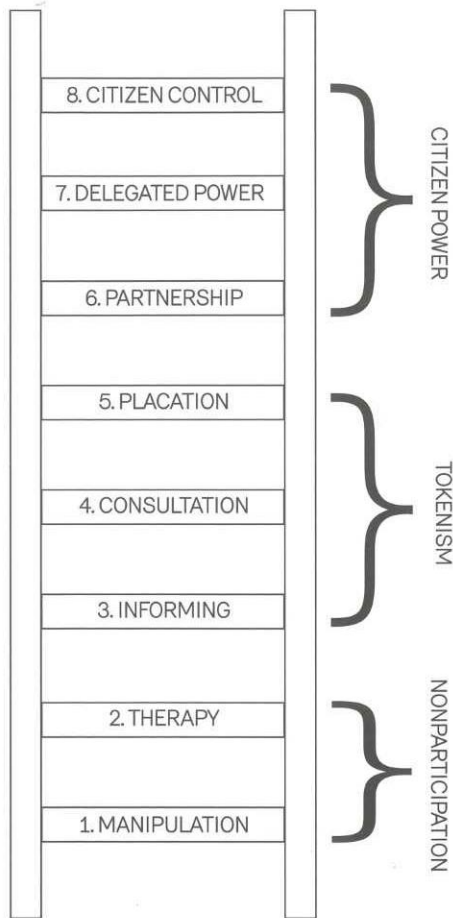## Images

Figure One: Sherry Arnstein (1969) *Arnstein's Ladder of Participation. In* Nato Thompson. (ed.) (2012) *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*. New York: Creative Time Books, p.42.
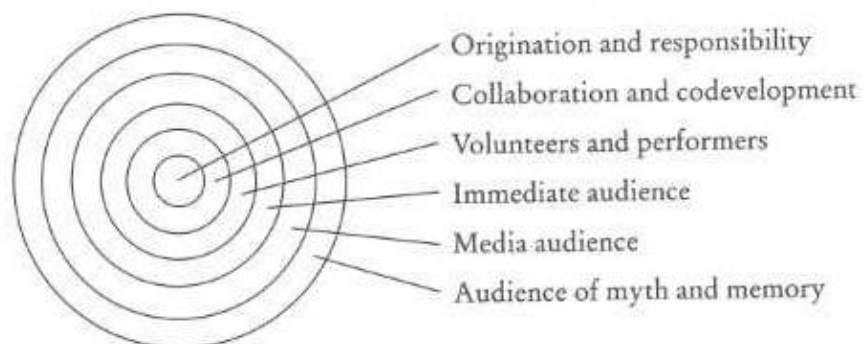

Figure Two: Suzanne Lacy. (1995) *Concentric Diagram Depicting Various Audiences of New Genre Public Art*. *In Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle: Bay Press, p.178.

Chapter One

Contextualising the Participatory Book Art Workshop

Time and time again the 'workshop' is cited as a staple of participatory art practices, with Grant Kester claiming it as a 'significant nexus of creative production in a wide range of collaborative and collective projects'[102]. From the use of the term in community arts organisation titles, to its frequent employment as a space of testing, working-through or making, the 'workshop' has become a central tenet of many co-authored art works.[103] Indeed, what exactly is a workshop? How is it structured? What theories support it? These questions are integral to an enquiry of participatory book arts, as the workshop is utilised for the production of books and as a space of discussion and socialising in *The Homeless Library* and *Crafting Women's Stories.* These projects appear to draw on an early workshop model developed during the community arts movement, which utilised the method to break down hierarchies between individuals, encourage collaborative production, enhance participant empowerment and pool together resources. This historical grounding could account for the popularity of the workshop in participatory arts practices, in which it is taken for granted as a beneficial mode of coproduction, resulting in its lack of questioning or theorising. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Vicki Florence and Vera Clough's comment, whom suggest that:

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[102] Grant Kester. (2011) *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, Durham: Duke University Press, p.95.

[103] Two well established community arts programmes were the Community Arts Workshop (1999) and the Greenwich Mural workshop (est. 1975). The Shelton Trust *Community Arts Information Pack* (1982) is also a useful snapshot of the various community arts organisations across the UK at that time, with many employing the workshop form. It would be difficult to list all the participatory art projects utilising the workshop as a method. However, there are some key examples cited by theorists in this field of study. Oda Projesi the Turkish collective are mentioned in Claire Bishop's 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents'. There are several projects listed in Nato Thompson's *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991 – 2011,* which employ the workshop in their practice including: Marion von Osten's *Moneynations* (1998, 2000), Eduardo Vázquez Martin's *Faro de Oriente* (2000-), Urban Bush Women's *Summer Leadership Institute* (1997-), Taller Popular de Serigrafia (Popular Silkscreen Workshop) (2002 – 2007), Slanguage (2002-), Pase Usted (2008-) and Zayd Minty's Black Arts Collective (1998 – 2003). Tania Bruguera's practice also regularly employs the workshop, whose *Cathedra de Conducta* is mentioned in Tom Finkelpearl's *What we Made Conversations on Art and Social* Cooperation (2013). Claire Bishop. (2006) 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents.' *Artforum International,* 44(6), pp.178-183; Nato Thompson. (ed.) (2012) *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011.* New York: Creative Time Book; Ros Rigby. (1982) *Community Arts Information Pack.* Manchester: The Shelton Trust; Tom Finkelpearl. (2013) *What We Made Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation.* London: Duke of University Press.

'[s]ocially engaged workshop models are grounded in methods and theories that are not always explicitly referenced, but serve to empower participants to alter their disassociation with the environment.'[104] Whilst Florence and Clough are clearly highlighting that workshops are designed in mind of a particular task (in this case addressing environmental concerns), I would argue that the lack of explicit reference to the theories and methods that ground the workshop can make it appear as a practice which is neutral and malleable, or already known. It may account for Claire Bishop's suggestion that workshops in participatory art employ 'predictable formulas' or easy to digest forms of 'edutainment'.[105] Consequently, the *specific* way in which the workshop is planned, designed, organised and manifests is never considered.

To challenge this neutrality or lack of questioning, I want to bring the workshop to the foreground of analysis. To do this, I concentrate on how the workshop emerges in participatory book art projects in relation to case studies and my own experience. There are also other projects which are connected to participatory book art that are not investigated within case studies but provide useful examples to establish the workshop. My overall aim is not to consider the workshop as a predictable method but unpack how its development and use interacts with wider political and social ideologies, as well as exploring what roles, behaviours and art forms it entails. It is important to stress that I am not attempting to condone 'best practice' but set the scene for the following case studies by sketching-out how workshops are planned, designed and authored.

I begin this chapter by contextualising the workshop within a history of community arts, where it gained increasing popularity and set a standard for its use in participatory art practices. I highlight how the early workshop model was designed to bring together various agents to improve access to arts, the pooling of resources and explore practices of cultural democracy: concerns which return in participatory book art projects. After this contextualisation, I conduct a closer reading of the participatory book art workshop by analysing how it organises or allows certain modes of making and

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[104] Vicki Florence and Vera Clough. (2015) *Polymers in Action: Socially Engaged Art and the Environment.* MA Fine Arts. OCAD University, p.4.
[105]Bishop is talking specifically about Oda Projesi's use of the workshop, she states: 'Even when transposed to Sweden, Germany, and the other countries where Oda Projesi have exhibited, there is little to distinguish their projects from other socially engaged practices that revolve around the predictable formulas of workshops, discussions, meals, film screenings and walks.' Claire Bishop. Op. Cit., p.180.

group formation. Initially, this will involve an investigation of how materials can be used as prompts or provocations to draw out participant's stories or encourage relations to develop between individuals. This chapter will also address how bookmaking is the primary process occurring within the workshop, analysing how skills may be transmitted and adapted by the various agents. Additionally, I consider how these techniques are connected to a history of book art education.

The last section will investigate both the restrictions and freedoms of participating agents in the workshop. On the one hand I argue that the workshop is a highly organised and controlled space, where the environments in which the workshop occurs are imbued with behaviour protocols or ideologies which can influence how participants behave or what books may be produced. Conversely, I also suggest that there is an unpredictability to the workshop method, where the interaction of various materials, agents and environments can produce unexpected results, allowing less organised or controlled outcomes or books to surface. This tension between control and unpredictability interacts with how the workshop forms community, shapes the role of the artist and confuses a straightforward 'equality' between the involved agents.

To clarify my terminology, it is important to stress that the workshop is frequently defined as a method; considered a way of approaching a project or engaging an activity. However, I would also argue that the workshop forms a 'space' or 'site', taking place in clearly demarcated locations and as a temporary 'coming together' of individuals. The workshop as site is comprised of specific materials and invited participants, which all have their own agency and are consistently entangled in various configurations – hence the use of 'assemblage'. This is why I move consistently between terming the workshop a space, site, method and occasionally assemblage within this chapter. It is also worth noting that I am focused on workshops which encompass a wide range of individuals (not always artists), who are engaged in modes of collaborative making or discussion/activities around a specific concern. The activities of the workshop are not always profit driven, or singularly authored. This separates these

practices from the notion of the 'atelier', which often designates a private studio or workshop, which is historically run by a 'master craftsman'.[106]

Cultural Democracy and Access: Connecting the Workshop to Community Arts

One of the primary explanations of the workshop is a method in which to collaboratively share ideas, reduce hierarchy between individuals, and engage in co-production of works/concepts. It was considered a staple of community arts practices, as Alison Jeffers asserts:

> It might seem unnecessary to state that much of the collaborative work took place in 'workshops' because the term has become ubiquitous. However, at that time, workshops remained relatively unknown and the writers of 'campaign for a popular culture' felt the need to explain: 'A workshop is a session in which people come together to pool ideas, pass on skills and share in the making of things be they performances or works. It is a time when distinctions between the teachers and the taught can be broken down.'[107]

Here, Jeffers indicates that the workshop was a 'new' method in community arts, born out of a desire for a non-hierarchical, democratic space which would allow equality, or at least co-authorship between individuals. The method relies on the premise that every individual has something to contribute, and that everyone could and should actively participate in the production of culture. As Mark Webster asserts, '[c]ommunity arts takes as its starting point that everyone is creative and, that essentially, everyone is an

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[106] Ellen Mara De Wachter's book on *Co-Art: Artists on Creative Collaboration* provides an interesting account of the various different forms of collaboration occuring primarily between artists. There is also a section on how decorative arts were made in workshops by artisan guilds, and 'communities of monks living and working together' in Europe in the Middle Ages. This communal act of making was prior to the individualism of the artist as a singular 'genius', and in some ways is potentially more relatable to some aspects of the workshop in participatory book art. Ellen Mara De Wachter. (2017) *Co-Art: Artists on Creative Collaboration.* London: Phaidon Press Ltd, p.6.
[107] Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. (eds.) (2017) *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p.47.

artist.'[108] Community arts became focused on encouraging participation from individuals with little access to the arts due to economic or social boundaries, acting as a means to animate local communities around situated issues and existing cultural practices. Whilst community arts utilised many different art forms, approaches, locations and groups, this collective drive towards redistribution of resources and capital was a means to awaken the creative potential of those outside of the traditional arts establishment. This was not about dictation of ideas or art forms from a singular, consistent authority, but was premised on a dialogical process in which several individuals could contribute to projects. From this concept, the workshop emerged as a site in which to literally and metaphorically pool ideas, skills and resources and to provide communities with the materials they needed to drive, readdress or reinvigorate their practicing cultures. Although concerned with the creation of artworks, this awakening of individual's creativity was also believed to empower communities by giving 'them insight into the nature of the oppressive ways in which society functions.'[109] This is why Rimi Khan suggests that community arts was focused on 'the people' - particularly the working classes - as an 'authentic and localised site of oppositional power.'[110] It is also why the idea of providing participants with a 'voice' was not only a method of encouraging self-expression, but to allow individuals to speak up for the rights and needs of their representative communities. What this posits is an early workshop model highly related to concepts of access and ownership. Not only in the sense of how artists might access or enter communities and engage in less hierarchical forms of project development, but also how communities might access and gain ownership of resources, the art making process and capital. From this, community arts believed it could readdress the imbalance and biases of funding and the centrism of certain forms of high art culture within the establishment.

If the workshop was first premised on allowing individuals to pool and access resources, as well as engage in more collaborative, dialogical forms of project development then evidently, there is a need to consider how this notion interacts with ideas of 'cultural democracy'. The debate over cultural democracy surfaced in the community arts

[108] Mark Webster and Glen Buglass, G. (eds.) (2005) *Community Arts Workers: Finding Voices, Making Choices Creativity for Social Change.* Nottingham: Educational Heretics Press, p.ix.
[109] Rimi Khan. (2015) *Art in Community The Provisional Citizen.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p.9
[110] Ibid., p.17.

movement and circulated around ideas of distribution and discussions on what constituted culture. As Jeffers explains through Geoff Mulgan and Ken Worpole, there is a tension between the democratizing paradigm as "distribution model", which "defines the problem of cultural democracy as being simply the distribution of access to culture", against cultural democracy, which tackles the problem of what constitutes that culture.[111] This debate emerged against a flurry of writing by material culture theorists such as Raymond Williams, who were challenging the notion that 'culture' was not simply the fine arts, instead arguing that it was a continuous action or a whole way of life, not only gathered in a series of artefacts, but enacted in institutions, manners, habits and intentions.[112] It also highlighted that localised communities - with a stress on the working classes - already had their own cultures and did not require fine art forms to awaken their creative sensibilities. This was pointed out in a publication produced for the council of Europe symposium 'Animation in New Towns' from 1978, in which Frances Berrigan states:

> A cultural democracy is one in which no pre-selection of cultural and artistic forms is made, to be spread thinly throughout the country; what is intended is that cultural forms which arise from; and are based in the community, are encouraged. It does not rely upon local imitation of national models, but on the creation at local levels of opportunities for participation in cultural and artistic activities relevant to a particular social and physical environment.[113]

Susan Jones has emphasised the contemporary relevance of this discussion in relation to the Arts and Humanities Research Funded programme 'Understanding Everyday Participation – Articulating Cultural Values'. This programme explores a wide breadth of cultural activities that have value in people's lives. This research shows individuals engaging in 'craft, music making, online gaming, social media, playing sports, walking and watching films.'[114] These are not necessarily high art activities, but are constantly

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[111] Alison Jeffers. Op.Cit., p.52.
[112] This understanding of Raymond William's concept of culture emerges from reading Alison Jeffers work; Ibid., pp.57-58.
[113] Ibid., p.52.
[114] Susan Jones. (2015) *Creativity at the heart: the holistic approach*. Padwick/Jones/Arts. 29 September. Padwick/Jones/Arts. [Online] [Accessed on 28th August 2018] http://www.padwickjonesarts.co.uk/creativity-at-the-heart-the-holistic-approach/.

moving, adapting and inventing forms of culture in which individuals are 'participating', challenging the notion that culture circulates within a constricted definition of the arts.

What this discussion foregrounds is a tension between projects which take a cultural form into communities, and projects in which artists go into communities and 'see what might emerge' - often animating or drawing out existing practices. Whilst this is not as straightforward as the division may imply, the projects within this thesis take book art into communities where it may not be practiced or recognised. In projects such as *Crafting Women's Stories* this surfaces as a point of conflict, where the Georgian women react to the implication of book art as a mode of self-expression, seeing it at odds with using the books to address communal themes and raise money for their families. Although this models the workshop as a space that can allow participants to transform or challenge the original value or use of book art, it also highlights how the workshop is designed with certain outcomes and processes in mind. These outcomes and processes can be pre-determined and based on assumptions about the ability or needs of participants and the location in which the workshop is taking place.

Despite these assumptions, I am not suggesting this process is wholly negative, but instead want to work through how these parameters may be designed, shifted and manifest. It is also to start from the premise that all participatory book art workshops are focused around the production of book art, relying on the artists communicating and teaching bookmaking techniques to the participants. This grants the artist a primary facilitating or teaching role (even if they maintain their role as collaborating artists), which although forms a hierarchy of artist as authority does not necessarily suggest that teaching bookmaking is didactic or that others do not bring knowledge to this space. I return to this discussion on the role of the artist later in this chapter, but I use it here to establish a foundation for the following section. It acknowledges that the materials and selection of book forms are elements designed or planned by the artist, meaning that there are already pre-established boundaries - even if book art turns out to be a versatile and adaptable medium for the participant to express their creative preferences. The next section will investigate how these boundaries manifest in selected materials and bookmaking techniques.

Book Art and the Selection of Materials

Nearly all the workshops I have attended, ran, seen advertised or recorded are enacted around a theme or topic. As Pablo Helguera states, 'artists aren't satisfied with having just *any* conversation'[115], rather the workshop is used to confront, address or make work around a particular issue. This is often because workshops barely ever work when people are just gathered in a room and told to discuss. Prompt texts, materials, or some form of stimuli is particularly useful at generating engagement. This emerges in one of the *The Homeless Library* workshops I observed, in which the artist introduced the theme of bravery. Subsequently, the artist then channelled responses to the topic through discussion activities (asking participants to speak about subjective interpretations of bravery) and creative processes (such as making collage pages from 1970s war comics).[116] Here, the workshop is premised as a space of multiple activities, in which to openly discuss one's experiences and opinions, engage in the creative process of bookmaking, and potentially form new social relations with other participants. Although the creation of book art as an 'end product' is important, the process of making is crucial to stimulate dialogue, think-through ideas and empower participants through self-understanding: making is considered a way of knowing. This also structures the workshop as a feedback loop, where participants are encouraged to discuss what they have made and critique one another's work, which then feeds back into how they develop their books.

If materials are prompts for making, the reasons behind the artist's selections become a key point of enquiry. In such projects as *The Homeless Library* the choice of material to create collaged books can either represent an aspect of the participant's identities or be used to encourage the creation or disruption of meanings. This is because the selected materials draw on narratives and stereotypical portrayals related to homelessness, both from popular culture (comics and novels), as well as transcripts of oral histories. The

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[115] Pablo Helguera. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Technique Handbook.* New York: Jorge Pinto Books, p.44.
[116] This is based on my own experience of observing a *Homeless Library* workshop. See appendix one for the report. Gemma Meek. (2016) *Observations at the Booth Centre*. Report on a workshop observation on 18 February, 9.30am – 12pm at the Booth Centre, Manchester.

same emerges in *Crafting Women's Stories*, where the books are made out of felt to accentuate a historical craft indigenous to Georgia. For both these projects the effectiveness of selected materials lies in provoking reaction or generating some form of recognition from participants. It emphasises that the selection of specific material within case studies also applies certain restrictions, where materials are already 'loaded' with meanings (often because of the texts they carry, or the discourses they are connected too) and thereby, contrasting with workshops that utilise materials with less ideological 'baggage'. These materials also challenge fine art hierarchies through the use of 'low', 'craft' or 'folk' sources, with artists encouraging participants to make books from glass bottles and felt; concerned not with the quality or establishment of these materials in a narrow artistic hierarchy, but how they might represent or interact with the individual's everyday experience.[117] This concern with 'low' art forms may account for Kester's envisioning of the workshop space as a social form, focusing on examples connected to 'a critical remobilisation of craft practices' within rural communities, which also materialises in *Crafting Women's Stories*.[118] It also appears in Gay Hawkins suggestion that community art projects in Australia focused on murals, banners, posters, photography and postcards, which signalled 'a distance from dominant fine art forms and their particular cultural authority.'[119]

As well as materials drawing out participant's stories or challenging hierarchies of artistic mediums, they are also used to encourage relations between individuals – to get people conversing. Anne Hickey-Moody and Mia Harrison have argued that engagement with materials in workshops is a relational and bodily experience.[120] Drawing on their experience of running workshops with children, they suggest: 'Children bonded through pouring paint from one container to another, through flipping bottles and through watching YouTube and listening to popular music. The materiality of

[117] This understanding of the hierarchy of materials in art comes from reading an article about Rachel Adams' practice, she asserts: 'I was always interested in the hierarchy of materials. For example, why sculpture with a capital 'S' was predominantly made with plaster, bronze and stone.' Certain art forms are given stature and gravitas through the materials they employ, based not only on the expense of materials, but also their longevity or ephemeral nature. David McLeavy. (2014) *Young Artists in Conversation Rachel Adams*. YAC. [Online] [Accessed on 10th September 2018] https://youngartistsinconversation.co.uk/Rachel-Adams.
[118] Grant Kester. Op. Cit. pp.95-100.
[119] Gay Hawkins. (1993) *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras Constructing Community Arts.* St Leonards: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, p.103.
[120] Anna Hickey-Moody and Mia Harrison. (2018) *Socially Engaged Art and Affective Pedagogy: A Study in Inter-Faith Understanding.* Spring, Tate Papers. [Online] [Accessed on 10th September 2018] https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/29/socially-engaged-art-and-affective-pedagogy

making brought together children who did not know each other at the start of the week.'[121] I have also experienced this connection between participants through materials in bookmaking workshops I ran with fellow researcher Jo Darnley.[122] Involving the participation of predominantly researchers and artists, we encouraged participants to make collage pages out of photocopied material from the first edition of the National Cooperative magazine *Woman's Outlook* (1919). The individual pages were then stitched together by participants into a collective book. Often, we laid the materials for collaging (anything ranging from coloured paper, to photocopies of the magazine, string and fabric) on a separate table for participants to sift-through and select. This space was where participants would converse with one another over their selections, or point out certain materials, discussing content or arrangement. Generally - but not always - it contrasted with the space designated for making, where participants were quietly immersed in sticking, ripping and drawing (focused on their individual acts of creation). Artist Jackie Haynes suggests this action is a dropping 'in' and 'out' of material engagement, to account not only for the collective and individual moments of production, but also this personal, contained and bodily experience of working 'in' or 'with' materials.[123] As materials have their own inherent properties and textures, they also appear to have their own agency, or way of behaving, which can influence the type of book that materialises.

In participatory book art projects, the workshop is also structured to facilitate and allow the teaching of certain techniques. To expand on this discussion of responsive techniques, it is useful to turn to my own experience of running bookmaking workshops at various academic conferences with colleague Jo Darnley. These workshops involved asking participants to make collage pages out of materials from the National Cooperative magazine *Woman's Outlook* (1919), which were then stitched together in a collaborative book.[124] Darnley and I selected collaging for its accessibility to a wide range of individuals, not to mention that we were running the workshops in various conference locations, so the process had to be easily transported. As a technique,

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[121] Ibid.
[122] See Appendix two for workshop abstract.
[123] These ideas emerged from personal conversations with Jackie Haynes who is currently completing a PhD at the University of Cumbria.
[124] See appendix two for workshop abstract.

collage can be employed to deconstruct existing texts, focus in or frame images, or simply be used to play with compositions of colour and shape: aspects which also emerge in *The Homeless Library* workshops. Unlike the more specialist craft knowledge required in making felt in *Crafting Women's Stories*, or even writing stories with *Unfolding Projects* (which requires a degree of literacy), collage can be used by a group of participants with various different learning capacities. It highlights that the technique of making in the workshop needs to be responsive to the group the artist has selected to work with, without undermining or patronising their potential ability.

The technique can also stress certain aspects of the book form. For example, artist Kate Bufton teaches sculptural book forms to mental health participants in Warrington, accentuating the materiality, foldability and three-dimensionality of the codex. At other times bookmaking workshops may stress the longitudinal process behind bookmaking. This is visible in Sheelagh Frew-Crane's workshops with 'voice hearers' (a term she employs to describe individuals with schizophrenia or other mental health conditions) that involve a more traditional codex form with stitch bindings, which requires developed skills in threading pages. It suggests that selecting a technique for the workshop group in participatory book art often involves some form of prior assumptions or knowledge from the artist about the group's ability and needs.

Although the artist may initially teach the techniques of bookmaking, skills are often shared through the workshop group, rather than just being passed down from artist to participants. This form of dispersed learning challenges the model of the traditional atelier which operates through workers creating the sole vision of the master craftsman. Rather, each individual can use the skills learnt in the workshop to transform the books into their own forms of expression, sharing and reacting to each other's modes of making. Elizabeth Kealy-Morris emphasises this in her own workshop experience, she asserts:

> My experience of learning craft skills in industry suggested to me that the workshop can be a shared social space of knowledge production, particularly when working between a highly skilled and experienced colleague and quickly turning to a new colleague to share the few skills I had learned just weeks before. In my experience, social production through skills exchange need not to didactic,

controlled, autocratic and hierarchical. In introducing the craft skills of hand
bookbinding it was the workshop setting that made sense to me as a
craftsperson and an educator.[125]

Although not reflecting on a participatory book art workshop, Kealy-Morris's experience
highlights that the space of the workshop can be a site of skill sharing, rather than a
hierarchical space wherein the transmission of knowledge is one-directional. In *Crafting
Women's Stories,* the artists may rely on the participant's felting knowledge in exchange
for bookmaking skills. Or, in *The Homeless Library*, the participants may use the
bookmaking techniques as a springboard for their own inventions.

In my own experience of running and attending workshops, and observing those of *The
Homeless Library*, sharing between participants can be a vocal action (giving advice on
other participant's work), and also gestural (pointing to, passing on, or sharing
materials, techniques and tools). Gestural actions can be difficult to notice or evaluate,
often because they can appear habitual or are deemed 'background' to the main event.
It may be related to what Erin Manning would consider values which cannot be
articulated, explained through Marcel Duchamp's notion of the infrathin. Manning
states:

> The infrathin is interested in what is backgrounded in experience, yet still makes
> a difference. Usually, what can actually be apprehended – the actual share of
> experience in the making – is the measure of use-value. What is not actually
> included in the occasion of experience, in the event, is considered useless. This
> unactualized share is not only too difficult to describe, it is unmeasurable. How
> could it possibly be evaluated?[126]

I will raise the issue of values which cannot be considered/measured in the chapter on
Crafting Women's Stories and draw attention to a specific example in *The Homeless
Library.* However, for now it is enough to suggest that sharing a space of production
can result in books and relations being influenced by individual's proximity to one

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[125] Elizabeth Kealy-Morris. (2016) *The Artists' Book: Making as Embodied knowledge of Practice and the Self.* PhD.
University of Chester, p.138.
[126] Erin Manning. (2015) '10 Propositions for a Radical Pedagogy, or How to Rethink Value'. *Inflexions.* 8, p.207.

another and the environmental constraints and freedoms of the place of making. How this proximity and environment influence is not always easy to evaluate, not only because it can be subtle, quiet and bodily, but because the way in which one values or reports on the project often operates through pre-determined, fixed ideals on the site of change and benefit. What occurs is seeing the workshop through a lens of objective values, where the change or emancipation of participants in the workshop is seen to occur in those actions which are highly visible and can be instrumentalised, such as the completion of a book, the observation of speaking to another, or voicing one's opinion.[127] The workshop is always more than these actions, and the objective values read into the workshop by the artists and organisers are not necessarily the location of interest from the participants.

There is also a need to consider why book art is employed in the following case studies. Or to make this enquiry more specific, what does this art form bring to participatory art practices? And, why does its production take place in the workshop? As discussed in the introduction, book art is a 'zone of activity', which presents an exceedingly versatile and constantly mutating medium in contexts of making: workshops might involve the creation of simple, folded, one-page books, or utilise elaborate Japanese stitch bindings.[128] As codices are connected to communication and storytelling, they are also a prime medium for capturing narrative. This is perhaps why in participatory book art the codex is used in a variety of approaches - as a mode of self-expression, re-writing of historical narratives or to host dialogues. It can be connected to a community arts tradition of empowering participants through 'giving them a voice', utilised to disrupt monolithic narratives, or encourage networking between various individuals. The latter use of book art as a form of networking surfaces in *Unfolding Projects*, as the book is shown to be a lightweight, portable medium in which to develop dialogues sent across geographical borders. TT Activist Arts have also run a similar project in Portugal, where they use book art to communicate messages between educators from different

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[127] This idea of educational activities being judged through pre-determined or objective values is the mainstay of Erin Manning's article. Ibid.

[128] The concept of book art as a 'zone of activity' draws from Johanna Drucker's understanding of artists' books as a constantly reinvented, mutable form which does not have a 'fixed' definition. Johanna Drucker. (1994) *The Century of Artists' Books.* New York: Granary Books, p.2.

locations, sharing learning methods, techniques and experiences through the visual, tactile and evolving book art form. As is apparent in many projects within this thesis, book art does not necessarily produce linear narratives and engage with traditional plot structures. Rather, the books play with fragmented texts and unclear authorship, their textures of felt and concertina structures demand physical engagement and haptic interpretations from readers. Books in participatory book art projects literally and metaphorically 'unfold' as they are read and are constantly on the move, circulating between hands. Hence why Ulises Carrión suggests book art is a series of 'moments', whose meanings are often contextually influenced and time based, affected by the reader's associations and disassociations, as much as the place of reading. [129] This idea of books as bodily in case studies emerges in their 'one-off' rather than editioned nature, with *The Homeless Library* and *Unfolding Projects* books containing handwriting, fingerprints, smudged ink and guiding lines for writing. These are the marks made within the workshop, pointing to the site of production and the individual creator. As will be discussed in the case studies, this grants the codices a certain authenticity, not only in relation to the uniqueness of the object, but also in transmitting the 'touch' of the participant.

To highlight the versatility of the book form and its relation to capturing participant's stories, it is useful to turn to the work of artist Sheelagh Frew-Crane, who, as previously stated, teaches bookmaking as part of her workshops with whom she calls 'voice hearers'. The project was funded by Watford Borough Council, and Frew-Crane has run workshops at Mind charity, Guideposts, LP Café and Signposts. Frew-Crane often talks about the importance of the bookmaking process as one of drawing out stories in a diaristic approach. She explains:

> This is extended even further when used in the workshops because of the process of actually making the book. The very fact that it can be made by almost anyone and the process is a cognitive breakdown of understanding how it is built and constructed. Each page is new and can be a reference to a new beginning, new day, new thought. A space to put down our thoughts with no interruption. A

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[129] Ulises Carrión. (1993) 'The New Art of Making Books.' *In* Joan Lyons. (ed.) *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook.* New York: Visual Studies Workshop, p.31.

place to vent and get it out. Because of the versatility of a book, the workshops can fit most types and ages from young to old, shy/bold. For the youths I have chosen a burn after reading theme. This opens up the chance to explore ways to help people open up, even if only in a book. The dear diary has been a great comfort to people in the past and it is for good reason. Obviously, the way in which this is done now has moved on and changed to a degree, but the blueprint is basically the same. I read recently that creative types are often introverted and that whilst they work well and prefer to work alone, they also work well on their own around others, so this theory/fact is something I think can be used in the workshops with those who are withdrawn. The book is a stimulating and powerful instrument and not unlike ourselves it can be opened or closed, this too is something I share with the groups.[130]

What Frew-Crane's description highlights is the accessibility of learning to make books, and the cognitive and lengthy engagements this form can offer. She models the workshop as a method which accounts for different forms of making and sociability, allowing introverted participants to make their books in a silent, enclosed approach, as much as encouraging sharing and conversation between participants. She also emphasises the transformative possibilities of books as a mode of recording, diary keeping, documenting or self-expression. This also takes the books, or the act of their making, beyond the workshop, challenging the idea that this is the only space of learning; instead allowing participants to relate bookmaking to other aspects of their lives through developing their books at home.[131] Underlining Frew-Crane's comments is also a suggested empowerment, surfacing in the sense of ownership over the books production. Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr. asserts that this sense of empowerment emerges when teaching children to make books. He states:

I think when a child can read out loud and understand what she is reading, that is the first time they make this connection with learning, with becoming educated, with having knowledge. The love of knowledge is developed at this point. If we can take this time in a child's life, normally between the ages of seven and eight,

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130 Sheelagh Frew-Crane. (2015) *New Email and Some Questions.* Email to Gemma Meek, 4th October.
131 Draws on Erin Manning's idea that learning needs to be understood as taking place everywhere. Erin Manning Op. Cit. pp.204-205.

and couple it with book building it will teach children that they can take this complicated object called a book and make one. It is empowering.[132]

The same idea of ownership emerges in Paul Johnson's study, he asserts: 'So intimately valuable are these books to children that I have to rely, almost exclusively, on photographs and slide records, because the owners will not part with them.'[133] Although focused primarily on children's development, Kennedy and Johnson's experiences might be read against a wider terrain of women's workshops and presses which sprung-up in the 1970s and 1980s as a means of claiming ownership over production. Many drew on ideals of the 'personal is political' and were concerned with writing against dominant, stereotypical depictions of women, by publishing their own magazines, posters and books.[134] The aim was to disrupt the boundaries of private/public which were constructed to retain women in a domestic sphere through using visual imagery and texts to interrupt the 'public' by producing images of women which challenged the heavily objectified bodies in popular media. Whilst *The Homeless Library* texts are less disruptive, or 'shock' based, they too emerge from this desire to produce alternative narratives against the dominant discourse on homelessness.

Furthermore, the women's workshops employed the 'workshop' as an identity, to initiate egalitarian modes of production through collective ownership of the space and distributed roles/jobs.[135] Producing books and magazines was deemed empowering due to authoring not only the content, but also controlling where the books might circulate and be seen. This is also visible in John Bentley's work with communities through his *Liver & Lights Press*, in which he publishes books authored by groups based in certain localities. An example is *A Handful of Memories, Dundee* (2002)*,* a book produced by a group of Dundee residents who became friends after receiving the post of 'keyholder' from artist Nicola Atkinson-Griffiths. This post allowed them to access cultural events

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[132] Amos Paul Kennedy Jr. (1995) 'Social Book Building.' *In* Charles Alexander. (ed.) *Talking the Boundless Book: Art, Language, & the Book Arts.* Minneapolis: Minnesota Center for Book Arts, p.51.

[133] Paul Johnson. (1988) *A Book of One's Own.* Manchester: Manchester Polytechnic, p1.

[134] In Britain emerged: Virago, Red Poster Collective and the Woman's Press. In the USA: the Los Angeles Woman's Building, the Feminist Studio Workshop, Women's Studio Workshop and Woman's Graphic Center.

[135] This is visible in an account of See Red Women's Workshop, whose members state: 'It was not a creative situation for any of us: as students we had been encouraged to be secretive and proprietorial about our work and to foster the cult of the artist – a uniquely creative individual. We wanted to challenge this way of working, and we decided from the beginning to work as a collective – to work in a non-patriarchal structure, with no hierarchy and all decisions taken as a group.' In Prudence Stevenson, Susan Mackie, Anne Robinson and Jess Baines. (2016) *See Red Women's Workshops Feminist Posters 1974 – 1990.* London: Four Corners Book, p.7.

around Dundee for two years, giving the successful keyholders a desire to pursue the visual arts and continue their growing friendship. Through the community and education programme at Dundee Contemporary Arts, Bentley was invited to create a collective book with the participants.[136] This book is a fragmentary text of photographs, broken texts and images which recall personal memories of the five authors (their fingerprints stamped in the front of the book). The book is what Bentley calls a community 'portrait', with the process providing participants with ownership over the creation and editing of the content, as well as freedom to narrate the localities they inhabit.

There is also a history of workshops in the proliferation of book art centres in the United States arising at the end of the twentieth century. Nowhere is this more visible that in Chicago based organisation 'Artists Book Works' (1983-1993), established by Barbara Lazarus Metz and Robert Sennhauser. As advertised in the journal *Umbrella,* one of the main aims of the organisation was to form a community of 'book-makers, critics, collectors, binders and printers'.[137] The centre held regular classes, lectures and exhibitions, including *Winter in Chicago* a long running mail art exhibition. The organisation also held workshops on a variety of different technical skills including, box making, bookmaking, calligraphy, rubberstamping, paper decorating and book repair. As well as a series of classes and exhibitions, Artists Book Works also had a strong focus on school education, which differed somewhat from other US book art institutions of the time. Although distribution and production became the main concerns of New York centres such as Printed Matter (established 1976) and Visual Studies Workshop (founded 1969), fuelled in part by Lucy Lippard's ideals of the democratic multiple, there was also an increased desire for institutions to take on a more educational or community-based role. Pyramid Atlanta, Washington (established 1981) and Artists Book Works began offering regular community bookmaking workshops and develop increasing partnerships and programmes for schools. These programmes were particularly concerned with encouraging bookmaking skills in the curriculum (through all levels of education), collaborative production and exhibition opportunities for students. This resulted in projects run by artist Myra Herr in which students made

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[136] Information drawn from the front of the book art piece. John Bentley, Sarah Derrick, Graham Esson, Mark McKay, Irene Shearer and Lynn Cunningham. (2002) *A Handful of Memories, Dundee.* London: Liver & Lights Scriptorium, pp.1-3.
[137] Barbara Tannenbaum. (1983) 'A New Place to Make Books in Chicago.' *Umbrella,* 6(4), p.109.

autobiographical books with stories, visuals and poems in stitched codices.[138] Artists Book Works also had an open call advertised in *Umbrella* for book artists to send images of their works to form a slide registry for the use of curators, collectors, educators and museums.[139] I mention this history because it is also connected to artists Miriam Schaer and Melissa Potter from *Crafting Women's Stories*. They have experience not only teaching in K12 schools but are also educators at the Center for Book and Paper Arts, influencing the way in which they structure their workshops. It also highlights an early interest in challenging the potential elitism, or clearly demarcated 'community' of book art makers, by employing this mutable form within education and reaching others within community settings.

Although the discussion has been centred on the processes occurring in the workshop, it is also important to realise that the codices are being created to be viewed or consumed by others outside of the space – to reach a secondary audience. This is often the point at which critical engagement with the projects occurs from outside viewers, circulating or centring around both the books and the related documentation. Helguera states that this engagement is integral as there is a need for participatory art projects to have a 'second interlocutor', which is often 'the art world, which evaluates the project not just for what it has accomplished, but also as a symbolic action'.[140] For Helguera, symbolic action is 'works that are politically or socially motivated but act through the representation of ideas or issues.'[141] Although participatory book art projects reach beyond a simple representation of ideas or issues through the social and skills-based elements within the workshop, the books do highlight issues around homeless representation or Afghan women's concerns, which interact with the concept of 'symbolic action'. These representations are shown in particular contexts, with *The Homeless Library* books being displayed at the Houses of Parliament, or *Unfolding Projects* books acquired by the State Library of Queensland and used in their education programme. The books intent is to highlight an issue; whether that is to draw attention to UK homeless policy, or Afghan women's struggles for education. These contexts of

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[138] Hugh Boulware. (1987) *Art Facts: Creative Bookmaker Seeks Attractive Mail*. 1st January. The Chicago Reader. [Online] [Accessed on 10th February 2017] https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/art-facts-creative-bookmaker-seeks-attractive-mail/Content?oid=926987

[139] (1991) 'Artists Book Works' *Umbrella*, 14 (2-3), p.34.

[140] Pablo Helguera, Op. Cit., p.36.

[141] Ibid, p.6.

display, therefore, extend the project beyond the workshop, with participants sometimes attending and conducting readings of their poems from book art, or assisting with the curation of exhibitions (seen chapter two on *The Homeless Library*). Furthermore, it is to acknowledge that the secondary audience forms somewhat of an invisible presence or influence on the work, wherein participants may be aware that their work will be read by another or displayed in a particular context, impacting the stories they will tell.

There is also a need to consider how the workshop space is often partially 'invisible' or mediated for this secondary audience. As Gerri Moriarty states: 'Workshop material must be edited, shaped, rehearsed, framed to communicate with a wider audience, for whom the longer creative journey will be, to some extent, invisible.'[142] This is far more complicated in participatory book art, as often when the 'creative journey' (the workshop) is presented to outside audiences, it is framed or shaped in particular ways through the artist's website, organiser's publications, or staged photographs highlighting participant's agency or 'energy'.[143] Whilst this absence of the space might account for its use of educational methods – as Claire Bishop states, art is 'seen by others' in comparison to education which 'has no image' - I think it is more likely to suggest that documentation of the workshop is fulfilling a specific role within participatory book art projects.[144]

As touched upon in the introduction, and re-emerging across this thesis, documentation is often wrapped up in a climate of evidence, whereby funder's pressures and a neoliberal environment of accountability demand artists to prove a project's worth. Therefore, documentation is often framed as a positive, easily digestible record of the workshop in action. Yet, for Bishop, documentation from participatory arts practice should highlight and work with the tensions between the 'event' (in this case the workshop) and the record. Bishop suggests documentation needs to capture something of the disruptions and tensions emerging in the workshop, as well as the chaos or dynamism of the collaborative process.[145] Often this involves the use of film, as

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[142] Gerri Moriarty. (2004) 'Community Arts and the Quality Issue' *In* Sandy Fitzgerald. (ed.) *An Outburst of Frankness Community Arts in Ireland – A Reader*. Dublin: Tasc, p.151.
[143] I address this subject of photographs capturing the energy of participation in chapter two on *The Homeless Library.*
[144] Claire Bishop. (2012) *Artifical Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship.* London: Verso Books, p.241.
[145] Ibid., pp.259-260.

documentation is seen to be more effective when capturing the event 'in time', rather than formed through reflection. To capture these tensions challenges the idea that collaborative workshops operate solely through participants agreeing, or simply enacting the task at hand in a straightforward approach. It also implicates the spectator in the interpretation of the event, which continues the learning process of the project through allowing the viewer to extend and produce meaning[146]. Whilst Bishop's critique raises interesting approaches to conceiving of documentation, it should be noted that the examples she provides are often documentation which is shown and displayed as an artwork. Whereas, in participatory book art projects there is an impression that documentation is to contextualise and frame the books, with the latter acting as the 'final art piece' inviting critique.

The Design of the Workshop and the Formation of Participating Groups

In nearly all of the participatory book art projects within this thesis, the artists have selected or planned to work with a particular social group, often gathered or constructed through an identity: whether this is 'homeless' or 'Afghan woman'. The participants may volunteer to take part in the workshops by choosing to sign up (and hence partially self-associating with the label) or are selected to participate by the supporting organisations. Thus, these labels act as invitations to participate, designating who may partake in projects, as much as being utilised as a marker in which to critique and re-address. In some cases, the label is also used in the title to 'frame' projects in documentation for secondary audiences. These labels therefore denote 'communities' in a loose sense, with 'community' understood as taking on various assignments, even if based on notions of consensus or commonality. This is emphasised by Rimi Khan who suggests that community can indicate a spatial component (e.g. local communities), or highlight individuals gathered around religious or social practices (e.g. Muslim communities, gaming community).[147] It can be tied to ideals of nostalgia, with some

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[146] Ibid., p.272.
[147] Rimi Khan. Op. Cit., p.16.

participatory art practices attempting to reinvigorate a 'lost' community, potentially visible in the *Crafting Women's Stories* interest in indigenous, but vanishing felting practices. And it is also increasingly used to signify groups that do not necessarily share physical localities, accounting for the proliferation of digital communities. As Saw Bowman argues:

> A 23- or 24- year old Londoner is more likely to be concerned about Mumbai than Newcastle – we're much less interested in national boundaries: the internet lets you speak to people who you share interests with, wherever they live. Geographical unity is fine, but I think most people prefer the unity and friendship that comes with shared interests. We get to do that now.[148]

Whilst this highlights that 'shared interests' rather than national or local identities can demarcate groups, it also emphasises that communities or relations may be built through digital devices, as much as through objects. This variety of community also stresses its contextual definition, and suggests individuals move across or associate with a wide variety of different groups, rather than being bound to a singular community.

This notion raises a debate in relation to participatory art projects on whether artists 'enter' a pre-existing community, or whether the project forms a community. For many, the former concept appears to model participants as material for creating projects, in which artists go into a readymade community and engage in a dialogical or creative process. Yet, Miwon Kwon argues that community is often initiated by artists and is formed by the participatory art process. This operates through an understanding of community not as a static or fixed group, but one that is provisional and in constant formation.[149] To unpack this idea, it is useful to consider how the workshop acts as a method of facilitating group formation, bringing together a particular community of agents.

Arguably, the group within the workshop interacts with, and is entangled around labels, as the invitation to participate is the foundation on which agents are brought together. However, rather than this suggesting that projects conceived with group labels are

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[148] Susan Jones. Op. Cit.
[149] This concept of the group as provisional will also be discussed in the chapter on *The Homeless Library*. Miwon Kwon. (2004) *One Place After Another Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. London: MIT Press, p.151.

always exploitative or limiting, Helguera has highlighted the difficulty of conceiving of projects without an idea of audience.[150] As previously discussed, this is particularly prevalent in educational projects, where pedagogical activities are planned around the needs, requirements and skills of the group. This is also because working with vulnerable or exploited groups requires an understanding of the potential reasons for their oppression, which indicates a certain responsibility from the artist/organisers to be intuitive to the participant's situation. Whilst this might re-iterate artistic fears of pre-determining outcomes and stereotyping those involved, Helguera asks 'Imagine doing a project without an audience in mind?' He instead suggests the space of process (in this context, the workshop), should be the point at which the fixity of community or outcomes is challenged. He explains:

> We build *because* audiences exist. We build because we seek to reach out to others, and they will come initially because they recognise themselves in what we have built. After that initial reaction, spaces enter a process of self-identification, ownership and evolution based on group interests and ideas. They are not static spaces for static viewers but ever-evolving, growing or decaying communities that build themselves, develop and eventually dismantle.[151]

Here, Helguera posits the group formed through participatory practices as temporary, through its suggestion of eventual dismantle. What this emphasises is community in contention, which is evolving and shifting always to 'become', rather than 'be', without disregarding the violence and exclusions of its boundaries. This also makes community formation highly political, where the desire to create community is one of will and design, which requires a dedication from the multiple agents within the workshop. Whilst this might suggest that not partaking halts or stalls community, it is to acknowledge that this lack of action manifests community within a different formation – seen in the passive resistance of standing as action from Erdem Gunduz and others during the 2013 Turkey protests.[152] Elke Krasny and Meike Schalk posit that community, therefore, has to be

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[150] Pablo Helguera. Op. Cit., p.21.
[151] Ibid., p.22.
[152] Richard Seymour. (2013) *Turkey's 'standing man' shows how passive resistance can shake a state.* 18 June. The Guardian. [Online] [Accessed on 20th September 2018] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/18/turkey-standing-man

produced and reproduced, and is the work of a 'struggle'.[153] They draw on Rosi
Bradotti's notion of 'becoming-subject' to assert:

> "[t]he subject is a process, made of constant shifts and negotiations between
> different levels of power and desire, that is to say, wilful choice and unconscious
> drives". She further argues: "It implies that what sustains the entire process of
> becoming-subject is the will to know, to desire to say, the desire to speak, think,
> represent". Becoming-subject is not an individual activity, but an interactive
> collective process that relies upon relations and social networks of exchange.[154]

In this reading, the subject is not only formed as an individual process, but our
subjectivities are cited as a collective manifestation: understanding of oneself is always
against and within larger social ideologies. What this suggests is that participants are
both consciously and unconsciously reacting to the boundaries and manifestations of
the workshop space, as much as wilfully or unwilfully taking part in performing the
processes involved. For each workshop the community is not fully formed, but being
provisionally reproduced and contended each time, grounded in this coming together
within a shared space.

The workshop, therefore, has to be designed or react to this provisional and
reproducing formation of community, to allow agents to evolve, gain ownership and to
critique the labels they are assigned within the planning of projects. This is not always
straightforward, sometimes the planning of projects and the pressures of monetary
support give little room for participants to shift and challenge the workshop processes
and outcomes. Thus, there is a need to note that the workshop is partially designed and
managed with certain ideologies in mind that can influence what actions or behaviours
are allowed to take place within the space. Although an extreme example, this might be
understood through Khan's analysis of the participatory installations of Lee Mingwei's
work in the exhibition *Lee Mingwei and His Relations* (2014). She specifically mentions
The Living Room, which was a section in the exhibition to allow visitors to "'relax' and
share stories about the Roppongi Hills district that the museum overlooks'. Also, *The*

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[153] Elke Krasny and Meike Schalk. (2017) 'Resilient Subjects: On Building Imaginary Communities.' *In* Meike Schalk,
Thérèse Kristiansson and Ramia Mazé. (eds.) *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms,
Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections.* Baunach: Art Architecture Design Research, p.140.
[154] Ibid., p.140.

Moving Garden that allowed visitors to 'take one of the flowers that made up the installation and offer it to a stranger on their way home.' She states:

> In order for these projects to work, people are required to adhere to codes of respect and civility, and to participate in socially appropriate and clearly prescribed ways. It would probably not do for a visitor to The Living Room to use the space as a site of social protest, for example, or for someone to 'participate' in The Moving Garden by vandalising the garden bed or stealing flowers from other participants. The success of these feel good artworks depends on specific forms of commonality that regulate what people do with the art and each other.[155]

This idea of regulating behaviours is familiar in discourse on what Kim Trogal calls the 'hidden curriculum' in classrooms. In this way, the 'social content of teaching' is often underlined with values, beliefs and norms of culture that reproduce social hierarchy, often reinforced though learning outcomes, rules and designated relationships.[156] Bell hooks has highlighted how these norms of behaviour can be racially charged or influenced by class ideology, affecting how students gain a sense of 'self', as much as learn 'suitable' ways of speaking, listening and acting.[157]

These enforced norms of behaviour also emerge in discussions over what forms of conviviality or relations are validated in participatory art practices. For example, Nicolas Bourriaud suggests that works by Rirkrit Tiravanija's (which allow visitors to eat Thai food in the gallery), or Felix Gonzalez-Torres' (piles of sweets which encourage individuals to take a piece of candy), always produce positive, convivial relations between audience members.[158] Yet, Bishop has highlighted that this is often because certain individuals attend and are welcomed into the gallery space due to its regulated rituals and modes of exclusion. Thereby affecting what behaviours audiences perform and what 'relations' are validated or given visibility.[159] Much like Khan's reading of

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[155] Rimi Khan. Op. Cit*.,* p.46.
[156] Kim Trogal. (2017) 'Feminist Pedagogies: Making Transversal and Mutual Connections Across Difference.' *In* Meike Schalk, Thérèse Kristiansson and Ramia Mazé. (eds.) *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice Materialisms Activisms Dialogues Pedagogies Projections.* Baunach: Art Architecture Design Research, p.240.
[157] bell hooks. (1991) 'Essentialism and Experience' *American Literary History*. 3(1), pp.174-175.
[158] Nicolas Bourriaud. (1998) *Relational Aesthetics.* Dijon: Les presses du reel.
[159] Claire Bishop. (2004) 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.' *October,* 110, Fall, pp.51-79.

Mingwei's installations, participatory art projects can condone and encourage certain behaviours that are not necessarily dissenting or disruptive. I raise these issues not to suggest that the workshop is a place of strict organisational control, but that certain parameters are authored within the design, which can influence the way in which participants behave or perform self-expression. It is why the artists in *The Homeless Library* maintain the workshop as a 'quiet space' away from the other centre activities or the potential noise and disruption of street living. Correspondingly, in *Crafting Women's Stories*, the workshop is posited as reacting against, but in relation to the women participant's domestic lives, as a space to be free of domestic duties. It also takes note of how the sites in which workshops are enacted (training centres, homeless centres and classrooms), are already imbued with certain behavioural codes and environmental constraints, which can influence projects and initiate whom is allowed in these spaces.

One of the pressures on the workshop space is time, and how the constrictions of time can influence outcomes or what is produced. For example, if the workshop is conducted in a one-off, two-hour session with the aim of creating a finished book, the rhythm of the workshop is likely to be fast paced and designed to be efficient. This was often the case in the *Woman's Outlook* workshops I ran, where stations were set up to improve accessibility to materials and spaces of making, but also to encourage productivity.[160] This is dangerously close to capitalist notions of efficient production over wellbeing, with more organic and individual rhythms that participants enact difficult to facilitate and was often a struggle we both contended with. It was also partially due to the restraints of the conference structure, as much as what we were trying to attempt in the allocated time. What it raises is issues over how one might allow a workshop space to unfold in an organic or responsive approach, accounting for how individuals come to tasks in their own speed, with time to wait, think, converse and contemplate, as much as generate focus and productivity for the task in hand. This is to allow individuals time for what Sharon Blakey terms 'dwelling', where 'being with' materials and seeing what emerges requires a prolonged, intuitive and intense engagement.[161]

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[160] See appendix two for workshop abstract.
[161] Liz Matthews and Sharon Blakey. (2017) 'Unfolding: A multisensorial dialogue in 'material time'. *Studies in Material Thinking.* 17, July, p.6.

On the one hand, this discussion raises an issue in regard to the time an artist spends in a locality prior to the workshop design, to understand these rhythms and desires of the participatory group. Kester, Helguera and William Titley have all indicated a preference for being based in a locality over a long period of time, either living and working in the chosen community, or engaging in lengthy periods of consultation. In participatory book art projects this longitudinal engagement is difficult as funding can be limited, resulting in consultation often being mediated through partner NGOs.[162] Funding therefore enacts a framework, with *The Homeless Library* having capital to conduct a year long, weekly workshop agenda, whereas in *Crafting Women's Stories* each group of women the artists worked with had two days to make a felt book. It may also explain why in *Crafting Women's Stories* the artists return to Georgia to conduct a different paced style of engagement, as the artists were armed with situational knowledge gained from their first visit. There is also a pressure from funders to produce 'outcomes', where the books become a show piece and evidence from the workshops, which demand this 'efficiency' of production. This is most visible in *Unfolding Projects*, where funders pressure the Afghan women to complete the books, as they are sold to raise funds for the centre. These external pressures come to impact the workshop's rhythms, whereby a need to produce might write over more intuitive or organic actions within its spaces.

Yet, even with these organisational and time-based pressures which might appear to pre-determine outcomes, there is always an element of unpredictability in the workshop's manifestation. For example, although Darnley and I ran the same workshop in several locations, the reactions of participants were nearly always varied. There were some groups that needed barely any steering or prompts with the activity – selecting materials and conversing with the group easily, voicing their opinions and sharing the content they had created with the group. At other times the group were timid and less at ease – sometimes voicing a frustration with the inability to give the material and activity the time it deserved. These are all legitimate responses, and Darnley and I constantly had to tweak the workshop to allotted conference times, taking on board the feedback and fine tuning the materials and processes that we would bring. The spaces of the

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[162] Pablo Helguera states that most successful socially engaged art projects 'are developed by artists who have worked in a particular community for a long time and have an in-depth understanding of those participants.' Grant Kester. Op. Cit; Pablo Helguera Op. Cit.*,* p.20; William Titley. (2017) 'Creative relations.' *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 31(2), p.247.

workshop were also highly influential and indeterminable: sometimes the lighting was minimal, the seating uncomfortable, or the tables difficult to establish in a more circular or workstation arrangement. Far from being static, these assemblages of materials, agents and environment are constantly manifesting and interacting, subsequently altering the way in which the workshop unfolds, influencing the social experience and the books being produced.

Although this assemblage may present a certain freedom for involved agents, it is crucial to be cautious of disregarding the previously discussed parameters or suggest that workshops can be inherently freeing, 'open form' or 'laboratory spaces' which lack constraints or modes of control on participants.[163] This idea of free spaces writes over the workshop or spaces of interaction as designed, organised or imbued with ideology – instead reiterating the workshop method as a neutral, passive form. This is because the idea of 'play' or free exploration of materials can be easily co-opted into the façade of easy to digest, active and quick information prevalent in both art education and participatory art practices. This activity is less about disruption or questioning the institutions or hegemonic discourse that supports and condones it, but more about 'vacant edutainment'.[164] Whether in the context of museum education, social media or Google Offices, Brian Holmes asserts that '[c]ontrol in hyper-individualist societies, is a function of the way your attention is modulated by the content you freely select; but it's also a function of the direction into which your behaviour is guided by the larger devices in which you participate.[165] Nadine Kalen also relates this control to the 'pedagogical factory', where the 'user-friendliness, how-to-demonstrations, entertainment value, and array of choices provided by the pedagogical factory meet the student-as-consumer or

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[163] This concept of the laboratory is critiqued by Claire Bishop in relation to the curatorial work of Nicolas Bourriaud, Maria Lind, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Barbara van der Linden and Hou Hanru. She states that exhibitions which appear as 'works-in-progress' or laboratory spaces (in which the work is in 'perpetual flux') become easily marketable as a 'space of leisure and entertainment'. These exhibitions are easily encompassed into an experience economy, which Bishop describes as a 'marketing strategy that seeks to replace goods and services with scripted and staged personal experiences.' Claire Bishop. (2004) Op. Cit., pp.51-52.

[164] 'Vacant edutainment' is a term Nadine M. Kalin borrows from Eilean Hooper-Greenhill to account for the 'gentrification of aesthetic forms for easy reception', which 'limits the possibilities of participation to active interaction wherein art must be "quickly intelligible and easily digested by everyone". Kalin is suggesting that participation can be utilised in art practices and institutions in a 'populist, diluted, superficial, and consensus-based' approached to attract the largest audiences, but does little to critique or form a longitudinal, meaningful engagement. Nadine M. Kalin. (2014) 'Art's Pedagogical Paradox.' *Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research,* 55(3), p.195.

[165] Brian Holmes. (2007) 'The Oppositional Device or, Taking Matters Into Whose Hands?' *In* Johanna Billing, Maria Lind and Lars Nilsson. (eds.) *Taking the Matter into Common Hands On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices.* London: Black Dog Publishing, p.39.

audience-as-self-interested individuals vying for their own gain in knowledge, culture economy'.[166] Here, participation becomes 'consumption', where workshop participants may appear to have 'freedom' of choice but are actually limited by the content and discouraged from formulating their own critical enquiries or engaging in collective modes of working. These practices are also entangled in an increasingly dematerialised and service-based economy, in which sites of learning and art practices can steer participants into gaining skills and behaviours which generate and stimulate a neoliberal climate. This might be understood through the writing of Andrea Phillips, whose essay 'Education Aesthetics' discusses the transition at the end of the twentieth century from a material to an immaterial concept of labour, with the immaterial concept of labour defining the production of services that 'result in no material and durable good'.[167] Phillips highlights how this immaterial labour has developed new forms of poverty, what Maurizio Lazzarato terms a 'hyper-exploitative 'totalitarianism'', where work and leisure time can become harder to distinguish. 'Free time' is increasingly sold to individuals as a space for 'experiences' and 'self-development', to encourage one to become more individualistic, creative and self-reliant, aspects increasingly demanded by employers.[168] The participatory book art workshop is partially wrapped up in these demands, as participants can be encouraged to engage in self-reflection, self-development and improve their conversational or communicating abilities, as much as their creative skills. For those projects working with 'others' (such as the 'homeless'), this may model the workshop as a form of 'normalisation', to encourage individuals to give back or get back into society, to contribute once again to the economy. I raise these issues as the workshop is neither outside of their influence, but also not fully imbued into these restricting and oppressive tendencies. What needs to be considered in individual case studies is how the parameters of the workshop modulate and influence behaviours by considering what modes of dissent are allowed? Moreover, how might these spaces use playful, material engagement to form new narratives or allow participant's room to challenge assumptions? Part of this enquiry also requires a need to consider whom is

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[166] Nadine M. Kalin. Op. Cit., p.194.
[167] Andrea Phillips. (2010) 'Education Aesthetics.' *In* Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson. (eds.) *Curating and the Educational Turn*. London: Open Editions, p.86.
[168] Ibid., p.87.

authoring and modulating these spaces, which, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, often revolves around the artist.

The Role of the Artist

In participatory book art projects, the artist is often the preliminary author responsible for organising the lay out, selecting the materials, teaching bookmaking techniques and generally coordinating the session. This grants the artist a certain authority, particularly as the funders and supporting organisations present the capital and resources as the responsibility of the artist. This posits the artist/s role as somewhat of a facilitator, not in the neutral sense that Helguera implies where the facilitator is an inactive, bringer together of individuals, but one that actively mediates the groups interests, encourages discussion and steers conversation. Quintin Edward Williams states that this demands certain skills from the artist in timekeeping, guiding interactions, as well as applying specific knowledge.[169] It also relates to the Reggio Emilia Approach and its construction of the 'workshop teacher':

> The *atelieristi*, or workshop teachers, play a key role in being attentive to the interests of the group but also in integrating those interests and activities into the curriculum. In this way, the learning experiences of every group is different and functions as a process of co-construction of knowledge.[170]

As previously discussed, although workshops do not necessarily work within a curriculum, they do have certain outcomes or aims they intend to achieve. These aims are often around producing books, encouraging participants to engage in discussions about particular issues or vocalise their stories. More often than not, these aims are pre-determined by the artist (and supported by partner organisations and the funders). However, even if certain bookmaking techniques are taught in the workshops or conversation points raised, individuals can develop and deviate from examples to create

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[169] Quinten Edward Williams. (2017) *A Day to Day Account of a Participatory Arts-Based Workshop*. Quinten Edward Williams Blog. [Online] [Accessed on 1st September 2018] http://quintenedwardwilliams.com/2017/06/21/a-day-to-day-account-of-a-participatory-arts-based-workshop/
[170] Pablo Helguera. Op. Cit., p.xii.

works or speak about issues that are more in line with their interests or ways of working. This is potentially why Philip Davenport sees his role more as a collaborator than a 'teacher', as he does not consider the workshop as a space in which to 'fill' participants with the correct book forms or objective understanding of themes, but more as method of steering and encouraging individuals to reinvent techniques, as well as feel comfortable at voicing and questioning their experiences.[171] What becomes an issue, is how much direction and control the artists give to participants on deviating from expected aims.

This steering or prompting of discussion could be linked to the work of Paulo Friere, a key figure in influencing community arts, as much as the 'educational turn' within curatorial and artistic practices.[172] In Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) he sought to alter the 'banking' practice of education, in which a specialist author would 'fill' students with knowledge that they had gained from objective insight about the world, often through the cognition of objects.[173] Instead, Freire proposed forms of critical thinking, which changed the nature of the teacher-student relationship to one based around dialogue and co-construction of knowledge. He states that this form of education results in the students gaining a form of ownership over knowledge creation, asserting:

> The students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the student express their own. The role of the problem-posing educator is to create; together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the doxa is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the logos.[174]

Through this co-creation Freire believes that students will 'develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in

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[171] Philip Davenport suggested he saw his role as a collaborator through personal correspondence after observing *the Homeless Library* workshop. See Appendix one for report.
[172] Alison Jeffers states the influence of Paulo Freire's work on community art practitioners. Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. Op. Cit., p.8.
[173] Paulo Freire. (1970, reprinted 2013) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Bloomsbury.
[174] Ibid. p.81.

process, in transformation.'[175] It is important to note that Freire was writing from a context of liberation as praxis, often running 'culture circles' with Chilean peasants to encourage them to understand their oppression and take ownership and control of the strategies to gain freedom from the landowners. This often results in Freire's conception of the 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' as working in a fixed binary, where those 'in power' are recognisable and clear-cut, even if he suggests that peasants should not simply take the place of the oppressor in liberating humanity.[176] Where Friere's ideas emerge in relation to participatory arts is in bringing to light that 'the oppressed' need to be involved in challenging the oppressors from the beginning, to manifest new models of collaborative working and living, rather than having it dictated to them by established powers or 'educators'.

What is integral about Freire's approach is that he does not dismiss the expertise of the educator (or artist) within the dialogical exchange. Rather, he posits all agents involved in the educational process as experts in some form of knowledge – be it farming for Chilean peasants, or in his case, philosophy.[177] This has been touched upon earlier, when discussing the bookmaking expertise of the artist. However, it also surfaces in Kate Crehan's experience of community arts organisation Free Form, who suggests that the value of the workshop is that it 'potentially makes expertise more accessible and decision making more democratic.'[178] Crehan envisions the workshop as shifting the ideal of the artist as the lone creator, instead seeing it as a space which allows participant's knowledge and skills to collide. What becomes the issue is how fixed or manoeuvrable the artist's proposition is for the workshop, and how directed the facilitation is to accept and allow other ways of working, knowledge and questions to surface.

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[175] Ibid. p.83.
[176] As Paulo Freire states: 'If the goal of the oppressed is to become fully human, they will not achieve their goal by merely reversing the terms of the contradiction, by simply changing poles.' Ibid, pp.55-57.
[177] Pablo Helguera also mentions the benefit of this approach through utilising Paulo Freire's work. Pablo Helguera. Op. Cit, pp.51-52. Freire suggests that to see oneself as having the potential or capability of knowing, one has to recognise their expertise. He states: 'Educands recognize themselves as such by cognizing objects – discovering that they are capable of knowing, as they assist at the immersion of significates, in which process they also become critical "significators". Rather than being educands because of some reason or another, educands need to become educands by assuming themselves, taking themselves as cognizing subjects, and not as an object upon which the discourse of the educator impinges. Herein lies, in the last analysis, the great political importance of the teaching act.' Paulo Friere. (1998) *Pedagogy of Hope Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum Publishing Company.
[178] Kate Crehan. (2011) *Community Art An Anthropological Perspective.* London: Berg, p.137.

This is why I also argue that Freire's expertise lies in facilitating certain discussions or questions to emerge. For the peasants to realise their expertise, Friere had to pose a particular activity, which required a certain knowledge of facilitating. In some ways this links to Chantal Mouffe's reading of Alfredo Jaar's *Questions Questions* (2008) which involved him placing specific questions on placards on public buses, billboards, subways and trams as 'counter-information' - a way of reacting to Berlusconi's media and advertising network in Italy.[179] Rather than rely on shock tactics, in which to reveal a 'truthful' reality to the public, Mouffe states that Jaar's work relies on 'unsettling common sense by posing apparently simple questions, albeit questions that, in the specific context of the intervention, are likely to trigger reflections that will arose discontent with the current state of things.'[180] What is key about Jaar's work for Mouffe is his lack of authority, or more specifically, his lack of authoritative address, where 'he prefers to interpellate people by setting in motion a process that will make them challenge their unexamined beliefs', through questioning rather than dictating.[181] It also relies heavily on the context in which these questions occur, contexts which will 'trigger reflections' as they may jar for the viewer or reveal something strange or ambiguous about the 'current state of things'.[182] This is much more difficult to enact in the workshop, as the individual asking the questions (often the artist) is visible and therefore more likely to influence the answer. Despite this, the workshop in participatory book art does seem to be constructed with the desire to challenge unexamined beliefs through the proposition of themes and artworks as provocations to participants. By constructing the workshop as different or independent from other spaces the participants occupy, certain questions and themes are centralised and rethought through their appearance in a critical site. What may be seen as a criticism is that these questions, activities or topics of address still often come from the artist. It fails to consider Irit Rogoff's statement 'regarding who produces questions, what are legitimate questions and under which conditions do they get produced?'[183] This will be pursued in individual case

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[179] Chantal Mouffe. (2013) *Agonistics Thinking the World Politically.* London: Verso, pp.94-95.
[180] Ibid., p.95.
[181] Ibid., p.95.
[182] Ibid., p.95.
[183] Irit Rogoff. (2010) 'Turning.' *In* Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson. *Curating and the Educational Turn.* London: Open Editions, p.37.

studies, as the ability for the participants to question the processes and topics raised by the artists is contextually based and highly related to legitimisation.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to challenge the workshop as a 'neutral' or 'already known' method. By bringing the workshop to the fore I have analysed how the ways in which it is planned, designed and delivered influences the involvement of participants, processes of making and the books produced. This has been a useful activity, as it has presented a way of drawing together the connected histories of community arts and book art education to participatory book art, as well as forming a foundation for the specific unfolding of the workshop in individual case studies.

This chapter has highlighted how the workshop is anything but predictable, and that the impact of the environment, selected materials, funding influences, time constraints and the ways in which the artist/s presents their role, can all transform how participants come to workshops, the conversations they engage with and the books that are produced. Whilst the ideologies and theories that support this workshop constantly interact with neoliberal forces of 'edutainment', accountability and immaterial labour, there may be room for collective working that allows participants to formulate new questions, reinvent hegemonic narratives and form new values. It has emphasised how control of the workshop, even if coordinated by the artist, does not necessarily result in the straightforward exploitation of participants. Therefore, if one aspect has been clarified it is that there is not one clear, singular workshop method, nor a clarified beneficia practice. Rather, the workshop is a method that is constantly reinvented in its contextual specificity and can manifest differently each time according to the agents, materials and processes imbued within its planning.

I utilise some of the ideas from this chapter around the workshop as method, site and assemblage in the case studies on *The Homeless Library* and *Crafting Women's Stories.* I understand the workshop as both an organised space littered with certain texts and modes of controlling participant's behaviour, as well as accounting for how participants'

can use the method to manoeuvre the project's original aims, pool skills and challenge the artist's predictions. The next chapter is focused on analysing *The Homeless Library* through the lens of representation.

Chapter Two

Representation: *The Homeless Library*

In 2014, artist collective Arthur + Martha (Lois Blackburn and Philip Davenport) received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop *The Homeless Library* project. The aim of the project was to create autobiographical book art with homeless participants at various homeless centres around Manchester.[184] The artists ran a series of weekly bookmaking workshops with both regular attendees and drop-ins at the centres, as well as inviting book artists such as Jeni McConnell to lead sessions on certain techniques. Generally, the workshops involved interrogating a set theme (such as bravery, poverty, suffering or heaven) through group discussion, and encouraged participants to create altered books with existing textual material (Charles Dickens' novels or comic books). As a broad definition, altered book art is created by cutting, folding, drawing over, or inserting new material within an original codex.

Alongside the workshops, the artists also conducted a series of oral history interviews, with some of the transcript material being employed by the participants to make their books. These interviews (seventy in total) were published in an eBook alongside images of the book art, the artist's written introduction, 'expert' footnotes, and my own observations of a *Homeless Library* workshop. Artists Blackburn and Davenport did not record the interviews, but made notes whilst the participants spoke, which were then read back to the interviewees for editing and approval.[185] As well as interviews, photographer Paul Jones was invited to capture portraits of the participants. The photographs from this shoot were shown alongside the participants' book art pieces at the project launch held at the Houses of Parliament. The fifty books made by the participants went on tour in a mobile library, shown at the Southbank Centre, London, Burnley Art Gallery and Museum, Burnley the Outside In/Inside Out Festival, Glasgow, and Central Library, Manchester. Several of the participants that took part in the project

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[184] The homeless centres include The Wellspring, Stockport and The Booth Centre, Manchester.
[185] 'Expert' is a term used by the artists to describe academics, artists or those working in homeless services who have written footnotes for the participant's interview transcripts in: Philip Davenport and Lois Blackburn. (2016) *Homeless Library.* Blurb Ebook: Apple Pie Editions, p.11.

also visited these exhibitions to give readings of their work and accommodate discussions on their experience.

The Homeless Library project ran for nearly two years, and models itself as the first-ever history of homelessness written by those who have experienced, or are experiencing, homelessness.[186] The artists taught the participants bookmaking skills in the workshop, encouraging individuals to capture their first-hand experiences of homelessness in the pages of book art. The books also act as a means of politicising participants' stories through their display and visibility in such contexts as the Houses of Parliament, UK. In particular, the use of a first-person perspective challenges a fixity or singular image of the homeless, which is reiterated in dominant narratives of popular media, fiction and policy. It allows participants to partially construct their own self-image in a climate where they are often re-represented or 'spoken for'. Rather than considering *The Homeless Library* book art outside of or separate from these dominant discourses, I investigate how the books might interact against and within its narratives to challenge and broaden their sometimes essentialising tendencies. This chapter is, therefore, concerned with representation.

Investigating representation within *The Homeless Library* books requires analysing how participants write and depict their stories within and against the label of 'homelessness'. To consider this practice of self-representation also requires enquiring about the freedom and control participants experienced in the space of the workshop where they created their books, and the impact of the artist as collaborator on this process. Some of this discussion draws on the analysis of the workshop from the previous chapter. By tracing the spaces in which the books are made and framed against a formal reading of the books' content and compositions, the overall aim is to consider how *The Homeless Library* book art may either reiterate stereotypical depictions of homelessness or open up a space for new identities to emerge. To conduct this analysis, I will take seriously the claim that this project is a more 'authentic' history of homelessness due to its use of a first-person perspective.

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[186] Arthur + Martha. (2017) *The Homeless Library (2014-2017)* Arthur + Martha Portfolio. [Online] [Accessed on 16th December 2018] https://arthur-martha.com/portfolio/the-homeless-library/

The first part of this chapter will interrogate homeless representation as one loaded with voyeuristic practices - from documentary photography of the twentieth century to more contemporary socially engaged photographic projects. Documentary photography tends to frame the homeless as 'other' in stereotypical, well-reiterated shots of the slum, soup kitchen and street living. These images do little to challenge the structures of oppression by allowing audiences to engage in a safe mode of looking at 'others' or to encourage charitable giving. Socially engaged photographic projects have attempted to combat the voyeuristic and exploitative tendencies of these early practices, by allowing the homeless to capture their own image with the camera. However, there is little questioning of the artist's role in this process or consideration of the camera as a historically loaded, bourgeois tool. As I argue, even if the artists invites the homeless participants to capture their own self-portraits, a refusal to interrogate the role of the artist as author of the photographic collection, or the lack of an attempt to disturb the framing of homeless as coherent, accessible subjects, still reiterates similar downfalls. As *The Homeless Library* also utilises photographic portraits of the participants, there is a need to discuss how individuals are potentially 'normalised' or stereotyped in their depictions. Some of these photographic examples highlight the energy of participation to evidence the benefit of individual's involvement in the project. Other examples emphasise a participant's individuality or personality to make them relatable to audiences and re-iterate those safe modes of looking. Therefore, these photographic images generally tend to bypass the tensions within the project or the difficulties of the photographic image in capturing subjects.

To build this argument and trace these discussions, I spend a significant part of this chapter working through these histories of photographing the homeless in relation to essentialist ideals, the framing of the subject and the concept of a 'homeless aesthetic' - a notion whereby homeless is designated and 'othered' through visual cues. This history of homeless representation will be a necessary underpinning to read book art against, not only because it is a different medium from photography, but also because it potentially entertains a different form of representation. Thus, the second part of the essay will utilise this contextual foundation against which to read *The Homeless Library* book art. Furthermore, I am interested in the ways in which audiences speak about the book art through notions of touch, which forms a fetishisation of their materiality (as if

the book art's textures and surfaces allow readers to make a connection with the situation and identity of their makers). Additionally, I also consider how the book art's altered and layered compositions draw on a postmodern vein, whereby the ability to find the 'who' that is writing/making is difficult due to the fragmentary and dislocated 'I'. To find the 'who' that writes and to consider the project as allowing homeless participants to tell their stories *as* homeless, is to re-engage a mode of reading through identity labels. By drawing on the author theories of Sara Ahmed, I argue that reading through the label of 'homeless' allows participants to voice their experiences, which have the potential to both reiterate essentialist meanings and deviate from ideas of homelessness in hegemonic discourse. The authors of the books, therefore, perform homelessness differently, as much as highlight other aspects of their identities outside of the label; showing that the 'I' who writes is never a cohesive, singular subject. There is also a need to consider where the book art is read and how this determines its potential interpretation. As stated in the introduction, context is key - where the books are read and performed, and how the identities of the authors are represented, affects the way in which readers understand their stories.

Contextualising Homeless Representation

'Soup Kitchen Saturday' – these words, printed on the top of a book box (figure three), are loaded with connotations. Instantly, a spring of referents comes into my head: hunger, low income, churches, vans, charity, queues, banging pots, large metal ladles and the homeless. The metallic text and darkened background not only suggest associations of pots and ladles, but also embody the colour of the soup kitchen's documentation – archival material, and black and white photography. These words appear to draw from a history of representations of the soup kitchen such as documentary photographs of 1930s America, to more contemporary visions of Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester. One only has to Google image search 'soup kitchen history' and an array of black and white images of long queues of sombre individuals waiting for their bowl emerge (figure four). These representations of the soup kitchen, although appearing on the surface as a cohesive vision of the 'real', are partial, framed,

and hard to shake. They have come to inform a homeless imaginary, whereby those outside the space of the soup kitchen have a sense of knowing it through these dominant representations. With an endless repetition of the soup kitchen through particular aesthetic tropes and topics, the representation becomes a space comprised of quotation. Even if the photographic image of the soup kitchen is meant to awaken audiences to assist the hungry, its continual reiteration through the same modes of framing forms a normalisation and the representation loses its critical edge. As Martha Rosler states:

> With quotation, as with photography, meaning comes largely from the frame. Simply introducing something where it has been excluded – mass-culture imagery in an elite-culture setting or photos of the unphotographed poor such as those I considered earlier – can be a radical opener, until familiarity dissipates the shock. Quotes, like photos, float loose from their framing discourses, are absorbed into the matrix of affirmative culture.[187]

The consistency of the representation simply reinforces the discourse that maintains the status quo, even if the image enters a more 'critical' or unknowing context. Familiarity almost feels like understanding. So, how might *The Homeless Library* disrupt this normalising chain of quotations? How might its representation of such spaces as the soup kitchen, or homeless identities move from essentialist depictions? How might book art be conceived as a critical vehicle?

To consider these questions, it is first necessary to delve into a history of homeless representation and to set the scene for an analysis of how *The Homeless Library* may challenge or reinforce essentialist depictions. This contextualisation requires a discussion of two crucial aspects that *The Homeless Library* engages with: labelling and representation. Although these operate differently, both are connected to modes of essentialising subjects and must be discussed in relation to how the project complies with, or resists, fixed meanings.

To expand, *The Homeless Library* utilises the label 'homeless' as a point at which to introduce and contextualise the project. Far from having a straightforward signifier, this

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[187] Martha Rosler. (2006) *Martha Rosler, 3 Works*. Halifax: Novia Scotia College of Art and Design, p.90.

label appears to have several affects and meanings that transform during the projects unfolding, often in accordance with whom is utilising the label and where and to whom it is being given/presented/designated. On the surface, the title of the project appears to designate the library itself as homeless. The fifty books produced were placed in a portable container and travelled to various galleries and venues. The books lack of residency in one location suggests a homeless form of mobility. Perhaps more problematically, the title also points to the authors of the book art as homeless. Constructing the authors under this label forms a reference point for readers to interpret the books' meaning – homeless as lens. This reading through a label is further complicated as participants of the project are encouraged by the artists to criticise, as well as identify, with the homeless label during the workshop sessions. Even if participants find the label problematic during the processes of making and attempt to subvert its stereotypical associations, homeless is reintroduced as a framing device for the books within their display and documentation. Thereby, creating a singular identity referent for the authors.

The second issue, although not that far from the first, is that of homeless representation as it exists in the discourse of journalism, charity campaigns and other media uses. Historically, homeless photography as social documentary claims some form of truth or authenticity, often through reiteration of sameness through visual cues. Although *The Homeless Library* is mainly comprised of drawing and writing as an output, contextualising the history of homeless photographic practices will be useful to see how the project may push against or reiterate some of its downfalls: how book art may operate as a different medium of representation. The project does, after all, also point to historical representations of homelessness through its utilisation of Dickens material for altered books, as well as through participant's photographic portraits within the exhibitions and documentation.

It is first integral to explore a definition of homelessness to establish how certain uses or understandings of the label materialise. 'Homeless', in its most common use, is a term which accounts for individuals who sleep or bed in places not made for permanent habitation, such as bus shelters, doorways, car parks or derelict buildings. Often, this is a rather rigid explanation based around 'rough sleepers', with many deemed homeless

living in unstable housing conditions such as hostels or couch surfing, which are also defined by many shelters as precarious situations.[188] Others have tried to expand the definition outside accommodation terms, to encompass the various pathways that may lead to the situation of homelessness (drug and alcohol problems, dysfunctional childhoods, family break-up, bereavement, loss of job, crime, prison, ill-health, etc.). Correspondingly, to also consider the various impacts homelessness has on the individual beyond loss of home (presence or absence of familial support and moral worth).[189] This discussion on homelessness could be situated in the continual expansion of the concept of home as simply 'bricks and mortar', to include the wider spatiality of feelings that home comes to represent in relation to experiences of alienation and belonging.[190] Homeless also encompasses many other labels and associations, which emerge in *The Homeless Library* interviews and complicate a fixed determinant. For example, one of the participants Brian asserts: 'The difference between a tramp and a dosser? A tramp is always moving from town to town, a dosser will stay in one place for years and years. I'm definitely a tramp.'[191] Brian's statement stresses that homelessness reveals a variety of different living conditions and identities (such as tramp or dosser). Individuals who fall under the umbrella of 'homelessness' can feel more connected too - or detached from - these variations in terms, not to mention defining and occupying labels in both individualist and more communal ways.

These definitions of homelessness are, therefore, entangled in varying contexts - from policy use to shelter identity – which can alter and transform the definition according to

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[188] Sofie Ruggieri suggests that homelessness in the UK was historically defined by the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions (dissolved in 2001) under the idea of the 'rough sleeper'. The contemporary Department for communities and local government also produce a publication of rough sleeping often taken on a 'single night snapshot', which is used to assist in political agendas even if often criticised in its method. 'Rough sleepers' are of course just one aspect of homelessness, and the participants in this project come from varying different 'homeless' backgrounds. Sofie Ruggieri. (1998) *Homeless Voices Words from the Streets the Views of Homeless People Today.* London: Crisis London Research Centre; Mike Young in Department for Communities and Local Government. (2017) 'Rough Sleeping Statistics Autumn 2016, England' *Housing Statistical Release.* London: Crown.

[189] David A. Snow and Leon Anderson expand on the various impacts of homelessness by drawing on their ethnographic studies in the US, thereby attempting to reform the 'one dimension' of homelessness as simply habitation loss. Dr John Garrard in *The Homeless Library* eBook footnotes also highlights that there is an increasing focus on 'pathways' theorised in the USA, Britain and Australia to explain the multitude of potential reasons why someone falls into homelessness. David A. Snow and Leon Anderson. (1993) *Down on Their Luck A Study of Homeless Street People.* London: University of California Press; John Garrard and 'A' (2016) 'A's Story' *In* Philip Davenport and Lois Blackburn. (eds.) *The Homeless Library*. Blurb Ebook: Apple Pie Editions, p.30.

[190] The current refugee crisis has also demanded a reconsideration of the concept of homelessness due to the multitude of individuals with no permanent accommodation and with their home countries in a state of turmoil. Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling. (2006) *Home.* London: Routledge.

[191] Brian. (2016) 'Brian's Story.' *In* Philip Davenport and Lois Blackburn. (eds.) *The Homeless Library*. Blurb Ebook: Apple Pie Editions eBook, p.61.

individual and institutional desires. In turn, these contexts define the label's value. In some situations, the term 'homeless' can draw light to an issue through charity and protest causes, in other contexts it is seen as detrimental to moving beyond a state of homelessness. As Amanda Croome the CEO of the Booth Centre states:

> We try not to label people as homeless. It is important people don't identify themselves simply as homeless. It should be a state you move through temporarily and hopefully forget. If you ask people who they are they say "I'm a grandma, I'm a Manchester United supporter, I'm a Lithuanian." It's one of the problems I have with the homeless protest camp right now. People get a sense of identity and purpose from being homeless there and don't want to move away from it.[192]

Within the context of working for a homeless shelter, Croome suggests that shared oppression 'on the streets' fosters a dangerous sense of cohesion, which maintains a state of homelessness through community belonging. However, homelessness is also a widely used and familiar term, presenting an effective way of gaining visibility of a marginalised group through advertising means. This visibility through the use of the label homeless became apparent when I was involved in a street money collection for the Manchester 'Big Change' campaign; often individuals could not make the connection between the charity title and the homeless cause it was raising funds for. Whilst this disconnection is clear, it was the reaction of individuals that was revealing of the label. After being told that the collection was to raise funds for the homeless, individuals often presented a well-constructed opinion, highlighting an instant recognition of the term both in a supportive and dismissive sense.

Thus, homeless exists as a familiar marker in discourse, and points to something recognisable for a large majority even if it operates in some modes as oppressive or one dimensional. It also emphasises that labels on 'causes' do not always garner support, as they can be loaded with stereotypes. One-dimensional ideas can emerge on how individuals ended up in a state of homelessness or related to assumptions about the effects of homelessness on society. Alice Fox and Hannah MacPherson have

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[192] Amanda Croome. (2016) 'Amanda's Story.' *In* Philip Davenport and Lois Blackburn. (eds.) *The Homeless Library*. Blurb Ebook: Apple Pie Editions, p.38.

highlighted this tension between benefit and constriction in the act of labelling. They suggest that labelling participants is occasionally for funding bodies to comprehend/categorise projects, and acts as a politicisation of the group of participants around an issue. Speaking primarily about 'Inclusive Arts' - a practice which involves the collaboration of artists with and without learning difficulties - Fox and MacPherson generally advocate the use of labels such as 'people with learning difficulties' as a platform for empowerment. They state:

> That is not to say that all Inclusive Artwork should be labelled – labelling something can affect how a piece is 'read' by a viewer, can reinstate labels that the maker might be seeking to overcome, and can burden them with somehow being representative of learning disability. Rather, how a work is labelled is an issue that should be carefully reflected on. Such work, like the whole of this book, is "…forced to walk a tightrope between complicity and critique"[193]

What Fox and MacPherson's suggestion highlights is that biography can come to authenticate works through identity labels, where participants come to be read solely through 'learning disabilities' as a singular form of meaning. A similar tension materialises in *The Homeless Library* wherein inviting participants to partake in projects as 'homeless' potentially constricts other possible identities to emerge. However, labels such as homeless can be pushed against and provide a platform to diversify considerations outside of stereotypes. Subsequently, becoming empowering for participants and wider attitudes in relation to the issue. Participatory projects often move, as Fox and MacPherson suggest, between complicity and critique.

If labels move within different contexts, and perform differently according to these contexts, understanding how visual representations of the homeless are constructed and gain meaning may benefit from a similar approach. For example, depictions of the homeless (even if taken by 'artists') are often deemed by other discourses as social documentary, altering their interpretation in relation to ideas of an authentic homelessness. This discussion of authentic imagery might be understood through

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[193] Here, Alice Fox and Hannah MacPherson quote P. Auslander (1994) *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance.* Michigan: University of Michigan Press. *In* Alice Fox and Hannah MacPherson. (2015) *Inclusive Arts Practice and Research A Critical Manifesto.* London: Routledge, p.12.

Martha Rosler and Steve Edwards's account of the phenomenon of documentary photography which arose towards the end of the nineteenth century. Edwards traces the practices origins to liberal state and reform movements, when photographs were used by state and private institutions to gather intelligence on the working class for analysis by 'experts'.[194] Rosler is particularly critical of these historical practices in her own work and related writings, terming it photographic 'pornography' in its obsession with fetishising working class life through reiterating usual topics and points of view.[195] For Rosler and Edwards, documentary photography arose from a continual citation of such images taken by Jacob Riis, whose prints of the New York slums did not attempt to transform the social situation of individuals, but 'preserve polite society from disequilibrium by calling attention to the "dangerous classes" and awakening the self-interest of the privileged.'[196] Photographs of the lower classes were not taken to empower individuals being photographed, but to reinforce the more socially powerful group to act through charitable giving rather than transforming the social structures of oppression.[197]

The photographer was not separate from this exploitative structure, instead they were utilised as an agent to capture subjects through a particular framing, a framing that would benefit those they were addressing. Photography formed the genuine through the repetition of visual cues and compositional methods to form an authentic imagery. Much like the images of the soup kitchen, there are many publications of black and white photography which echo similar subject matter and framing of the homeless, from Don McCullin's images of the London homeless (1960s – 1980s), to Margaret Morton's *Fragile Dwellings* (2000) and Salvo Galano's *Sidewalk Stories* (2001).[198] These representations form the artist as voyeur, who, as Edwards states, have the capital and social authority to access the exotic and mysterious world of those who supposedly live 'on the boundaries' of society.[199] These images are continually cited and staged within

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[194] Steve Edwards. (2012) *Martha Rosler The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems.* London: Afterall, p.10-18.
[195]. Ibid., p.12.
[196] Ibid., p.13.
[197] Martha Rosler. Op. Cit., pp.74-75.
[198] Margaret Morton. (2000) *Fragile Dwellings.* New York: Aperture; Salvo Galano and Jeff Bridges. (2001) *Sidewalk Stories.* New York: Powerhouse Books.
[199] Steve Edwards, Op. Cit., p.77.

certain ideological viewpoints, often encompassed into discourses outside of art for government surveillance and policy making, as well as social narratives. For Rosler, in the 1970s there existed no critique of the frame as a specific construction of the subject. Instead, the photographic image was designated a form of reality which did nothing to problematise the very discourse/methods of photographing 'others'.

More recently, socially engaged photographic practices have tried to combat this voyeuristic tendency linked to documentary by handing the camera to participants to capture their own image. This practice is visible in projects such as *No Place Like Home* (2010) at the Huggard Centre, Cardiff, in which artist Faye Chamberlain taught the staff at the centre how to use photography and sound to 'describe a sense of place', techniques they then passed onto service users.[200] In a similar vein, Anthony Luvera creates what he calls 'assisted self-portraits' (2002 – present). Luvera invites individuals he meets at homeless shelters to learn how to use large-format camera equipment to take their own portraits in a location that has significance for the participant. He then edits the image with the participant, and it becomes encompassed into his collection. For Luvera, asking homeless individuals to take pictures of themselves was a way to disrupt a representation that was other to their experience. He states,

> It seems to me that forms of self-representation may go some way to broadening an understanding of individuals who are generally depicted through their experiences with charities, the law and state services. Birth and death certificates, education reports, electoral roll details, housing status, health records, legal documentation and other official registrations or descriptions can only provide a limited outline of the life experience of any person. Filling in some of the remaining gaps and absences with the first-hand representation of the points of view of people who would otherwise leave little material trace of their lives may offer a more complex, nuanced and varied understanding of the experience of being homeless.[201]

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[200] Faye Chamberlain, Chris Young and staff & service users of Tresillian House & Huggard. (2010) *No Place Like Home.* Cardiff: Ffotogallery Wales Ltd.

[201] Anthony Luvera. (2011) *Residency.* Belfast: Belfast Exposed Photography, p.13.

What becomes an issue with Luvera's practice is the artist as the substrate of the representation; the invisible presence. Although the artist no longer presents oneself as voyeur, these images do not necessarily challenge the framing of the subject and may simply affirm the ability of the photographer to work with 'others'. Brenden Leam Gray has discussed this in relation to socially engaged photographic practices.[202] He suggests that in some projects the individual being photographed is represented through their body, whereas the artist is only present through their name. He asserts:

> If the body of the represented other is the focal point of the invitation, the artist appears on the invitation in name, but not in body. The fact that the artist is both a subject and not a subject is at once obvious and significant – he, unlike the pictured man, cannot be arrested. Where is his body? It seems that the artist does not want to be seen, but prefers instead for his body to be referred to indexically, as if his identity can be found elsewhere, if at all.[203]

Here, Leam raises the issue that some bodies are declared to be visibly identifiable, and that certain representations grant access to individual's identity through their display under socially engaged projects; they are made the spectacle.[204] Leam's ideas could be useful to analysing the representations within *The Homeless Library*, wherein the books and photographs produced within the project are framed and read under the term homeless. An identity that is deemed to be fully visible and completely determines the represented subject. Leam suggests that the artist, whose name appears on the documentation, the exhibition poster and the website as author remains tied to a discourse of artist as facilitator, whereby their identity is insignificant and remains unscrutinised, even unimportant. Yet, I argue that this insignificance actually heightens the place of the artist, whereby their ability to create with the other is a comment on the artist's skill in building relations, which is above and beyond a general public.

Although clearly Luvera is interested in individuals' histories and their stories - providing participants with a vehicle to share these - by authoring the work through his name, the meaning often circulates back to his tenacity and skill. As he remains absent from the

[202] Brenden Leam Gray. (2010) 'Making Art in the Wrong Place: Violence and Intimacy in Speak English to Me' *Critical Arts,* 24(3), pp.368-391.
[203] Ibid., p.372.
[204] Ibid., pp.372-373.

images, his identity is not under consideration from the audience. Rosler makes this critique of late twentieth century photographers, whom she states were interested in the aesthetics of 'imperfect' society and would access supposedly dangerous areas to photograph. Often, the photographer's images would be read primarily through the ways in which they were created and their connection to the photographer's autonomous body of work, rather than through a consideration of the specific context of the image. This stress on the photographic process would emphasise the artist's tenacity and unique ability to access these 'dangerous' terrains, with the terrain often modelled under a concept of 'exotic' difference.[205] It suggests that the artist is empowered by the experience, more so than those they are photographing. Morgan Quaintance suggests a similar notion of the artist as representative in his reading of Pierre Bourdieu, when he states:

> The delegate must "mobilise the group" according to Bourdieu, "in a demonstration or display of the group's existence…[t]he spokesperson demonstrates his legitimacy by demonstrating or displaying those that delegated him." This act can sanction what Bourdieu describes as an "embezzlement" in which the delegate claims the authority to speak for the community in order to empower him – or herself politically, professionally and morally.[206]

Although this analysis is highly critical, it is problematic when the photographic images taken by Luvera are encompassed into his collection (even if he is deciding to archive this in a more public domain) rather than held/used by the individual within the image. It appears that the point of connection or the meaning comes back to the artist as archivist/author due to their circulation under his name, heightening his place as the individual able to access relations with others.[207]

Although arguably there is a discovery or empowerment to revealing oneself through taking a self-portrait, the fascination with photographing the homeless also seems to

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[205] Martha Rosler. Op. Cit., p.77.
[206] Morgan Quaintance. (2012) 'Private Moments.' *Art Monthly,* 354, p.148.
[207] I attended a talk by Anthony Luvera where he indicated that he still had not decided where to house his photographic collection. Anthony Luvera. (2016) *Community, Participation, and Reciprocity in Socially-engaged Photographic Practice*. Paper presented: *How does artistic research transform society? Practicing Communities: Transformative Societal Strategies of Artistic Research Winter Symposium.* Latvian Academy of Culture, Riga, 18 – 20 March.

highlight a fixation with their appearance.[208] Even if representing participants' bodies in more recent socially engaged projects may be in backlash to stereotypical representations stemming from Jacob Riis, there is a potential danger of a desire to present the homeless as familiar. It has been suggested that these photographic practices are an attempt to normalise the other within a hegemonic discourse, with difference dissipated rather than confronted. The difficulty appears when these photographs are revealed as hosting some form of truth, or authentic homelessness, which either conforms or does not conform to the subjects presented posture, clothing, living condition or features. A homeless 'aesthetics' is utilised to conduct an active mode of discriminating or categorising individuals and allowing them to move and entertain certain spaces.

This visual categorising is nowhere more apparent than in Regenia Gagnier's article on 'Homelessness as an "aesthetic issue"'. Gagnier argues that the homeless literally disrupt the aesthetics of San Francisco, which is conceptually and economically deemed a capital of shopping and tourism but interrupted or disturbed by the presence of the homeless 'putting-off' shoppers.[209] The homeless disturb the 'everyday' individual utilising the city, often as a visual entity in the form of rough sleeping and loitering. If Tim Edensor states that cities have an urban rhythm, the homeless come to disturb this rhythm, to prevent its primary role as a site of production and sociability.[210] This has come to the fore in Britain recently, with towns such as Oxford and Windsor using fine enforcement or legal rulings to criminalise those begging or sleeping out, and to remove them visually from the public eye.[211] Projects that involve homeless representation can, therefore, come to replicate these authenticities by utilising the stereotypes of shelter,

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[208] There are some participatory photographic projects which consider the process of self-portraiture as performative, and as a constant reworking of the subject. In these projects, the photographic image is arguably for the participant (rather than the artist) as the focus is more on the process than the outcome. Often the image is used as a discussion point, wherein looking and interrogating the image is wrapped up in its making. This is visible in the project *Wonderland*, as discussed in Gemma Meek (2016) *The Exposure of Self: Reading Wonderland Artists' Books*. Wonderland. [Online] [Accessed on 1st March 2018] http://www.art.mmu.ac.uk/wonderland/essay-gemma-meek.html

[209] Murray Baumgarten and H. M. Daleski. (1998) *Homes and Homelessness in the Victorian Imagination.* New York: AMS Press, p.168.

[210] Tim Edensor. (2010) *Geographies of Rhythm: Nature, Place, Mobilities and Bodies*. Farnham: Ashgate.

[211] Dawn Foster. (2018) *What Kind of Society Tries to Make its Beggars Invisible? Ours Does.* 11 January. The Guardian. [Online] [Accessed on 16th January 2018] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/11/newport-begging-homelessness-public-space-invisible.

clothing and possessions in the representation, referring to them in oral history interviews, or using them through book art materials.

To unpack this argument, it is useful to conceive of how homelessness, or perhaps more specifically a broad understanding or observation of homelessness, is built on an 'othering' around visual prompts. Take for example the opening to Dr Anya Daly's article 'Homelessness & the Limits of Hospitality'. She begins by describing an experience of witnessing homelessness:

> Coming home on the tram my gaze met that of a young man shouldering a carry-all – heavy, and torn in parts. I looked away quickly. Clearly that carry-all carried all his belongings, and, I hoped, food for the wet, icy night ahead under the bridge. I knew I was going home to company and a hearty soup. Part of me wanted to suggest he come back and share soup with us; but the greater part was fearful: he could be dangerous, perhaps a drug user, and even if neither of these, how could we turn him out into the cold again. The limits of my hospitality – fear.[212]

There are two aspects that are worth pausing over in relation to this description. The first is the suggestion that the young man literally wears his homelessness – it is visible in the materiality of the carry-all, in its torn, rugged and used appearance. Homelessness is not confirmed through speech or indicated by the man through his confirmation, instead, much is assumed from his outward appearance. Daly, like the public, is taught to survey homelessness - to literally, visually separate individuals from their appearance. This act of surveying is not only used in an oppressive sense, as the public can be asked to report homeless individuals in freezing weather to allow help to be given, extending a form of governmental or NGO monitoring.[213]

The second aspect, highly related to the first, is that this appearance produces or is linked to the production of 'othering' and the residing fear the other produces to those who host normative social ideals. The fear comes from mistrust, a suspicion that

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[212] Anya Daly. (2017) 'Homelessness & the Limits of Hospitality' *Philosophy Now.* 123, December/January, p.11.
[213] Getting the public is survey homelessness is visible in the new app for reporting 'rough sleepers' called Street Link. It allows members of the public to report rough sleepers, which notifies local authorities or outreach services. Street Link. (no date) *Welcome to Streetlink*, Streetlink. [Online] [Accessed on 22nd April 2018] https://www.streetlink.org.uk/

homelessness is linked to a whole range of stereotypes of lifestyle such as drugs and crime. Daly later uses the phenomenological theories of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to unpack this reaction of fear and relates it to our sense of belonging. She asserts:

> I propose it is because of the sight of homeless people challenges our sense of entitlement and also our sense of self and belonging. It makes us recognise how fragile these things in fact are; that we too could potentially become victim to any number of the misfortunes, such as have been visited on those living under bridges and on streets.[214]

It is crucial that Daly employs the term 'sight', but also relates the concept of homeless as 'alien'. Those that occupy homelessness metaphorically and literally do not belong to a place, community and larger social structures, and thus disrupt the rhythms and structures of the city and remind us of our own instability. Daly goes further, arguing that what occurs in homeless assistance is an attempt to encourage the homeless to conform to social norms, what Daly calls a 'coercive normalising.' Here, the structures of normalisation as oppressive - that which forms a who is, and who is not included within the designation of 'normal' - are not challenged, but those labelled other must instead comply. This mode of normalisation in relation to homelessness is multi-faceted. It could be seen as a desire to secure homes, employment and security. On the other hand, it is about conforming to a normative appearance. It suggests the outer presentation and habits of the homeless deem them other, often in line with essentialist ideals that allow normative subjects to distinguish 'them' from 'us'. The distinction between them and us can also be linked to Sara Ahmed's discussion on Neighbourhood Watch schemes.[215] Ahmed asserts that the 'stranger' is essentialised in appearance and movement to allow those on watch to supposedly select those who do not belong to that locality.[216]

So how might normalisation operate in the photographic image? The suggestion is that by humanising individuals with personal narratives or visual cues the audience can feel a connection, thereby reducing fear or an 'opening out' to the other. There is an

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[214]Anya Daly. Op. Cit., p.13.
[215] Sara Ahmed. (2000) *Strange Encounters Embodied Others in Post Coloniality*. London: Routledge, pp.25-32.
[216] Ibid., pp.25-32.

element of this in operation in *The Homeless Library* photographic portraits taken by Paul Jones (figure five and six). Much like Luvera's photographic portraits, here individuals are not taken to appear homeless, by which I imply that they do not draw on clichéd historical representations of rough sleepers clothing, settings and postures. For these images' personality is key and is revealed through physical mannerisms and material possessions; steampunk glasses, sewn badges, gestures, smiles and hair styles. Each participant's individuality emerges through engagements with fashion, showing personal interests through material items and personality through mannerisms - however staged these may appear. Although these images do well at celebrating difference through individuality, they are not for the participant but for an outside audience. Shown primarily in the documentation of the project, in the eBook, on the blog and Flickr, the images act to familiarise the audience by allowing for a comfortable viewing, which does not present a tension. The images seem to invite the viewer to find familiarity in the portraits, to understand the subjects as fully present. Yet, this 'just looking', or the invitation to look, is still wrapped up in a voyeuristic tendency, even if the participants are involved in their self-fashioning. This voyeuristic tendency could emerge from the photographs being framed under the label homeless, with the images of others presented as a valued method of marketing the project. As Fox and MacPherson state, this diversity from the 'norm' is a 'highly valued and marketable feature of contemporary capitalism', and images of participants can often become part of a wider process whereby they are 'packaged' for the cultural consumption of others.[217] Thus, what appears to be the issue is the context in which these photographs operate. They appear not to be taken for the participants, but for the consumption of others. Furthermore, they appear to lack critique of the homeless as a subject to be watched, surveyed or understood fully from their physical composure. The images appear to be more concerned with validating the project by highlighting interested and dynamic participants who, through the act of self-expression in the project, can now reveal themselves. Thus, when Blackburn and Davenport asked the participants to write down what the camera would fail to capture, they not only revealed an awareness of the

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[217] Alice Fox and Hannah MacPherson. Op. Cit., p.72.

limitations of this medium in capturing subjectivities but highlighted an insight into the problematics of photographs as 'proof'.[218]

Where the photographic images of *The Homeless Library* are potentially more revealing in relation to this argument is in the 'doing' images, either of the workshops in session, or moments from the book's launch at the Houses of Parliament. There are images of Blackburn working with one of the participants on a book art piece (figure seven), or photographs of the participants reading out their poems in the Houses of Parliament. These are fairly typical images taken during participatory art projects and are generally to highlight the dynamism of the artist or institution that is facilitating. As Adair Rounthwaite states:

> Photographs of participation typically position participant agency as something anterior to a given project, which the project simply facilitates, and which is reflected transparently in the photograph. In fact, documentation images and the representation of participant agency they materialise are bound up with the production of institutional and artistic authority.[219]

This concept of projects literally catalysing the participant's engagement supposedly becomes visible in the photographic image. The images are therefore, entangled in a proof culture, whereby a project's success is not only measured through targets in participatory works, but also by visual outcomes which can be marketed. This demand for positive images is not necessarily the artist's choice, but their hands are often tied by their funder's request for evidence, particularly in a funding climate which demands accountability. With success in mind, these images lack tension. There is no conflict visible in the individuals being present in certain spaces, and no suggestion that participants might have refrained from engagement in the activity. Furthermore, the focus on capturing images of people engaged in an activity (often as if unaware of the

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[218] Arthur + Martha. (2016) *You Take a Picture of Me.* 10 March. The Homeless Library. [Online] [Accessed on 10th February 2018] http://arthur-and-martha.blogspot.com/2016/03/you-take-picture-of-me.html

[219] Adair Rounthwaite. (2014) 'In, Around and Afterthoughts (on Participation) Photography and Agency in Martha Rosler's Collaboration with Homeward Bound.' *Art Journal,* 73(4), pp.47.

camera) also highlights that 'naturalised' images are valued above posed and controlled framing; these are participants lost in the task at hand.[220]

Within *The Homeless Library* photographs, unlike the Luvera images, both Blackburn and Davenport are present as collaborators. Take for example the image of Blackburn (figure four), she is clearly not the maker in this portrayal but leans over to watch the participant form the pages of his book. Her presence suggests assistance and involvement, from her focus on the participant's hands to the movement of her mouth indicating engagement in speech. This assistance from the artist/s is reiterated through my own observations of the workshop, where Davenport would offer aesthetic advice on a participant's compositions or chosen colours.[221] The artists are not an 'invisible presence' but an active force in the construction of the book art pieces, even if they remain officially unnamed authors of the book art (not the project). In another image, Davenport appears to address the audience at the Houses of Parliament, with arms outstretched in an explanatory fashion (figure five). Other photographs of the launch reveal participants reading out their poetry from the books, conversing with others, or MPs engaging with the various codices. What these images reveal is an energised project, based on participants being visible in contexts often closed off to the homeless (both in the Houses of Parliament and galleries), as well as positioning the artists as part of that narrative of representation. As the facilitators for engagement and access to these other arenas, perhaps visible through Davenport's outstretched arms (figure eight).

Whilst Davenport does not deny the antagonisms within the project and speaks openly about how participants were not always engaged in the task, these tensions do not emerge in the outward publications on the project. Thus, to understand these tensions often involves a visit to, or an experience of, the workshop space; a space not open to a

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[220] Adair Rounthwaite makes a similar observation in relation to the photographs of Martha Rosler's *Homeward Bound* project. Ibid., pp.57-62.

[221] Notes from my workshop observations record this interaction: 'During the making of his collage, Philip comes over and suggests that participant one sticks the sword the other way around as the colour of the sword's handle sits well with the 'blue' of the map. This aesthetic decision relates to Philip's insight as an artist, which he uses to inform and collaborate with participant one. Later, after the session, I ask Jeni and Philip whether it is difficult to navigate their position in terms of what the group demands. Do they consider their role as teachers, carers or artists? They both state that they are not teachers but see themselves as collaborators - as sharing rather than teaching skills.' Gemma Meek (2016) *Observations at the Booth Centre*. Op. Cit. (Appendix one).

general readership.[222] As discussed in chapter one, the workshop space is often constructed to encourage the development of certain book art pieces, and thus maintain an environment which partially influences modes of participation. The workshop space can be loaded with subtle messages, from the placement of certain materials in the room, to the way in which the artist steers the activity. It emphasises that the space of the workshop is far from static but can be affected by a wide range of interacting variables on the day such as personalities, disruptions, materials and atmosphere, as well as being constructed through larger influences of funders desires, artist's ideals and the centre's programming. Although much of this discussion on the workshop as both a controlled and unpredictable space has been established in chapter one, I want to spend some time considering how these ideas might emerge in the context of *The Homeless Library.*

As mentioned in chapter one, the workshop space could be viewed as an organisational space, which can be investigated to consider the ways in which space is lived, embodied and made to mean.[223] It can be constructed through chosen book art materials, tasks, furniture layout, displays and the designated roles provided to the various agents. To deem a space organised is not always to highlight it as oppressive, as space can be a mechanism of control, as well as a site in which control can be challenged and resisted.[224] Space is not understood as neutral and passive, but through Doreen Massey, modelled as porous and materialising, constructing and being constructed through various interacting agents.[225] It is also therefore, unpredictable, and cannot be fully controlled by the participants or the artists.

I find Pablo Helguera's suggestion of his library projects as forming a 'third place' useful to situate the workshop space as a site somewhere between 'work' and 'home'.[226] As a space designated for the production of art and self-expression it gains a certain signification, which encourages participants to perform actions and self through certain

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[222] In a personal conversation before my workshop observations at the Booth Centre, Davenport discussed participants occasional lack of engagement. Ibid.

[223] Melissa Tyler and Laurie Cohen. (2010) 'Spaces that Matter: Gender Performativity and Organizational Space.' *Organization Studies*, 31(2), p.180.

[224] Ibid., p.180.

[225] Doreen Massey. (2003) 'Imagining the Field.' *In* Michael Pryke, Gillian Rose. And Sarah Whatmore. (eds.) *Using Social Theory Thinking Through Research.* London: Sage Publications, pp.71-88.

[226] Pablo Helguera. (2016) *Combinatory Play – Pablo Helguera The Art Assignment PBS Digital Studios.* Nerdfighteria Wiki. [Online] [Accessed on 11th December 2018] https://nerdfighteria.info/v/yF6dB7Uignc/.

modes of making or statements (both resistant and compliant). This is because the space 'compels' subjects to materialise themselves in certain ways and can be established as a site of critical thinking.[227] This idea of spaces as compelling subjects might be understood through bell hooks' writing on the site of the classroom. She states that the classroom is already loaded with 'systems of domination', which control what experiences students can voice and whom can speak, as well as how this is heard and framed.[228] Speaking about the work of Diana Fuss, hooks argues: 'I am disturbed that she never acknowledged that racism, sexism and class elitism shape the structure of classrooms, creating a lived reality of insider/outsider that is predetermined, often in place before any class discussion begins.'[229] The same parameters exist in institutional spaces of the gallery or museum, which Anna Cutler has pointed out as being arranged on inclusivity by actively making some subjects feel welcome and others not.[230] Thus, in the space of the Booth Centre there are already existing protocols and invitations in regards to who can use their space and facilities. *The Homeless Library* workshops also have a pre-considered designation of roles, whereby certain agents are authorities due to establishing the layout or leading the session, impacting how others may engage or voice their experiences within the space.

As previously discussed in chapter one, the workshop space is first formed through an invitation to participate. In the case of *The Homeless Library*, the invitation is opened to those who use the Booth Centre or Wellspring services. Dave Beech suggests that invitations to participate, particularly when modelled under an identity such as homeless, demand participants to perform in certain ways appropriate to this designation, even if asked to 'be themselves'.[231] This demand on participants is partially caused by the label presenting a form of coherency, in which those termed homeless are deemed a community, bound together in a belief of a shared oppression or situation and often considered as having little agency. Yet, this prior coherency is actually a constructed one, and often the workshop space or project is one of temporality. Miwon

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[227] Melissa Tyler and Laurie Cohen's study focuses on the way office environments compel women to materialise their gendered identities in relation to a heterosexual matrix: Melissa Tyler and Laurie Cohen. Op. Cit., p.181.
[228] bell hooks. (1991) 'Essentialism and Experience' *American Literary History*, 3(1), pp.172-183.
[229] Ibid., p.176.
[230] Alice Fox and Hannah MacPherson interview Anna Cutler, Director of Tate: Alice Fox and Hannah MacPherson. Op.Cit., pp.65-67.
[231] I also raise this discussion on how the invitation to participate might construct the way individuals perform or depict their identities in the workshop chapter. Dave Beech. (2008) 'Include me Out!' *Art Monthly*. 4, p.3

Kwon highlights this within her argument that artists engender several types of community rather than simply plucking them from a prior, coherent form within collaborative practices.[232] She criticises Grant Kester for maintaining the view that artists often go into 'ready-made' communities, which in their marginalised and oppressed form gain authenticity and are hence 'activated' through the artistic process.[233] Kwon suggests that this idea of community surfaces due to an essentialising process in community art. She asserts:

> […] the identity that is created by the art project is viewed as self-affirming, self-validating 'expression' of a unified community (of which the artist ostensibly is now an integral part), as if the community or any collective group (of any individual subject) could be fully self-present and able to communicate its self-presence to others with immediacy.[234]

Kwon's statement suggests that communities are not only temporarily formed by the artistic process, but they are also not always marginalised, localised groups. Therefore, groups such as the 'homeless' can be determined under larger concepts and dominant class views on 'home' and 'nation'. It is also necessary or worthy to note that many marginalised groups are often distinguished or granted labels. One of the participants of *The Homeless Library* Doreen speaks about a past experience of those labelled tramps, she asserts: 'They had a label on them – TRAMP – and you couldn't get past that label. I think people are too easy to blame others. It's always the ones who are well off who don't get the label, they can pay for silence.'[235] Doreen's statement may move closer to the issue that Kwon raises in terms of accounting for how marginalised groups are

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[232] Miwon Kwon. (2004) *One Place After Another Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity.* London: MIT Press.
[233] Although I think Miwon Kwon is suggesting that Grant Kester often analyses projects in which artists appear to go into 'readymade' communities (stating that they are modelled as a delegate for the community), it is important to note that in my reading of Kester's 'dialogical art' theory I believe he is establishing community as provisional. Drawing on Jean Luc Nancy, he suggests that our identities are always in negation and that we should not conceive of community as a unified subject and social formation. Rather, community should be considered a "call or appeal to a collective praxis", which forms a provisional community produced within a specific context, but never fully formed or reached. He also says that groups such as 'at risk youths' should not be seen as coherent, malleable forms. See: Grant Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces Community + Communication in Modern Art.* London: University of California Press, pp.154-163. Miwon Kwon. Op. Cit. pp.139-140.
[234] Miwon Kwon. Op. Cit., p.151.
[235] This statement also relates to Kester's description of collective identities under 'oppressive' labels. He asserts: '…my criticism is not that any form of collective identity is inherently or irrevocably repressed, but rather that particular categories generated out of dominant political discourse ('at risk youth', 'the underprivileged') have the effect of constructing the target population as an implicitly defective but malleable resource.' Grant Kester. Op.Cit., p.163; Quotation from: Doreen (2016) 'Doreen's Story.' *In* Philip Davenport and Lois Blackburn. (eds.) *The Homeless Library.* Blurb Ebook: Apple Pie Editions, p.73.

always being defined through labels as a mode of control, used by authorities to exercise how others approach or mark certain groups or identities. This marking through labels emphasises that community is often built on violence through its very exclusionary definition, to draw out who is as well as who is not encompassed. What it asserts is that difference can be equally as constructive as forms of harmonious relations in the formation of community, as well as factors not always being transparent and self-evident. For Kwon, this demands the artist to be aware of the circumstances, an idea which relates to discussions in chapter one on building community as a 'struggle' or desire.[236] Kwon states:

> It involves a provisional group, produced as a function of specific circumstances instigated by an artist and/or a cultural institution, aware of the effects of these circumstances on the very conditions of the interaction, performing its own coming together and coming apart as a necessarily incomplete modelling or working-out of a collective social process.[237]

If we understand the participants of *The Homeless Library* as a 'provisional group' (or set of groups, gathering round each shelter/centre), emerging out of 'specific circumstances' instigated by the artist, a consideration of how these circumstances are authored and constructed presents a closer analysis of how participants may have a form of agency within this space.

The Homeless Library workshops are particularly concerned with addressing the group's temporality. When I observed a session at The Booth Centre, Manchester, Davenport began by welcoming the participants - a mixture of regulars and new attendees - and wrote down all their names and positions on a piece of paper, which was then placed in the centre of the table. In conversation with Davenport, he later informs me that this drawing creates a sense of equality between participants as well as a 'getting to know each other' method. What it also engenders is a feeling of temporality, whereby at the end of the session the paper is abandoned, and the group

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[236] This emerges from the ideas of Rosi Braidotti, used by Elke Krasny and Meike Schalk. (2017) 'Resilient Subjects: On Building Imaginary Communities.' In Meike Schalk Thérèse Kristiansson and Ramia Mazé. (eds) *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections.* Baunach: Art Architecture Design Research, p.140.
[237] Miwon Kwon. Op. Cit., p.155.

disperse. This is furthered in the establishment of the room away from the rest of the centre activities. The busy entrance with the serving of food, is a loud, bustling environment, which contrasts to the quiet space of the upstairs workshop area. As indicated in my workshop report:

> Later, Philip and Jeni McConnell (the book artist running/assisting with the session) talked about the importance of this space being quiet, and in quite a purposeful act - isolated. Philip stated that staff were made aware that when entering the space, quietness was important to maintain even if they were just passing through. This quiet sanctuary allowed a sense of comfort to participants, but in many ways, gave value to the task in hand. Here was a space where participants could talk openly, which was safe, secure and lacked judgement.[238]

Although this establishes a sense that the homeless often lack a 'quiet' space (particularly for those individuals who rough sleep) and creates the bustling room as a spectacle of the 'soup kitchen', this comment aims to highlight an awareness from the artists that through certain circumstances they can entice particular interactions. In many ways this links to Suzanne Lacy's work within 'New Genre Public Art', wherein the layout of the space encourages participants to engage in certain conversations and interactions, as well as establishing a particular aesthetic. In her piece *The Roof is on Fire* (1993-1994), teenagers and police officers were invited to participate in discussions amidst a well curated space of cars, and a designed police officer to teenager ratio. Here, the construction of the environment facilitates and enforces a certain interaction, as well as allowing for an audience to be present. This form of control can be both beneficial and comforting (as a way of maintaining a safe space to encourage dialogue), but also a means of manipulating or coercing certain stories or subjectivities to emerge.

Davenport and Blackburn's employment of set themes or book techniques, therefore, act as steering devices. Although the artists may employ methods which allow participants to respond critically or complicity to these themes, the artist's choices come to partially author the content of the book art. When I asked if the artists saw themselves

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[238] Gemma Meek. (2016) *Observations at the Booth Centre*. Op. Cit. (Appendix one)

as teachers, they were keen to defend their role as 'collaborators' or skill sharers, even if their performance within the sessions appeared to sit closely to that of an educator. In fact, during my observations one of the participants raised this issue, stating that he calls himself the student and Davenport and McConnell the teachers. Whilst this concept of artist as educator is not constructed here as a negative - as much contemporary learning theory is about facilitating/steering than it is about dictation - the denial from Davenport and McConnell reveals a wariness in their potential construction under this role. Even if the artists are passing on the skills of bookmaking and thus facilitating a space of learning, as discussed in the introduction in relation to museum/gallery education, there are often many stigmas attached to the role of educator. Yet this denial, as Pablo Helguera advocates, simply makes invisible the effect the artists have on the authorship rather than removing its influence.[239] Instead, the artist's effect on authorship should be claimed and interrogated rather than denied.

Helguera suggests that the artist's authoring of frameworks, much like the establishment of the room, or themes in *The Homeless Library*, can be useful in readdressing issues surrounding such concerns as homelessness.[240] He states: 'The expertise of the artist lies, like Freire's, in being a non-expert, a provider of frameworks on which experiences can form and sometimes be directed and channelled to generate new insights around a particular issue.'[241] Thus, forming frameworks or spaces of engagement (even if based in learning), can allow the artists to encourage personal, diverse and critical responses to labels, as well as bringing their own position of authority into question. As I suggested in the workshop chapter, this relies on the artist forming specific questions or activities which allow room for participants to be critical or have ulterior experiences to those planned. As discussed in the introduction, what becomes the issue is not only how to incorporate the participant's changing desires into the project aims, but how to acknowledge or read participant's reactions to the activities. To consider this difficulty in analysing or responding to a participant's

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[239] Pablo Helguera. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art A Materials and Techniques Handbook.* New York: Jorge Pinto Books, p.53.
[240] Ibid., p.53.
[241] Pablo Helguera. (2011) Op. Cit. p.54.

reactions, it is useful to turn to my own observational experience of *The Homeless Library*.

Prior to the session, Davenport had asked me to act as an assistant by writing down stories/words for participants that struggle with writing and help with the tasks as they occurred. For some of the session I sat with a Lithuanian participant who had little English-speaking ability, but was being asked to engage in a task that involved circling aspects of a Charles Dicken's text that had relevance to the maker, much like the technique Tom Phillips utilises in the *Humument*.[242] As other participants got involved with this task the participant seemed disengaged, and I realised that this lack of interest could have come from his inability to read/understand the text. To help, I proceeded to read the text slowly, out loud, whilst following the words with my pen so he could trace them alongside my speech. After finishing, I summarised each section in 'plain' English in hope that he might understand the plot. He then proceeded to circle the first paragraph, continuing by circling another line within that paragraph, which described a girl needing help due to having fallen ill.

My first feeling was a sense of breakthrough or joy at having assisted with an understanding of Dickens, and in a sense a connection through this act of reading together. My second thought was to read the selection of a sentence on 'help' as a subjective interpretation of his own feelings in relation to his situation as homeless, potentially revealing my own held stereotypes. With a desire to help, it soon became apparent that reading success into a project was inevitable, and it was often hard to be critical towards one's own actions as well as understand that those actions lacked a fixed reading. On reflection, and during the write up of the report, I realised that perhaps this participant had not even understood the text or my summaries. Was he appeasing my efforts of trying to engage him by circling the text? Had he simply drawn a circle within a circle due to aesthetic pleasure? How could I possibly interpret an action that I was both witness to, but part of?

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[242] *Humument* is a Victorian book that Philips discovered and painstakingly altered page by page since 1966. He used paint to block out certain words whilst revealing and emphasising others, leading to the formation of a new narrative.

Much of Grant Kester's writings on critical engagement within participatory art theory advocate being 'inside' the project, wherein watching and observing its development allows a thorough understanding of both its success and failure. Kester's comment suggests that being within a project during its unfolding has more value than critiquing from an 'outside' perspective by analysing projects through documentation and outcomes.[243] Whilst this clearly draws on anthropological ideas of being in the field as somehow closer to forms of understanding, in the case of this observation it was difficult to present a firm case for this reaction to my steering. In theory, I could place this interpretation within two frames: 1) that it was a positive mode of engagement in which the participant created a pleasant arrangement on the page and purposefully selected texts with which he connected with on a subjective level. This was assisted by the reading out loud, forming a connection between the participant and the text. Or, 2) The position of authority that I presented as an attending university student, observing and helping with the session, produced a form of submission in which the participant, having been read to, felt obliged to draw a circle around the text, although showing little awareness of having comprehended its content or the reasoning behind the action. My ambivalence appeared to manifest discussions about how value, or the reading of value, is contingent on a range of variables, but often constructed through a singular, fixed account. It also highlights that workshop frameworks, or the assistance of artist/organisers, can move consistently between encouragement and restriction.

Drawing from this observation, what also becomes apparent is that workshop spaces can be places in which participants subvert or deny expectations, even if constructed under ideals in which to coerce participants into engagement. Lack of engagement in this case may have been more 'productive' as a comment on the individual's agency, than the creation of a finished page. Performance through written language, after all, is not necessarily enticing or accessible to all. This reading of 'non-action' as empowering might be understood through Erin Mannings' suggestion that there are 'major' and 'minor' structures at operation in the placement of value.[244] She suggests that when reading values certain aspects are given priority (majors) in actions/events/gestures

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[243] Mick Wilson. (2007) 'Autonomy, Agonism, and Activist Art: An Interview with Grant Kester.' *Art Journal,* 66(3), p.109.
[244] Erin Manning. (2016) *The Minor Gesture.* London: Duke University Press.

over others (minors). Yet, much like the interaction with the participant above, the major and minor are not a dichotomy, but an entanglement. She asserts:

> A minor key is always interlaced with major keys – the minor works the major from within. What must be remembered is this: neither the minor nor the major is fixed in advance. The major is a structural tendency that organises itself according to predetermined definitions of value. The minor is the force that course through it, unmooring its structural integrity, problematizing its normative standards. The unwavering belief in the major as the site in which the event occurs, where events make a difference, is based on accepted accounts of registers as change as well as the existing parameters for gauging the value of that change. The grand is given the status it has not because it is where the transformative power lies, but because it is easier to identify major shifts than to catalogue the nuanced rhythms of the minor. As a result, these rhythms are narrated as secondary or even negligible.[245]

Manning's assertion highlights that the major should not be disregarded or undermined, but that the minor needs to be valued on an equal footing for its ability to problematise given 'truths' and to 'make a difference'.[246] The site of the minor is suggested to emerge by reorganising or questioning where one places value, a discussion I will return to in chapter four on *Crafting Women's Stories*. As sites of learning are measured, analysed, documented and evaluated, Manning hints that the minor is often hard to narrate or discover, meaning new visualising and documenting methods need to be formed aside from the false cohesiveness of the major success story in both reports and photographic imagery. These major success stories write over the minor, hiding it from outside readers whose access is tied to documentation and book art.

This contextual discussion produces a complex foundation to engage in a reading of *The Homeless Library* book art. I am concerned with how book art may reiterate or push against a history of homeless representation focused on an essentialist aesthetic and an oppressive mode of voyeurism. Furthermore, I am also interested in how the books may be situated alongside a series of absences in revealing the antagonisms within the

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[245] Ibid., p.1.
[246] Ibid., p.1.

workshop highlighted in the project's photographic documentation. Whether these tensions are more visible in the book art demands a reading of the books through the label of 'homeless', considering how it may comply or criticise its essentialising tendencies, whilst providing agency to participants to voice their stories. It should be noted that I have not had access to the book art first-hand, often due to their roaming nature and difficulty in gaining access from those who host the books. Therefore, as with most of the case studies, my access to the books is through secondary representations – a form most audiences of *The Homeless Library* will engage with.

Reading *The Homeless Library* Book Art

U Tramp (figure nine) is comprised of an altered Victorian novel, with its pages folded and cropped so only some of the original text and image are visible. The book hosts a makeshift aesthetic and is held together by a metal binder at the top, with the pages hanging precariously loose at the bottom. Frayed edges and folded corners present use, perhaps due to the age of the original pages or their treatment in the process of its alteration. It is difficult not to make the association of travel (this book would hook nicely onto a backpack or folded into a pocket). This is a book for those on the move.

The written "U tramp" draws attention. The black ink of the pen is darker and fresher than the faded printed text. The text's boxed in nature accentuates the new title, as well as conveying the limits of this label and its sense of enclosure. It conjures speech in its colloquialism and appears directed towards someone; the label is given. Underneath, Thomas (presumably the author) connects to the title with a dash, perhaps suggesting his association with this label. To the left (the back of the book), the original text of the Victorian novel seems to entwine with this fresh ink stating, 'addressed me directly…', the ellipsis inviting the reader's eyes to follow across the binding and form the book as a continual loop back to "U Tramp". Who is making this address? The reader? The woman in the image? The woman visible in the print seems to be leaning towards an unknown, hidden figure. This period of representing women as carers – gentle nurturers, softens this address. Yet, the invisibility of whom is receiving, who is being

branded or bedridden is disturbing. Here, the carer takes on an accentuated presence, leaning over she commands and dominates the space.

Reading the books from *The Homeless Library* is often a process of connecting multiple elements of their arrangement to form a makeshift narrative. Different interpretations can be formed by linking the original text to the more recent handwriting, the imagery, material and folds. This process of bringing together disparate elements might not involve a straightforward reading from front to back, but a different rhythm of toing and froing. The participants created these altered book's by folding, writing over and emphasising certain aspects of the original texts they were working with. The alteration of books draws attention to certain elements, as well as involving an act of destruction or creation of new meaning. Playing with the material in this way serves to introduce new meanings and tensions within the original texts, which in the case of *The Homeless Library* are linked in some way to the identity or construction of a homeless history. Texts such as the Charles Dicken's novels as an archetype of Victorian poverty were re-purposed, as well as 1970s 'hero' comics around war, old photographs and wood cuts. Even the interview transcripts from the project were re-narrativised, layering further the autobiographical experiences of homelessness. Thus, the act of writing over or destroying these texts is one of claiming and critique. They provide visibility to this material as hosting a history of the homeless, as well as scoring over its narratives to reclaim a space and challenge stereotypical representations that dominate a public imaginary.

The altered, one-off nature of these books also encourages a haptic engagement. Although *The Homeless Library* books are often displayed behind glass cases, the books invite a physical engagement to comprehend the whole through the turning of pages or the pulling of leaves from a box. As mentioned in the introduction, this tactility is often an element continually cited in book art discourse as a unique interaction in comparison with other art forms: books invite touch. Book art does not treat the form of the book as an invisible structure on which the blank white pages host the text as focus. Rather, book art manipulates and experiments with form as a way in which to re-emphasise how form produces meaning. Whilst this is not a new concept, Michel Foucault has written about the importance of the book form as a closed entity, which

occupies a 'determined space' and therefore suggests a unity of work. Book artists are concerned with pushing the boundaries of how this form might operate differently from traditional constructs.[247] For Andrew Eason, this focus on haptic interaction that book art stresses has led to book art providing readers with proximity to their makers.[248] He argues that many artists make books primarily for the anticipation of a reader, what he terms 'making-reading'. This approach to making-reading suggests that artists make books in a desire for the *contact* with their readers, tying together the creative process felt by artists with the experience that readers have.[249] Eason's concept of artist and maker having contact through the book also links to historic notions of 'the touch of the artist' and manifests ideals of authenticity through closeness.

In the 1930s, Walter Benjamin theorised a desire for authenticity as a means of getting 'close' to the genuine and conceived that reproduction produced a sense of dislocation from an original.[250] Reproductions were not based in a fixed time or space and thus created a desire to 'get back' to the 'real' object, with the latter believed to have a history in its physical condition and chronology of ownership. The authentic object's aura could therefore be felt/seen through proximity to the genuine artefact. He stated:

> Namely, the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. [251]

The manifestation of *The Homeless Library* books as one-off altered books reintroduces this desire for uniqueness, extending it through the idea that books have left physical traces of their makers. For example, Blackburn and Davenport state of the books: 'Because they are handmade, to pick one up and read it is more like meeting a person, than touching an object. It has fingerprints on it, human traces left in ink and paint and pencil and words.'[252] Utilising monoprinting techniques and accentuating handwriting within the book art highlights these 'traces', as well as the processes of making. Ann

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[247] Michel Foucault. (1972, reprinted 1994) *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* London: Routledge, p.23.
[248] Andrew Eason. (2010) 'On Making Reading.' *The Blue Notebook,* 5(1), pp.37-42.
[249] Ibid., p.37.
[250] Walter Benjamin. (introduction by Hannah Arendt and translated by H. Zorn) (1999) *Illuminations*. London: Pimlico.
[251] Ibid., p.217.
[252] Arthur + Martha (2017) *The First History.* 8 February. The Homeless Library [Online] [Accessed on 31st December 2017] http://arthur-and-martha.blogspot.com/2017/02/the-first-history.html

Coffey, Member of Parliament, also reads this mark of the makers within the materiality, asserting: 'This is not only a history of facts, the very material of each of these handmade books in *The Homeless Library* tells its own story. It is full of emotion. I feel I can reach out and touch it.'[253] This repetition on the reader's desire to physically and metaphorically contact the author through the book, reintroduces the dislocation that is established in homeless as other by allowing a safe form of communion through the book form, rather than between bodies. Unlike the popularity of photographic representation, this emerges through words and tactility, to potentially challenge the dominance of visual stereotypes. A desire for contact is also enmeshed in the concept that *The Homeless Library* books present an unmediated experience (an aspect Gali Weiss also states of the books from *Unfolding Projects*), wherein the book's stories are lacking contamination from other's interpretations and can be experienced in their originality.

Whilst this framing of the books as unmediated is more of an idealised reading than a genuine occurrence (often because of the way in which they are displayed or supported with documentation), it is assisted by a conceptualisation of the participants as untrained. The participants do not communicate their stories through artistic tropes, but 'pure', unhindered expression. For this to occur, the books authenticity relies on the author's identity as homeless, validated through autobiography and potentially linked to the production of outsider art. Although participants may have engaged with art education, this is not necessary presented within documentation. Rather, individual's work is defined as drawing on 'real life' experiences and appears autonomous and untainted by the institutional structures and markets of the art establishment; the participants are simply provided a platform to make book art by the artists. Whilst this is clearly more complex in the workshops (as the artists provide aesthetical suggestions and steer themes) the participants are conceived as other through the framing of their work under the identity of homelessness, and thus presumed outside of the art establishment. As Gary Alan Fine states:

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[253] Arthur + Martha (2016) *A Hidden History in the Heart of Westminster*. 25 May. The Homeless Library. [Online] [Accessed on 12th December 2017] http://arthur-and-martha.blogspot.com/2016/05/a-hidden-history-in-heart-of-westminster.html

Not only are these artists outside of the art market, but also the value of their works is directly linked to the biographies of the artists and the stories of *authentic creation* that the objects call forth. Life stories infuse the meaning of the work. It is the purity or unmediated quality of the production of the work, in the view of the audience, that provides the work with significance, and, not incidentally, with value as a commodity, creating a biography of the object.[254]

This outside status is further emphasised by the eBook, which frames the interviews and participant's portraits alongside the book art, whereby their stories are not only captured on the pages of the objects but come to contextualise their meaning.

An example of biography as a way of authenticating the books' stories surfaces in the project's blog, wherein Arthur + Martha tell the story of the participant Jack Quashie: a Nigerian refugee sleeping rough in Manchester. Quashie's story is used to accentuate his involvement in the project, as well as highlighting the struggles that this individual perseveres. He states:

For *The Homeless Library project,* he used left luggage to store his rucksack in Manchester, got on a train and spoke at The Houses of Parliament, addressing the Under Secretary of State Marcus Jones and Ann Coffey MP, discussing the emotional impacts of being a refugee and of homelessness. He returned to Manchester, collected his rucksack and slept rough that night.[255]

On the one hand this post shows the artist's awareness that the project can only do so much for participants in regard to homelessness. It also stresses the importance of providing the participants with the opportunities to speak about their experiences. However, it also could also be used as a tool to validate the authenticity of the books and participants as homeless, particularly as Quashie is defined primarily through his refugee and rough sleeping status.

The materials used in book art creation also come to host elements or conditions of the maker's identity, forming a fetishization of their materiality. As discussed in the

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[254] Gary Alan Fine. (2003) 'Crafting Authenticity: The Validation of Identity in Self-Taught Art.' *Theory and Society,* 32(2), p.156.
[255] Arthur + Martha. (2016) *Jack Quashie.* 14 October. The Homeless Library [Online] [Accessed on 12th December 2017] http://arthur-and-martha.blogspot.com/2016/10/jack-quashie.html

introduction, this focus on materiality is in opposition to much of socially engaged art, which draws from the dematerialisation of the art work to focus on speech, dialogue and process.[256] Whilst *The Homeless Library* also draws on these other forms within practice, they are specifically interested in producing an art object out of group experience and as a physical history: a testament to the project to live on beyond its unfolding. Blackburn and Davenport emphasis this aspect of the materiality by asserting:

> The handmade books we've made aren't conventional histories, much of the communication in them is not words, it's image, texture, gesture. The physicality of the books is a testament to their maker's lives, complete with rough edges.[257]

This comment from the artists suggests that the materials utilised by the participants somehow host or relate to the identity of the makers or their situation of homelessness, which can be communicated to the reader. The concept of materials hosting the identity of the makers is also an aspect that appears in relation to Natalie Silberleib's book art project *La Estampa* in No3 Women's Prison at Ezeiza, Argentina. Silberleib's workshops involved teaching women prisoners how to use screen printing techniques and establish what she terms an 'awareness-raising workshop,' in which 'the management of the technique responded to an artistic and a personal quest'.[258] What is interesting in relation to *The Homeless Library*, is that Silberleib also imbues the materials they employ with a similar relation to the identity of the women partaking. She states:

> La Estampa works with the specific tools and materials required for serigraphic printing as well as unusual materials such as parchment paper, toilet paper, vinyl glue, newspapers and magazines. This means that the projects can take a unique aesthetic shape, bringing out a sense of isolation and marginalisation often felt by the prisoners through the use of discarded materials.[259]

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[256] Dematerialisation is a notion propagated by Lucy Lippard in the late 1970s to signify that art objects may be replaced by ideas (ephemeral or process based) and is used by Quaintance to describe commonalities of socially engaged art practices (I discussion in which I return to in Chapter three). Morgan Quaintance. Op. Cit. pp.7-10.
[257] Philip Davenport and Lois Blackburn. Op. Cit., p.12.
[258] Natalia Silberleib. (2013) 'Artists' Books in an Argentine Prison: The Possibility of Existing in a Different Way'. *Journal of Artists' Books,* 33, Spring, p.48.
[259] Ibid., p.48.

On the one hand, this concept of materials as hosting the situation or condition of their makers relates to how the *Homeless Library* books draw on a historical context of homeless representation by employing texts such as Dickens novels in the books. It could also be read in the dishevelled or 'rough edged' materials, which may point to the hardship and precariousness of being homeless.

The availability of materials in both prisons and 'on the streets' could also indicate an individual's access to the creation of certain art forms. Audre Lorde suggests that women's poetry in the 1980s was highly related to class issues. The hierarchical placement of poetry under prose did not account for the fact that working women wrote poetry on scrap paper between shifts and on the subway as it was a more economical form of creativity.[260] Thus, the use of bottles, pill packets, old books and magazines in *The Homeless Library* can take on stereotypical associations in hosting an 'authentic' homeless materiality, which allow readers a closeness to their makers (figure ten and eleven). These materials also highlight the participant's precarious access to creativity and point to a utilising of sources that surround their everyday experiences.

If the materiality of the books forms a proximity for the readers through touch, there is a partial removal from the dominance of homeless as a site of voyeurism: something to be looked at or categorised visually. Yet, this is not to say that the bodies of the individual makers are removed. In Rosler's documentary project on *The Bowery*, a site loaded with photographic clichéd representations of drunkenness and poverty, bodies in photographic form were often indicated through objects as metonym rather than an actual depiction of subjects. This is because Rosler saw these subject depictions as highly related to a well-quoted, exploitative documentary practice as previously discussed. Edwards suggests that in Rosler's works, subjects emerge through bottles, cigarette packets and shoes, which stand in for absent bodies.[261] In comparison, *The Homeless Library* object books of Jack Daniels bottles and pharmaceutical packaging appear to operate in similar ways, whereby their consumers are referenced through their empty contents, and the remains repurposed as books - surfaces for stories (figure ten and eleven). Although the Jack Daniels bottle inscription of 'The root of all evil' may

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[260] Audre Lorde. (1984) *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches by Audre Lorde.* New York: Ten Speed Press, p.116.
[261] Steve Edwards. Op. Cit., pp.105-106.

reference addiction and the physical contents of the object, others are used merely as surfaces to formulate poetry around night time occurrences and themes of comfort (figure ten and eleven), thereby challenging a straightforward, stereotypical reading.

Rosler's photographic images of The Bowery shop fronts with those littered objects mentioned previously, are also displayed alongside slang words for drunkenness. Here, slang is what Steve Edwards calls 'colourful language', a language full of reference and quotation and belonging to the working class.[262] This use of language, rich with associations, allows for the individuals often exploited through the photographic image to partially claim the space through words that are their socio-linguistic property.[263] The "U Tramp" book can be read in a comparable manner, whereby the colloquialism of the address seems to conjure the speech of the individual making it – a claim of ownership over both the label and the Dickensian representation. Davenport and Blackburn seem aware of the importance of capturing the way in which individuals speak through accents or turn of phrase. They attempt to capture this quality through the oral history transcripts and encourage participants to use their linguistic identity in their books.

Language is also shown in *The Homeless Library* books to be a source of tension and quotation. Much like Rosler's slang, the language used in the book art is full of references which diverge and ripple, rather than reinforce a singular meaning. Take, for example, the book on 'Crumpsall Workhouse' (figure twelve). Here, a monoprint of an individual is created with limited outlines and minimal detail and is encircled by different words scrawled in pencil at the top of the page: 'Kind, understanding, Patient, STRICT, Critical, Uncompromising.' These descriptions might depict explanations of the figure's character. The figure is drawn at the centre of the page and could represent the 'man at Crumpsall workhouse 1897', a statement scrawled in pencil at the top of the page. The words also appear to create a binary, with the list under 'kind' seemingly related to 'good' aspects of his personality, against those of the 'bad' traits. 'STRICT' is capitalised, whereas understanding is in lower case format, potentially highlighting either the man's embodiment of those traits, or the fixity/performance of those words. These traits may have been taken from one of the texts that the participant was working

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[262] Ibid., pp.9-10.
[263] Ibid., p.105-106.

with, as the artists provided transcripts of interviews and other histories of the homeless for altered books. Yet, even if these descriptions taken from an oral history transcript point to a 'real' individual, there is limited access to identify whom this subject might be. Is it the participant's story? The drawn figure's bare outline and minute detail appear to conjure a sense of anonymity, potentially commenting on the anonymity of those within the workhouse ("only a servant" seems to resonate), as much as highlighting the inaccessibility of the subject's identity. What do these traits tell us about the workhouse? Perhaps it is a comment on the space of the workhouse, as much as the individual? It is difficult to read the original text beneath the handwriting as it is covered by smudges of ink. Only certain words seem to stick: absence, presence, friend, the repetition of kind. The lack of being able to find a cohesive narrative creates a dislocating, a frustration, whereby there is instability of representation.

Both the book on Crumpsall and "U Tramp" could be read as operating in a postmodern manner, which is described by Edwards as:

> […] that pure and random play of signifiers that we call postmodernism, which no longer produces monumental works of the modernist type but ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of pre-existent texts, the building blocks of older cultural and social production, in some new and heightened bricolage: metabooks which cannibalise other books, metatexts which collage bits of other texts – such is the logic of postmodernism in general […][264]

This reshuffling takes place in the alteration of existing material, through a constant play of meaning and a lack of pointing to an actual subject; such as the man at Crumpsall workhouse, or the individual who uttered "U Tramp". Even if there are many book art examples that clearly outline more subjective experiences of homelessness in relation to rough sleeping, family scenarios or feelings of self-worth, when the participant utilises the "I" there is never a conclusive narrative, a neat traceable line back to whom is performing the utterance.

This lack of a conclusive, visible subject presents a tension in relation to analysing the authorship of these books. The tension emerges around the claim the project makes in

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[264] Ibid., pp.16-17.

granting agency to the "I" (the participant) who writes to voice their stories and utilise the books to challenge an essentialist history of homeless representation. On the one hand the participant's stories are given visibility through their biographies appearing in the interview transcripts in the eBook, which act as a form of contextualisation to the book art produced. However, it is difficult to make concrete links between the transcripts and the book art pieces, as not only do many of the transcripts remain anonymous, but the book art narratives problematise a cohesive, fully apparent subject to emerge. Even if some individuals reveal their books in the documentary film on the project, often there is no singular, designated author for each text - the participants books simply become part of the library. So how might one read the books in mind of a real individual behind the 'I'?

There is a need to be cautious of reading book art solely through the biography or identity of the author. This critical practice of reading books through the author's identity harks back to nineteenth century practices which rely on a notion of the author as a godlike creator; a conscious, a priori subject who could transmit a single meaning to the reader. As Sean Burke suggests, originally the author was, 'The unitary cause, source and master to whom the chain of textual effects must be traced, and in whom they find their genius, meaning, goal and justification.'[265] Yet, this reading practice of constructing the author as the sole meaning has been challenged by postmodern theory and emerges in Roland Barthes' well cited claim of 'The Death of the Author'.[266] Barthes theory dismisses the potential of the author to be an effect on the text. Instead, he suggests that the figure of the author is a mere illusion, which should be disbanded and replaced with écriture (writing). This replacement would attempt to redeem writing from the corruption of authorship brought on by modern society to an 'original' form where writing is returned to inside language. Barthes asserted that there is no subject prior to language, and thus the only meaning can be found within language itself. The writer becomes a 'modern scriptor', 'whose being does not precede writing, but on the contrary is constituted and delimited by writing itself'.[267] A text is now 'made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue,

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[265] Sean Burke. (1992) *The Death and Return of the Author Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p.23.

[266] Roland Barthes. (1977) *Image Music Text.* London: Fontana Press, pp.142-148

[267] Ibid., p.145.

parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as hitherto said, the author.'[268] In Barthes theory, emphasis is placed on the role of the reader in the creation of meaning, which he indicates as the: 'Space on which all of the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.'[269] No longer is the author 'a final signification on the text', the origin and only meaning, instead the text is given over to the reader with no constraints and a potential multitude of voices, cultures and dialogues.

Whilst Barthes' 'tissue of citations' becomes apparent in many of *The Homeless Library* texts through the literal layering of words, the alteration of existing material and the lack of linear page turning, it does not present a useful approach to allow subjects to be visible in their texts or the stories to be traceable to a real, writing subject. Whilst Burke highlights an extreme of the author as the sole meaning of the text, Barthes rids the influence of the author entirely – it suggests a middle ground needs to be found. Furthermore, even if criticisms against Barthes' text have reinstated the author as an unconscious strand, or a potential strand of meaning (just not the sole cause), there is still a present difficulty for those that are utilising writing/representation as a means of agency – to allow writers to say something with purpose, or form a position, even to be recognised as a 'real' individual behind the writing.[270] Thus, there is a need to account for how the project claims to provide agency for the participants to voice their stories, particularly as the homeless are often 'spoken for' through past representations and narratives. Rather than reinstate the a priori, godlike figure Barthes criticises, there may be an option to turn back to labels as a way in which to ask representations within the book art to speak back, or speak differently, and to allow subjects to emerge not as cohesive representations, but as possible alternatives to essentialist depictions.

As previously discussed, when contextualised, labels can take on different meanings. In certain contexts, these labels can provide agency or at least visibility to certain marginalised groups. Therefore, in relation to book art, framing the books within

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[268] Ibid., p.148.
[269] , Ibid., p.148.
[270] Dario Compagno. (2012) 'Theories of Authorship and Intention in the Twentieth Century. An Overview.' *Journal of Early Modern Studies,* 1(1), p.42.

homelessness already establishes a referent for the reader, which likely points to both essentialist ideals - well quoted and reiterated in discourse - as well as the reader's more subjective associations. It stresses that reading rarely ever takes form in the abstract and the framing of the books under the label of homelessness cannot be dismissed. As Kazim Ali suggests, reading is often conducted in mind of a genre, gender, or wider discourses.[271] He asserts that we read books, or books are 'framed' with a certain authorial identity in mind:

> Genre and gender are both *reading* practices, resulting from "authorial intention"
> – the author's desire to bracket and frame the text, control (or contribute to the
> control of) how the text is received, read, "understood".[272]

What Ali's assertion suggests is that bracketing or framing the text under a label such as homeless can control how it is interpreted or understood by readers. His ideas might also be understood alongside Michel Foucault's theory on the function of the author's name. Foucault states:

> The author's name serves to characterise a certain mode of being in discourse:
> the fact that the discourse has the author's name, that one can say: "this was
> written by so-and-so" or "so-and-so is its author" shows that this discourse is not
> ordinary everyday speech that merely comes and goes, not something that is
> immediately consumable. On the contrary, it is a speech that must be received in
> a certain mode and that, in a given culture must receive a certain status.[273]

Foucault's analysis suggests the author's name can come to determine what discourse texts are situated within, as well as granting them a certain status in line with the author's authority or popularity. Whilst the authors of *The Homeless Library* books do not have the weight of a recognisable author's name as classification, by framing the books within the context of a homeless charity and in such places as the Houses of Parliament under the label of homelessness, the books are promoted and legitimised as a validated history.

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[271] Kazim Ali. (2013) 'Genre-Queer: Notes Against Generic Binaries.' *In* Margot Singer and Nicole Walker. (eds.) *Bending Genre: Essays on Creative Nonfiction.* London: Bloomsbury.
[272] Ibid., p.29.
[273] Michel Foucault. (1994, reprinted 2000) *Michel Foucault Essential Works of Foucault 1954 – 1984 Aesthetics Volume 2.* London: The Penguin Group, p.211.

If the 'homeless' label cannot be disregarded, then an enquiry needs to be made into how book art might expand or push against the label to allow other elements of the author's subjectivity to emerge. To consider answering this enquiry, it is useful to turn to a critical contextual reading within Sara Ahmed's *Differences that Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism.*[274] Ahmed attempted to posit an alternative to the author as 'originary' or 'dead' by speaking back to postmodernism. In particular, she was concerned with how Foucault and Barthes had failed to consider issues of sexual difference in relation to authorship, and how the question of 'woman' is overlooked as a site of meaning (woman-as-text). Ahmed suggests that if 'woman' is situated in relation to authorship and literary production, there may be a way to consider an alternative approach to recognising the 'who' that writes as an effect on the text. She states:

> An emphasis on the literary production of 'woman' as a site of meaning (woman-as-text) may lead us to an alternative, either the author as originary or the author as dead. That is, the question of 'woman' may help to convey that it does matter who is writing: the text may not belong to the 'who' as a marker of authorial and sexual identity, but the 'who' opens out a broader social context which is neither inside or outside the text itself.[275]

This concern with the 'who' that writes - particularly in relation to woman as a site of meaning -draws on a history of feminist concerns with placing women authors into the canon to challenge a patriarchal heritage. Although Ahmed's approach is focused on the literary production of woman, there may be a way in which to use aspects of her text to consider how we might conceive of the 'who' that writes/makes the *Homeless Library* books. Ahmed believes the 'who' that writes is important to consider, not as an ontology of the individual, but as a 'marker of a specific location from which the subject writes'[276]. This is not to say that one should read texts marked with a 'woman's signature' as sexed, and therefore read in a particular way, but rather consider how we might read that marker within the wider contexts of difference.

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[274] Sara Ahmed. (1998) *Differences that Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[275] Ibid., p.122.
[276] Ibid., pp.122-123.

Much like the representation of woman as frequently 'spoken for', the homeless also suffer from a lack of representing themselves as they are often modelled through othering representations. We might even understand the homeless as 'homeless-as-text'; something to be written on and for, or designated through essentialising visual cues, rather than writing/representing oneself. Therefore, it is important the authors speak from this position, whereby they are read against and within the existing discourse on homelessness to allow other potential meanings to emerge. Arguably, this difference emerges through a deferral of meaning, whereby other experiences of homelessness do not match with the well-quoted discourses and representations that frequent a history of media. Much like Rosler's work, fragmented words from original texts are reiterated, as well as challenged by participant's new writings and imagery, causing endless entanglements and citations.[277] These meanings cannot be tied down to an origin but diverge and confuse a cohesive definition or subject of homelessness. Even when the narrative indicates a more linear reading and aspects of an individual's story can be grasped, there is no individual which is pointed to in name, traceable or understood entirely through the identity or discourse of homelessness – highlighting Ahmed's conception that the subject is neither inside nor outside the text.[278]

It is also crucial to realise that reading *The Homeless Library* books does not take place in the abstract. Archived in a mobile library, the books have travelled to The Houses of Parliament, the Southbank Centre, Burnley Museum and Art Gallery, as well as Manchester Central Library. Even if framed under the label homeless, the books form new dialogues as they enter these alternative spaces. For example, in Central Library they were placed amongst Victorian historical exhibits, and at the Southbank Centre a focus on poetry led to some of the participants reading out their works. Here, the books are performed, and the who that speaks adds another dimension to the text in the form of voice or mannerisms. On the one hand, this also leads back to forms of validating the project as successful; where the participants must perform their stories and works (much like the photographs) to prove the projects impact. As discussed in chapter one, these performances also highlight that texts can be read differently, and through their contextualisation in different spaces can take on more distinct readings. For example,

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[277] Edwards. Op. Cit., pp.16-17.
[278] Ahmed. (1998) Op. Cit., p.123.

when attending the launch to the Central Library exhibition, talks on a history of homelessness in Manchester (from use of underground tunnels, to squatting in Hulme) connect the book art to this history in a form of chronology. Against this historical narrative, the poems the participants recited were presented as the contemporary experience of homeless in Manchester, the place, the city, gaining more emphasis over a more generalised, national narrative on homelessness. What was also interesting about this exhibition, was that certain participants were presented under more defined roles as 'artists' and 'curators', with the titles suggesting a shift in ownership. This form of ownership also emerges in placing the books back within the Booth Centre, designating their return to the space of making and marking the books as the property of the centre and its users. Whilst there is a lack of room to further analyse this shifting of roles, it does reinforce the provisionality of the project. Much like the temporality of the workshop space, participants do not remain fixed within the label of homeless but move within the confines of the project into different selected or given identities. In fact, this stepping outside of homelessness into the role of artist or curator, almost presents a dismissal of that previous identity or an acknowledgement of other identities. In the film on the project the participants claim that they are now engaged in gardening programs or have entered permanent accommodation.[279] In many ways this may highlight a benefit of the process of self-expression through book making, in which self-reflection or regular contact sessions may have assisted participants to move beyond a state of homelessness.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to explore how book art may challenge a discourse of homeless representation by expanding and complicating its essentialist depictions within a history of photographic practices through creating book art. The creation of book art allowed participants to move beyond a singular identity referent of homeless

[279] Arthur + Martha. (2017) *Testimonials.* Arthur + Martha Portfolio. [Online] [Accessed on 1st November 2018] https://arthur-martha.com/testimonials/

through deconstructing and exploring other meanings in texts. The use of book art appears to operate against the voyeurism of the photographic representation, even if it still plays on a homeless aesthetic through the use of certain materials and stereotypical objects. Often writing over historically loaded material and disallowing a straightforward narrative to emerge, these books do not simply reiterate a well-referenced representation of homelessness but defer meaning through fragmented language and lack of identifying a singular subject.

One of the primary issues with this project is the missing tensions and coercion surrounding the books creation. The framing of the project within the documentation emphasises a positive spin on the spaces of production and exhibition, revealing energised, cohesive subjects, which do little to outline the emergent conflicts. This absence is often due to a culture of evaluation discussed in the introduction, wherein certain practices or processes are validated over others, impacting the way that participants' actions are read and framed. This objective valuing presents difficulties, not only in masking the role and involvement the artists perform, but also in suggesting that the works require a 'support' in which to be understood. The translation of participant's actions or stories also emerges in the eBook of the project, wherein the interview transcript is footnoted by 'experts' which seek to validate or expand upon participants points – occasionally clarifying the 'truth' of a statement being made, or to historically contextualise their arguments. Although this layering of voices presents an understanding of history lacking a singular narrative, it also reiterates homeless as something to be surveyed and spoken for, whereby a voice of authority needs to authorise the history as genuine and ensure its 'truth' for circulation. Overall, it stresses a problem with participant's creations always being mediated and translated.

The next chapter in this thesis analyses *Unfolding Projects* through the theme of 'dialogue'. This case study will also return to the theme of representation. However, the focus is on the label 'Afghan women' and its designation in western media and academic narratives, and how it emerges in book art.

Images

Figure three: Arthur + Martha. (2015) *Soup Kitchen Saturday*. [online image] [Accessed on 4th December 2018] https://www.flickr.com/photos/arthur-and-martha/33162841116/in/album-72157654895015932/
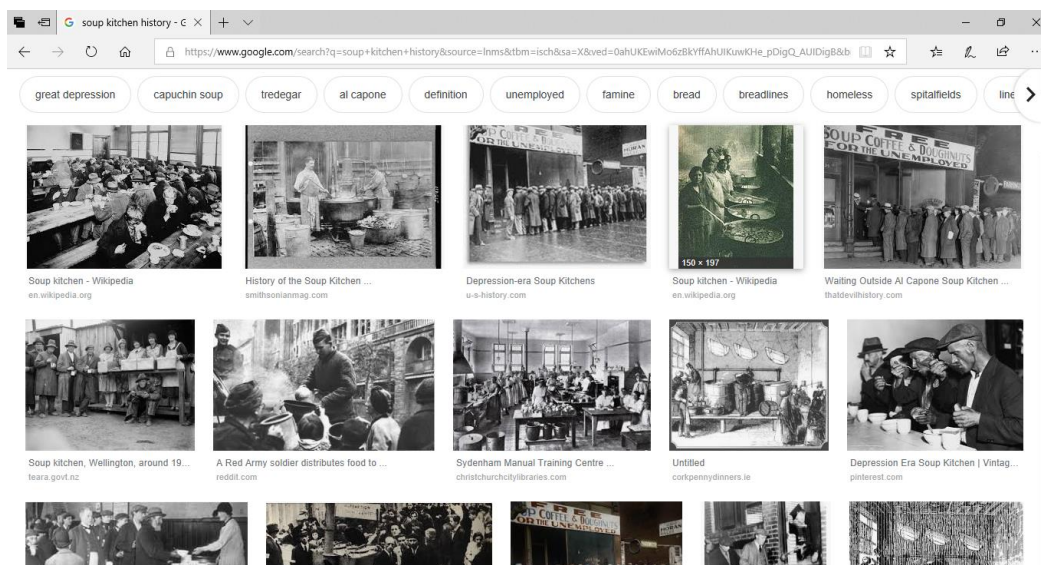
Figure Four: (no date) *Google Image search results for 'Soup Kitchen History'.* [Online] [Accessed on 19th March 2018]

https://www.google.com/search?q=soup+kitchen+history&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiMo6zBkYffAhUIKuwKHe_pDigQ_AUIDigB&biw=1366&bih=651

Figure Five: Jones, P. (2016) No title. Photograph. *In* Davenport, P. and Blackburn, L. (2016) *The Homeless Library.* Blurb Ebook: Apple Pie Editions, p.245.

Figure Six: Jones, P. (2016) *Lawrence McGill (Riff Raff).* Photograph. *In* Davenport, P. and Blackburn, L. (2016) *The Homeless Library.* Blurb Ebook: Apple Pie Editions, p.10.

Figure Seven: Jones, P. (2016) *Lois Blackburn, Lawrence McGill and Christine Hough at the Booth Centre.* Photograph. *In* Davenport, P. and Blackburn, L. (2016) *The Homeless Library.* Blurb Ebook: Apple Pie Editions, p.246.

Figure Eight: Jones, P. (2016) *Davenport speaking at The Homeless Library opening event at the Houses of Parliament.* Photograph. [Online] [Accessed on 4th December 2018]. https://www.flickr.com/photos/arthur-and-martha/30175654031/in/album-72157654895015932/

Figure Nine: Arthur + Martha (2015) *U Tramp book from The Homeless Library.* Photograph. [Online] [Accessed on 4th December 2018] https://www.flickr.com/photos/arthur-and-martha/32389572673/in/album-72157654895015932/

FABRIC

Can be cut to
size required

Strong adhesion

Moonlight slants
through
and lights up the path
A fox is seen in the
distance

Steve S

10

Figure Ten and Eleven: Arthur + Martha (2015) *Book Objects from The Homeless Library.* [Online] [Accessed on 4th December 2018]

https://www.flickr.com/photos/arthur-and-martha/sets/72157654895015932/with/19051295315/
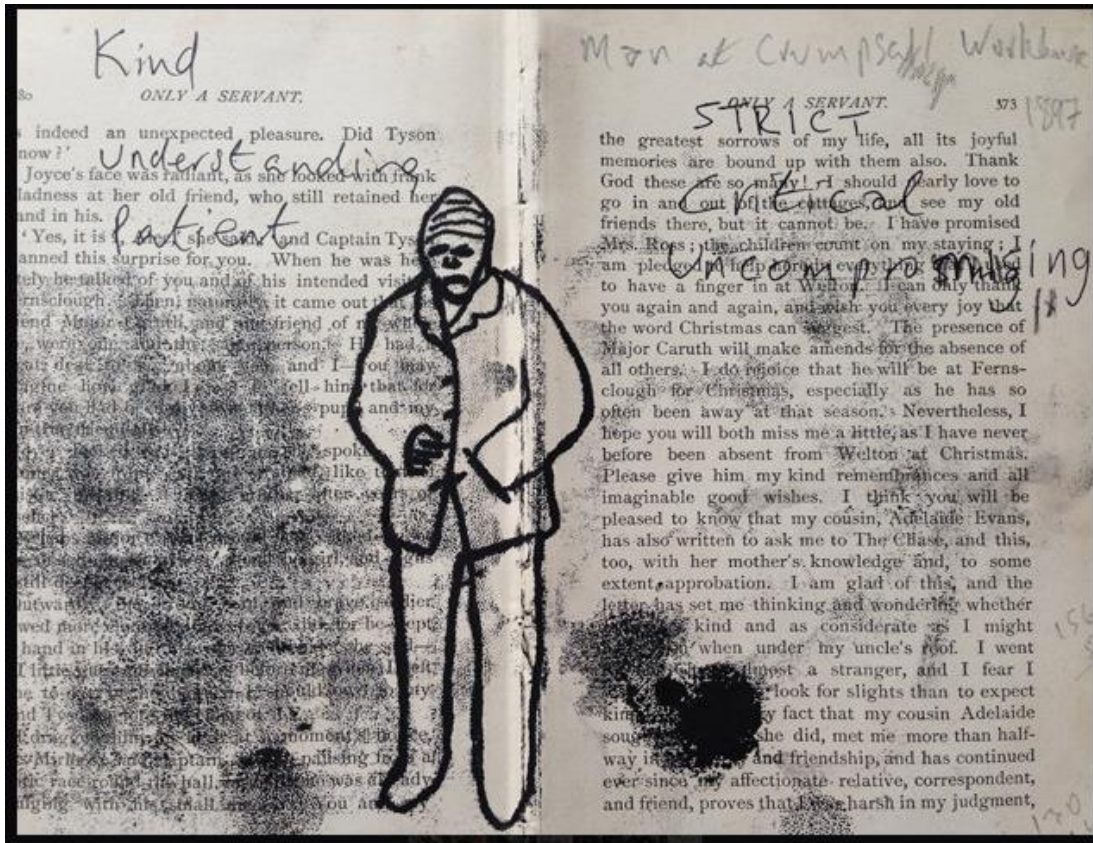

the Root of ALL evil

Figure Twelve: Arthur + Martha. (2015) *Man at Crumpsall Workhouse, a book from The Homeless Library.* [Online] [Accessed on 4th December 2018]

https://www.flickr.com/photos/arthur-and-martha/18428604304/in/album-72157654895015932/

Chapter Three

Dialogue: *Unfolding Projects*

In March 2010, a group of fourteen Australian artists led by Gali Weiss sat down to write a letter to Afghan women as part of the project *Unfolding Projects*. The letter was the artist's introduction and would be sent with the book art pieces they had designed, drawn and printed. The books and letter were delivered by a charity representative - Matthias Tomczak - to the Organisation of Promoting Women's Capabilities (OPAWC) Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Kabul, Afghanistan as part of the work of Australian charity Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan (SAWA-Australia). Established in 2007 with SAWA funding, the VTC provides support for Afghan war widows and illiterate women by offering a two-year literacy programme alongside lessons in Dari (Farsi), Mathematics, Basic Information, Child Care and General Knowledge.[280] The books were a gift to Afghan women currently undertaking the literacy course – with an invitation to respond to the images by writing directly alongside the artist's designs. For Weiss and the artists, this act of joining 'voices' through the coming together of text and image was a symbolic union of solidarity, and a catalyst for conversation. As the letter states: 'As women, we know what it's like to fight for our voices to be heard. We also know that we can find our own "voice" when we read the expressions of others and find that we feel similar things.'[281]

The books the artists sent are all uniform in concertina style, size and page number. When gathered together they appear to form a library or a collection. Where the books vary is in the artist's individual designs, which highlight playful arrangements with spatial components and the strengths of their individual practice. Most of the Afghan woman received a different book art design, although occasionally the same image appears

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[280] SAWA-Australia (SA) (no date) *The Vocational Training Centre for Women.* SAWA-Australia. [Online] [Accessed on 23rd August 2016] http://www.sawa-australia.org/projects/vocational-training-centre

[281] This quote comes from a collaboratively written letter sent to the Afghan women from the Australian artists. Tracey Avery, Ros Atkins, Ann Cunningham, Deborah Klein, Marian Crawford, Susan Gordon-Brown, Jennifer Kemp, Anne Riggs, Tanya N., Christine Wilcocks, Krystal Seigerman, Dianne Ellis, Annelise Scott and Gali Weiss (2010) *Letter Sent to Afghan Women with Book Art.* Letter received by Latifa Ahmady at the VTC. March.

across two participant's books: a butterfly-masked portrait of a woman, orange rooftops, or a wispy stain coming from open mouths. The Afghan women also received two identical copies of the books they selected – one in which to practice their writing, and the other as the 'final' piece to be sent back to Australia. The Afghan women's response to these images is through handwriting, with their calligraphy manifesting in long flicks or marked in different coloured pen. Sometimes the writing appears rushed, other times of great concentration. There are also visible guiding lines in some of the books to help the writers keep their text straight, whereas other examples show relations to concrete poetry as they play with formal elements and word combinations. Occasionally the writer scribes directly over the images, other times words carefully follow the outlines as if not to disturb. The writing content is also diverse and includes political views, to experiences of landscape and personal stories. Originally, fifty-three books were delivered to the VTC and eight months later, thirty-six returned to Australia. Those completed were exhibited at Impact 7 conference, Melbourne and eventually purchased by the State Library of Queensland.[282]

The above description highlights that the primary claim of *Unfolding Projects* is the joining of voices within the pages of book art. It is believed that culturally different women can come together to share their stories and discover similarities through the collaborative creation of codices. The project also suggests there is a sense of solidarity in a shared belief in women's rights to education, and the provision of opportunities for women's voices to be heard. For example, in an interview with Weiss, she explains to me that the project surfaced from reading an article on Afghan women's struggle for self-expression. She states:

> One of the pinnacle articles that I read was in a British magazine that someone had passed onto me. The article was about women in Afghanistan and the extremes that they had to go through just to have the freedom to write. Even if the women already knew how to write, say poetry for example or any other forms of self-expression, they were doing so in a patriarchal, fraught and traumatic

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[282] Impact 7 is an International Multi-Disciplinary Printmaking Conference. The conference's focus is graphic design, drawing, artists' books, text, animation, film and digital media. Call for papers and proposals can be seen here: Impact 7: Intersections & Counterpoints. (2011) *Call for Papers and Proposals.* Monash University. [Online] [Accessed on 1st August 2016] http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/4480/1/IMPACT_7_Theme_and_Topics.pdf.

environment. But, even surrounded by these extremes, they continued to place their voice and their expression as ultimate. As without that, it seemed their life wasn't worth living. This isn't to suggest that everyone is like that, but these articles point to that.[283]

Weiss established the project against this traumatic environment that these articles suggest, by using the somewhat safe and accessible form of book art as a platform for Afghan women to engage in forms of self-expression. The artists' books were a 'gift' to the Afghan women, a symbol of support and acknowledgement of their battle to gain access to literacy. As the project developed, the purpose of the books became twofold: on the one hand it was a visual method of garnering support for the VTC, on the other, a chance for Afghan women to voice their stories in dialogue with the Australian artists' imagery.

To consider the projects claim, this chapter focuses on analysing book art as a meeting point between two groups of women by investigating *Unfolding Projects* through the theme of dialogue. To do this, I unpack how the dialogue is planned, enacted and given meaning by analysing the content and physical properties of the *Unfolding Projects* books, as well as consider the immaterial qualities in the books' exchange and mobility into differing contexts. My analysis is often positioned from a western perspective, accounting for how I am reading the project in relation to the books' location in the State Library of Queensland, Australia and their framing and translation in the Australian charity's publication on the project - *Two Trees*[284]. As the contextual essays within this publication are written predominantly by the artists and organisers, they come to mediate the Afghan women's writing, as the latter's voices are only apparent in the book art.

To read the books within western discourse is to first consider the label the participants are designated with – 'Afghan women'. This label has a particular, essentialist designation in western narratives since the increasing involvement of western military conflict in Afghanistan at the beginning of the 21st century. In media narratives, the

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[283] Gali Weiss (2016) *Personal Interview via Skype*. 12 October.

[284] It is also important to acknowledge that I am reading these books from the context of the UK. Gali Weiss, Barbara Kameniar and Matthias Tomczak. (eds.) (2013) *Two Trees Australian Artists Books to Afghanistan and Back*. Fremantle: Vivid Publishing.

Afghan is increasingly modelled as 'other', imbued with colonial and orientalist imaginaries of the 'backward' and 'violent' Middle East in relation to such groups as the Taliban. In these narratives, Afghan women are often portrayed as 'veiled', voiceless victims.[285] To combat these essentialist depictions and singular narratives, academic accounts have attempted to highlight a complex history of women's rights agendas in Afghanistan since the 19th century, and to reveal how imperialist and colonial agendas of international countries have, in part, resulted in continual women's subjugation. It is worth paying attention to these narratives, for even with good intentions, they can further problematise, decontextualise, and stereotype Afghan women and their political desires. Whilst I am not suggesting that the *Unfolding Projects* book art reiterates these stereotypes, much like *The Homeless Library* representations, I am interested in how the book art might be read against and within its narratives. As Weiss also raises the importance of Afghan women's rights to education and self-expression, I want to consider how this politicisation comes through in the Afghan women's writings and the contextual essays of the organisers. Thus, the first part of this chapter is concerned with outlining these narratives of 'Afghan woman' to consider how the books within *Unfolding Projects* may reiterate or subvert the essentialising of women's rights, and the othering tendencies of representation. I also want to make it clear that the mediation of the project and the books in the *Two Trees* publication was not necessarily an aspect Weiss desired or planned before the project and appears as a point of tension between the artist and the supporting charity. Weiss is particularly aware of Afghan women's re-representation and felt the publication may mediate or contextualise their writing within certain narratives – a contextualisation I am attempting to unpack.

Following on from this contextual discussion, I analyse what form of dialogue is occuring through book art. As stated in the introduction, I am particularly interested in how *Unfolding Projects* might challenge the widely cited theories of Nicolas Bourriaud, Suzanne Lacy and Grant Kester, who tend to champion participatory and collaborative projects that involve physical interaction and spoken dialogue between individuals[286]. As the books in *Unfolding Projects* are concerned with dialogue taking place across

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[285] These narratives are particularly prevalent in the media. The Oriental and east vs west binary is discussed in Edward W. Said. (1978, reprinted 1991) *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.
[286] By physical interaction I imply: participants interacting with one another within a locality, or, artist/s and participants produce an artistic/social outcome collaboratively within a physical space.

geographical borders and without the two groups of women physically meeting, it problematises the concept that spoken word and sharing of physical space are the only beneficial social or emancipatory scenarios. To elaborate this argument, I draw upon Jacques Rancière's discussion of 'the emancipated spectator' to suggest that the Afghan women's ability to freely write their stories and enter the 'aesthetic realm' was benefitted by the Australian artists lack of presence. To 'test' this argument and its political claims, I analyse how this form of emancipation is entangled in the books' conception as 'gifts'. By drawing on gift theory by Marcel Mauss, Jacques Derrida and Roger Sansi, I consider how framing the books as 'gifts' may impose particular obligations on the Afghan women, which could alter their written responses. To analyse the effect of the books as gifts, I spend the final part of this chapter tracing the book's conception, through to their exchange and 'use' by different project agents. The latter enquiry will also reveal the tensions that emerged in the project between the artists' focus on the books' as dialogue, to the monetary value of the project for the charity. By charting this journey along anthropological and art historical enquiries, my overall aim is to question what form of dialogue is taking place in *Unfolding Projects*, and how this manifest in the various artistic and social processes.

Women's Rights in Afghanistan: Problematising Representation

The aim of *Unfolding Projects* is for Australian artists to provide a space within the pages of book art for Afghan women to voice their stories. As previously suggested, this invitation gives emphasis to the importance of women's rights to education by allowing Afghan women engaging in literacy lessons to have control of their representation through writing. The books, therefore, also become a political form, as they are used in the *Two Trees* publication to highlight Afghan women's political and social desires. Thus, in Weiss's article on *Unfolding Projects,* she asserts that the completed book art provides a window into the lives of Afghan women: 'Moreover, that object now delivers testimony of experiences, histories, and opinions through the written word: the emotionally moving, written narratives provide the reader/observer an entry into the

world of women in Afghanistan, who just one year ago were unable to read or write.'[287] In some ways, this statement indicates that the 'world of women in Afghanistan' was previously difficult to enter for 'readers/observers' due to the participant's illiteracy, hence lack of communication with western audiences. As previously suggested, a presumption can be made that the book art readers are generally western audiences, as access to the books is within the State Library of Queensland, or the *Two Trees* publication. Problematically, Weiss' statement also asserts that the brief writings within book art can, in part, represent 'Afghan women' and allow the reader to 'enter' their world. Whilst I know through having discussions with Weiss that she is more aware of the diversity of Afghan women's situation and the difficulties of their re-representation, this grouping of participants potentially dismisses contextual variants between rural and urban women, tribal affiliations and practices, employment, class, education and family structures. It suggests that these stories are a complete 'window' or portrayal of Afghan women, without considering the diversity of individuals understanding or performance of this role, or that subjects are not necessarily 'fully apparent' within the book art. Furthermore, it does not account for how the women's stories can be influenced by the projects structure (restricting the potential of what they may write), or that the books can be co-opted or framed under supporting organisations agendas – to highlight the charities work or validate the success of the project.

As the books interact with Afghan women's rights for education, there is also a need to consider how this desire emerges in Afghan narratives (and the women's stories) and the western discourses in which the books are often read. To consider these narratives, I first unpack Afghan women's representation within academic, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and media contexts. This background to Afghan women's representation may present a useful foundation for considering how book art is mediated and framed within and amongst contextual influences, as well as highlight how it may challenge some of their essentialising tendencies. As discussions in the chapter on *The Homeless Library* and the workshop have highlighted, in certain contexts creating representations under labels such as 'Afghan women' can be beneficial at subverting stereotypes or raising awareness of the situation of the participating group.

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[287] Gali Weiss. (2011) *Unfolding Projects: Australian-Afghan Encounters through the Artist's Book*. Autumn Gali Weiss Artist Website. [Online] [Accessed on 26th July 2016] http://www.galiweiss.com/texts/unfolding_projects_text.html

However, labels can also be used to universalise women's situation, or be encompassed into essentialising narratives to benefit alternative, restricting agendas. Where *Unfolding Projects* book art sits, is one of the questions that appears regularly in this chapter.

As stated, I want to start by tracing some of the dominant western narratives on Afghan women as they interact with literature on women's rights. Stereotypical and colonial narratives of Afghanistan have proliferated in western media since the US terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the preceding Afghanistan conflict. Sarah Blake suggests that these narratives often represent Afghan women's subjugation under the extremist occupation of Taliban militants as fuel to stir public imagination into supporting the war effort.[288] These narratives also highlight that the backward and aggressive inequalities impressed onto women by the Taliban is a supposed failure of Afghanistan to modernise and democratise its state under western ideals.[289] It suggests that prior to the Taliban, women often had greater freedom of movement, involvement in political activism, access to healthcare and education, control over dress and more decision over employment choices. Whilst this may be the case, historical accounts of Afghanistan have highlighted that since the nineteenth century women's rights and changing societal positions have resulted in certain freedoms in line with modified legislation, but also times of restriction and imposition of strict laws on the bodies of women. In academic discourse, particularly within the social sciences, these changing rights are woven into a certain historical narrative.[290] Although historical narratives are

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[288] This was particularly the case in US and UK media. Gali Weiss states that at the beginning of the project the Australian media suggested a great deal of empathy towards Afghanistan's situation, but this gradually changed as the conflict proceeded. Australia became involved in the Afghanistan conflict after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the US through the provision of both military assets and personnel - see details on the Parliament of Australia website. Nicole Brangwin and Ann Rann. (2010) *Australia's military involvement in Afghanistan since 2001: a chronology.* 16 July. Parliament of Australia. [Online] [Accessed on 10th May 2018] https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/1011/MilitaryInvolvementAfghanistan; Sarah Blake. (2009) 'The War on Terrorism as a State of Exception: A Challenge for Transnational Gender Theory.' *Journal of International Womens Studies,* 11(3), pp. 56-65;

[289] Valentine M. Moghadam. (2003) *Modernising Women Gender and Social Change in the Middle East.* London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.2.

[290] This historical narrative seeks to outline the changing reforms of women's rights and societal 'freedoms' in line with changing rule/occupation and legislation. My aim is not to undermine the importance of these studies, but to show that they have similarities in their historical narratives and highlighting of particular women's rights, making them appear as if they are the main concerns of Afghan women. This narrative appears in the following sources: Carol J. Riphenburg. (2004) 'Post-Taliban Afghanistan: Changed Outlook for Women?' *Asian Survey,* 44(5), pp.401-421; Deniz Kandiyoti. (2007) 'Old Dilemmas or New Challenges? The Politics of Gender Reconstruction in Afghanistan.' *Development and Change,* 38(2), pp. 169-199; Sonali Kolhatkar. (2003) 'The Impact of U.S Intervention on Afghan Women's Rights.' *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law and Justice,* 17(1), pp.12-30; Sultan Barakat and Gareth Wardell.

important in highlighting the implications of imperialism and international meddling (such as the support of extremist mujahedeen factions through arms and training by the US government), and in challenging the image of Afghan women as silent 'victims' (through the representation of such groups as the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, RAWA), it also foregrounds a failure to consider that *certain* rights for women are emphasised and the implication this has for Afghan women's representation.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty suggests narratives can implicate a colonial mode of western thought; history is gathered around a series of issues such as marriage, education and child birth. These issues are suggested to be areas around which all women are expected to organise, even if emerging from a universal mode of western feminism. In 'third world' countries these issues are also deemed increasingly fraught, often as places such as Afghanistan are represented as hosting a monolithic patriarchy, which defines all women as oppressed and all men as oppressors. Mohanty suggests these frames act to perform an image of an 'average third world woman'. She states:

> This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being "third world" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimised, etc.) This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decisions.[291]

Yet, these narratives disguise the continued oppression of women within certain western contexts, as well as failing to consider the reiteration of stereotypes regarding Afghan women's representation and desired rights under the label 'third world'.

To challenge these stereotypical constructions, academic discourse has been engaging in specific contextual studies, which complicate and deconstruct fixed narratives to reveal the complexities of women's representation. Malini Johar Schueller has shown how narratives in popular culture have not only posed the Afghan woman as 'other'

(2002) 'Exploited by whom? An alternative perspective on Humanitarian assistance to Afghan women.' *Third World Quarterly,* 23(5), pp.909-930.
[291] Chandra Talpade Mohanty. (2003) *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonising Theory, Practicing Solidarity.* London: Duke University Press, p.22.

within the binaries of liberated vs oppressed and modern vs traditional, but also established scenarios within books and documentaries in which western women can relate their own situation as similar to that of Afghan women.[292] This aspect of relatability is visible in Weiss's previous statement in an indication of 'solidarity' and common ground between the groups of women, but also the ability to 'enter' the Afghan women's world. Whilst this is far more complicated in *Unfolding Projects* than this statement suggests, in relation to Schueller's assertion, these narratives operate by utilising neoliberal ideals of self-management, individualisation and consumerism within humanitarian programmes. Although these operations are considered by some as destructive in western contexts, within the context of Afghan women's situation they are viewed as freeing and democratic.[293] There are also prolific representations of Afghan women based around clothing practices of the burqa or veil, which have come to dominate the imaginary other. The media image of the Afghan woman as unveiled is shown by Shahira Fahmy's study to be associated with the US liberation of women under the Taliban.[294] Here, the veil becomes a fixed symbol of oppression, and fails to consider the complexity of veiling practices.[295] These studies highlight that representation should be considered alongside and within the contextual situation, cultural practices and desires of Afghan women, and to note how they may be entangled or framed in colonial narratives of otherness, orientalism, racial and religious stereotypes.

The ownership and construction of Afghan women's representations in western discourse is important to consider when analysing the exchange of book art between Australian and Afghan women. As the Australian artists and charity organise and generate funds for the project, and hence call upon the terms of exchange, they negotiate or partially exert control over the representation of Afghan women. In *Unfolding Projects*, Afghan women generally only appear in their written responses or photographic images taken by OPAWC.[296] Therefore, rather than attempt to construct a

[292] Malini Johar Schueller. (2011) 'Cross-cultural identification, Neoliberal Feminism, and Afghan Women.' *Genders,* 53, Spring.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Shahira Fahmy. (2004) 'Picturing Afghan Women.' *Gazette the International Journal for Communication Studies,* 66(2), pp. 91-112.
[295] Zillah Einsenstein. (2004) *Against Empire: Feminisms, Racism and the West.* London: Zed Books Ltd, p.170.
[296] I am referring to photographs within the *Two Trees* publication. Gali Weiss, Barbara Kameniar and Matthias Tomczak. Op. Cit. The photographs are also visible on the SAWA website: SAWA-Australia (2011) *How the Book*

detrimental narrative about the Afghan women's lives from this limited information, it is more beneficial to consider the exchange or form of communication and dialogue involved. As well as address how this exchange allows for the emancipation of participants or freedom for the participants to respond. To inquire over dialogue is not to disregard the context of Afghan women's representation, but rather to move the enquiry from *who* is speaking (although this undoubtedly plays a part), to focus an analysis on *where, what* and *how* the speech (or in this case, the writing/image making) is taking place. This enquiry into the form the dialogue will take still allows room for considering how the Afghan women's responses might interact with the discussed discourse on women's rights (and its often-limited focus in third world narratives). I also draw upon these narratives to understand how these representations are utilised and validated by the artists and supporting charity. The overall aim is to consider whether *Unfolding Projects* book art operates by reiterating the same universal concerns of women's rights, or whether it allows a space for revealing the complexity of Afghan women's concerns and interests.

Dialogue through Book Art: Challenging Spoken Word as the 'Medium' of Emancipation

So what kind of dialogue is taking place? Dialogue through words and images sent and received across geographical borders moves the encounter with book art away from spoken word and the engagement of participants within a physical space. This lack of collaborators physically meeting presents somewhat of an anomaly for discussions of 'relational', 'socially engaged' or 'dialogical' art forms.[297] Theorists such as Nicolas Bourriaud, Grant Kester and Suzanne Lacy, albeit in diverse ways, all state spoken word

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was Conceived, Dialogue through Art: The History of Two Trees. [Online] [Accessed on 18th July 2016] http://www.sawa-australia.org/projects/dialogue-through-art

[297] Arguably not all socially engaged art practices rely on spoken dialogue and physically shared space between participants. Nato Thompson, although wary of the difficulty of defining practices as complex as socially engaged art, states that 'numerous genres have been deeply intertwined in participation, sociality, conversation and "the civic"' (p.19). In Thompson's introduction on types of communication, he states that, 'certainly many artists privilege conversation as a mode of action'. Nato Thompson. (2012) *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011.* New York: Creative Times Books, p.26.

and the sharing of a physical space between participants as beneficial to social cohesion. Bourriaud asserts 'live discussion' as the only means for producing a social bond, Kester sees face-to-face conversation as allowing an empathetic 'opening up' to the other, and Lacy highlights the importance of audience and participants to be summoned to a physical, shared space for the building of relationships. [298] For these theorists, the concept that written dialogue can form a social relation, or the notion that individual consumption can in fact be emancipatory is disregarded. It suggests that the Afghan women's experience of imagery, if not discussed with another, could not result in any meaningful form of sociability. The book as a conduit for dialogue would only increase the isolation of individuals, rather than form a relation between groups of women from different geographical contexts. To contest these theorist's ideas, it is worth spending some time unpacking how they structure verbal conversation as emancipatory in relation to ideas of time, empathy and transformation of subjectivity. This is not necessarily to dismiss their arguments entirely, but to establish a foundation for arguing how book art dialogue may form a different social bond. A discussion that will challenge a dominant valuing of spoken word in theories of participatory art, but also allow an investigation into how *Unfolding Projects* participants may gain some form of emancipation.

In 1998, Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* set a new precedence of writings and responses to an emerging scene of collaborative, participatory, dialogical and relational art practices[299]. For Bourriaud, 'relational art' is the new avant-garde and consists of works that investigate the realm of social interactions. Relational art is conceived as a space in which to test and produce alternative forms of communication and sociability, which once transposed into 'real life' can enhance a supposedly consistently alienated society of individuals.[300] Bourriaud suggests that artist's interest in human interaction is posited against a modernist concern of private contemplation and individual genius. He asserts:

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[298] Grant Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces Community + Communication in Modern Art.* London: University of California Press; Nicolas Bourriaud. (2009) *Relational Aesthetics.* Dijon: les presses du reel; Suzanne Lacy. (1995) *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle: Bay Press.
[299] Nicolas Bourriaud's publication of essays did not reach English-speaking audiences until its translation in 2002, arguably resulting in a delay of response. Nicolas Bourriaud. Op. Cit.
[300] Ibid., p.18.

> The possibility of a *relational art* (an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space), points to a radical upheaval of the aesthetic, cultural and political goals introduced by modern art.[301]

For Bourriaud, modernist concepts of art are primarily concerned with modelling the artist as genius, whose original observations emerge from working 'outside' of society. Entangled within this idea is that art exists (or should exist) within an autonomous, sacred space, which encourages private contemplation and a mastery of aesthetics. To liberate art from the modernist imperative, relational art must turn to the encounter between individuals that art produces. According to Bourriaud, artworks that allow people to eat Thai food together or allow viewers to form meaning from an installation with various, disparate elements, all place the creation of form and the derivation of meaning in the hands of the viewer. These presumed social scenarios, in Bourriaud's conception, bring people together to freely talk, bond and socialise, establishing micro-communities or micro-utopias.

Whilst the concept of a relational art dismisses more traditional art forms as potentially forming social relations, most criticism against Bourriaud is fixated on calling into question the *quality* of relations constituted. These criticisms call into question Bourriaud's failure to consider implications of tension within these social scenarios, the accessibility of artworks in the 'exclusive' gallery space and works relation to capitalist modes of life he seeks to overturn.[302] Jens Haaning's creation of a 'micro-community' around laughter, formed as immigrants listen to Turkish jokes in Copenhagen, or Felix Gonzalez-Torres' *Stacks* in which people can choose how much candy to take from a pile of sweets, provide little indication of people physically meeting and interacting, let alone speaking and listening to one another.[303] However, as theorised in *Relational Aesthetics,* these examples apparently 'tighten the space of relations' and encourage a form of sociability through live discussion.[304] To form this argument, Bourriaud

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[301] Ibid., p.14.
[302] Stewart Martin (2007) 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics' *Third Text*, 21(4), pp.369-386; 'Relational Art: Is it an ism?' *Art Safari.* (2003) Ben Lewis. [Television] BBC 4; Claire Bishop. (2004) 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.' *October,* 110, Fall, pp.51-79.
[303] Nicolas Bourriaud. Op. Cit. p.17 and p.39
[304] Ibid., p.15.

conceives of art as different from television and literature. He sees these latter art forms as referring each individual person back into their private space of consumption. Unlike television and literature which must be watched/read and then discussed, art encourages live discussion in real time. This act of live discussion implicates a taking place in the present, a 'here and now', demanding the viewer not only to be physically present, but also to engage in spoken dialogue with another.[305] Bourriaud also suggests that this instant reaction to works of art results in an 'evolution' of the viewer in a 'unique space and time'.[306] The exhibition is designated the site of this 'unique space', supposedly presenting a 'free arena' outside of the controlling and restricted arenas of urban living, which influence our behaviour and modes of communication through the demand for work or consumption.[307] In relation to *Unfolding Projects*, this reliance on ideals of live discussion instantly problematizes a reading of book art*,* which if read in terms of its literary content would prove hazardous to a meaningful encounter. Bourriaud's disregard of the emancipatory potential of individual consumption, also suggests that the Afghan women's experience of imagery if not discussed with another could not result in any convivial or beneficial form of sociability. It suggests that Bourriaud's focus on 'bond' relies on certain types of dialogues or encounters.

Bourriaud is certainly not alone in his championing of convivial encounters around face-to-face discussions. A similarity also emerges in the writing of Suzanne Lacy, whose works under 'New Genre Public Art' (1995) involve highly authored performances with large groups of participants. These works often take place in specific locations and involve the performance of gestural, symbolic or verbal displays. Take, for example, Lacy's piece *Crystal Quilt* (1984). Crystal Quilt consisted of 430 women who gathered

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[305] Ibid., pp.15-16.
[306] Ibid., pp 15-16.
[307] From the outset, Nicolas Bourriaud indicates nostalgia for what he perceives as lost forms of communication. As contemporary society increasingly moves from a goods to a service-based economy, sites of the coffee shop or theme park are ideal marketable arenas for interaction. They not only sell beverages and food as commodities, but also model these arenas as suitable for building and maintaining relations – a lifestyle. These 'communication arenas' control our behaviour and remove agency until we become 'the laboratory rat doomed to an inexorable itinerary in its cage, littered with chunks of cheese.' Alongside this increasingly controlled environment, is the continual replacement of humans through cash machines, automatic public toilets and automated telephone calls, which has reduced the chance for verbal exchange between individuals. As machines replace the cashier and hotel receptionist, individuals become disengaged with one another and lose 'opportunities for exchanges, pleasure and squabbling.' For Bourriaud, it is only the space of the art exhibition, in which we can redeem and form new, beneficial relations between individuals and a revived sense of community. This suggestion fails to conceive of the art exhibition in line with service-based economies surfacing in education and entertainment, as well as the commodity related art market, and hidden labour behind institutions. Somehow, the space of art is posed as autonomous from such interferences, Ibid., pp.8-17.

to meet and verbally converse on experiences of growing old around a well-curated display of tables. From a bird's eye view, the arrangement of tables draped in brightly covered cloths appeared as a patterned quilt. This visual patterning provides the project with a notable aesthetic, as much as being concerned with the social processes involved in bringing participants together to converse. Although these events are highly authored and involve a significant degree of planning in the form of prior discussions, rehearsals and consultation, much like Bourriaud's live discussion Lacy is interested in the immediacy of the event. Lacy states that there is a degree of urgency to works as they pull from a history of avant-garde, leftist politics; demanding social change, works often see the fate of the world at stake, meaning action needs to occur quickly.[308]

Bourriaud also demands this real time change, moving away from twentieth century concerns with future utopias, to contemporary arts focus on 'modelling possible universes' that take place in the 'real' of the now/present.[309] Bourriaud suggests that this now/present requires the artist to *summon* the audience in a factual time, but also in a particular place to witness or experience the work and to condition its existence.[310] This summoning to the event also places the visitor as collaborator in the production of form, as many relational artworks contain 'flexible matter' that is informed by the artist, but invokes interaction and creation from the audience.[311] The placing of the audience is far less specified in *Unfolding Projects* book art, often because the summon is not bound to a physical site and time frame. The book art is made in the artist's studios, completed at the Vocational Training Centre (VTC), and then given new meaning through its use within the archive and exhibition. Here, interaction with book art from the viewer is not time bound, or reliant on immediacy. Both writing and reading is constructed as a slow, ponderous and longitudinal process, whereas speech is posited as an instant, reactionary action. The audience is also not summoned as witness to the production or to the making of book art, rather the encounter is separated – the audience are only

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[308] It should be stated that Lacy's conception on 'New Genre Public Art' draws from a tradition of 'site-specific' art, in which the physicality of place is integral. Suzanne Lacy. Op. Cit., p.31.

[309] Nicolas Bourriaud. Op. Cit., p13

[310] Ibid., p.29.

[311] Nicolas Bourriaud states that 'art is made in the gallery'. In his curated show *Traffic,* he asserts "each artist was at leisure to do what he/she wanted throughout the exhibition, to alter the piece, replace it, or propose performances and events. With each modification, as the general setting evolved, and the exhibition played the part of flexible matter, "informed" by the work of the artist. The visitor here had a crucial place, because his interaction with the works helped to define the exhibition's structure." Ibid., pp.38-40.

spectators to the final piece. Production and consumption, therefore, take place with different participants and within different sites.

In Grant Kester's 'dialogical art', he also advocates verbal, spoken communication as a method of producing a particular 'space of relations'.[312] He shifts the focus from object-based art - which he sees as provoking dialogue only in response to finished works - to works in which conversation is an integral part of the work itself. Nearly all of Kester's examples within *Conversation Pieces* utilise spoken communication, from Lacy's *The Roof is on Fire* where teenagers and police officers discuss violence, to Wochenklauser's work in Zurich where a dialogue between various authorities on a boat addressed the problem of prostitution and drug addiction.[313] Conversation, for Kester, becomes the dominant tool to modify subjectivity and create a stronger social cohesion between individuals. To formulate his argument, Kester draws on the work of Adrian Piper to show that our subjectivities are built on a philosophical tradition which views the subject as both 'rationally unified', and 'temporarily continuous', allowing a modification of subjectivity. Within this trajectory, Piper states that our 'unified status' is constantly being undermined as one encounters difference and the self modifies in relation to the meeting of difference, thereby disrupting the illusion of a fixed identity. Kester utilises this concept to suggest it is the transformation of self through meeting the 'other' that is crucial to the possibility of social cohesion. He suggests empathy and compassion can make subjects more open and accepting of the other, allowing individuals to engage in dialogue which encourages the modification of their behaviour and identity accordingly and results in an overall strengthening of communities. Kester envisions this transformation occuring within a feedback loop. He asserts:

> ...[W]e determine the relationship between our interpretation of another's state of mind or condition and his or her actual inner state through a performative interaction, an empathetic feedback loop in which we observe the other's responses to our statements and actions (and modify our own actions accordingly). This empathetic identification is a necessary component of

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[312] Grant Kester. Op. Cit.
[313] Ibid., pp.1-5.

dialogical art practice – it provides a way to decenter a fixed identity through interaction with others.[314]

According to this theory, the notion of altering our subjectivities to accept difference and in turn modify behaviour must take place within a shared physical space, as to alter our subjectivities we need to *observe* the other's actions and *respond* to statements through the act of talking. Like Bourriaud, Kester is implying that the feedback loop is based on a relation between two participants that is conditioned by their physical mobility within a space, through real time conversation and with subjects which are open to a reactionary and responsive approach. Not only does this seem to disregard a contemporary environment of prolific digital conversing, which is arguably bodily and physical, but for the book art made within *Unfolding Projects* the lack of speech or action within a set space disallows an opening up to the other and in turn a modification of subjectivities.[315] It suggests that individuals whom are conversing through the pages of book art, do not engage in any forms of emancipation or shared connection to benefit social relationships. Conviviality or understanding can only take place through a verbal feedback loop.

However, there could be an opportunity to conceive of a different form of social interaction and modification of subjectivity taking place within *Unfolding Projects.* The first is that of a 'meeting point' between artist and writer through the medium of the book. To understand this meeting point, it is useful to turn to Jacques Rancière's disruption of the binary between spectator and artist through his shifting of the focus onto the intermediary artwork.[316] Rancière sees the artwork as the aspect owned by neither the artist nor the spectator, but that which subsists between them. This placement of the artwork does not imply that meaning operates through cause and effect, in which the artist forms an idea in the artwork that is transmitted, undisturbed and understood in totality to the viewer. What Rancière is interested in is the association

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[314] Ibid., p.77.
[315] The argument of digital spaces as bodily emerges in Engin Isin and Evelyn Ruppert's *Being Digital Citizens.* They state: 'Let us now describe cyberspace as a space of transactions and interactions between and among bodies acting through the Internet. But this is hardly uncontroversial. If indeed cyberspace is first a relational space, these relations are between and among bodies through the internet. These bodies can be collective (institutions, organisations, corporations, collectives, groups), cybernetic, or social.' Engin Isin and Evelyn Ruppert (2015) *Being Digital Citizens.* London: Rowman & Littlefield, p.28.
[316] Jacques Rancière. (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator.* London: Verso.

and disassociation that occurs within the spectator when experiencing/viewing the artwork.[317] This process of association and disassociation involves the spectator interpreting the artwork's meaning in relation to what they have seen, heard, dreamt, felt and experienced - a process which also occurs within the artist. Thus, the act of emancipation for Rancière operates in the ability to exercise this realm of association and disassociation within our existence, but does not necessarily require spoken interaction or physical presence with another individual.[318] For the Afghan women within *Unfolding Projects,* to respond to the imagery created by the Australian artists enacted a freedom to look, comment and freely express their individuality outside of the confines of their expected roles within society.

To unpack this statement, and, in part, problematise the ideal of emancipation, it is useful to consider the words of VTC director Latifa Ahmady. Ahmady states that Afghan women are treated as 'second class persons', in which they are locked in the enclosure of the house and unable to move without male escort. The women are subjected to violence and judgment on a continual basis and are therefore unable to exercise individualities of opinion and enjoyment of leisure time and education. As Ahmady states,

> They are in search of a minute to relax and breathe. Presenting a gift or award, even asking about their living condition is just like a dream for them. So under such conditions the support of Australian women and the sharing of their ideas with them is the greatest gift in their lives. They never dreamed to have such a big chance to write down their sad stories and pains in the pages of the books.[319]

Placing to one side for the moment the implication of 'the gift', this suggests the women's emancipation occurs through expressing oneself in writing and the ability to freely gaze at the images. Yet, as previously explored, representations and narratives on Afghan women produced by media and NGO sources can often be co-opted within avocation of certain rights, often decontextualized from the actual situation or desired rights of Afghan women. With this in mind, a certain cautiousness arises about the

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[317] Ibid., pp.14-15.
[318] Ibid., p.17.
[319] Latifa Ahmady. (2013) 'A fresh breath.' *In* Gali Weiss, Barbara Kameniar and Matthias Tomczak. (eds.) *Two Trees Australian Artists Books to Afghanistan and Back.* Fremantle: Vivid Publishing, p.16.

political potential, as this statement from Ahmady is published in the charity's publication on the project, which is generally positive about the outcomes of *Unfolding Projects*. Is it a dream of the Afghan women to write their stories? Did they see the value in this project? Did the act of interpreting images provide escape from their 'normal' routines?

If we consider Ahmady's suggestion, the Afghan women's ability to respond to the images has similarities to Rancière's discussion of an act of emancipation in Victorian workers. These workers wrote of their aesthetic enjoyment of the landscape within their 'free time' rather than conserving their energy for work, an aspect that defines their social preoccupation. He writes:

> By making themselves spectators and visitors, they disrupted the distribution of the sensible which would have it that those who work do not have time to let their steps and gazes roam at random; and that members of a collective body do not have time to spend on the forms of insignia of individuality. This is what the word 'emancipation' means; the blurring of the boundary between those who act and those who look; between individuals and a collective body.[320]

Within this analogy, the emancipatory act is not solely within the Afghan women learning to read and write, but also through their participation in the aesthetic realm of book art. The chance to express their individual interpretations blurs the boundaries of social expectations and capability for individual expression that society dictated. This challenges theorists such as Kester, who see the altering of the individual operating primarily on spoken dialogue and within a real time feedback loop between participants. The emancipation, or altering of the individual, occurs within the very lack of a need to *observe* the Australian artists working process or hear their spoken opinion; rather it is the freedom to *respond* to the imagery without the presence of the artists in which Afghan women's liberation occurs. Their subjectivities are altered through the knowledge that they have an option to freely express their individual concerns, which is heightened through its taking place in the safe confines of a book that will be sent back to Australia, rather than remain in Kabul.

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[320] Jacques Rancière. Op. Cit., p.19.

However, this argument still relies on the assumption that learning to read and write as a woman in Kabul is an act of activism, an aspect somewhat clarified in the Support Association for the Women of Afghanistan's (SAWA) 2010 annual report. In the report, Ahmady speaks of the centre's move to an area called Spin Kalay intersection near their previous location in Afshur. She states

> Spin Kalay is an area where the warlord Sayaf lives along with his commanders, so working in Spin Kalay is very hard. Several times they created problems for the Center, as they went to the mosques and made propaganda and asked the men of the area not to let their wives or sisters or women of their houses attend the literacy course; they told the men "The people who arrange such activities want your women to leave you and join the political parties, that they show bad ways to your women." We lost many of our students as a result of such propaganda...this is the condition under which OPAWC is struggling to achieve its goals to empower women.[321]

Here, going to the centre is illustrated not only as a political act (either in terms of the warlords suggestion of propaganda, or in the centres ideals of empowering women), but also highlights the dangerous conditions in which access to literacy occurs.[322] However, a cautiousness arises in considering the act of individual expression as explicitly emancipatory, as it may fail to deliberate the request on Afghan women by Australian artists – a request operating within the charity's aims. By asking the Afghan women to respond to the images through the act of self-expression could misconstrue the project as drawing on neoliberal ideologies of the privatized individual, particularly in terms of 'self-interest' or 'self-management' as freeing. Importantly, this is avoided within *Unfolding Projects* as the focus is on the exchange of each group of women's stories, based around a notion of collaborative communication. As the letter sent by the artists to the Afghan women explains:

> As artists we understand the desire to express and communicate our thoughts and feelings creatively so that others may hear and understand, and we feel we

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[321] SAWA-Australia (SA). (2011) *2010/2011 Annual Report.* Bedford Park: SAWA-Australia (SA). [Online] [Accessed on 10th July 2016] Available from: http://www.sawa-australia.org/annualreports/report2010_11.pdf, p.6.
[322] There have been studies to suggest there are high illiteracy levels among widows due to poverty and cultural factors, particularly in areas such as Kabul. Carol J. Riphenburg. Op. Cit.

can grow as people through that exchange. Reading and writing empowers us to reach places and people and ideas beyond our immediate place, and as artists, we feel that art can communicate with and beyond language.[323]

We are left asking, does this exchange result in the empowerment of both parties?

The Gift: Who's Empowering Who?

Both Weiss and Ahmady place the project within a system of gifting, demanding a consideration of how the books as gifts operates and the differing values agents give to this exchange. For many the gift, or act of gifting, offers an alternative system to the world's economic and social system based on capital, or to be more specific - the exchange of goods for money. Gifts within art practices enter multiple economies; as Ahu Antmen suggests, Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Stacks* exist within the market economy (the work of art is for sale as a commodity), and as a gift economy (his candies are taken for free by the public).[324] The gift in many ways demands a more active involvement from the viewer, as the reception of the gift or the act of receiving symbolically and literally provides meaning through the form of the encounter. Although at its basic premise giving a gift would appear to be situated in ideals of generosity and charity, it is problematic to consider a history of gifting 'as free of moral or ethical dilemmas'. More often than not, gifting occurs as part of the agenda of the giver. Jeanne van Heeswijk highlights this through the example of the US military dropping food packages containing commercial 'All-American' products such as peanut butter within Afghanistan.[325] In this example, the meaning of the gift falls into several connotations: 'generosity, cultural framework and American business'. The self-benefitting mode of 'product placement' implicates generosity but is actually entangled in the giver's desire for monetary benefit.[326] Janna Graham has also asserted that

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[323] *Letter Sent to Afghan Women with Book Art*. Op.Cit.
[324] Ahu Antmen. (2010) 'From a pile of candies to a thousand cranes: art works of a gift economy.' *Parallax,* 16(1), p.30.
[325] Jeann van Heeswijk. (2005) 'A Call for Sociality.' *In* Ted Purves (ed.) *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art.* New York: State University of New York Press.
[326] Ibid. p.86.

generosity or gift giving is often used in diplomacy or negotiation, which are the tools of many participatory art practices and related 'project management'. However, the generosity apparent in a soft, interpersonal mode of giving is 'totally strategic and underpinned by force.'[327]

This concept of a 'force' or 'violence' behind gift giving is no secret to anthropological based theories of the gift premised by Marcel Mauss.[328] Mauss asserts that the gift always comes with an obligation that forces the recipient to make a return, hence forming a debt. Although Mauss was interested in areas such as 'Polynesia, Melanesia and North West America' with a specific focus on the potlatch, he indicated strong relations between these practices and what he terms – problematically - 'modern' society.[329] He suggests that at nearly all levels the gift - material and immaterial - forms three obligations: giving, receiving, repaying. The gift is also considered to operate as a conduit between persons, as it is conceived as holding a subject's 'spiritual essence' or a 'giving of oneself'. Therefore, the gift given has a hold over the recipient so that '[t]o refuse to give, or fail to invite, is like refusing to accept – the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship and intercourse.'[330] This 'circle' of exchange proposed by Mauss implicates it within an economy of credit and debt as discussed by Jacques Derrida.[331] For Derrida, to conceive of the gift is an impossible act, as for it to occur it must interrupt economy and hence disturb or prevent exchange. He suggests, '[f]or there to be a gift, *it is necessary [il faut]* that the donee not give back, amortize, reimburse, acquit himself, enter into a contract, and that he never have contracted a debt.'[332] The 'pure' gift, for Derrida, is not only that which is not exchanged or removes the idea of credit, loan or debt, but to operate must also not appear as a gift either to the donee or the donor. He goes on to assert:

> It is thus necessary, at the limit, that he not *recognise* the gift as gift. If he
> recognises it *as* gift, if the gift *appears to him as such,* if the present is present to

[327] Janna Graham. (2012) 'Our Motivations.' *In* Marijke Steedman (ed.) *Gallery as Community: Art, Education and Politics.* London: Whitechapel Gallery, p.150.

[328] Marcel Mauss. (1970) *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies.* London: Cohen & West.

[329] Ibid., pp.1-3.

[330] Ibid., p.11.

[331] Jacques Derrida. (1992) *Given Time 1. Counterfeit Money*. London: University of Chicago Press.

[332] Ibid., p.13.

him *as present,* this simple recognition suffices to annul the gift. Why? Because it gives back, in the place, let us say, of the thing itself, a symbolic equivalent.[333]

The inability to separate the gift from the idea of exchange, but also from the position of donor who pays him/herself with symbolic recognition in the form of gratification and congratulation, posits the gift as always lost not only in its conception but in its giving over and expectation of return.

This expectation of return emerges in the artists conception of the books as 'gifts' in *Unfolding Projects*. It accentuates the books as a meeting point or space of encounter, where the artist's work becomes a 'giving of oneself' and an invitation or obligation for the Afghan women to respond. However, there is also a need to challenge this conception of the 'gift' as a static object and as a fixed mode of exchange, as it fails to consider how 'gifts' alter during and after the transaction. In the case of *Unfolding Projects* the codices can shift from art works, to mail, to exhibits, to archival material and to evidence, transforming their values and use. To consider these shifts, the last section of this chapter will follow the books - from their conception to archiving – contextualising the operations of 'the gift' by analysing its mode of exchange and processes of production, reception and ownership.[334] From this tracing, the values gained by individual agents can be considered.

During the planning stage of *Unfolding Projects* Weiss approached many charities to garner support for the project, but only heard back from SAWA which suggests it resonated with the charity's aims. The convenor of SAWA – Matthias Tomzcak - proceeded to discuss the feasibility of Weiss's idea with their partner Organisation of Promoting Women's Capabilities (OPAWC) whom run the VTC. When it appeared that the project could be accomplished, Weiss found fourteen other artists who wanted to be involved. From here, it appears that Weiss had a certain amount of autonomy on the conception of the project. Prior to the creation of the books, a meeting was held in

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[333] Ibid., p.13.

[334] This idea of following book art, in part, relates to a reading of Arjun Appadurai's *The Social Life of Things* in which he suggests the meaning of things (in particular commodities) are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret 'the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.' This is as commodities can slip in and out of a commodity state, and different agents can attach differing value systems to things. Arjun Appadurai. (1986) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.5.

which Barbara Kameniar a researcher in education at Melbourne University and a representative of SAWA gave an overview of the situation of women in Afghanistan for the artists.[335] After discussions, it was decided that the aim was to send image filled concertina books to Afghan women to fill with writing, as an act of solidarity with women struggling for the right to be literate. The books were then to be returned to Australia for exhibiting - the terms of the exchange had been set. The artists were also requested to focus on producing images related to their practice, rather than think of themes and content which may interest the Afghan women. This focus on the artist's individual practice is an aspect Weiss encouraged, as she was aware of Afghan women being spoken for and wanted to encourage an open dialogue. She states:

> We had one meeting with all the artists, and there were questions such as: "how the hell do we know what women in Afghanistan want?" So, the instruction to use imagery from their practice was the one directive I gave. And it was important to make that decision, to say we are going to be who we are, and they are going to be who they are. And this allows them to make the decision whether to relate to us or not, or whether to relate to our images or not. And whatever happens it will be like an artwork. Just in the same way an artwork evolves in the studio without preconceived ideas but being genuine to your own practice.[336]

Weiss' statement shows an informed awareness about Afghan women's re-representation as previously discussed, and challenges this through a 'coming as we are' premise. It also moves the project's focus beyond the importance of individual creation, as the artists gift the books as a collective that proposes a communal or collaborative act of giving. This collective act of giving is furthered through the artists representation under SAWA, whose charity work is supported by a vast membership and stated shared goals and actions.[337]

Tomzcak carried out the transportation of the books, although within the initial meeting other modes of transportation were addressed such as placing the books in birthing kits

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[335] Gali Weiss. (2009) *Notes from meeting Involving Australia Artists*. Meeting Notes. 24 August.
[336] Gali Weiss. *Personal interview via skype*. Op. Cit.
[337] SAWA-Australia (SA) (2015) *Constitution of SAWA-Australia (SA)*. SAWA-Australia. [Online] [Accessed on 24th July 2016] http://www.sawa-australia.org/about-us/sawa-australia-constitution.

sent by SAWA or with visiting women from Afghanistan.[338] Tomczak's article in *Two Trees* reflects on his delivery of the books to the VTC in Kabul. Having worked for the charity for many years, his writing highlights the personal relations he has with the 'fearless' headmistress Adila or the 'cheeky' administrator Rakia. The delivery also highlights Tomzcak's trepidation that the project may not appeal to the women or that it may not make sense. So much so, that in the first meeting Tomzcak does not find the moment to show the books. He explains:

> I hoped for a suitable moment when I could mention the book project, but Latifa was full of energy, and the longer she talked the less important the project seemed in the face of such serious problems. As I listened it began to seem inappropriate to mention it so I packed the books away and took them to my room.[339]

Interestingly, this reservation from Tomzcak highlights a dynamic of power relations in the exchange and an anticipation of the obligation the books represent. Within the VTC, Tomzcak enters an environment which does not belong to him, as he is the guest and the centre Director Ahmady is his host. Derrida has written about how the act of hospitality or 'universal hospitality', much like the interrelated gift, is an obligation as well as a duty regulated by law. He relates this to the ideals of the home and the inviting of the other or foreign into one's home. The invitation obliges the host to receive the 'foreign other', whilst ruling that the host maintains their authority and 'looks after himself and sees to and considers all that concerns him.'[340] The law of hospitality or law of the household (in this case VTC), confuses the conditions of exchange as 'planned' by Tomczak and Weiss. Tomczak has reservations about revealing the books as they may not be suitable for the centre or the group, but also due to the somewhat constraints of his place as guest accommodated in line with the 'law of place'.

Tomczak's anticipation of the exchange also indicates the chance aspect involved in the exchange of the gift. The aspect of chance in gift giving might be understood through

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[338] This secretive mode of delivery was discussed in the meeting between the Australia artists. Gali Weiss. *Personal Interview via Skype.* Op. Cit.

[339] Matthias Tomczak. (2013) 'A Visit to Kabul.' *In* Gali Weiss, Barbara Kameniar and Matthias Tomczak. (eds.) *Two Trees Australian Artists' Books to Afghanistan and Back.* Fremantle: Vivid Publishing, p.14.

[340] Jacques Derrida. (2000) 'Hostipitality.' *Angelaki,* 5(3), p.4.

the writing of Roger Sansi whose work addresses the recent turn by artists in social practice, with a focus on artist's interested 'not in '"art" itself but the things one can do with art'.[341] What Sansi is particularly interested in is addressing the affinities between artists and anthropologists, not only in fieldwork but in considerations of representation and the visual. In his discussion of art and artefacts, Sansi considers that the two are often separated by ideas of content (meaning) and function (use). He turns to Arthur Danto's article *Art/Artifact* to show that the distinction is neither based on craftsmanship or on ideals of beauty, rather "[a]n artefact is shaped by its function, but the shape of an artwork is given by its content." For Sansi, this analogy fails to consider that an artwork and an artefact can actually have both qualities. To explore this, he looks at the concept of the trap in the writings of Alfred Gell, who 'fights Danto's 'function' premise by looking at the trap and how it 'goes beyond its function through its creation in line with the animal it traps, and how animals are unique in being lured to their death in different ways. Every object in this sense can tell a story and has unique interpretation.'[342] This concept of the trap as metaphor can also be useful when considering discussions of appropriation and representation. As Sansi states, 'The trap on the other hand, seems to propose a way out of discussions of appropriation and representation, towards a relational approach, in which it is the situation, the scenario that constitutes its subjects'.[343] In this reading, the temporary trapping of the subject in a place, time and context effects not only the individual interpretation of the reader, but also relates to an element of chance in the constitution of the scenario. When connected to the concept of the use or meaning of the gift, it is the scenario or the situation which constitutes the reaction or obligation formed through the exchange. Thus, although the trap might be a rather vivid metaphor to be using as an analogy with gift giving, it still maintains the somewhat 'violent' obligation whilst highlighting the chance aspect of its reception in relation to the 'scenario' that Sansi sees as integral.

The next morning Tomzcak tries again to give the books, to 'spring the trap':

> I cannot remember how I found a moment to unpack them, show them to Latifa
> and attempt to explain the project to her. I soon realised that my fears were

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[341] Roger Sansi. (2015) *Art, Anthropology and the Gift.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, p.2.
[342] Ibid., pp.46-53.
[343] Ibid., p.52.

unfounded. Without waiting for the end of my explanations Latifa took possession of the books, and in her matter-of-fact management way she prepared herself to get the women to write their texts into them – on the spot, there and now.[344]

As host, Ahmady accepts the gifts along with the coloured pens provided by Weiss. As readers, a speculation could be made that this acceptance is due to the obligation on Ahmady, because of the support provided by SAWA for the centre and her obligations as host. However, Tomczak's account also suggests there is a genuine curiosity for the women to look at the books. Apart from Tomczak's account, the production of the books in *Unfolding Projects* remains somewhat hard to analyse. There are only a few photographs of this process depicting the women writing with their children peering at their pages, or individuals writing by the light of the window (figure thirteen). Tomzcak's text suggests initial reactions to the books were of 'pleasure and delight', others, 'investigative scepticism'.[345] We are left asking questions in relation to whether participants declined to partake (some of the books did not return to Australia), what those initial conversations revealed, or if the production of the books was a social act.[346] It is perhaps here in the space of the VTC that Kester's dialogical emancipation enacted through spoken discussions could have occurred. As no documentation on this element of the project exists, it is difficult to speculate.

Left only with the writings to interpret, the content of the books does not reveal set themes or topics. The artists purposefully avoided creating images under ideals that may appeal to Afghan women, which would operate to some degree under stereotypical presumptions of interests. As previously stated, this focus on the artist's own interests (rather than choosing themes that may interest Afghan women) challenges a climate where Afghan women's representation is manipulated within media, governmental and NGO contexts. The non-verbal exchange that occurred between the Australian and Afghan women (symbolised by the passing of the book to one another) allowed for a level of equality. It emphasised the artist's belief in the importance of the Afghan women's voices, not only in terms of inviting their aesthetic judgment, but also in

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[344] Matthias Tomczak. Op.Cit. p.14.
[345] Ibid., p.14.
[346] Gali Weiss suggests the production of the books by the Afghan women took place in their homes and at the VTC. Gali Weiss. (2011) Op. Cit.

allowing individuals to represent their own subjectivities. Ownership of this ability to write oneself can be read in some of the participants writing directly over the images and the scoring of handwritten lines (figure eighteen), suggesting a claiming of the right to speak for their own position. This freedom of expression also appears in a wide array of different subjects addressed in the Afghan women's writings, with many responses interacting with the images. What follows is a discussion of the writing contents within *Unfolding Projects* book art. The images can be seen at the end of this chapter, with translation of the texts taken from the *Two Trees* publication.[347]

The text from these books illustrates the wider concerns of women within Kabul. There are accounts on drug abuse (figure sixteen) or exercise (figure fifteen), emphasising the narrow view of women's concerns framed around marriage, education, healthcare and childbirth in discourse. Here, other interests, although sometimes related, become the key stories illustrated by these scribes, asserting that women do not gather entirely around universal issues. Or, for that matter, that their lives are necessarily dominated by pains and trauma as Ahmady previously suggested. However, even though the artists are not physically present during the process of the Afghan women responding, some of their stories suggest their authority has not entirely dissipated.

As discussed in the workshop chapter, within participatory art practices the artist is often presented as a facilitator and imbued with an aura of authority - whether due to their control of the funding for projects, as designer of the project, or because of their identity as specialist. Within an act of collaborative dialogue or production, this hierarchy of authority must be interrogated or made visible through the planning within the social/artistic act. When the artist/s are not present in a physically conductive manner as in *Unfolding Projects* this power structure would appear to be absent, as the Afghan women can freely visualise a solution to their own situation - an idea which has particular resonance in Afghanistan, a country that has a history of occupation by several international and factional forces. Therefore, writings within the book art illustrate political awareness, but also account for personal experiences of warfare and political desires for their country (figure seventeen, eighteen and nineteen). Weiss states that for her these books highlight the political depth of the women, an aspect she

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[347] Translations are taken from the *Two Trees* publication.

suggests is often not presumed to be present in those who are illiterate or for those who do not engage in different forms of writing. She states that their political concerns can often manifest in specific ways in the women's stories, for example she explains: 'I learnt afterwards from the translator that by reiterating lines of a particular poem that was written by a particular RAWA person was a subversive political act on the part of one of these women.'[348]

Although this would indicate the book as a neutral container in which the Afghan women can vocalise their stories and political concerns, this reading fails to consider the obligation the gift imposes. Hence, in some of the books there are pleas to an 'imagined other', showing an awareness from the Afghan writers that their words will be read back in Australia by others that are deemed to have political and financial aid (figure six and seven). This acknowledgement of western readers potentially influences the women's ability to freely write on any desired topic. In many ways, these books continue the circle of exchange existing within the gift. The books given over are received and responded to in writing. But these writings call for another reception and further obligation through calling on the artist/audience to not only read the stories of these women, but to respond and reciprocate their desire for support. However, this is often not as straightforward as it first appears, as the site of the book's production and the potential coercion of the participants into writing their stories lacks clarity. Furthermore, to brand the book's production as entirely forced fails to consider the diversity present in the women's stories. As Weiss explains, these comments form a one-dimensional reading of the project:

> I am not sure if I saw it in that way. I actually felt uncomfortable with those comments, because I felt that they weren't looking at us as individuals but looking at us as part of a welfare system which was supporting the centre to exist. Which I suppose in some ways, we are part of. It's not that I didn't accept it, I just felt uncomfortable. I originally come from Israel, so I have been amongst Islamic peoples and their beautiful, poetic forms of expression. Sometimes you say something that doesn't directly mean what your say. I just felt that it has set up a power tension, but also a thank you for setting up the school and

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[348] Gali Weiss. *Personal Interview via Skype*. Op. Cit.

organisation. The reality is also, or I can imagine, that some of the women do not care to write in the books. So, they were potentially doing it for us, rather than for them. That is the tension for me. Here I am talking about all this wonderful identity presence and mark making, and they may have been doing it as another exercise. This is an exercise my principal or my teacher wants me to do. I can't even imagine where these books are going and who these people are. In my imagination, that is what the reality is. I can't criticise that.[349]

What Weiss' comments highlight is the difficulty of interpreting book art as a straightforward political expression, a display of the literary skills of their writers, or a plea to an imagined other in a desire for VTC funds. As the labour of the book art remains invisible within the documentation, or out of sight from the artists, there is little insight into the possible coercion of the book's production. However, what this discussion does potentially present is the differing values emerging in relation to an interpretation of the women's writing.

These differing values also surface in a conflict between the artist and charity organisers. After the books were delivered to Kabul there was an eight-month gap before their return to Melbourne, Australia. This postponing of the project caused the charity to contact the VTC and request the completion of the books, suggest the books may have had a differing value for the charity. Mary Jane Jacob has asserted that value is implicitly part of the process of gift giving and suggests that in artistic practices generosity is linked to value. She asserts

> In the social contract that is the art experience, the audience member, or viewer, is a recipient of what the artist makes: the artist gives, the audience receives. Exactly how generous the artist is, is determined by the use value of the thing received: Can I eat it, wear it, trade it, collect it? Does it give me a platform or exposure for my cause, further my way of life or that of those in my community?[350]

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[349] Ibid.
[350] Mary Jane Jacob. (2005) 'Reciprocal Generosity.' *In* Ted Purves (ed.) *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art.* New York: State University of New York Press, p.3.

Ahmady states in her write up of *Two Trees* that Tomzcak wanted to attract the attention of the Australian Embassy in Afghanistan to support the centre, the 'use value' of the books relying on their visibility.[351] This could be due to SAWA's identity in relation to its constitution, which is based around raising funds, community awareness, encouraging membership, networking and support groups.[352] The books are used to publicise the charity's work - as Tomzcak states, the books are proof of how far the women have come in their writing ability after only a year.[353] It indicates that the visibility or completion of the books is important for the future of the centre. Thus, it could indicate that the individual's experience of writing within the books could be overshadowed by the importance of visibility and fundraising. Raising funds is clearly a priority of the organisation SAWA, as the money circulates back to the VTC to develop programmes and purchase related equipment. This money is therefore crucial, with a substantial figure of A$9,800 for the book art acquired by the State Library of Queensland and the following publication *Two Trees* yielding a profit of A$20,000.[354] As SAWA operates as a volunteer organisation with no paid members of staff, most of this money feeds back into the operations of the centre. Whilst this funding is clearly necessary to continue the operations of the centre, this highlights a different interest to Weiss' focus on the book's dialogical potential.

This discussion on value leads to a consideration of the project's *Two Trees* publication, which contains a series of writings from those involved in the project, but also images of all the books and translations.[355] This document acts as a record of occurrence and as an additional commodity, but also places the project within a certain conceptual framework which could be seen to mediate the representation of the participants. Sara

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[351] Latifa Ahmady. Op. Cit, pp.16-17.

[352] The constitution consists of the following points: Raise funds to assist in development and relief projects for Afghan women and children; increase community awareness of the needs of Afghan women and children; encourage women, men and young people to join SAWA-Australia state associations; set up SAWA/RAWA support groups throughout Australia; encourage cooperation among SAWA-Australia state associations through participation in bi-annual national SAWA network forums. SAWA-Australia (SA) *Constitution of SAWA-Australia.* Op. Cit.

[353] The video is part of the fundraising for the printing costs of *Two Trees. Unfolding Projects.* (2010) Matthias Tomzcak [Online] Available through Pozible. [Accessed on 10th August 2016] https://pozible.com/project/8881

[354] The printing costs of the book *Two Trees* was covered through the running of a crowd funding drive that raised A$12,566 to cover the costs of 1,000 copies. Books were provided as rewards for crowd funding, leaving 900 to sell initially for A$35. There are now only 150 copies left, selling at A$20. Ibid. Matthias Tomczak. (2016) *Questions Regarding Two Trees.* Email to Gemma Meek. 21 July.

[355] Writings by Gali Weiss, Latifa Ahmady, Malalai Joya and Matthias Tomzcak. There is also a section written by Malalai Joya who comments on the friendship that these books represent, she sees the books on one of her speaking tours of Australia. Joya is an activist who works for democracy in Afghanistan and women's rights.

Ahmed explores representations within ethnography and reveals that the other is spoken for or given speech through translation within the cultural frameworks of western discourse.[356] Ahmed views this translation of the other in ethnography as being 'predicated on a model of translating "strange cultures"', with the idea of the 'stranger' or the recognition of the other as stranger already premised on them not belonging.[357] Ahmed asserts: 'Strangers are not simply those who are not know in this dwelling, but those who are, in their very proximity, *already recognised as not belonging,* as being out of place.'[358] If strangers at that which is out of place, translation, or the act of translating, within ethnography is a means of making the strange/stranger appear familiar. It is, therefore, a translation or construction of the strange subject. In this sense, *Two Trees* acts to translate the project into a discourse in which it is familiarised as a participatory art project, as well as fitting it into the charity's aims. Although ethnography is premised on a different form of practice (describing/documenting peoples/cultures) than collaborative book art, it presents some useful approaches to considering the documentation of the project in its representation of the 'other'.

The Australian artists and Afghan authors are presented as equal collaborators via their positioning and context within the translation of *Two Trees*. However, Ahmed reminds us that ethnographers and related anthropologists' work comes only to be known through others and is built on knowledge gained from interactions with others.[359] In this sense, all encounters with the other are co-authored; it is their translation into a western field of ethnography, or in this case artistic documentation, which highlights the authority of granted voices. She states:

> But to say that ethnographers should rename their informants as co-authors would be to conceal how this debt also involves forms of appropriation and translation: it would conceal that the ones who are known have not authorised the forms of writing and knowledge produced by ethnographers, but have been authorised by it.[360]

[356] Sara Ahmed. (2000) *Strange Encounters Embodied Others in Post Coloniality.* London: Routledge.
[357] Ibid., p.57.
[358] Ibid. p.21.
[359] Ibid. pp.57-60
[360] Ibid., p.63.

Within *Two Trees,* authority to speak is provided by the project organisers - by those often conducting rather than actually taking part in book production (minus, of course, the artists). The organisers and artists translate the project, providing meaning or clarity through introductory texts. As previously stated, this results in Afghan women's writings and representation already being negotiated within the charity's aims. Certain aspects therefore remain invisible, such as the unpublished 'mock copies' that the Afghan women practiced on, which potentially symbolise a hidden labour. The absence of the Afghan women's explanation of their experiences beyond their writings, could in part, be a barrier in language, but also caution from the Australian artists in demanding extra responsibilities. Rather, what readers are left with is a selective form of documentation which highlights the limitations of recording participatory book art practices.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore *Unfolding Projects* book art as a conduit for dialogue. One of the key aspects of this analysis was to challenge participatory art narratives which construct spoken word and face-to-face interactions as the primary emancipatory process for building relations and alteration of individual's subjectivity. Through the example of *Unfolding Projects*, I argued that book art builds relations through its construction as a 'meeting point' for the artists and participants, which is initiated as a continual exchange due to its operation as a gift. Furthermore, by employing Jacques Rancières' notion of the 'emancipated spectator' I highlighted how the Afghan women's freedom to write their responses and 'enter the realm of the aesthetic' was due to the lack of the Australian artists physical presence. This lack of the artists presence allowed Afghan women to form their own representation, which will circulate in a western climate and potentially challenge not only essentialising and 'othering' narratives, but a practice in which Afghan women are continually spoken for. After all, this chapter barely addresses the images created by the Australian artists, as they are generally shown as catalysts to Afghan women's writings. The lack of addressing the artist's images within this chapter is not to suggest they have a shortage

of quality, as many form interesting dynamics with the structures of the concertina. Rather, it highlights that perhaps the original intention for the books to provide a platform for Afghan women to speak, share their struggles, stories and concerns is accomplished.

Although I have suggested this project provided participants with forms of emancipation, I have also been clear about how the Afghan women's stories may have been altered by the obligation the gift imposes or influenced by the charity's alternative agenda. Therefore, rather than make a conclusive claim that this project is solely emancipatory for the participants, I have attempted to problematise and trace the various influences that could affect this claim – thinking through how the books production and interpretation might be influenced by discourse on Afghan women's rights and representation, the conception (and obligation) of the books as gifts and their general framing in documentation. Whilst this might appear that I am refraining from taking a position, I would suggest that in all participatory book art projects there are several factors at work and involved agents which can complicate both the forms and values emerging in projects. As the latter discussion in this chapter highlights, these factors or agendas can particularly come to the fore when reading projects through documentation that frames and translates the books and related actions within a particular narrative – often the narrative of the funder or organisation. Perhaps the true value of this project is the multiple gains agents both bring to and draw from the project – both monetary and artistic, to social and political - that are gained from the production of book art as dialogue. Even after the book art's acquisition into the archive, the books continue to 'educate' through their use within the State Library of Queensland education programme, even if not seen again by the Afghan women participants.[361] That SAWA may also embark on a further collaboration with Weiss and are engaging in a handkerchief project, also highlights that art has a continued use within the charity's aims. This continuation of encounters with book art, presents a consistently evolving experience for readers and producers. Highlighting that although books can be

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[361] The State Library of Queensland use the book art for artists' books tours for students (both secondary and tertiary) and sometimes for adult groups. Staff select a number of books to suit the requirements of a group, give a short informal talk about them and supervise their usage. Joan Bruce. (2016) *State Library of Queensland Enquiry.* Email to Gemma Meek. 7 July.

conditioned by context and individual's interpretations, they are never bound to a fixed time, within a static space.

The next chapter continues a discussion of value in participatory book art in the case study on *Crafting Women's Stories.*

Images

Figure Thirteen: Ahmady, L. (2013) *Speaking Back to the Australian Artists.*
Photograph. In Weiss, G., Kameniar, B. and Tomczak, M. (eds.) *Two Trees Australian Artists' Books to Afghanistan and Back.* Fremantle: Vivid Publishing, p.15
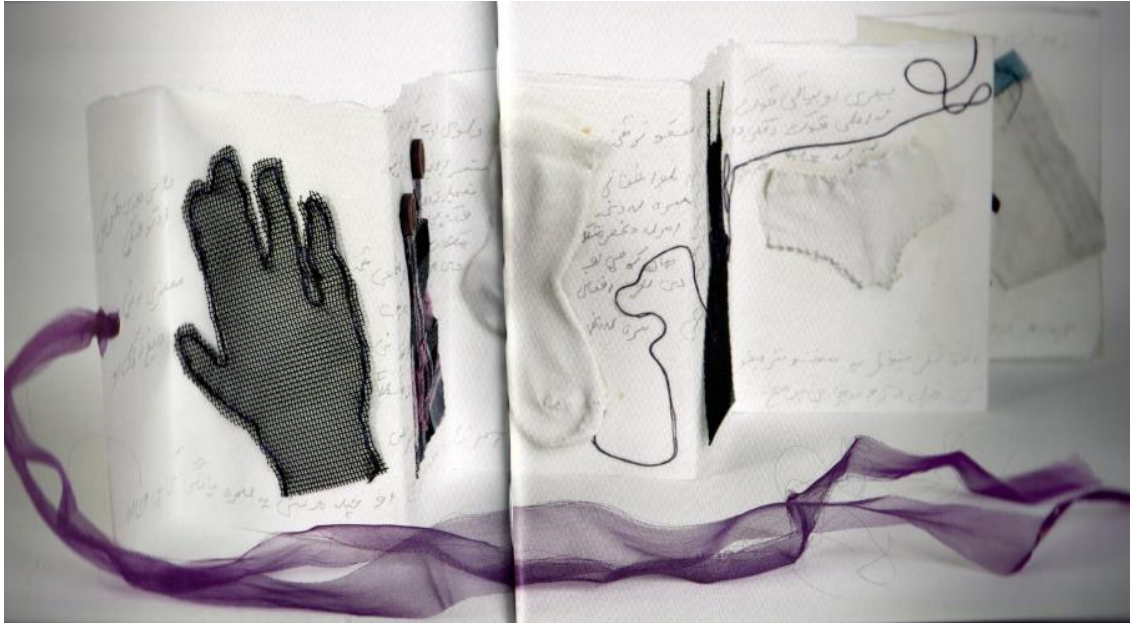
Figure Fourteen: Riggs, A. and Nazia. (2013) *Book Art on Tailoring.* Book Art. In In Weiss, G., Kameniar, B. and Tomczak, M. (eds.) *Two Trees Australian Artists' Books to Afghanistan and Back.* Fremantle: Vivid Publishing, pp.80-81

Translation: 'I'd love to become a tailor to make my dream into a reality and make beautiful dresses. My cousin is getting married and I would love to make her a dress but she won't be able to wear it if it's a western style dress. We have to work hard to continue our life. All Afghan people work hard.'

Figure fifteen: Susan Gordon-Brown and Marwa (2013) *Book Art on Exercise.* Book Art. *In* Weiss, G., Kameniar, B. and Tomczak, M. (eds.) *Two Trees Australian Artists' Books to Afghanistan and Back.* Fremantle: Vivid Publishing, pp.76-77

Translation: 'Exercise is very important for increasing one's physical capabilities. It consists of bodily movements that can be attained through football, basketball and skiing or specified arms, legs and neck routines that are all vital for strengthening bodies. Swimming, too, is a form of exercise that requires orderly movements to be able to prevent the death of humans.'
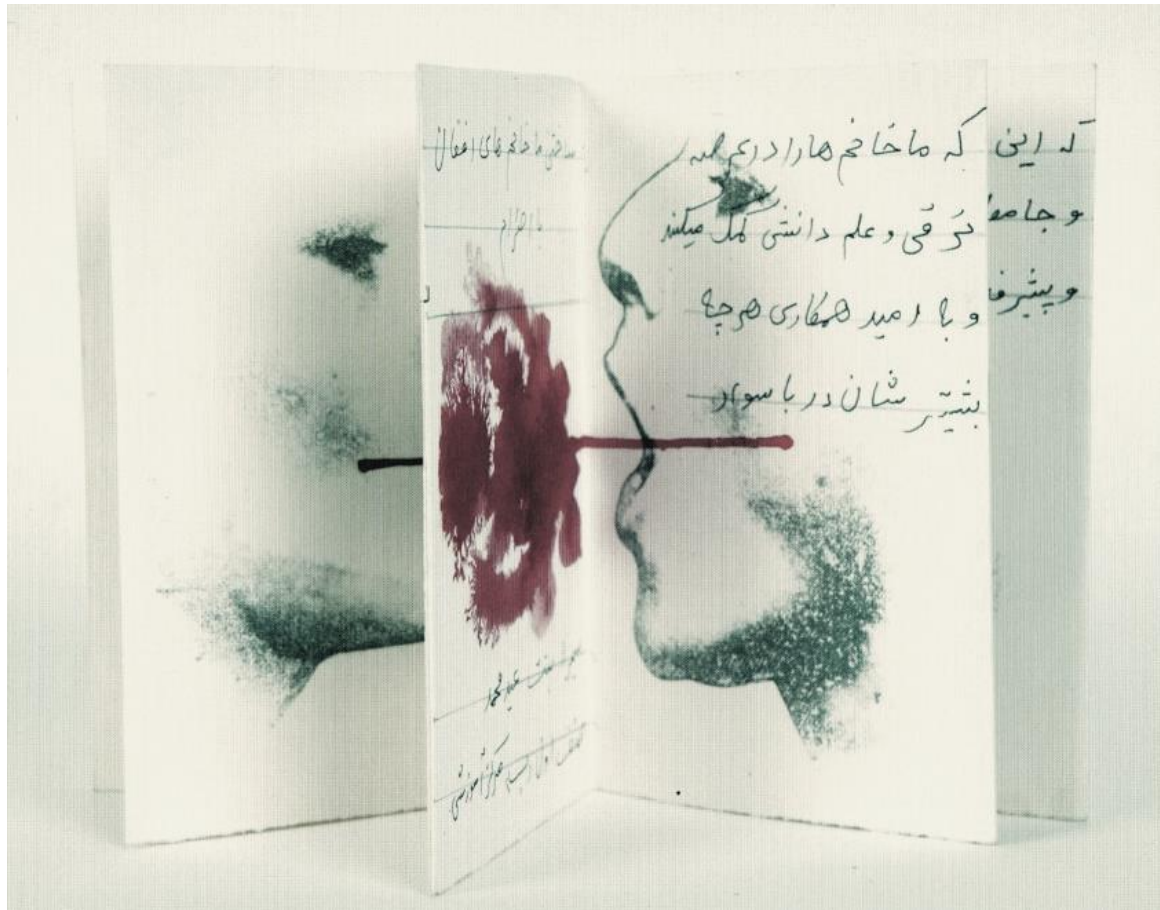
Figure Sixteen: Gali Weiss and Someyra. (2013) *Book Art on Narcotics.* Book Art. *In* Weiss, G., Kameniar, B. and Tomczak, M. (eds.) *Two Trees Australian Artists' Books to Afghanistan and Back.* Fremantle: Vivid Publishing, pp.38-39

Translation: 'We all know that using narcotic substances such as hashish, opium, heroin, snuff, cigarettes, cocaine etc. Prevents us from taking part in positive education, social and economic competitions; and that all of these become the causes of the misfortune of our society and prevent our country from progress.'

Figure Seventeen: Jennifer Kamp and Sajiya. (2013) *Book Art on liberation and education.* Book Art. *In* Weiss, G., Kameniar, B. and Tomczak, M. (eds.) *Two Trees Australian Artists' Books to Afghanistan and Back.* Fremantle: Vivid Publishing, pp.68-69

Translation: 'We have always had the wish that our country be liberated and free, and that it is liberated from the hands of foreign and political enemies. So in order that we see our country liberated, prosperous and independent we should try hard not to allow the enemies and the traitors to betray our spiritual treasures, and loot and destroy our wealth, honour, and our homeland. National unity will result in a free homeland and will let no foreigner enter our dear country Afghanistan. And the most important work for the freedom of our country is that we get education, and with education and knowledge we bring freedom for our country on our own. At the end we are very thankful that courses such as this are run so that we can get more education and become literate. Such works of patriotism will result that there will be no-one illiterate in any home and the liberation of the country will be guaranteed one hundred per cent.'

Figure Eighteen: Susan Gordon-Brown and Agila. (2013) *Book Art on literacy course.* Book Art. *In* Weiss, G., Kameniar, B. and Tomczak, M. (eds.) *Two Trees Australian Artists' Books to Afghanistan and Back.* Fremantle: Vivid Publishing, pp.24-25

Translation: '…In Iran, we went to a literacy course, and in our country, at the OPAWC literacy Center, I am doing a literacy course and with the help of my kind teacher I am learning reading and writing. I will try to continue my studies. I ask you my friends, for help to my war torn country.'

Figure Nineteen: Annelise Scott and Hamida. (2013) *Book Art on literacy course.* Book Art. *In* Weiss, G., Kameniar, B. and Tomczak, M. (eds.) *Two Trees Australian Artists' Books to Afghanistan and Back.* Fremantle: Vivid Publishing, pp.46-47

Translation: 'We are in dire need of your assistance, friends. We are in need of your help. Help your Afghan sister out. I can read and write letters and am very thankful to OPAWC organisation for providing us with a literacy course. I am a 45 year old lady with eight children. Because I got married at a very young age I couldn't continue with my studies and faced a very challenging life. By the grace of God, now that my children are grown up, I am able to study in a literacy course for women. I am thankful that now I am literate.'

Chapter Four

Value: *Crafting Women's Stories*

In December 2012, US artists and Professors Miriam Schaer and Melissa Potter travelled to the Republic of Georgia with their colleague Professor Clifton Meador. The aim of the trip was to deliver five, two-day workshops with various women's groups to make felted autobiographical book art. The project was titled *Crafting Women's Stories* and was a response to a call-out for cultural innovation projects by the Soros Arts and Culture Fund (part of the Open Society Foundation) on *Re-Title*.[362] Working from Potter's knowledge of the Balkans, the artists began to develop a project around Georgian felting traditions, with Schaer suggesting they focus on making felt books. As educators and artists at the Center for Book and Paper, Columbia College Chicago, Schaer and Potter had a keen sense of book art's history as a feminist vehicle for self-expression but also the various manifestations the book form could potentially take. The project was also an opportunity to introduce a new artistic medium to the area, as Georgia hosts a rather minimal book art scene. In return, the artists could learn aspects of the indigenous practice of felting within particular rural regions of Georgia. As they state in the publication on the project, '[w]e thought, perhaps hubristically, we could infuse Georgian felting with the idea of the artist book and introduce a new avenue for self-expression as we absorbed the details of Georgian crafting.'[363] The artist's bid turned out to be successful and they soon found a focus for the project in the Kakheti region, leading workshops in the small towns of Alvani, Napareuli, Telavi and Akhmeta. The artist's access to these predominantly rural communities was through contact with the Peace Corps and Women's Fund, who were running projects within the region related to domestic abuse. In rural Georgia, traditionally domestic abuse incidents are

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[362] Re-title is a website on International Contemporary Art and features a page on 'Artists Opportunities'. Re-title. (no date) *Artists Opportunities.* [Online] [Accessed on 30th July 2017] http://www.re-title.com/
[363] Melissa Hilliard Potter and Miriam Schaer. (2015) *Craft Power Enhancing Women's Rights Through Traditional Practices in the Republic of Georgia.* Chicago: Lulu, p.21.

deemed a private affair, and dealt with in the confines of one's home.[364] Therefore, the artists aimed to encourage participants to engage in modes of self-expression that might enable women to feel more comfortable at communicating their experiences. [365]

To encourage participation, the Women's Fund advertised the workshops and individuals could sign-up to take part if they were interested. In the introductory meeting to the project more than sixty-eight women attended, stated by Schaer and Potter to be '[d]iverse in occupation, age and situation, they included professional felters, teachers, a gynaecologist, a social worker, a deaf student, and teens in foster care.'[366] From that introductory meeting, the artists went on to lead two-day workshops in school buildings or offices within different towns and with a variety of different participant numbers. As the artists developed a stronger understanding of the region, what became increasingly evident was that the Kakheti women's felting skills surpassed that of Schaer and Potter (particularly in methods of wet felting, or in creating forms such as flowers or dolls). In certain locations the Kakheti women also showed little interest in using book art as a form for self-expression, instead envisioning its potential as a saleable form in which to raise money for their families. The project incidentally became focused around a skills swap, whereby Potter and Schaer taught numerous book forms in exchange for the Kakheti women's felting knowledge. The books were then sold at a market in Telavi to raise money for the participants' communities.

After the initial book making workshops, the artists were funded to return to Georgia for a second time by the Interdisciplinary Arts Department at Columbia College. The second trip was framed as *Feminist Felt,* a series of workshops in which they made felt banners carried in the first International Women's Day march in Tbilisi (2013). The artists also met with several women's groups including Partisan Girls and International

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[364] In 2006, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence, both emphasising the scale of the issue, but also the need for developments in the field. In 2009, the United Nations population Fund (UNFPA) commissioned a nationwide survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Georgia as part of "Combating Gender Based Violence in South Caucasus" (GBV-SC). The report on this survey does indicate that violence towards women is often in their immediate social environment, and that 'women are more open to talk about the forms of violence which are socially acceptable and are trying to hide the truth when it comes to physical and sexual abuse (because of fear and shame).' Marine Chitashvili, Nino Javakhishvili, Luiza Arutinov, Lia Tsuladze and Sophio Chachanidze. (2010) *National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women in Georgia*. Tbilisi [Online] [Accessed on 10th July 2017] http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/AdvanceVersions/GeorgiaAnnexX.pdf
[365] It should be stated that there were a few male participants that took part in the workshops, although it was predominantly attended and aimed at women.
[366] Melissa Hilliard Potter and Miriam Schaer. Op. Cit., p.22.

Group of Feminists. From these meetings the artists developed a series of workshops to create more banners and Berikaoba masks out of felt. Berikaoba masks derive from a pagan festival of fertility and rebirth and are normally worn by men. They are made from animal skin, horns, feather, ribbons and bells. The masks were then worn by the participants of these women's groups for media interviews and street protests. Furthermore, as few books on feminist theory are readily available in Georgia, the artists also held a reading group in the Women's Fund office around Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970). Schaer also conducted interviews for her research around the pressure women experience to have children, and both artists continually visited museums, archives and local felt makers to gather felting knowledge.

Although these latter engagements are important in providing meaning to *Crafting Women's Stories* (particularly in terms of its longitudinal development and feminist context), for this case study I want to focus on the initial book art sessions. A focus on these sessions assists in exploring larger thesis questions surrounding the construction or reading of *value* in participatory book art. This enquiry into value is particularly poignant for an analysis of *Crafting Women's Stories,* as the US artists and the Kakheti women approached both the book art and the project aims differently. For the Kakheti women, one of the values of felt as a material (and process) lies in its function and aesthetics and its interaction with community patterns, clothing items and health benefits. Whereas, felt book art, or even contemporary craft for the US artists, is valued for the way it is used or gives visibility to individual's self-expression: an idea inherent in western concepts of art making and some feminist practices. Thus, the participants challenged book art as a valuable object or process of self-expression by envisioning its use as a commodity. Not only does this conflict present an opportunity to transform the trajectory of the project, but it raises issues with artists formulating a predisposed framework for engagement. It suggests that the predetermination of aims (and the value of these aims) may not be suited or well received in relation to particular cultural contexts. Furthermore, that the differing self-interest of the artists in comparison to the participants - even if self-interest is formulated around creating an event for others - is

imbued with certain values that are metaphorically 'brought' to the project and attain to larger economic systems.[367]

To work-through the issues of artists pre-determining the project's benefits and the entanglement of various agents' values, it is important to outline a different approach to how one might understand and interpret value in participatory book art projects. To approach this discussion, I employ the critical theory of Barbara Hernstein-Smith who argues for the 'contingencies of value'.[368] She asserts:

> All value is radically contingent, being neither a fixed attribute, an inherent quality, or an objective property of things but, rather, an affect of multiple, continuously changing, and continuously interacting variables or, to put this another way, the product of the dynamics of a system, specifically an economic system.[369]

Smith views the value of entities not as a fixed attribute or an inherent property hosted by the object, but suggests it is 'radically contingent' on an entire range of 'interacting variables' that are the product of a system. This dynamic of interacting variables can be broken down into various economic systems. These include: 'exchange value' (the market price), 'utility or use value' (function) and 'intrinsic value' (this is often relegated to works of art or literature and describes a quality that is not normally based on the material, functional, production or distribution aspects of the entity).[370] Hernstein-Smith also suggests that individuals approach or form these values according to their 'personal economies', which are 'constituted by the subject's needs, interests, and resources – biological, psychological, material, experiential, and so forth.'[371] What is crucial to Hernstein-Smith's argument is that these systems are continuously 'fluctuating' and 'shifting'. They are not separate but 'interactive and independent', whereby individuals both react to the values presented by these economies, as much as

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[367] As previously discussed in the chapter on *Unfolding Projects*, gift theory highlights that giving often involves an element of nursing the ego, with an interest from the giver for self-regard or self-interest. I do not mean to suggest this as a negative but assert that gift giving also has benefits for both parties.
[368] Barbara Hernstein-Smith. (1988) *Contingencies of Value Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
[369] Ibid. p.30
[370] Ibid., pp.30-31
[371] Ibid., p.31

feed back into the economies and alter their values.[372] She also recognises that all those values which present themselves as noncontingent such as 'fixed attributes, unidirectional forces, simple causal & temporal relationships' are part of a narrative which wants to protect and reinforce certain 'universal' or 'canonised' forms under such notions of objects having 'intrinsic', 'objective', 'absolute' and 'transcendent' qualities.[373] One might understand this protection occurring in the centring of certain artworks or notions of the aesthetic, which operate through claims that certain types of objects, experiences or properties of objects are universal. This universalising of values generally asserts particular western practices of aesthetics, and functions by distinguishing these values against the other of 'non-western' art forms by modelling them as 'deviant'.[374] These values are enforced through their constant reiteration by those in positions of 'cultural power', appearing in reading lists, citations, documentaries, conferences, etc.[375]

Utilising Hernstein-Smith's notion of the contingency of value, in this chapter I explore how the values the different agents bring to projects fluctuate and interact to develop the project's aims, operations and book art. I understand the values different agents bring to projects as contingent on a range of interacting variables of self-interest, community trends, institutional structures and classifications of art works that produce an interacting dynamic. Whilst these values may be difficult to pinpoint or 'fix', they can be discussed as the project and individual agents interact with and generate claims. Thus, taking as the starting point this concept of value as in no way objectively evaluated or fixed, but constantly negotiated and variable, an attempt can be made to analyse how at distinct stages of *Crafting Women's Stories* values are written into the planning through the funder's and the artist's own self-interests and utopian ideals. The aim of this analysis is not to state what values are correct but to remain slightly ambivalent, discussing instead the contexts and histories in which they may emerge in line with the authority whom is supporting or reinforcing classifications.

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[372] Ibid., p.31.
[373] Ibid. pp.31-32.
[374] For a discussion of universal art values, see Hans Kreitler and Shulamith Kreitler's consideration of 'the implications of universally valid principles of art appreciation.' Hans Kreitler and Shulamith Kreitler. (1983) 'Artistic Value Judgments and the Value of Judging the Arts.' *Leonardo Special Edition: Psychology and the Arts,* 16(3), pp.208-211.
[375] Ibid. pp.50-52.

This chapter will also challenge wider discussions in participatory art literature on 'good' or 'bad' practices, which suggest there are models of collaboration which are ethically or aesthetically more valuable to improving social cohesion or revealing economic exploitation.[376] I raised this issue in chapter three on *Unfolding Projects*, suggesting ideals of spoken word and face-to-face conversation are given dominance as emancipatory processes in participatory art practices. Hernstein-Smith asserts that the reiteration of certain values in literature is not a 'conspiratorial force of the establishment nor of the continuous appreciation of the timeless virtues of a fixed object by succeeding generations'.[377] Rather, it is a sign of continuous interactions around these texts, and their connection to differing variables and mechanisms of 'cultural selection'.[378] In relation to participatory art, these valued actions and processes (face-to-face interactions and conversation) are employed in various projects (and are evidenced by continually cited texts), suggesting they are malleable and effective in a diverse range of contexts.[379] Whilst this may be the case, I suggest that this reiteration without disruption or questioning can prevent other actions or different values to emerge in the circumstantial specificity of the project in question. As Hernstein-Smith states, to prevent values becoming dominant or universal we have to 'disrupt, question and debate these values to draw out convergences.' What her statement asserts is that the disruption, questioning and debate of values needs to be given a space when both designing and evaluating participatory book art projects. Therefore, in this chapter, rather than read *Crafting Women's Stories* against a strict set of values or what counts as art, I work through the difficulties of reading projects which move across various economies and account for the reaction, tastes and values of all the involved agents.

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[376] This was initially raised by Claire Bishop. She highlights that an artist who renounces authorship in participatory projects is always deemed ethically 'good', and thus involved in a more beneficial practice. She states that this is because participatory art tends to be judged against social criteria rather than against a project's artistic value. Thus, Bishop asserts that practices should produce a final work for aesthetical criticism to occur. Furthermore, although Bishop did not necessarily advocate certain works over others, her writing on exploitative, antagonistic works normally employing film or the installations (which can be displayed in galleries), has come to create a framework for 'good' modes of antagonistic practices. Claire Bishop. (2006) 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents.' *Artforum International,* 44(6), pp.178-183.

[377] Barbara Hernstein-Smith. Op. Cit. pp.47-53.

[378] Ibid., p.52.

[379] I raised this discussion in chapter three on Unfolding Projects. I suggested that a dominance of conversation and face-to-face interactions in visible in the following texts: Grant Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces Community + Communication in Modern Art.* Berkeley: University of California Press; Nicolas Bourriaud. (1998) *Relational Aesthetics.* Dijon: les presses du reel. Suzanne Lacy. (1995) *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art.* Seattle: Bay Press.

Furthermore, I address how coming to projects with a predetermined framework of what participation should consist of, can restrict the visibility of certain values to emerge.

I begin this chapter by outlining how the artists authored and planned the project with certain values in mind, which were not necessarily co-authored with participants by initially supported by the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the funding from the Open Society Foundation (OSF). This planning resulted in several tensions, particularly surfacing around the funder's use of the brief to enforce certain aims and hold the artists' actions to account. Not only do these restrictions contradict with the image the OSF promotes, but also highlight a tightened climate of funding criteria and commissions. Against this image of the funders, I consider the values of self-expression and second-wave feminism the artists bring to the project. I explore the potential issues these ideologies present in terms of operating through cultural assumptions about the Kakheti and the participant's situations. Consequently, I do not suggest this is a straightforward process of stereotyping but work through an analysis of how certain beliefs in self-expression and second-wave feminism may have been a point of tension or dialogue in which participants could react against and transform the project.

The final section of this chapter will focus on the workshop space as it manifests in *Crafting Women's Stories*. Drawing on some of the ideas established in chapter one, I scale in on the texts that litter the workshop space (felt banners, craft practices and book art examples), investigating how they can politicise or influence participant's book art creations. The workshop is also the site in which the participants challenged the value of book art as a mode of autobiography, whereby they argued for the books commodification to raise funds for their communities. These surfacing values materialise against and around the artist's experience of the labour conditions of felters in the region, and how craft in Kakheti is entangled in participant's communal obligations. Lastly, I discuss those values in projects which are harder to predict, envision or discuss – those 'minor' details Erin Manning mentions[380]. I explore these minor details by investigating an effect the project had on one of the participants that could not

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[380] This was discussed in *The Homeless Library chapter*, in relation to where one might read or cite the moment or action of importance in the participant's response. Erin Manning (2016) *The Minor Gesture*. London: Duke University Press, p.1.

necessarily be predicted. Thus, I discuss how the artist's subjectivities and actions can be highly influential, but in a way that confuses a straightforward sense of accountability or responsibility. Here, the contingency of value comes to the fore, where the participant's reactions to the project are shifting, indeterminable, but equally as 'life changing'.

Planning: Building and Authoring Projects

Like all the participatory book art projects analysed within this thesis, *Crafting Women's Stories* moves across several registers. Participants are encouraged to produce an artwork in the form of a book, which can be displayed and sold as an aesthetic or decorative item. The project also has a social aim, wherein the space of the workshop is deemed to encourage relations and improve the lives of the women by giving them confidence to partake in self-expression. These aims do not emerge during the project but are based on assumptions about the participant's needs and certain benefits of interaction, which are written into the early stages of the planning. These aims are also granted authority through their formulation with partnered NGO's (Women's Fund and Peace Corps) and the funders (OSF). To understand the materialisation of these aims it is useful trace their development in relation to the involved project agents and their desires.

Potter and Schaer began planning a project suitable for the Republic of Georgia after seeing a call for proposals for an Arts & Culture Grant on *Re-Title*. They responded to the call by building a brief solely upon their knowledge of working in the Balkan area and drawing on their existing skill set. As Potter explains, 'I got the Soros arts and culture call and was like 'what shall we do Miriam? This looks really good, what could we do? I was like belts it's a regional thing! And Miriam just goes, we could make felted books! And I said, I think we have a winner!'[381] There is a sense emerging here that the application was a speedy process due to the rarity of the grant appearing and the

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[381] Miriam Schaer and Melissa Potter. (2015) *Personal Interview via Skype*. 20 October.

imminent deadline, resulting in a need to conceive of a project with the artist's existing knowledge and early research. The artist's project conception beforehand is created through working with a specific audience (in this case Georgian women) in mind. This pre-determination of the project aims is partially demanded by the grant application: connected to an increasing popularity of commission based work or short-term briefs that require a certain level of detail and project imagining prior to meeting the collaborating participants; An aspect I discussed in chapter one of this thesis. As Sophie Hope states, 'while community or socially engaged artists might embrace fluid, overlapping and messy encounters, the commission as a semi-visible frame is defined by funding, timescales, agendas and expectations.'[382] The commission can constrict emerging possibilities and limit a dialogue with the participants early in the brief writing process, even if planning is conducted in co-authorship with NGO partners or draws on the artist's knowledge of the area.

This imagining of the beneficial processes of engagement and the potential interests of participants is also an aspect built into the definition of socially engaged art. As Alexander Winters asserts, socially engaged art is 'a practice which in its simplest and broadest form, is a process of reimagining an existing system or set of conditions for that site, community and audience'.[383] This has led many to conceive of participatory practices as forming 'micro-utopias'; with 'utopia', Carol Becker explains to mean 'good place'.[384] For Becker, the creation of micro-communities (small locations of utopian interactions), 'is the creation of 'good places' that do not exist on any map other than that of the imagination. Such experiments attempt to create physical manifestations of an ideal 'humanity' in an inhumane world.'[385] The utopic conception of socially engaged art practices utilises a notion of art as somewhat autonomous, to allow other ways of life/experience to be tested and performed in the independent space of art before potentially being injected back into 'reality'. These imaginings are, arguably, an aspect

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[382] Sophie Hope. (2017) 'From Community Arts to the Socially Engaged Arts Commission'. *In* Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. (eds.) *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art.* London: Bloomsbury, p.204.

[383] Alexandra Winters. (2016) *Utopia and the Institution: Socially Engaged Art Practices in the 21st Century.* Brisbane: Australian Performing Arts Market. [Online] [Accessed on 20th February 2018] Available from: https://www.performingartsmarket.com.au/assets/Schedules/UtopiaandtheInstitutionProvocation.pdf.

[384] Bourriaud also cites the gallery as a space for 'micro-utopias', free of the fixed spaces of communication and socialisation imposed upon society by capitalism. Nicolas Bourriaud. Op. Cit.

[385] Carol Becker. (2012) 'Microutopias: public practice in the public sphere' *In* Nato Thompson. *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991 – 2011*. London: MIT Press, p.68.

integral to a design process that must envision an event or object prior to its creation, even if during the process of making alternative meanings emerge. What becomes crucial to understanding these imaginings is *who* is authoring these values and *how* these values and approaches manifest in and against the economic systems previously discussed.

Correspondingly, as the artist is the initial author of the project there is a certain centring of their values before the project unfolds, highlighting a potential issue in the development of collaborative works where many visions should count. Prioritising the artist's vision has been criticised by Grant Kester for modelling the artist as a seer of the inconsistencies and wrongdoings of society.[386] He links this to artist's use of 'shock' tactics to awaken individuals into realising their oppression through their advocation of known benefits for the community[387] These tactics have led artists such as William Titley to argue for more organic relations with collaborators to allow ideals to emerge; as a way of shifting the focus solely from validating the artist's vision to understanding that others also have solutions.[388] Titley explains this through Tim Ingold's theory of making, proposing that there are projects which employ a hylomorphic approach in which participants are tools and/or labour in the production of the artist's vision. Conversely, the morphogenetic approach allows for a shared creative vision to emerge through the process of intersubjective change.[389] Titley's reframing of approaches is useful as it suggests that in morphogenetic approaches agents other than the artists can alter *and* author a project, particularly if the artists are reliant on the participant's labour or specialities (an aspect that materialises in *Crafting Women's Stories* in the artist's reliance on the Kakheti women's felting skills). It is also important to stress that Titley's approach to allowing a 'shared creative vision' to emerge relies on the artist/s hosting a strong understanding of the locality, having time to build trust with the participants, or for the project to take place in sites that are not always selected or designed by the artist. These aspects are far removed from *Crafting Women's Stories*, where the artists

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[386] Grant Kester. Op. Cit.
[387] Grant Kester states that 'the rupture provoked by the avant-garde work of art is necessary to shock viewers out of this perspective and prepare them for the nuanced and sensitive perceptions of the artist uniquely open to the natural world'. This suggests the artists as a privilege 'seer', who can 'master' viewers to seeing the world differently, particularly as artists are modelled to exist on the margins of society. Ibid., p.27.
[388] William Titley. (2017) 'Creative relations.' *Journal of Social Work Practice*. 31(2), pp.239-248.
[389] Ibid., p.247.

had to conduct short-term workshops (often only spending two-days with different groups of women) and spent little time in the area they were working within prior to the project. These are monetary as much as time issues and suggest that seeing what might emerge was a possibility denied primarily by the funders of the project. Thus, it is useful to unpack these boundaries and constrictions of the funder, to consider what image and values the OSF promotes, against the way they manifest in *Crafting Women's Stories*.

a) The funders

Crafting Women's Stories was funded by the Open Society Foundation (OSF). Established in 1979, the organisation has branches in thirty-seven countries and a large funding presence within Georgia. Artists Schaer and Potter were drawn to the OSF's open-call for a culture grant because they share the foundation's belief of culture shaping a region and were also aware of the organisation employing individuals from outside the region to run projects[390]. However, from the beginning of the application process the artists experienced changes in the terms and conditions attached to the funds as initially promised, which conflicts with the OSF's marketed image. After the artists saw the call on *Re-Title* and sent in their application, the grant was taken down from the site and it emerged that the office funding their grant had been closed. The artists explain that the closure of the office resulted in their grant being passed to a different department and representative within the organisation.[391] This change in office meant that the original representative who initially processed and supported their application (who Schaer and Potter stated showed genuine interest and excitement for their project) changed, and the new representative looking after their finances came forward with a set of business-like restrictions. These restrictions resulted in the artists

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[390] It is also important to note that Schaer and Potter are aware of the criticisms against Soros, and his potential enforcement of a Neoliberal agenda. Miriam Schaer and Melissa Potter. *Personal Interview via Skype.* Op. Cit.
[391] Ibid.

having to return money at the end of the project, as there was a lack of flexibility in what could occur.[392]

The funder's choice to restrict an organic development of the project contradicts with the image the OSF promotes around 'self-criticism' and a 'democratic agenda' (aspects which encouraged the artists to apply for the grant). For example, the founder of the OSF George Soros establishes a vision for the foundation around the concept of an 'Open Society', which he derives from Karl Popper's text *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945). Soros explains the concept of Open Society through Popper's work:

> Karl Popper showed that totalitarian ideologies like communism and Nazism have a common element: they claim to be in possession of the ultimate truth. Since the ultimate truth is beyond the reach of the humankind, these ideologies have to resort to oppression in order to impose their vision on society. Popper juxtaposed with these totalitarian ideologies another view of society, which recognises that nobody has a monopoly on the truth; different people have different views and different interests, and there is a need for institutions that allow them to live together in peace. These institutions protect the rights of citizens and ensure freedom of choice and freedom of speech. Popper called this form of social organisation the "open society".[393]

Some of the crucial ideals that the open society epitomise exist around 'freedom of choice' and 'freedom of speech', which allow the rights of the individual to be protected, whilst advocating shared values between groups of people. In practice, the suggestion that there is not one concise 'truth' would result in the foundation's grant criteria having little dictation of a project's outcome or aims, instead allowing dialogue and processes to emerge during the project's development. A rigid criterion disallows a space for negotiation and flexibility in how the artists and participants approach the making of book art and the emergence of 'shared values' (or even alternative values) that may arise from the project - even more so, because Soros suggests the OSF should be inherently transparent and recognise its own fallibility. He asserts, 'what is imperfect can be approved, by a process of trial and error. The Open Society not only allows this

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[392] This information comes from a personal interview with the artists. Ibid.
[393] George Soros. (1997) 'The Capitalist Threat.' *The Atlantic*, 279(2), p.45.

process but actually encourages it, by insisting on freedom of expression and protecting dissent.'[394] This reading of the OSF's values does present some generalisations, especially as Soro's vision extends across a large organisation, with nuances difficult to impose on the various regional operations and each organisational representative. Yet, the control of projects through fixed criteria is an issue relevant to a history of participatory art practices, and is worth considering as it impacts the wider problems of terminology and the flexibility of institutions involved in funding participatory art. As shown in both *Unfolding Projects* and *Crafting Women's Stories,* emerging tensions between funders and artists often arise in relation to where value in the project is placed and how values may be negotiated.

The 'by the book' operation of the new representative looking after the artist's OSF grant, raises issues over the setting of criteria for projects which may have little idea on how their dialogue with others may develop. It disallows an authoring of projects with little pre-determined outcomes, or in fact, no outcomes at all.[395] The establishment of criteria through which to monitor projects can be read through a larger cultural shift in the funding sector towards the end of the twentieth century concerned with 'targets', 'visitor figures', 'outcomes' and 'impact'.[396] The criterion acts as both a monitoring exercise, but also as a way of validating institution's contributions to society. As discussed in the introduction, these demands surface against a neoliberal pressure for accountability and the third way politics of New Labour in Britain, which demands arts to prove its worth through the encouragement of 'impact' studies. Arts was instrumentalised to fill the gap on diminishing social welfare services in various policies, including health and education.[397] Employing terms such as 'inclusion' in government rhetoric made these practices appear to benefit society, but actually masked processes of oppressive, institutional control. These histories interact and surface against the increased institutionalisation of community arts towards the end of the 1970s, which is said to have conformed to the needs and desires of the Arts Council (its primary funder), rather than respond to the values and practices of the artists. Owen Kelly has

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[394] Ibid., p.45.
[395] Miriam Schaer and Melissa Potter. *Personal Interview via Skype*. Op. Cit.
[396] Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett. (2008) *The Social Impact of the Arts An Intellectual History.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
[397] Claire Bishop. Op. Cit., p.180.

been most vocal in this narrative, asserting that as the community arts movement expanded, and applications increased to the state, the only way limited funds could be distributed was through the creation of criteria by which to judge projects. As criterion become more rigid and written by the funders (rather than the practitioners), what occurred was a process of conforming and constricting community art's potential dissenting or radical practices.

As discussed in the introduction, in a contemporary participatory art climate funding is garnered from state, charity, private and self-generated capital, which emphasises a 'mixed economy' model. Funding is, therefore, far more precarious and short term, but still operates within certain trends, criteria and universal values around what counts as 'good' participation. For example, on trend and regularly funded participatory arts practices are now often relegated to the 'curatorial' rather than educational - the installation over the workshop. These practices are deemed more radical than the institutionally friendly or leisure-based education or community projects (even if both are complicit and critical in certain contexts). To validate these practices and improve their visibility, texts such as Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* are regularly cited and used to produce a canon of household names.[398] This following of trends has led to what Andrea Phillips calls the 'institutionalisation of participation and engagement', whereby funding agencies and institutions dictate 'good practice' by providing visibility to *certain* participatory art forms. These are not necessarily always critical, as the institutionalisation of participation also shapes publics into quantifiable communities through rehashing a set of agendas and works around 'inclusion' and 'impact', with little room for participants to disrupt or gain agency.[399] Deviance is simply highlighted as 'non-art' and dismissed from particular art establishments. Although not always the case, this sets a precedence by which institutions become more concerned with the number of visitors participating, the quality of the documentation produced, and the

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[398] The popularity of Bourriaud's text emerges in Stewart Martin's declaration that it is an 'ism'. Janna Graham also states that she uses the text to validate her practices as it is well known and malleable to several situations. Janna Graham, Marie-Anne McQuay, Marijke Steedman. (2012) 'Inherent Tensions.' In Marijke Steedman. (2012) *Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics*. London: Whitechapel Gallery, p.216; Stewart Martin. (2007) 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics.' *Third Text*, 21(4), p.369.

[399] Andrea Phillips. (2016) *Introduction: Community Arts? Learning from the Legacy of Artists' Social Initiatives*. Liverpool: Liverpool Biennial (Stages) [Online] [Accessed on 3rd August 2017] Available from: http://www.biennial.com/journal/issue-5/pdf/introduction-community-arts-learning-from-the-legacy-of-artists-social-iniatives, pp.2-3.

monetary value of such engagements; a precedence that surfaces in the 'business-like' restrictions on *Crafting Women's Stories*. These restrictions not only homogenise publics into quantifiable and constructed forms, but for participatory arts that produce a 'product' (such as book art) it can result in a mediation of that form into an advertising tool or to produce further capital for funding agencies.

Therefore, to receive funding from institutions or to be provided visibility becomes somewhat of a 'game', wherein certain terminologies or practices are given legitimacy through the application procedure. For Lorraine Leeson and Peter Dunn in the 1990s, words such as 'participation', 'ownership' and 'consultation' became buzz words for public art funding, which for them represented a positive step in liberating more collaborative, social art practices from the margins.[400] However, the frequent use of these words in various contexts and lack of specifying their potential meaning (and inherent complications), has often resulted in their co-option, but also 'empty' use. As explored in the introduction, participation can indicate far more than a simple taking part (or increased inclusion), signifying a divisive word for validating certain cultural forms and identifying who counts as participating. It is, therefore, integral to consider these terms in specific contexts, for as Gillian Rose wrote in 1997, certain terminologies that may have once been political become redundant through their frequency as the correct language on funding forms and by those elite organisations utilising it for their own means. She states:

> The language of funding bodies is used for its radical possibility – empowerment, after all, is a worthy goal, and so is enabling, and demystifying – and some terminology is needed to speak at all. But the vocabulary of that language is also qualified, parodied, critiqued and refused, because the powerful are using it to non-radical ends'[401]

As previously stated, this use of certain terms can be seen in the frequent employment of inclusion in governmental agendas that suggests a co-operative and together Britain, whilst actually masking issues of social poverty and a declining welfare system. Or, as

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[400] Lorraine Leeson and Peter Dunn. (1997) 'The Aesthetics of Collaboration.' *Art Journal*, 56(1), p.32.
[401] Gillian Rose. (1997) 'Performing Inoperative Community: The Space and Resistance of Some Community Arts Projects.' *In* Steve Pile and Michael Keith (eds.) *Geographies of Resistance*. London: Routledge, p.12.

Sara Ahmed suggests, policies, like criteria, although documented and visible can actually be used to hide the underlying tensions of institutions or practices, concealing more difficult issues of harassment, racism and exploitation.[402] Criteria and related applications also demand more 'upfront' knowledge in the form of participation figures, venues, outcomes and aims, which constrict the ability for artists to start out with a dialogue and see 'where it might go'. The funding application, as seen in *Crafting Women's Stories,* becomes something to hold the artists by and to limit their flexibility, even if the project is conceptualised through a belief in exchange, unfolding and transformation.[403] Although Schaer and Potter first experienced the funding as a flexible and supportive source, it then transformed into a restriction in which to challenge as potentially serving an alternative agenda.

This dictation of funding also sits alongside a larger critique, not only of Soros, but philanthropic foundations in the US and Europe. These institutions are becoming increasingly popular alternative sources to state funding but have little evidence or statement of their rationales in modern society. This was highlighted by Helut K. Anheier and Diana Leat, in their suggestion that foundations can be read as expressions of individual altruism as a means of leveraging private money for public purposes. Conversely, under neoliberalism, provide an alternative to some kinds of state responsibilities.[404] For foundation figureheads, George Soros becomes somewhat like Claire Bishop's 'Christian Good Soul', in which he not only saves his conscience through good deeds, but also gains socially accepted tax shelters and control in areas outside of state intervention.[405] Soros has referred to himself as a 'God like' figure, and is often critiqued for his promotion of self-importance. David C. Korton also argues that Soros continues to operate from an elite perspective. He asserts:

> Soros takes no note of the fact that from an elite perspective, the genius of finance capitalism and its ability to manage the money system in a way that maintains a sharp distinction between those who live by their labor and those

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[402] Sara Ahmed. (2017) *Living a Feminist Life*. London: Duke University Press, pp.139-142.
[403] This came to the fore in my own experience as a museum education officer, spending time with artists and filling out arts funding forms. These forms demanded pre-determined participation figures, descriptions of engagement and learning outcomes that disallowed or forestalled an organic project development.
[404] Helmut K. Anheier and Diana Leat. (2013) 'Philanthropic Foundations: What Rationales?' *Social Research: An International Quarterly,* 80(2), pp.449-472.
[405] Claire Bishop. Op. Cit., p.183.

who live by their money – keeping money scarce for the former while allowing the latter to create it in abundance through the interaction of debt pyramids and financial bubbles.[406]

In this sense, Soros maintains a class division to allow those wealthy to come to the aid of the working classes, whilst imposing certain conditions on where, how and when that funding is given. On a potentially more beneficial note, this results in a certain freedom for the foundation to support projects for marginalised groups or minorities outside of governmental support. The OSF is often praised for this form of work and can be connected to the organisation's support of vanishing felting practices in the Kakheti region within *Crafting Women's Stories*. However, often foundations remain 'unchecked', as they do not have shareholders or voters and their customers are unlikely to criticise them. What often occurs is an antagonistic relationship between funders and the funded, wherein certain project aspects that the artist's desire can be negotiated and if fulfilled, then money must be returned. These changes are often not publicly visible, as the funder's image remains a key author in the project; their logo clearly stamped on the back of publications or displayed in supporting exhibitions. Although clearly the funding still allows the project to occur, this form of branding provides validation and uncontested praise. The organisations presence can result in evaluation which weaves and promotes a particular positive narrative, which manifests prominently in the project documentation.

However, even with pressure from the funders to alter the project, rather than succumb to the new impositions brought about by the change in office Schaer and Potter returned some of the money. The artists clearly felt the need to hold their resolve and belief in the project's development according to their own values and those of the participants, even if financially problematic. The artist's flexibility indicates a greater responsiveness in understanding that projects may develop differently when collaborating with others. However, it is also important to recognise that the artists approached the Kakheti women with their own personal economies and assumptions,

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[406] David Callahan. (2015) *Philanthropy vs.Tyranny: Inside the Open Society Foundations' Biggest Battle Yet.* 17 August. Inside Philanthropy Who's Funding What and Why. [Online] [Accessed on 17th May 2017] https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2015/9/14/philanthropy-vs-tyranny-inside-the-open-society-foundations.html.

which potentially impacted upon the project development. As touched upon earlier, within the planning of *Crafting Women's Stories* the artists can be seen to place value on *particular* forms of artistic engagement and related social interactions. These may not be the same 'values' that the OSF promotes (in terms of publicity and monetary investment), but still operate on assumptions around the participating women's identities and artistic and political forms of expression that are culturally related to the artist's experience. To consider these values, I want to spend some time dismantling what 'personal economies' the artist's planning interacts with.

b) The Artists

A crucial approach embedded within the project and imagined as having the potential to change the lives of participants, was to motivate the Kakheti women to create books out of autobiographical stories. As the artist's blog states: 'The goal will be to make unique artists' books with felt pages that incorporate family stories, personal histories or other forms of storytelling based on local symbols and mythologies.'[407] Part of the reasoning behind the selection of art as self-expression was due to the close working relationship the artists had with the Women's Fund, who were trying to persuade women in the region to talk openly about their experiences at home. The project was a response to statistics that revealed the artists were working in an area in which domestic abuse was often dealt with as a private matter in the confines of the family. For the artists, making felted autobiographical book art in the safe space of the workshop may have allowed the women to be more open about vocalising their experiences, as much as encourage the continuation of a dying craft.[408] In a region where self-expression in a western tradition is limited, the artists received some warnings from their colleagues about the danger of bringing this practice into the Kakheti region. As Potter explains:

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[407] Miriam Schaer. (2012) *Introduction*. Felt Reports Blog. [Online] [Accessed on 30th August 2017] http://feltreports.tumblr.com/post/38530053548/introduction-the-soros-arts-and-culture-program

[408] This article accentuates the work being done to preserve Georgian felting (highlighting state and EU funding/competitions). Lika Chigladze. (2015) '"New and Old Tusheti" – Meet the woman who preserved and introduced Tushetian handicraft traditions to the world.' Georgian Journal. 25 April. [Online] [Accessed on 17 December 2018] https://www.georgianjournal.ge/discover-georgia/30288-new-and-old-tusheti-meet-the-woman-who-preserved-and-introduced-tushetian-handicraft-traditions-to-the-world.html

I think one of the best moves that we made was researching what organisations could partner with us. So that number one, we had entree into the society. And number two, that we would not be perceived (or we could also keep in check) our white, privileged world of feminism, and be able to filter it through people who have real impact and experience working in these regions. One thing that probably needs to be mentioned - and it's a subject that's shied away from a lot - is that the Women's Fund in Georgia fund all over the Kakheti region. One of the things they fund are domestic violence interventions; It has a 92% domestic funds intervention issue. What was really fascinating for me (and I don't know what to attribute this to), was that our male colleagues (including our collaborator and my consultant in Belgrade), who while they weren't that interested in coming up with a solution, wanted to remind us that these women were potentially at grave risk. So, my friend and my colleague at Belgrade wrote me this email. Do you remember that night? [she asks Miriam]. And it was very intense, and I felt really sick and scared. And he basically said, "do you realise the Pandora's box you could potentially be opening? In terms of fostering self-expression in environments where women are potentially domestically abused and worst?" And that's where I think the Women's Fund in Georgia were critical, in helping us build trust around women that were empowered to participate and also in providing services and helping to network in places that have more than one stop shop. […] We were also told in many of the situations that the women were not really allowed to participate in the workshops, unless they were making money.[409]

Initially, this statement from the artist raises issues about parachuting a practice of art as self-expression from one culture into a totally different context, where it may not be readily accepted or potentially dangerous for women in a vulnerable situation. Arguably, one of the ways in which the artists and the Women's Fund negotiated this issue was to provide the participants with the choice to partake in the project. Providing this choice enabled participants some form of autonomy (even if they are signing up to a 'fixed' workshop structure). By running the terms of the workshop past the Women's Fund and

[409] Miriam Schaer and Melissa Potter. *Personal Interview via Skype*. Op. Cit.

partially 'checking' their position of privilege, the artists also relocated aspects of responsibility, as interactions could be mediated and discussed through several participating representatives to allow a shared governance. The Women's Fund also led a training day for the artists to provide a context to the area and explain existing feminist Georgian practices.

On the one hand, this knowledge of the context and participants is useful and necessary to allow the artists to be sensitive to the women's situation. However, it also furthers a potential hierarchy between the artists and the participants, as the artists arrive at the project hosting certain knowledges. To expand, François Matarasso has suggested that this authority often comes from one side of the collaboration knowing more about the other prior to the project – particularly if working with a vulnerable group of individuals. He states,

> It is very hard to achieve any real equality between people who have an unequal knowledge of each other. When one person has been told personal, even private things about another, even with the best intentions, the relationship is changed; It is hard not to start thinking that you know what will be good for them.[410]

Yet, a denial of responsibility to know aspects of the participant's context or situation may produce a different power dynamic, wherein a lack of questioning one's role or self-presentation as an artist results in an insensitive approach to collaboration.

Artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn refrain from taking responsibility for the empowering effects of a project when creating collaborative, interactive installations in relation to a specific context or philosopher.[411] Although he has a vision for the project, Hirschhorn keeps it firmly under the protection of art, inviting those to participate if they have a skill to provide and without promising a form of emancipation, but simply an 'experience'. Whilst this lack of promise of any social or political benefit to participation resolves Hirschhorn of any responsibility (for the project having a life transforming experience). It also refrains from pressurising participants in having to perform against their own

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[410] François Matarasso. (2017) 'Need to Know'. A Restless Art How Participation Won, and Why it Matters. 8 November. [Online] [Accessed on 15 January 2018] https://arestlessart.com/2017/11/08/need-to-know/
[411] Hirschhorn has created public monuments for Gramsci, Spinoza, Deleuze and Bataille. These have all been different installations in particular public spaces and can include libraries, sculptures, performances and events.

existing skill set or desires. Yet, Schaer and Potter cannot avoid this pre-disposition towards creating an empowering experience, because the practices they have chosen to exist in a critical environment where they must be constantly proved and 'checked'. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the criticisms they receive from their male colleagues. These criticisms not only model the participants as having little agency or choice, but advocate that the artists must approach the context knowing all the details (as if possible), otherwise their actions are dangerous, irresponsible and inappropriate. An organic approach to dialogue and processes of making are limited by the demands on a fully conscious sense of how the project will operate. It also suggests artists can be fully aware of their potential authority and that all goals and outcomes from a project can be predicted; the plan proposed by the artist will be enacted and understood in a straightforward transmission from artist to participant.

To approach these issues, there is a need to analyse how this valuing of self-expression by the artists may be limiting or transformative in the context of Kakheti. For example, the valuing of self-expression sits alongside a continual hierarchy of certain cultural sites, events and practices, which are often deemed participatory or more socially beneficial over and above more traditional gallery experiences of painting, photography or sculpture. As discussed in the introduction, participation in arts discourse becomes bias with notions of cultural benefit, in which individuals are only participating when taking part in the relevant projects. Fine art is ranked against everyday practices of knitting, going to an aerobics class, cooking dinner or attending a local football match, with the latter not presented with the same hierarchical classification.[412] This hierarchy raises questions over why such forms might be chosen in projects over and above other forms. For example, what was beneficial about the Kakheti women making felt book art, over more traditional forms such as dolls?[413] This focus on certain forms of participation

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[412] This also emerged from Paul Docherty's talk 'The Myth of Non-Participation: A tale of Two Book-Centred Communities in Glasgow' at the Doing Research on Participation Methods and Data for Understanding Everyday Participation Conference. 25-26 May 2016. He spoke about literature festival in Glasgow as an avenue for all those participating, which failed to include those practicing spoken word in suburban pubs – which were not included in the festival programme, designating them as 'non-participants'. Paul Docherty. (2016) 'The Myth of Non-Participation: A Tale of Two Book-Centred Communities in Glasgow.' Paper presented at: *Doing Research on Participation Methods and Data for Understanding Everyday Participation Conference.* Friends Meeting House, Manchester, 25-26 May; James Bau Graves. (2005) *Cultural Democracy The Arts, Community and the Public Purpose*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, p.76.

[413] Early on in the project, Schaer and Potter visited an open-air market in Tbilisi where they saw a woman doing needle felting. The woman was making dolls, as Potter describes: 'some ethno-inspired, others over-the-top and hilarious'. The lady originally made paintings but realised that the dolls sold to tourists. Melissa Potter. (2013) *22*

possessing a higher value, links somewhat to Iris Marion Young's theories around 'deliberative democracy' (a discussion/debate around an issue).[414] Young highlights that there is a difficulty not only in what types of speech are given authenticity and place in debates, but also that certain forms of 'disorderly, demonstrative and political behaviour' are often labelled as extreme and thus dismissed as inappropriate modes of expression – deviance from the 'norm'.[415] The categorisation of particular types of communication connects not only to acts of speech or face-to-face meetings given precedence in participatory art as more socially or politically effective (as argued in chapter two). Moreover, *Crafting Women's Stories* highlights that inclusion (or participation) can often be conducted under normative frameworks (in this case self-expression). Participants have to perform and partake under these frameworks not only to be deemed as culturally participating, but also for the project to be recognised by the art discipline in which it operates (to be given a platform and to be heard). Therefore, the normative framework of 'self-expression' in *Crafting Women's Stories* could be approached under a Foucauldian consideration of the way in which power is structured, by asking the question: who does this practice serve? Is it the case that United States (US) feminist practices are representation by the artists and employed as a starting point for dialogue? And, what formation or practice of self-expression is being asked of the Kakheti women?[416]

Historically, ideals of self-expression within the workshop format could be seen to draw from a specific strand of second-wave feminism in the cultural context of the US. A strand of US feminism of the second wave was particularly concerned with bringing groups of women together to share experiences under the 'personal is political', establish workshop spaces, publish collectively made printed material, and disrupt the 'public' sphere. As Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker state:

> There were the convictions characteristic of a specific American tradition of feminism that every woman had it in her to be creative, once she was liberated from the dominant mode of instruction and appropriate to men. The feminist

December. Felt Reports Blog. 22 December. [Online] [Accessed on 14th November 2017] http://feltreports.tumblr.com/post/38552847637/december-22-today-we-began-our-research-on-the
[414] Iris Marion Young. (2002) *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[415] Ibid., pp.22-48.
[416] Michel Foucault. (1994) *Power Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Volume 3*. London: Penguin Books, p.337.

belief that the right context would 'free' women's creativity combined with an insistence on self-discovery typical of growth movement therapies then flourishing.[417]

This concept that 'every woman had it in her to be creative' also emerges within *Crafting Women's Stories.* The workshop is established as a space free of 'the instruction of men' that can empower Kakheti women to vocalise their stories within book art and through that, discover more about themselves. However, much criticism of the practices of second-wave feminism is that it predominantly consists of a metanarrative, which served the position of the white, middle class, western woman. As Audre Lorde states, universalising women under the concept of 'sisterhood' homogenised women and their issues, where differences of race, sexual preference, class and age did not matter, or in fact 'exist'.[418] Women's issues could not, and cannot, be universalised under a 'victim' status, and the same forms and approaches to 'liberation' - whether in terms of attempting to change artistic freedom, labour conditions, employment or education - were not suitable as a global fix, but had to be considered in line with the particular context that women occupied.[419]

To consider this discussion, there is a need to think through Eastern European gender discourse, against the artist's use of second-wave feminist practices. Particularly as second wave is considered outdated or out of sync in a US context, due to the supposedly liberated and gender equal 'west'. By utilising second wave practices in the east (which are outdated or been consumed in the west), the Kakheti is constructed as 'backward' or behind in their gender practices. This 'backward' view sits rather uncomfortably with a colonial construction of the west as the universal and ideal, and the 'East' as marginalised and 'other'. What is established is a binary of west/east, in which they are not only opposed, but hierarchically defined; with the west occupying a

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[417] Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock. (1987) *Framing Feminism and Art and the Women's Movement 1970-85.* London: Pandora Press, p.18.

[418] Audre Lorde. (1984) *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Ten Speed Press, p.116.

[419] I borrow this idea from the writing of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who asserts that the centring of western feminist ideals re-enforces women and their struggles as universal. This enforces a sociological notion of the 'sameness' of oppression, in which women are wiped of their individual history, material realities and contextual circumstances. Women are solely classed by their 'victim status'. Chandra Talpade Mohanty. (2003) *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. London: Duke University Press, p.31.

status of superiority.[420] This binary is problematised by Georgia's precarious position between these constructions of east and west, where it is situated at a crossroad between Russia, Turkey and Iran. Although more recently there has been a general shift for Georgia to become part of the European Union (EU) (particularly for economic benefits), it still hosts many conservative views at odds with other EU countries in relation to such matters as homosexuality and women's rights.[421] The in-between status which constructs Georgia as conservative and traditional (yet aligned with the west economically), produces a confusion of sameness and difference.

This position 'between' also seeps into how Eastern European feminist discourse (in which Georgia occupies a precarious position) is understood and placed in the wider, global, theoretical field, and may account for the artist's envisioning of Georgia's 'behind' or 'marginalised' status. Martina Pachmanová asserts this status when writing on the place of Eastern European feminist discourse. She states:

> Eastern Europe bears a legacy of western culture, but due to the rupture of historical continuity after WWII, it's not part of the 'west' anymore. It is similar, yet different, but not different enough to be in the position of the postcolonial 'other' that is today an integral part of contemporary feminist and gender debates about contemporary art and visual culture.[422]

For Pachmanová, the duality of similarity and difference results in Eastern European practices and theories of gender being marginalised in feminist discourse, particularly as unlike the post-colonial dimension of current feminism it is not encompassed into the

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[420] Said writes about the East as 'other' in relation to constructions of Orientalism within the west. Edward Said. (2003) *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.

[421] Writings and studies on Georgia's relation to the EU include: EEAS Press Team. (2017) *EU-Georgia Relations, Factsheet.* 10 November. European External Action Service. [Online] [Accessed on 29th July 2017] https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/23634/EU-Georgia%20relations,%20factsheet; Jonathan Wheatley. (2015) 'Reviewed Work(s): The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and Its Successors by Stephen F. Jones.' *Slavic Review*, 74(4), p.931; Martin Müller. (2011) *Public Opinion Toward the European Union in Georgia.'* Zurich: University of Zurich. [Online] [Accessed on 29th July 2017] Available from: http://www.zora.uzh.ch/78836/1/2011_M%C3%BCllerM_Public_opinion.pdf; Robia Charles. (2012) 'Georgia at the Crossroads: East or West?' *In* Colombia University. *The Association for the Study of Nationalities Annual Conference*, April. [Online] [Accessed on 29th January 2017] http://iseees.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/u4/2012_8-charles.pdf.

[422] Martina Pachmanová. (2010) 'In? Out? In Between? Some Notes on the Invisibility of a Nascent Eastern European Feminist and Gender Discourse in Contemporary Art Theory' *In* Bojana Pejić. (ed.) *Gender Check: A Reader Art and Theory in Eastern Europe*. Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, p.37.

increasingly global discourse.[423] What occurs is either invisibility or marginalisation of Eastern European gender and art discourse in global narratives. Furthermore, when Eastern European art practices or feminist positions *are* written within western discourse, they are defined against that of the west. Piotr Piotrowski has argued that this definition places Eastern European art practices within a "passive" position, in which individuals merely imitate or adopt a set of western practices. If Eastern European contemporary art is reviewed and given an 'original' label, it is often interpreted within the 'dissent paradigm', in which art is against the state; an aspect increasingly wrapped up in the term 'post-communist art'.[424] The name suggests that this art cannot be read outside or detached from the past regime.[425] In this sense, any political forms to emerge from *Crafting Women's Stories* could be defined as coming from or reacting to this position of western feminist influence, centring and hierarchically defining these theoretical practices as superior.

What this discussion also raises is a prevailing view in contemporary media and academic contexts of a continually cited conservative backlash towards feminism. I would argue that this results in a misidentification of criticism, particularly in western countries which are considered to be markers of gender equality (even if this is not actually the case). Second wave feminism is particularly branded as outdated or 'old hat', constructed under a monolithic account based on essentialism and concerns with a biological determinism in a 'feminine aesthetic'. Whilst I am not inclined to disagree that certain feminisms fit with this reading, it can be problematic to brand the entire period under a 'been done' or old-fashioned attitude, ignoring the potential reuses (in terms of discussion, debate and reinvention) that could emerge from this reconsideration of second-wave practices. It suggests there needs to be a reconsideration of feminism beyond a 'passé' framing, as Sara Ahmed asserts:

> Some students have said to me in that feminism itself tends to be seen as passé.
> This feminism as "past it" is how feminism tends not to be taught, there is a

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[423] There are, of course, issues with this 'global' perspective that I will not touch upon here, but seek to highlight that Pachmanová uses the example to show that Eastern European feminism neither fits with the universal 'west', nor the postcolonial 'other'.
[424] Piotr Piotrowski. (2012) *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*. London: Reaktion, p.11.
[425] Ibid., p.11.

fantasy of feminist digestion, as if feminism has actually been taken in and assimilated into a body and is thus no longer required.[426]

Jean Curthoys takes this further than Ahmed, arguing that feminism has not only been 'assimilated' (and is thus no longer necessary as a reflection or practice), but is actually purposefully forgotten.[427] Curthoys terms this action 'feminist amnesia', where the 'systematic and necessary forgetting' is a means to get rid of socially threatening ideas.[428] Reading this concept against *Crafting Women's Stories,* results in Schaer and Potter's rehashing of second wave feminist uses not as 'old hat', but a radical move. Western feminist practices can be reinvigorated and debated in the context of Georgia, as well as Georgian women testing the artist's own feminist ideals.

Drawing upon a feminist, pedagogical approach, Schaer and Potter also consciously draw from histories which they see as dismissed from the emerging canon of socially engaged art practices – practices discussed in chapter one around the workshop. In many ways, this position readdresses the 'forgotten' or 'hidden' histories of community and feminist art, as well as museum/gallery practices beneath participatory art writings.[429] By utilising techniques from practices that lie beneath the mainstream of institutionally validated forms, there may be a chance to reiterate both the value of these historic practices and gain new collaborative forms through their potential reinvention. Therefore, this discussion presents a need to consider if there is another way to read this project as more than simple reaction to 'self-expression' at/as the centre. If feminism is written into the planning, how was this enacted or 'taught' within the workshop sessions? Did the participants feel restricted by the aims of the project? Or, have freedom to shift the artist's visions from the centre? How did the artists renegotiate the project's values through interaction with the Kakheti participants?

Unfolding: Altering the Autobiographical

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[426] Sara Ahmed. Op. Cit., p.112.
[427] Jean Curthoys. (1997) *Feminist Amnesia The Wake of Women's Liberation.* London: Routledge, pp.5-6.
[428] Ibid., p.6.
[429]See introductory chapter for a discussion on the relation of museum/gallery education practices and chapter one on the workshop for art education in the workshop method.

The initial plan for *Crafting Women's Stories* was to run five two-day workshops in various towns in the Kakheti region. The workshops were predominantly for an audience of women, whom were either experienced felt practitioners or others that wanted to engage in making felt book art. Women could sign up to participate in the workshops, with access to places coordinated by the Women's Fund. At its basic, the morning workshop consisted of the artists teaching simple book structures inspired by Schaer's teaching collection.[430] After lunch the session would follow with felt making, resulting in most participants having created a single page or the beginnings of a book to continue in the next, one-day session. The day session often ended with a group discussion on what the participants had made, and their reflections on the process. Drawing from my own experience of running book art workshops, I can imagine that these sessions were highly productive and intense, particularly due to the lengthy process of making a book out of felt. Reading the blog, it appears that the participant group size varied according to the location, with production occurring in office spaces or classrooms not always suited to felt making, but adapted to the purpose of the project. One might understand a sense of the workshop space from the photographs of the project (figure twenty and twenty-one); even if like *The Homeless Library* these are captured to reveal the energy of participation rather than reveal potential tensions. These photographs depict a classroom filled with women adding tuffs of felt to their pages. There are women merging the fibres with soapy hands or seen conversing at the border of the image. The images reveal a space of sociability, production and collaborative modes of making.

Looking at the Kakheti women's book art, one is faced with a wide range of different forms. There are recognisable stitch bindings, pocket pages, beak books (a book made from a single page) and origami folds. Some examples also show more experimental forms, such as a book that transforms from a small, tied parcel to an elaborate petal shape. Schaer's teaching collection was clearly an inspiration for the Kakheti women, allowing participants to consider what forms might best reveal the content they intended to share. Although it is difficult to read the book art produced first hand (due to its location), the photographs of the books show a wide range of experimentation and

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430 Miriam Schaer and Melissa Potter. *Personal Interview via Skype*. Op. Cit.

inventiveness. There are natural materials of leaves, flowers and wood sewn into pages by Sopo Potolashvili (figure twenty-three). In another, Manana Tavberidze's book covers form open or closed bird wings with intricate images of presumably local wildlife (figure twenty-four). A book by Khatia Bordzikidze, Nani Khavazulashvili and Lali Darchiashvili appears to contain abstract imagery on birthing symbolism, with the book wrapped in a specially made sleeve (figure twenty-five). These highly finished books mask the time-consuming process of felting, which involves the repetitive matting, binding and condensing of fibres together, traditionally utilising such material as wool. The participant's knowledge of felting as a 'personal-know-how' is particularly visible in the tacit elements of the books.[431] Thus, the inability to access these haptic elements is one of the inherent frustrations of looking at these books in the pages of the secondary publication. I can only imagine that the way in which the felt is layered, the exploration of rough and smooth textures and the weight of the pages adds a rich meaning to the reading experience.

Even though the workshops operate through a short-term model, the longitudinal process involved in felting over the two-day sessions must have encouraged participants to feel comfortable in the space of creation that they continuously returned too, as well as provide an opportunity to get to know one another. The making of felt could be read as a metaphor for the dialogical potentials of this project, in the 'pulling-together' of participants through the spaces of making and the sharing of skills. As discussed in chapter one, interaction with materials can be an effective means of building relations, as well as account for private, insular modes of making. The binding of fibre as a metaphor for sharing knowledge and making links to historical practices might be understood through the writing of Janis Jefferies.[432] She asserts:

> Crafting, decorating and imbuing a material object can be an embodiment, a sign
> of personal knowledge, and it can give form to our own stories and memories.

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[431] Denni Stevens. (2011) 'Validity is in the Eye of the Beholder Mapping Craft Communities of Practice' *In* Maria Elena Buszek (ed.) *Extra/Ordinary Craft and Contemporary Art*. London: Duke University Press, p.43.
[432] Janis Jefferies. (2011) 'Loving Attention An Outburst of Craft in Contemporary Art.' *In* Maria Elena Buszek. (ed.) *Extra/Ordinary Craft and Contemporary Art*. London: Duke University Press.

> The acts of binding, knitting and tying are the means of piecing together that which has been broken and cut.[433]

In this sense, binding together fibres can metaphorically symbolise a repairing of the lost trace of traditional Georgian felting practices, but also represent the bringing together of different women: both the US artists and Kakheti felters.

Collaboration between the women also emerges distinctly in those single books which are made by a group of participants. The concept of bringing women together to collaborate/socialise in the workshop space also emphasises Schaer's own practice, which she historically situates in women's pedagogy. She is particularly critical of the codification of education in Pablo Helguera's *Education for Socially Engaged Art,* which she sees as dismissive of women's knitting groups, workshops, reading circles and the K-12 artist book residencies she is affiliated with (an aspect potentially emerging amongst those 'hidden histories' contextualised within this thesis). The workshop space within *Crafting Women's Stories* also appears to draw from a history of bookmaking labour conditions, where several 'workstations' are established for different elements of a book's production.[434] This layout is as much to do with the constrictions of the space and the processes involved in felting, as it is about the efficient use of resources and management of participant numbers.

For the artists, the workshop is considered a *modus operandi.* It is modelled as a space of exchange and empowerment, and the way in which this is organised is construed as beneficial to the participants that the artists have *selected* to work with. As previously stated, although the participants chose to partake in the workshops, these practices are often initially conceptualised through the artist's own set of values about the power of certain types of artistic expression and methods to produce change. These values can surface or influence the way in which the workshop is organised and compel certain reactions or behaviours from participants. It demands a need to investigate how this organisation affects the processes of making. In *Crafting Women's Stories*, this requires addressing how the space is literally and metaphorically littered with other 'texts' (the

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[433] Ibid., p.62.
[434] Richard W. Clement. (1997) *Medieval and Renaissance Book Production.* Logan: Utah State University. [Online] [Accessed on 10th December 2018] https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=lib_pubs

teaching book collection, feminist banners, examples of women's artworks), which compose a background to the workshop space and potentially influence what is being produced. Furthermore, an enquiry needs to be made into how the space is conditioned or interacts with the obligations and experiences of Kakheti women's personal economies.

One of the ways in which the space is conditioned in *Crafting Women's Stories* is its conceptualisation as free of the obligations of the 'private' domestic places that Kakheti women inhabit. The workshop is framed as encouraging social relations between women in what could be deemed a more 'public' arena (even if this space is connected to the private through the request on participants to express first-hand experiences of home life). This public/private binary is also an aspect related to women's artistic practice, visible in the construction of the domestically bound woman sewing, painting or knitting in the home.[435] It is also a narrative that emerges within the book art field, where the format, materials and processes of making are interpreted as gendered practices.[436] For example, in Johanna Drucker's article on 'why women make book art', she vouches for the book as a private, intimate form in its creation and enjoyment, which is publicly circulated. She asserts:

> The space of the book is intimate and public at the same time; it mediates between private reflection and broad communication in the world by structuring a relation between enclosure and exposure. The women who make books out of materials of their lives and imaginations establish a balance that gives voice to their issues on their own terms.[437]

Drucker considers the creation and reading of books occurring in a 'private and meditative space', with their sale and circulation in the public allowing 'self-protection and recognition, for the preservation of modesty and the display of competence'.[438] Drucker's perspective is crucial in giving credit to women's writing and emphasises the

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[435] Discussions on these narratives can be seen in: Gillian Elinor, Su Richardson, Sue Scott, Angharad Thomas and Kate Walker. (1987) *Women and Craft*. London: Virago Press; Rozsika Parker. (1984 reprinted 2010) *The Subversive Stitch Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd.
[436] Gemma Meek (2013) *Reclaiming the Codex Feminist Artists' Books in the Public Domain.* MA. University of Manchester.
[437] Johanna Drucker. (2007) 'Intimate Authority.' *In* Krystyna Wasserman. *The Book as Art Artists' Books from the National Museum of Women in the Arts.* New York: Princeton Architectural Press, p.14.
[438] Ibid., p.16.

symbol value of having one's work published as a sign of acceptance through indicating a keen readership.[439] However, there is an issue with Drucker's analysis in its reinforcement of gendered modes of making. It appears to regress to nineteenth century ideals of women's authorship only being able to occur in the modest form of memoir, rather than 'serious' forms of writing (to preserve one's modesty).[440] It also fails to consider the complex way in which women move between public/private binaries in contextually specific modes, and how these supposed opposites influence and construct one another. Thus, when Schaer and Potter were met with the Kakheti women's desire to make books as a saleable item (under their communal obligation) or engage in book making with the support of their husbands, this is because public/private binaries are interwoven rather than distinguished as separate spheres. Drucker's analysis of why women make books only fits a western experience of individual expression and establishes a concept by which 'private spaces' are somehow separate from public influence. Her argument does not account for the communal obligations of other women's, situated and diverse contexts.

Felt, after all, is a communal practice in Georgia and surrounding countries, with records of Tusheti rug making captured as a collaborative form of production. There are films recording the process of rolling and binding felt, which often reveal several hands working in unison with practiced and regulated motions.[441] Accordingly, there are patterns regularly utilised in Georgian felt making which also introduces a shared language, that both communicates particular meanings, as much as displays aesthetic qualities. Furthermore, in the artist's first visits to Georgia they met with local felt practitioners, who also indicated a more community-driven concern with their belief in felt's health properties. For example, Marina Pareulidze makes Tushetian hats and knits socks, utilising herbal dyes proffering benefits to health. 'Lili' who makes Tusheti slippers

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[439] Ibid., pp.16-17.
[440] Linda H. Peterson. (1993) 'Institutionalising Women's Autobiography: Nineteenth Century Editors and the Shaping of an Autobiographical Tradition.' *In* Robert Folkenflik. (ed.) *The Culture of Autobiography Constructions of Self-Representation.* Stanford: Stanford University Press; Gemma Meek. Op. Cit., pp.23-24.
[441] This article includes a video which not only highlights the need for safeguarding felt practices of the Kyrgyz peoples (whose felting knowledge passed along the silk road, and hence spread to other parts of Asia and Eastern Europe), but also highlights the collective production involved in felt carpet making. UNESCO and Intangible Cultural Heritage. (2012) *Ala-kiyiz and Shyrdak, art of Kyrgyz Traditional Felt Carpets*. [Online] [Accessed on 17th September 2017] https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/ala-kiyiz-and-shyrdak-art-of-kyrgyz-traditional-felt-carpets-00693

also declares her footwear can cure twenty illnesses.[442] Here aesthetics and function are woven together, with rugs and clothing garments offering both a practical but also symbolic element, including benefitting the health of the local community. In many ways, this communal aspect of craft making has more in line with quilting bee communities, knitting circles and more recent craftivism collectives, than the concept of book-making as a 'lone' activity. Take for example Kirsty Robertson's analysis of the practice of knitting circles, and collective action of weaving fabrics into fences during the protests at Greenham Common. Robertson states: 'Political craft for these practitioners was about an escape from the monotony of daily life, about connecting with other women and other artists, and about challenging the boundaries of the art world – in terms of both what was being made and what was being archived in the annals of women's history.'[443] Whilst this reading is situated in a western art context, the idea of the 'escape from the monotony of daily life' and 'connecting with other women' particularly strikes a chord in relation to *Crafting Women's Stories.* As later advocated by the Kakheti women, the space of the workshop was both a chance for the participants to be temporarily free of other responsibilities, focus on their craft and meet other women practitioners.

As well as the establishment of the workshop space as one outside of the 'private' construction of home, Schaer and Potter also weave feminist values in both verbal and physical demonstrations within the project. For example, the blog to the project highlights that Schaer and Potter introduced Anglo-American feminist theories to encourage participants to consider the 'power' of self-expression and to think of alternative ways of using felt and textiles. Potter writes that in collaboration with Ida Bakhturidze (the Women's Fund coordinator for the project), they decided to make a felt banner hosting a feminist statement for each book making session. Bakhturidze clearly occupies or is engaged with a feminist position, with the first book art piece she created stating 'feminist' and depicting the Venus symbol that is often referred to as the female sign (figure twenty-six). The first felt banner states 'My Body, My Choice' and includes

[442] Melissa H. Potter. (2013) *January 13 Knitted Socks.* Felt Blog Reports. 13 January. [Online] [Accessed on 4th March 2018] http://feltreports.tumblr.com/post/40442709010/january-13-knitted-socks-we-next-visited-the Melissa H. Potter. (2013) *January 10 Conclusion of Workshop #1.* Felt Blog Reports. 10 January. [Online] [Accessed on 4th March 2018] http://feltreports.tumblr.com/post/40181506776/january-10-conclusion-of-workshop-1-our-first
[443] Kirsty Robertson. (2011) 'Rebellious Dollies and Subversive Stitches Writing a Craftivist History.' *In* Maria Elena Buszek (ed.) *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art.* London: Duke University Press, pp.184-185.

symbols inspired by Judy Chicago's (1974-79) *The Dinner Party* (figure six). These symbols have significance, as this artwork was introduced by the artists to the Alvani workshop participants. As Schaer explains:

> Yesterday's workshop was wonderful - the books look fantastic! We shared a lot of information: Mel talked about the tradition of scrap booking for creating self-portraits and family histories that stems from the mid 1800s. I showed a selection of international artists working with embroidery, fabrics, knitting. I ended with Judy Chicago's Dinner Party. Our wonderful translator Nana Magradze, described the project as a supra-a traditional Georgian feast with endless toasts of wine to family past and present. I love the idea of Judy Chicago as the 'tamada'-the toastmaster (traditionally NEVER a woman) toasting to all woman artists and leaders-past and underrepresented in history.[444]

Here, Schaer and Potter are introducing works that celebrate women's history in relation to book art, but also textiles. The scrapbook is part of familial and autobiographical practices, with *The Dinner Party* revealing more political and matriarchal tendencies*.* These introductions also historicise *Crafting Women's Stories* within women's engagement with book art and textiles, as discussed previously in relation to both private/public binary, but also women's pedagogy. In many ways these examples are stimulants for dialogue, with their introduction clearly acting as effective discussion points for some of the Kakheti women to make a connection with gendered roles within their own culture (such as the role of the toastmaster).

As the banners were potentially displayed with little context or explanation, they could represent a subtle form of intervention. Furthermore, they could also serve to politicise the participants, whilst developing in reaction to the visits the artists and coordinators make during their stay in Georgia. These interactions with Kakheti emerge in the banner which reads 'Equal Work for Equal Pay', created after witnessing the poor working conditions and unfair pay of local felters. Schaer describes one of their visits:

[444] Miriam Schaer. (2013) *January 11*. 11 January. Felt Reports Blog. [Online] [Accessed on 27th August 2017] http://feltreports.tumblr.com/post/40254193705/miriamschaer-january-11-yesterdays

Our translator Nana put us in touch with a very influential person in Pankisi Gorge. She is a community leader, and Nana explained that in cases of domestic violence and marital problems, the women seek her counsel. She took us door-to-door, yelling for anyone home, and we ended up seeing four felt artisans. One family really affected me. Their poverty is pretty staggering, and they are on public assistance. (This has brought up new issues for our team in terms of protecting women's financial as well as personal safety.) They are paid 3 lari for their felt hats (approximately $1.80), and they are marked up by middle men to 30 lari for tourists in Tbilisi. In spite of their poverty, they welcomed us into their home with coffee and tea.[445]

This example of visiting local felters in Georgia typifies the abject circumstances in which felting is both being made and exploited by the systems that seek to promote it. It is also a point of realisation for the artists on the difficulties and needs of the participants in the region.

Labour conditions surrounding felting also became an issue when running the *Crafting Women's Stories* workshops. Schaer and Potter regularly visited towns in the Kakheti region that had issues with resources and space in which to make felt. In Napareuli, the building in which they were conducting the workshop had no running water and they had to walk to the pump outside of the public school. In Alvani, there was no electricity in the building so a petchi (wood stove) was used to heat the water for felting. Furthermore, there was no water in town the first day of the workshop (as it is delivered every other day) meaning that the participants had to fill buckets with snow to melt and work in teams doing different felting processes.[446] Here, the artist's assumptions about the spaces in which they would work with the participants were challenged when the minimal facilities became a development issue, and a realisation of the daily working/living conditions faced by these communities. This emerging knowledge about the working conditions could be a form of Donna Haraway's 'situated knowledge', which

[445] Melissa H. Potter. (2013) *January 14*. Felt Reports Blog. [Online] [Accessed on 27th August 2017] http://feltreports.tumblr.com/post/40495249109/january-14-am-our-translator-nana-put-us-in
[446] Miriam Schaer. (2013) *January 17, Day 1 in Alvani*. Felt Reports Blog. [Online] [Accessed on 17 January 2018] http://feltreports.tumblr.com/post/40771084778/january-17-day-1-in-alvani-we-got-to-our-school

surfaces from working within and against a specific context: in this case, the Kakheti.[447] This situated knowledge re-emphasises the difficulty of arriving with a pre-formed project around an imagined group of participants.

It soon became clear that having a space in which to work with the right conditions was a concern of many of the women participating, arguably over and above 'self-expression'. This concern for a working environment surfaced when the artists visited Napareuli and saw an established felting workshop that took place in the same building as a kindergarten to twelfth-grade school. This workshop accepts commissions for work, such as one-hundred quilted pillows for the Chateau Mere, a tourist hotel in Kvareli, Georgia. For the women who utilise the space the facility must be suitable for crafting, but also allow the women to create within their existing cultural frameworks. As Potter writes,

> The workshop leaders explained that they love to come to the studio and just work, even when they don't have commissions. They said that their husbands sometimes have a hard time with this, as they do not support work outside the home that does not produce income, and it's very difficult to find jobs and grants to help support the workshop.[448]

Rather than dismiss these alternative values presented by the participants, the artists re-conceptualised the project (as far as possible) to incorporate these new desires. In many ways this shifted the original value of books as self-expression, which for the participants was secondary to producing an income for their family. Producing an income from the project was integral to improve the working conditions for felting, but also allowing the Kakheti women to participate without being vulnerable to potential family difficulties.

Understanding the Kakheti women's situation forms a turning point in the project, where Schaer and Potter admit to the problems of going into a location with a predetermined assumption of both the benefits and identities of their participants. As Potter suggests:

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[447] Donna Haraway. (1988) 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies,* 14(3), pp.575-599.
[448] Melissa H. Potter and Miriam Schaer. (2015) Op. Cit., p.22.

> […] in some ways I think I should have know better. I have been working around issues of intentional heritage and preservation for a while, and one thing that's become very clear to me (and was also the genesis of the *Feminist Felt* project) is that it is hard for us here in the US to understand environments where there is a still a very deep, traditional society. In these societies the idea of personal identity and individuation is not really there. So, in a traditional society, a lot of these women from generations upon generations of farmers, cheese makers and felt makers, are duty bound not individual bound. They are not driven by individual experience. What we experienced is many of the women making Georgian flags or things that were more about Georgian heritage and the family, rather than about their own personal experience.[449]

The artist's responsiveness to the women's situation presumably grew out of dialogical relations, which situate conversation and the sharing of a physical space as an arena of potential change. In fact, this could present an example of Kester's dialogical exchange in operation, whereby conversation must involve subjects 'coming as they are' to transform through an open and empathetic engagement.[450] It also could imply that the US artist's introduction of western, feminist ideals may have been useful for the Kakheti women to react against and to stimulate discussion, although this does establish a binary of opposition between the two values. Rather, I think it is perhaps more useful to see the values brought by the various agents of the project under Hernstein-Smith's interaction, where they are in constant negotiation with one another to allow different enactments of felt bookmaking and materialising of workshop spaces to emerge.[451] This fluctuating interaction of values is why some of the women took up self-expression in their practice and others formed more communal narratives in their books, emphasising an enactment of their personal economies.

It also highlights Karen Barad's understanding of agency, not as an aspect someone 'has' but is enacted. She asserts:

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[449] Melissa Potter and Miriam Schaer. *Personal Interview via Skype*. Op. Cit.
[450] See chapter three for a discussion on the dialogical theories of Grant Kester. Grant Kester. (2004) Op. Cit.
[451] Barbara Hernstein-Smith. Op. Cit.

> Agency is not held, it is not a property of persons or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements. So agency is not about choice in any liberal humanist sense; rather, it is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices.[452]

Here, Barad appears to establish a responsibility wherein certain practices must allow different enactments of agency to emerge. In this sense, one cannot grant participants agency – the artists did not 'provide' empowerment to the Kakheti women. Instead, it might be understood that at different moments of the project a different staging of agency is formed in line with the 'articulations and exclusions' of the workshop space and the introduced bookmaking processes. To allow these different possibilities to emerge means to adjust reconfigurations and consider how the apparatus of the workshop might allow diverse book forms to surface. Thus, the workshop must facilitate changes and challenges to the feminist banners, as much as readdress social concerns with labour conditions surrounding felting.

What this discussion has so far revealed, is that projects which provide room for the participant's self-interests to develop, alongside freedom to alter the conditions of making, selling and contextualising the practices are far from straightforward. This freedom to alter values should not just be reserved for participants, but also provided to artists to manoeuvre their original aims and plans (or start with minimal aims), rather than be held to account by the funders. There is also a need to challenge the idea that artists can be fully accountable or aware of the surfacing impact and values that materialise in projects. In relation to *Crafting Women's Stories,* this particularly comes to the fore in Schaer explaining about the impact of the project on one of the participants. The participant was young, educated and with a good level of English-speaking ability. After *Crafting Women's Stories*, the participant arranged a 'green card marriage' to a Georgian man in the US so she could pursue a career in medical school – a surprise to

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[452] Karen Barad, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin. (2012) *Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers Interview with Karen Barad.* New Materialism Interviews and Cartographies. [Online] [Accessed on 5th May 2018] https://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/11515701.0001.001/1:4.3/--new-materialism-interviews-cartographies?rgn=div2;view=fulltext

both of the artists. As Schaer states: 'I think that she thought after experiencing us and coming to the States that there was no future for her in Georgia.'[453] What is highlighted in this account is that not all outcomes can be anticipated, and that the way in which the US artists consciously and unconsciously framed their own subjectivities was potentially enticing to the participant.

One of the values presented by the US artists may have been their apparent ease of movement between the US and Georgia. What is emphasised is a privilege of labour conditions, which is different to those of the Kakheti women. To expand on this point, it is useful to draw on Angela Dimitrakaki's analysis of the work of Tanja Ostojić and her piece *Looking for a Husband with EU Passport.* The artist posted a personal online ad seeking to meet and marry a holder of a European Union passport. Dimitrakaki explains, Ostojić 'effectively sought entry into this transnational flow of labour – a flow which nevertheless privileged the Western/Northern territories of Europe as the recipient of potentially productive labour and, as one might guess, better and hence more visible art'.[454] Whilst this artwork is operating on a different basis to *Crafting Women's Stories,* this freedom of movement is an aspect Schaer and Potter possess. Not only can they move around the region due to their contact with the NGOs, but their frequent return to Georgia is granted by their western US passports. It is what Dimitrakaki calls a 'largely unexamined art historical negotiation of globalisation', where freedom of movement is assumed to be an automatic privilege to artists. It is based on a notion of art as autonomous (and easily transferrable to other contexts), but also deemed integral to in an increasing climate which supports creativity. This freedom to move is not a privilege open to all the Kakheti women, and whilst not the artist's aim, it became a recognition for the younger, more urban and moneyed participants of the project.

What this indicates is a project outcome which is not necessarily a responsibility of the artists, but rather contingent on the interaction of different agents and contexts, wherein a new value emerges from the project that cannot possibly be 'measured' or planned prior or during the engagement. Thus, it materialises from the circumstantial specificity

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[453] Miriam Schaer and Melissa Potter. *Personal Interview via Skype*. Op. Cit.
[454] Angela Dimitrakaki. (2015) 'Women's Lives, Labour, Contracts, Documents: The Biopolitical Tactics of Feminist Art, Act Two and a Half.' *In* Angela Dimitrakaki and Kristen Lloyd. (eds.) *Economy: Art, Production and the Subject in the Twenty-first Century*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, p.88.

of the interacting agents, their presentation and actions during the course of the project. It also confuses the artist's responsibilities beyond the artistic and social concern of book making, felting history and educational workshops. Thus, where the value of the project for the participant lay in *Crafting Women's Stories* was as a catalyst for envisioning a life outside of Georgia. This not only challenges dichotomies of good and bad practices in evaluating art projects over fixed ideas of what counts as art, or ethical notions of reducing authorship. Rather, it begs the question over where the artist's role or sphere of influence stops? And where must the project's benefits, or values begin and end?

Conclusion

Eventually, book art circulates outside of the spaces of production and the value read into the books is altered not only by the publications that surround and support, but also by the new contexts and readerships they circulate within. As discussed in *Unfolding Projects,* secondary publications can often reframe projects to suggest little antagonism between agents, or to smooth over those sections in which the 'imagined ideal' did not match the projects development. These documents create a seamless narrative. Reframing projects through other discourse can also occur through exhibitions, with the display of *Crafting Women's Stories* taking place at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade. Unfortunately, there is a lack of room to fully investigate this movement of the books into other contexts, but it does emphasise the various values the books can hold through interacting with other variables of sites and readers.

What this chapter has also highlighted is that 'values' do not necessarily slide so easily into a hierarchy, or classification, and projects should not be addressed according to whose 'use' or 'plan' for the books are more 'correct' – although this of course needs to be considered when working with vulnerable groups (particularly if certain self-interests rely on the exploitation or labour of others). An invitation of participation, after all, comes with a set of conditions, and those conditions - whether based on the workshop, historical contextualisation, institutional support and modes of labour - are loaded with

ideology, power relations and allow only so much room to manoeuvre. It is also worth noting that these conditions do not mean that the artists can predict or be fully conscious of the impact or 'values' they were writing and performing in the project. As the latter discussion highlights, there are 'minor' or unknown outcomes which participants can gain or enact in participatory book art projects. It emphasises that concise, seamless evaluations often fail to explore how a wealth of varying values from different agents overlap, rub up against, or conflict with one another, challenging a need to try to formalise projects in a correct frame of practice. Furthermore, it problematises evaluative techniques of participatory projects read through singular ideas of effectiveness, moral modes of engagement or certain performances of art. Instead, perhaps evaluation should approach values as contingent and interacting, rather than hold projects to a tight criterion of ethical and artistic accounts.

Images

Figure Twenty and Twenty-one: Clifton Meador. (2013) *Crafting Women's Stories Workshop.* Photograph. *In* Melissa Potter and Miriam Schaer (eds.) *Crafting Women's Stories: Lives in Felt.* Chicago: Lulu.

Figure Twenty-three: Sopo Potolashvili. (2013) *Untitled*. Book Art. *In* Melissa Potter and Miriam Schaer (eds.) *Crafting Women's Stories: Lives in Felt.* Chicago: Lulu.

Manana Tavberidze

Figure Twenty-four: Manana Tavberidze. (2013) *Untitled*. Book Art. *In* Melissa Potter and Miriam Schaer (eds.) *Crafting Women's Stories: Lives in Felt.* Chicago: Lulu.

Khatia Bordzikidze,
Nani Khavazulashvili,
Lali Darchiashvili

Figure Twenty-five: Khatia Bordzikidze, Nani Khavazulashvili and Lali Darchiashvili. (2013) *Untitled*. Book Art. *In* Melissa Potter and Miriam Schaer (eds.) *Crafting Women's Stories: Lives in Felt.* Chicago: Lulu.

Figure twenty-six: Ida Bakhturidze. (2013) *Untitled*. Book Art. *In* Melissa Potter and Miriam Schaer (eds.) *Crafting Women's Stories: Lives in Felt.* Chicago: Lulu.

Figure twenty-seven and twenty-eight: (2012) *Melissa Potter and Ida Bakhturizde with felt banners.* [Online] [Accessed on 4th December 2018]

http://feltreports.tumblr.com/post/40495249109/january-14-am-our-translator-nana-put-us-in

Conclusion

A significant contribution of this thesis has been to give visibility to a series of interrelated projects, understanding them as a mode of what I term 'participatory book art.' To read these projects I have constructed a new critical framework that is grounded in the fields of 'book art' and 'participatory art'. Literature from these fields has been integral in addressing the similarities across projects, including investigating the formal properties of the books (composition, structure and content), as much as the social and emancipatory processes surrounding the books' making. The framework has also allowed the case studies in this thesis to speak to the theoretical communities of book art and participatory art, to expand their understandings of themes such as dialogue, representation and value, as well as show alternative ways of making collaborative and political book art.

At the beginning of this project, although I did not set out with a predetermined hypothesis to prove, my hunch was that participatory book art projects were doing participation differently. This hunch led to a dominant research question of: In what ways does participatory book art do participation differently? As these three case studies clearly reveal, this difference lies in the projects focus on making a tactile object – book art – as a catalyst for encouraging social relations and discussions, rather than stimulating these solely through the more popular dematerialised art forms such as verbal conversation. In *Unfolding Projects* books might bring together two groups of women, with their interaction occurring solely through the sharing of a page in which to write and draw. This relation between the women relies on the concept of the books as a gift and its suggestion of a continual circle of return. In *Crafting Women's Stories*, the making of books out of felt draws on a repetitive process of binding fibres in a workshop style setting. This process brings together women to collaborate in a shared workshop space, encouraging the giving over of craft skills, stories and community imagery. Much like in *The Homeless Library*, the space of the workshop creates a particular environment for participation – one that is not only focused on book production (and the requirements of the craft in hand), but can also be heavily politicised with such items as

feminist banners, words related to homelessness, Charles Dickens texts, comic books and educational content. It suggests that participation in participatory book art is driven by a complex mixture of materials, book art making processes, workshop structures, funding, artists aims, locations and the group of participants. Furthermore, these case studies highlight a diverse array of felted books, altered codices and concertina forms. Whilst the mark making and tactility of these examples is important in communicating the 'touch' of the participant or their making process to secondary readers, it is also an important layer in encouraging the social relations and experiences of the participant. This is because the materials used in altered books might remind participants of their past experiences or create a talking point towards individuals. Furthermore, the artists' drawings in *Unfolding Projects* stimulate the Afghan women to share certain autobiographical stories around a wealth of themes such as health, landscape and tailoring. The artists' sharing of western feminist artworks are reconceptualised in the participants felted books, creating further discussions between the women. It suggests that participation in participatory book art requires or is driven by the creation of book art.

By situating the projects primarily within the participatory art and book art fields, this research intends to encourage further critical attention from practitioners and researchers in these areas. As the title of this thesis suggests, participatory book art projects have also been in dialogue with literature from these two fields, challenging, expanding and problematising some its dominant narratives, as well as accounting for where these fields interrelate. Hence, an important research question asked in this thesis is: How are participatory book art projects interacting with and speaking to book art and participatory art communities? A primary contribution of this thesis, therefore, is an identification of the ways in which the examples discussed intersect with and expand on both participatory art and book art discourse. I will foreground and summarise these intersections and expansions, before I elaborate upon their relation to the thesis findings and importance to further research.

Firstly, participatory book art projects expand the book art field by addressing examples created between artists and 'non-artists'. Secondly, the book art discussed in this thesis

is often displayed outside of the traditional venues such as the gallery and library. For example, *The Homeless Library* books are displayed at the Houses of Parliament and the *Unfolding Projects* books are shown at a printmaking conference. These contexts affect the books' political messages and challenge the popularity of the political 'democratic multiple' in the book art field through their unique hand-made form. Thirdly, the in-depth analysis of the participatory book art workshop in chapter one problematised its treatment as a 'neutral' or 'predictable' method in participatory art theory. This study emphasised the need for researchers and practitioners employing the method to consider how it organises or controls certain forms of collaboration. Linking the participatory book art workshop to a history of education and community arts practices (which are often hidden or written-out of participatory art histories) also reinstated the relevance of their debates in an understanding of contemporary participatory art projects. Fourthly, in developing the framework I contested the dominance of narratives by Grant Kester, Suzanne Lacy and Nicolas Bourriaud in participatory art fields. These writers model spoken word and face-to-face interaction as the primary approach to building relations or emancipating individuals. In chapter three on *Unfolding Projects*, I argued that dialogue in the pages of book art sent between two groups of women (who never physically meet) not only builds relations but is emancipatory for the Afghan women due to the lack of the Australian artists' presence. Lastly, I developed a new approach to understanding value in participatory book art projects that will be beneficial to wider practices of evaluating participatory art. In Chapter four on *Crafting Women's Stories*, I drew predominantly on the theories of Erin Manning and Barbara Hernstein-Smith to show that values are contingent on a range of interacting variables (context, agents, objects) and value systems. The findings emphasise that values cannot be predetermined or read against a criterion of 'good practice'. Instead, values need to be traced and seen as emergent and continually fluctuating as the project develops. I also accounted for how values in projects are not always visible or easily recorded. Thus, a different form of documentation needs to be created to reveal inconsistencies and absences in evaluation.

To expand and emphasise these contributions, this conclusion summarises some of the primary arguments and discussions within this thesis. I start by taking note of my

changing position during the course of this research journey and use this as an anchor from which to trace some of the key themes addressed in the chapter headings. These themes include book art, the workshop, representation, dialogue and value. I connect these themes to context, display, production and documentation to account for the aspects addressed in participatory book art through the framework developed in this thesis. I employ these themes to explore the connections across case studies, acknowledging what knowledge my findings indicate and the implications this has for research. I conclude with an outline of potential further research.

A Change in Position: Re-addressing Participatory Book Art.

One of the primary conclusions that I have drawn from this research, is that participatory book art projects are complex entanglements of agents, processes, operations and book forms which do not fall easily into models or narratives of 'good' or 'bad' practice. At the beginning of my research journey, I believed that participatory book art projects were transforming participants' lives and challenging certain forms of social oppression. Whilst I still believe this is occurring in specific projects, at the end of the thesis I am far more cautious in making grand claims about their transformative potential. This cautiousness arises from being mindful of how projects can be co-opted to fulfil the desires of funders, re-framed within narratives which can write out participants' voices and are interwoven with ideologies that can essentialise participants' representations. After all, participatory book art projects do not happen in isolation. I evidence how these projects interact with larger political and social forces, wherein pressures of impact studies and a neoliberal demand for accountability results in artists having to predetermine project outcomes or create positive documentation. Projects are also entangled in an arts funding climate which relies on a precarious mixed economy, with artists fulfilling and responding to an organisation's well-regulated, short-term briefs. This predetermination of outcomes can limit the participant's ability to alter the direction of a project and restrict an organic development – it can also be used by organisations to hold the artists to account. The artists are also working in a climate

whereby the once radical practices of community and participatory arts (such as the workshop as method), are increasingly encompassed into an uncritical, leisure-based 'edutainment'.[455] Furthermore, organisations can employ representations of the 'other' and photographs of participation as an effective marketing strategy to highlight (rather than critique) the 'good work' they are doing.

Nevertheless, even with the pressures of this climate, this research has revealed that participatory book art projects can also create a critical space in which to challenge essentialist representations and reflect on one's experiences or understanding of certain systems of oppression. I discovered that dialogical processes created within book art can form relations between individuals and that projects can form temporary communities. The skills of bookmaking can also provide participants with ownership to narrate their localities, as well as to challenge stereotypical representations apparent in labels such as 'Afghan women' or 'homelessness'. By starting from a position of taking the artist's claims for the project's potential seriously, I highlighted how these tensions between exploiting and empowering participants are a constantly moving dynamic that the artist (and myself as researcher) is consistently negotiating and tracing. By unpacking these tensions as they gather around key themes, new perspectives on participatory art and book art fields have emerged. I begin by considering how these contributions surface by summarising discussions of the workshop in this thesis.

Context: The Workshop and Community Arts Practice

I decided to analyse the workshop method in the first chapter as it appears in both *Crafting Women's Stories* and *The Homeless Library*. I also realised that, although the workshop was a popular method in participatory art practices, writing on its operation and influences was sparse. Even if the workshop was accounted for in literature, there

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[455] 'Edutainment' was a term used in chapter one of this thesis. I borrow it from 'vacant edutainment', a term Nadine M. Kalin draws from Eilean Hooper-Greenhill to account for the 'gentrification of aesthetic forms for easy reception', which 'limits the possibilities of participation to active interaction wherein art must be "quickly intelligible and easily digested by everyone". Nadine M. Kalin. (2014) 'Art's Pedagogical Paradox.' *Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research,* 55(3), p.195.

was little in-depth investigation of how it may have structured or encouraged particular forms of collaboration. More often than not, in the literature it appears that the workshop was treated as a straightforward method of consensus building around a project's aims between various individuals. However, I found that an enquiry into the specific operations of the workshop was crucial to understanding how the method may have influenced the production of book art and the modes of participation in projects. What formed was the research question: How is the workshop space planned, constructed and manifest in participatory book art?

To answer this question, in chapter one I focused on uses of the workshop in a wide variety of participatory book art projects, as well as drawing on my own experience of running bookmaking workshops at conferences during this PhD research. Arguably, one of the difficulties of this study was the inability to visit all the workshops occurring in case studies. There are multiple reasons for this. One, is that the workshops had already occurred before the research begun and two, the sessions were taking place in locations that were difficult to visit. To account for the inability to always be present at the workshops, I interviewed the artist/s about their experiences, read accounts of the projects and I visited one of *The Homeless Library* workshop sessions. Employing these different perspectives was beneficial to mediating and challenging some of the seamless narratives or claims that the projects (and their documentation) were making.

What the study in chapter one revealed, is a tension between the workshop as an organised space that establishes certain parameters (in which the layout, materials and methods are designed by the artist) whilst also showing that the workshop can manifest in unpredictable ways (due to the way in which various agents, materials, environment and processes interact). This tension between the workshop having controlled parameters against one of manoeuvrability and unpredictability manifests in several of the case studies. For example, in chapter two on *The Homeless Library,* the workshop was designed to form a temporary group in a quiet place, with the discussion topics and book materials selected by the artists. How this space manifested in terms of the direction of the conversation or the ways in which the participants created their individual books was often tangential and unpredictable. A similarity also appears in

chapter four on *Crafting Women's Stories,* wherein feminist banners, book art examples and political artworks influenced and steered the content of the participants' books. Yet, the participants' interest in more communal themes and commodification of book art meant that feminist leanings or personal stories were often lacking in their engagements. Furthermore, the facilities for making felt book art (running water and a physical space) in *Crafting Women's Stories* were also highly unpredictable in relation to each town and sometimes unsuitable for the felting process. These examples underline that, whilst an organised space can be politically loaded or designed to encourage certain behaviours and book content, participants can contend, diverge and alter the project outcomes. It also stresses that the limitations of the environment and site can demand the artists to react and transform the project's trajectory. Investigating the workshop through these two case studies also emphasises that there are similarities in artist's selection of the materials, the workshop as a discussion space, the transmission of bookmaking skills between participants and the establishment of the workshop as a critical and responsive site.

Researching the workshop also provided a useful method of constructing the role of the artist as facilitator in participatory book art. Part of this enquiry was to address the research question: How do participants partake in the decision-making process or enact certain modes of making, against the 'control' of the project outcomes by artist/s? In chapter one, I drew on case study research to challenge the concept that there is a straightforward equality between artist and participant occurring in the projects. As previously discussed, understanding the workshop as an organised space suggests that the artist/s designs, steers and authors the project aims, granting a form of authority that is enforced by the funder's provision of capital and resources in response to the artist's brief. I do not envision the facilitator under Pablo Helguera's passive understanding of the term, instead I construct the artist in participatory book art as an active director who engages discussions, offers aesthetic advice on participants' books, teaches bookmaking skills, selects the book materials and directs the overall session.[456] Not only does this control over the project's parameters occur in the workshop, but in

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[456] Pablo Helguera. (2011) *Education for Socially Engaged Art A Materials and Techniques Handbook.* New York: Jorge Pinto Books, p.54. See discussions in chapter one on the role of the artist in the workshop, p.74.

chapter three on *Unfolding Projects* the artists design and set the terms of the books exchange, even if there is a freedom for the participants to write their stories. Thus, these findings trouble standpoints in which the artist has to renounce their authorship (or involvement) and reinstates certain expertise in regard to relaying bookmaking techniques, stimulating discussions and asking poignant questions.

Whilst I have shown that these latter skills are interwoven in demands made on cultural workers and educators in a neoliberal climate, I also employ the theories of Paulo Freire and Chantal Mouffe to show that the workshop can be a space to criticise and examine stereotypical representations (images of the homeless in chapter two) and readdress labour conditions (the Kakheti women's experiences of felt making in chapter four).[457] It acknowledges that although the artist is an authority, in some cases they may rely on the participants' skills, perspectives and interaction with book making. As previously discussed, this participatory dynamic can result in the participants challenging the artist's authority over the project aims. In chapter four on *Crafting Women's Stories*, I also addressed how the artist's authority can be constricted by the demands of the funder; the artists were requested to return some of the funds due to the change in the trajectory of the project outside of the original brief. It suggests that the authority over the project outcomes, or the contributions of agents is a constantly conflicting and surfacing interaction.

This discussion on the idea of the artist as the authority also raises a contradiction regarding the authorship of projects. In all three of the case studies the projects appear on the artist's websites or blogs and documentation is either published by, or contains the reflections of, the artist/s (and/or the supporting organisers/funders). Whilst this framing models the artist as the author of the completed project and reiterates their active role as a facilitator, the books created in projects are nearly always labelled the work of the participants *not* the work of the artists (even if the books are anonymised or not matched to a specific individual in *The Homeless Library*). It should be noted,

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[457]Paulo Friere. (1994) *Pedagogy of Hope Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Publishing Company.; Chantal Mouffe. (2013) *Agonistics Thinking the World Politically*. London: Verso. See chapter one on the workshop, pp.76-78.

however, that *Unfolding Projects* does advocate shared authorship of the books, as the artworks are constructed as catalysts for the participants' stories. On the one hand, this labelling suggests the artist/s only author the aims and direct the project's development, thereby disregarding their input into the books production through their provision of aesthetic advice, selection of book materials and choosing the workshop themes. There is also another tension emerging in the reframing of the project under the name of the artist at the end of the project, in that it can hide, obscure or undermine the participant's contributions. This classification of projects under the artist's name points back to the artist's skill of facilitating, their ability to produce social change and grants them an ownership of the project.[458] The artist's authorship of the project is further enhanced due to the lack of reflection or evaluation from the participants in the project's documentation, even if the participants are sometimes present in the contexts in which the books are displayed.[459] It highlights that the artist's name is important to granting these projects the critical attention and situation in art discourse, but also the difficulties of projects writing-out or translating the experiences of the participants.[460] Whilst I am not suggesting that these projects completely disregard the participant's connection to the books or their sense of ownership, it does raise a need to consider how participants are represented in the final framing of participatory book art projects.

The research findings from chapter one on the workshop are also a crucial contribution to reintroduce the connected histories of community arts to participatory art narratives. Working from the literature of Alison Jeffers, Gerri Moriarty, Kate Crehan and early community arts documents, I addressed how the workshop method was developed and gained popularity in the community arts moment, and how its use interacted with ideas of cultural democracy, access and skill sharing.[461] These ideas are not only entangled in

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[458] This discussion also relates to my reading of the work of Anthony Luvera in chapter two on *The Homeless Library*, pp.90-92.

[459] Several of the participants in *The Homeless Library* travelled to the Houses of Parliament, Southbank Centre and Manchester Central Library where the books were displayed.

[460] See the discussion on *Unfolding Projects* in chapter three. I investigate the *Two Trees* publication and the translation of participant's experiences/stories, pp.167-169.

[461] Alison Jeffers and Gerri Moriarty. (eds.) (2017) *Culture, Democracy and the Right to Make Art: The British Community Arts Movement*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing; François Matarasso. (2013) *All in this Together: The Depoliticisation of Community Art in Britain 1970 – 2011*. ICAF Community, Art, Power. [Online] [Accessed on 1st November 2018] https://arestlessart.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/2013-all-in-this-together.pdf; Gerri Moriarty. (2004) 'Community Arts and the Quality Issue' *In* Sandy Fitzgerald. (ed.) *An Outburst of Frankness Community Arts in*

participatory book art, but still emerge in debates within the participatory art field around forced participation and developing alternative social spaces outside of capitalism. As previously stated, whilst the workshop may be a popular method in participatory art practices, often research fails to address the ways in which it can influence the forms of collaboration and participation occurring in projects. Thus, by analysing the specific way in which the participatory book art workshop is organised, managed and manifests, this thesis problematises literature which treats the method as neutral or already known. In particular, it queries writing by Claire Bishop who cites the workshop as a predictable method wrapped in practices of leisure or uncritical forms of art making.[462] Whilst I do not dismiss that the workshop is used or influenced by practices which advocate play or laboratory style spaces that are constructed as freeing but are actually modulated and controlled arenas. I argue that the workshops in participatory book art are concerned with challenging hegemonic representations (*Unfolding Projects* and *The Homeless Library*), reinventing indigenous crafts (felt in *Crafting Women's Stories*), pooling skills and encouraging relations between individuals. Thus, this thesis also readdresses the larger issues of the methods used in community arts practice being viewed as uncritical and fully controlled by funding agents. This is a narrative I argue in the introduction is contrasted to validate the radical practices of a curatorial 'educational turn'.[463] I also envision that this research will have implications for those utilising or critiquing the workshop in wider participatory art practices to encourage a deconstruction and tracing of the various parameters, assemblages and developments; an enquiry that may present further research in response to this thesis.

Display and Dialogue: Book Art

The main use of the workshop in participatory book art is a space in which to teach bookmaking skills to participants and experiment with a range of book art pieces which

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Ireland – A Reader. Dublin: Tasc, pp.148-156; Kate Crehan. (2011) *Community Art An Anthropological Perspective*. London: Berg.

[462] Claire Bishop's discussion on neoliberal forms of leisure and education can be found here: Claire Bishop. (2012) *Artificial Hells Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso. Also see her article on the social turn for a description of workshops operating in predictable formulas: Claire Bishop. (2006) 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents.' *Artforum International*, 44(6), pp.178-183.

[463] I address the curatorial turn in the introduction of this thesis, see p.26.

interact with the identity or concern of the social group. To consider the books created in this space, the aim of this thesis was to analyse the book's formal properties (materials, composition, design, content, etc.), in addition to addressing their circulation, readership and influence of contexts of display. The research findings indicated a wide range of different book art examples, from books made of felt in *Crafting Women's Stories*, to concertina folded structures in *Unfolding Projects* and bottles used as surfaces for texts in *The Homeless Library*. The artists' selection of materials for bookmaking (whether Charles Dickens' novels or felt) often responds to particular understandings or narratives about the identity of the participants. Thus, in chapter two on *The Homeless Library* I emphasise that Charles Dickens' novels and comic books are deconstructed, destroyed and dishevelled to symbolise a history or state of homelessness. Furthermore, in *Crafting Women's Stories* the use of felt for books references an indigenous Kakheti craft.

In chapter one of this thesis, I considered how the collaborative production of books is affected by the design of the workshop and, in chapter three on *Unfolding Projects,* how the books are influenced by the construction or notion of the gift. These findings add to understandings of collaboration in the book art field by accounting for how the conditions may influence both the books produced, as well as the input of various agents in co-creation. The use of book art to relay a political message in participatory book art operates differently to popular examples mentioned in the introduction in which the political and social message is relayed through the multiple, editioned and widely circulated democratic book art model. In comparison, book art from case studies are unique, one-off examples. As discussed in chapter two on T*he Homeless Library*, these books supposedly grant the readers a closeness to authors through the touch of the maker being accessible in the books' handmade and tactile qualities. Furthermore, in chapter three on *Unfolding Projects*, I stress a closeness or ownership of the page from the Afghan women through their handwritten stories and scored lines over the top of the artist's images. The unique nature of these books emphasises that the aim is not to reach a wide audience through wide distribution, but rather politicise or draw attention to their messages in specific contexts of display.

Acknowledging that books are often politicised through their display in specific contexts has implications for the ways in which book art might be interpreted. This was a key research question of this thesis: How does the context in which the books are displayed and their framing in supporting documents effect their meaning? As the book art field tends to read books in traditional contexts of the library or gallery, there is a need to expand an approach to consider how alternative spaces might influence the book's meaning.[464] In this thesis, for example, I account for how *The Homeless Library* books in chapter two are displayed at the Houses of Parliament to draw attention to homelessness policy. And, in *Unfolding Projects,* the books' display at a printing conference is contextualised by a talk which highlights the participating women's creativity and right to education (as much as the act of dialogue). In chapter one on the workshop and in a chapter three on *Unfolding Projects,* I also address how the participants' stories may be influenced or affected by the knowledge that they will be read by a secondary audience. Hence, in *Unfolding Projects*, the Afghan women's writing may have been altered by the realisation that their stories will be read by the Australian artists (who could contribute financial aid and solidarity with their situation). Furthermore, many of the *Homeless Library* participants recited their poems or presented testimonials at the books display. The participants' presence, therefore, can come to validate the benefit of the project or its authenticity as a 'first-person' homelessness history, as much as it can empower participants to have control over the project's representation.

This thesis has also addressed what forms of dialogue occur in participatory book art and how these may contradict dominant narratives in the participatory art field. In chapter three on *Unfolding Projects,* I also challenged writings in the participatory art field that tend to provide visibility or pedestal dematerialised and conversation-based practices. Consequently, I contested the work of Grant Kester, Nicolas Bourriaud and Suzanne Lacy whom, albeit in different ways, advocate conversation and the sharing of

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[464] I do account for when participatory book art is also displayed in these traditional spaces within case studies, but I want to draw attention to how this research contributes new perspectives to acknowledging the influence of alternative spaces of display. It is also worth noting that there is some book art literature which addresses book arts display in more public arenas, but I would say that is an exception. See Hubert and Hubert's chapter on the public artist book: Renée Riese Hubert and Judd D. Hubert. (1999) *Cutting Edge of Reading Artists' Books*. New York: Granary Books.

a physical space as the primary emancipatory processes.[465] By drawing on Jacques Ranciere's theory of the 'emancipated spectator', I accounted for how the Afghan women's empowerment lies in their ability to partake in the 'realm of the aesthetic' and write their own stories without the presence of the Australian artists.[466] Furthermore, the obligation of the books as 'gifts' is entangled in a cycle of debt, wherein the books demand the Afghan women to respond in writing who in turn, demand the Australia artists to support the VTC. What occurs is a circular dialogue, which builds relations between the two groups of women. This discussion, therefore, reintroduces a need in participatory art theory to address the specific ways projects may use traditional art making methods; Rather than claim that dematerialised processes are the most effective at building social relations and forming empathetic subjects, or that producing objects falls easily into capitalist modes of production. That there is a variety of collaborative and social processes occurring around book production across this thesis, stresses a need to consider how these operations, methods and processes manifest in particular ways to emancipate individuals and build social relations. Thus, I envision these findings to encourage a readdressing of the complex ways in which participatory art practices might reinvent object making to have both social and artistic value.

Representation and Labels

A reoccurring theme across this thesis has been a concern with participants' representation. In all of the case studies, I have shown how participatory book art projects involve the invitation or selection of participants around an identity label such as 'Afghan women' or 'the Homeless'. In chapter one, I query how these labels might suggest the determination of a pre-existing community group that the artist utilises or joins in the creation of a project. However, drawing on the ideas of Miwon Kwon, Elke Krasny and Meike Schalk, I argued that projects actually form a provisional group, which is temporarily gathered around the label or within the space of the workshop.[467]

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[465] Grant Kester. (2004) *Conversation Pieces Community + Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Nicolas Bourriaud. (1998) *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon: les presses du reel; Suzanne Lacy. (1995) *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle: Bay Press.

[466] Jacques Rancière. (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso.

[467] Visit p.70 in chapter one on the workshop for this discussion. Elke Krasny and Meike Schalk. (2017) 'Resilient Subjects: On Building Imaginary Communities.' In Meike Schalk, Thérèse Kristiansson and Ramia Mazé. (eds.)

The artist's understanding of these labels also influences the project aims, the type of activity and the benefit or emancipation for participants (plans that are made prior to the artist meeting their collaborators). However, as I have stressed, the way in which these aims are interpreted and performed in projects is never straightforward or necessarily readily accepted by the other involved agents.

For example, I emphasised in chapter four on *Crafting Women's Stories* that the artist's aims can emerge from misplaced understandings of the Kakheti women's situation. Yet, far from being simply oppressive or enforcing certain modes of participation, the artist's ideals of self-expression and western feminist practices could have acted as something for the women to contest or manoeuvre away from. Furthermore, in *The Homeless Library* (chapter two) the invitation of participants through the label 'homeless' could stereotype and restrict participants' subjectivities. In contrast, working within the boundaries of or deconstructing the label of homeless' in the project may have allowed participants to address other meanings beyond essentialist representations. These other meanings surface through the focus on producing disjointed texts and images in book art, which refrain from employing the tropes of voyeuristic 'othering' practices of social documentary photography. Additionally, the fragmentary texts from *The Homeless Library* also fail to present a conclusive, visible subject – a neat, traceable line back to the person writing the 'I'.

This analysis of *The Homeless Library* books revealed that it is necessary to read projects against and within relevant discourse on representation, to understand how book art may disrupt or reiterate hegemonic narratives. Thus, in chapter three on *Unfolding Projects,* I discussed how the artist Gali Weiss' interest in Afghan women's rights and re-representation demanded an enquiry into Afghan women's representation within western media and academic narratives. These western narratives of Afghan women's representation interact with the books as they are archived and displayed in the context of Australia. I investigated how the participants' books reiterated or

F*eminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*. Baunach: Art Architecture Design Research; Miwon Kwon. (2004) *One Place After Another Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. London: MIT Press.

challenged essentialist images in these narratives of the voiceless, veiled Afghan women or their concern with particular topics of education, marriage and childbirth. Much like *The Homeless Library*, this investigation suggests that representations of participants, particularly when presented or understood under identity labels, are continually negotiated and can be complicit or critique essentialist definitions or uses.[468] It emphasises the need to read participatory book art within the history or context of the label, to establish how the books and the structure of participation may react against or reiterate stereotypical meanings. Thereby, it enforces my previous discussion on how the contexts of the books' display or archiving can transform or influence the books content and must be accounted for in participatory book art analysis.

Documentation and Value

In the introduction to this thesis, I suggested that Suzanne Lacy placed documentation at the periphery or as a minor form to the event (often a performance or workshop).[469] Whilst the documentation in participatory art practices is cited by Pablo Helguera to encourage a secondary audience, it is not necessarily valued as an authentic or rich site of critique in comparison to being witness to the project's unfolding.[470] Part of the research in this thesis has challenged this minor positioning of documentation. Whilst I am aware that documentation is not a simple restaging of the event, it is an important source in communicating the project to a wider audience. Therefore, by reading projects through documentation I have staged an enquiry into how these reports can construct certain narratives which reiterate the artist's and author's claims and disregard any tensions through reporting seamless narratives on the projects. In such publications as *Two Trees* discussed in chapter four, organisers and artist's essays can contextualise and translate participant's experiences. Furthermore, in *The Homeless Library* eBook the participant's oral history transcripts can be validated or authenticated

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[468] Draws on the understanding of labels from Alice Fox and Hannah MacPherson. Alice Fox and Hannah MacPherson. (2015) *Inclusive Arts Practice and Research A Critical Manifesto*. London: Routledge, p.12.

[469] See p.31 of the introduction. Suzanne Lacy. Op. Cit., p.178.

[470] See p.110 in relation to the critique of Kester's claim that researchers should be 'inside' projects in the workshop chapter. And p.31 in relation to Doreen Massey's writing on 'the field'. Mick Wilson. (2007) 'Autonomy, Agonism, and Activist Art: An Interview with Grant Kester.' *Art Journal*, 66(3), p.109; Doreen Massey. (2003) 'Imagining the Field.' In Michael Pryke, Gillian Rose and Sarah Whatmore. (eds.) *Using Social Theory Thinking Through Research*. London: Sage Publications, pp.75-76.

through footnotes by 'experts'. The documentation in participatory book art, therefore, reveals all kinds of tensions in relation to whose voices carry authority in situating projects in art networks, in what ways participant's actions are valued and given visibility, and how participant's voices are translated or hidden.

Reading participatory book art projects through documentation also meant that, when I was granted access to the space of book art production, it revealed that the gestures, interactions and discussions that participants engaged in could not be limited to a singular, written account, or translated easily into a wholly beneficial narrative of engagement. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the discussion in chapter two, which recounts an interaction wherein I read a page from a Dickens' novel with a Lithuanian participant in *The Homeless Library*. In this section of the chapter, I show how my assistance with a participant's work and his reaction to my help could easily fall into narratives of coercion (due to the implication of my presence as a researcher), in addition to addressing how his creative response to this act of reading could have proved his engagement or subjective recognition of the texts content. It suggested that a singular interpretation or valuing of that participant's interaction was flawed. Furthermore, I highlighted that I couldn't possibly comprehend or account for all of the influences that could have led to this moment in the report write-up.

This experience led to a research enquiry on both the place and the construction of valuing participatory book art projects. To try and answer this enquiry, I focused on the *Crafting Women's Stories* case study to address the 'contingency of value' in participatory book art. Drawing from Barbara Hernstein-Smith's theory, I emphasised that value is always produced through a variety of interacting variables, which are interpreted and responsive to agent's 'personal economies'.[471] Hence, in *Unfolding Projects* the charity revealed an urgency in generating capital from the secondary publications and books, whereas the artists gave more value to the space provided for Afghan women to voice their stories. A similar situation also emerges in *Crafting Women's Stories*, wherein the funders attempted to restrict the project according to a

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[471] Barbara Hernstein-Smith. (1988) *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*. London: Harvard University Press.

pre-determined list of criteria from the brief, whereas, the artists were keen to allow the participants' emerging values of books as commodities to unfold. These case studies stress that evaluation cannot be reduced to a singular, absolute value, whilst also highlighting that many different values are emerging in projects that are constantly fluctuating and interacting.

Values, therefore, can also contradict one another and, although an agent may vocalise a particular desire for an object, this may change during the course of the project. Hence, in *Crafting Women's* Stories the funder's image of encouraging dissent and working through problems contrasted with their actions during the projects unfolding. Additionally, in *The Homeless Library* the artists may have emphasised the value of allowing the homeless to represent their own stories, but this conflicted with photographing the 'energy' of participation and the participant's portraits which became linked to advertising the projects benefits or depicting the participants in particular ways.

Furthermore, linking the notion of the contingency of value to Erin Manning's work has also shown that there are some aspects of the projects which cannot be easily evaluated or recognised (mainly bodily, gestural or background influences).[472] Hence, in chapter one I described how relations can be built through the passing of materials or influenced by the workshop environment. There are also values which cannot be pre-determined. For example, in *Crafting Women's Stories,* the account of the participant's move to the US suggested a value materialised which could not be predicted and was contingent on the interacting variables of the project. These findings suggest that practitioners and critics investigating participatory art projects need to be clearer about the discrepancies, tensions and absences in reports or critique of projects. Evaluation should not be conducted under pre-determined criterion, wherein projects are measured against good or bad models of collaboration. These can present unfortunate models of universal or absolute values (such as renouncing authorship as always beneficial), which do not necessarily translate or operate in the same way in differing

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[472] Erin Manning. (2015) '10 Propositions for a Radical Pedagogy, or How to Rethink Value'. *Inflexions*, (8), April, pp.202-210; Erin Manning. (2016) *The Minor Gesture*. London: Duke University Press.

contexts. Instead, value should always be determined as an emergent, shifting dynamic, and much like *Crafting Women's Stories* traced (as far as possible) to note the ways in which it manifests according to the various agents' interactions and responses. It shows that there is not a concrete, distinct list of benefits and failures in participatory book art projects, but an entanglement of differing values emerging, altering and reacting to the environment and agents and within different economic systems.

Before concluding with a discussion of potential further research as a result of this thesis, I want to emphasise the importance of the artists' interviews. These interviews were particularly revealing of how time and further resources would benefit the evaluation of participatory book art projects. I interviewed many of the artists after their projects had finished and they were open and knowing about the various tensions that surfaced in the projects and the personal conflicts that these tensions raised. It highlighted that the gap or break between the project and reflection was useful for unpacking some of the issues presented. As participatory book art projects are often conducted within short-term project models, I propose that there should be further time and breathing space given to the documenting process. This time may also allow a secondary response from involved participants, as much as account for the repercussions of the engagement. In many ways this reiterates Claire Bishop's premise that documentation should be time-based.[473] Although, I would challenge her requirement that there is a need for documentation to be film. Instead, what could be of use is a multi-modal documenting and evaluating process which accounts for text, image, interviews and critical responses from the various involved agents. This documentation might take the form of another book art piece, an aspect Frances Williams explored in her talk at the New Modes of Art Writing Symposium, Manchester Metropolitan University (2017).[474] Whilst this would change the way in which the documentation is treated and displayed, it may also prevent a product which is driven by monetary returns or simply promoting organisations.

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[473] Bishop. (2012) Op. Cit. pp.257-259.
[474] Frances Williams spoke about the potential of new forms of writing to emerge from socially engaged art practices and considered the possibility of book art. Frances Williams. (2017) 'Coping Strategies: How Socially Engaged Art Practice Elicits New Forms of Art Writing.' Paper presented at *New Modes of Art Writing Event 2.* Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, 10th November.

Further Research

Whilst conducting this research I came across a series of projects that utilise the library model as participatory art practice. These libraries might encourage the formation of particular communities, investigate or alter reading practices, as well as build social relations. For example, Martha Rosler allowed the majority of her personal library available for the public to browse at a storefront reading room at e-flux (2005). This library has been modelled as a 'new space for thinking and questioning', as much as acting as a portrait of the artist and her interests.[475] Pablo Helguera created the *Librería Donceles* (2013), which is a Spanish-language second-hand book store that addresses the lack of outlets in the US for Hispanic and Latino communities. Most of the books were donated from Mexico and contain details about the donor in the front of each book. The library is also surrounded by a series of events, including a one-off altered book art workshop. *The Library of Re-Claimed Books* was established by Noriko Suzuki-Bosco (2018), which hands out ex-library books for members of the public to alter and then return. Suzuki-Bosco states that the project allows for 'collective making, expanded experiences of 'reading', and opportunities for sharing to explore social relations that are underpinned by ideas around cooperation rather than reciprocal obligation.'[476] Building on the theoretical framework presented here, the library examples provide the scope for an analysis that explores how these library projects structure forms of readership, how the space influences social relations and how books might act as conduits between individuals.

The research in this thesis is intended to encourage a wider investigation into the workshop method in participatory art. Furthermore, there are several participatory book art projects that could not be analysed thoroughly in this thesis but would benefit from an investigation through the use of the critical framework. Using the framework to explore these projects would not only build upon the research but could further expand and develop the term participatory book art; particularly as the term is not a fixed

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[475] Stills Centre for Photography. (2008) *Martha Rosler Library.* Stills Centre for Photography Past Exhibition. [Online] [Accessed on 13th December 2018] http://www.stills.org/exhibition/past/martha-rosler-library
[476] Noriko Suzuki-Bosco. (2018) The Library of Reclaimed Books. Winchester School of Art Blog. [Online] [Accessed on 13th December 2018] https://wsalibrary.wordpress.com/2018/06/18/the-library-of-re-claimed-books/

category, but as explained in the introduction, is an expanding zone of activity. Although not a comprehensive list these projects could include Sheelagh Few Crane's project *Into Voices,* William David Titley's *Make Your Own DIY Artist Books,* many of John Bentley's community books from the Liver and Lights Press, Kate Bufton's bookmaking workshops as part of *Creative Remedies* and TT Activist Art's use of book art as a method to share visual notes and research between educators.

There is also considerable potential in the use of the critical framework for further research into both participatory book art and similar projects. Drawing together a social science and art historical method highlights how projects which combine the creation of traditional artworks with disciplines such as urban planning, social care and community building need a more diverse array of approaches to understand the various operations and outcomes occurring. If I had solely analysed the book art from project documentation and secondary sources, I would have missed the contradictions, additions and anomalies raised by speaking to the artists and watching the workshop in action. This mixed methodology could also be extended to include the participant's voice, an aspect difficult to access in this research. The participant's voice would also confuse further the idea that there is one, or an absolute value to be gained from participatory art projects. As I argued in chapter four on *Crafting Women's Stories*, there are several values that individuals bring to projects and the ways in which these might emerge or be recognised is by speaking to agents, observing the processes of projects unfolding as well as analysing the books as objects. There would also be potential in using social science approaches to observe the books development across workshops to gain another layer to understanding how the making process is entangled with the building of social relations in participatory book art.

I want to end this conclusion with a statement made by Gali Weiss during her interview as I believe it is a useful summary of the motivations and findings of this research. When I raised the issue of the books as gifts in Unfolding Projects, taking note of how the obligation they presented might have pressured the Afghan women to voice certain stories, she responded through both an acknowledgement and contradiction to this narrative. Much like artists Melissa Potter and Miriam Schaer, Weiss challenged the

idea that artists should not involve themselves in acting against or challenging systems of oppression because of one's privilege or authority. Or, feel hindered by larger, oppressive structures. [477] Rather, Weiss emphasised that it is better to do something than nothing at all and learn from and share these experiences to hopefully benefit further practice.[478] Weiss' comment, I feel, has been a crucial motivation for this project. And I hope that it paves the way for further uses, experiments and explorations into participatory book art practice.

[477] Miriam Schaer and Melissa Potter (2015) *Personal interview via skype*. 20 October.
[478]Gali Weiss. (2016) *Personal interview with Gali Weiss via Skype.* 12 October.

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Appendices

Appendix one: *The Homeless Library* – Arthur & Martha

Observations at the Booth Centre, 18 February 2016, 9.30am – 12pm

Tucked amongst car garages, hidden behind car parks and down a set of narrow side streets, exists the Booth Centre. This day centre offers advice, activities and support to homeless people in Manchester. The centre, with its purple doors and windows is bold, and verges on a mix of being welcoming, safe and defensive through its use of barred windows. Although it exists within the city centre (a step from the O2 arena and Manchester Cathedral), it is somehow on the brink, tucked in a space off the main road. It is both of the city and hidden from the city, a rather poignant metaphor for a homeless centre.

Stepping into the centre, I was immediately struck by how many people were in the canteen. The sound levels were high, a blanket of talking, chattering cups and the banging of pans from the service window. The receptionist pointed out Philip Davenport, the one-half of Arthur & Martha who runs *The Homeless Library* project. Lois Blackburn, whom makes up the other half of the pairing, could not attend the session due to other commitments. Philip was immediately warm and welcoming. He directed me outside to have a conversation about the session in a private space and to discuss the best approach to observing the workshop.

It turns out *The homeless library* project had been running for over a year, established with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. After asking about my research and showing his support, Philip outlined what the session would involve: collaging old 1970s comics that he had found in his house, particularly looking at the themes of bravery. I asked what the demographic of the sessions normally consisted of, and he stated that it is predominantly male, aged 30 – 50, followed by a biting comment that not many homeless people live beyond the age of 50. Philip outlined that the sessions involve the attendance of a strong set of regulars, and that sometimes they really get on board with the task, and other times they do not - but trial and error is part of the process. He

suggested that this could be related to the participant's ability (some require assistance in terms of cutting out or a scribe to write as the participant speaks), or that the participants simply do not connect with the theme/subject.

Philip suggests I take on the role of assistant during the session (acting as scribe or helping participants with the cutting) and says that if I am a scribe for a participant then try and capture their authentic voice as much as possible – transcribing in line with their dialogue, accent and phrasing. It is apparent from the offset that the voices of the individuals (both spoken and written) are crucial to this project, as a history of the homeless has never been recorded before. Furthermore, he states it is crucial that those that experience and define this position first-hand tell the history of the homeless. I asked about the possibility of taking photographs and it was decided that this would be intrusive to the session. When I entered and experienced the space, I could see that the lack of photography was a way of maintaining a safe, relaxed and private environment away from the rest of the centre, and in many ways, other outside influences. The presence of a camera and in turn the act of surveillance would not benefit this space. Philip's sensitivity to the participants showed an intuitiveness to a group he had been working with for many months, and suggested that some of the relationships had taken time to build and were premised on an aspect of trust.

After grabbing a cup of coffee and speaking to some of the centre users (very kindly helping me to find a cuppa!), I headed upstairs to the workshop space. Immediately, I was struck by the contrast of the busy ground floor with the quiet, tranquil space of the upstairs room. So quiet, that during our session snoring could be heard from a visitor slumbering in the sofa area! Later, Philip and Jeni McConnell (the book artist running/assisting with the session) talked about the importance of this space being quiet and in quite a purposeful act, isolated. Philip stated that staff were made aware that when entering the space, quietness was important to maintain even if they were just passing through. This quiet sanctuary allowed a sense of comfort to participants, but in many ways gave value to the task in hand. Here was a space where participants could talk openly, which was safe, secure and lacked judgement.

Later Philip spoke about the aspect of visibility to this process. They recently hung a textile piece at an exhibition with embroidered text from the homeless participants'

stories. The piece was displayed adjacent to a Jenny Holzer, which provided in many ways a mark of standard – both in terms of aesthetics and content. Philip stated that he had thought about holding one of the workshop sessions in the gallery space, but realised that this would not be an appropriate environment for the process or those involved. Jeni and Philip also discussed exhibiting *The homeless library* (which now holds more than 60 book art pieces), and creating a portable container in which to take the books to different destinations.

When arriving in the workshop space, I was met by the friendly smile of Jeni McConnell and proceeded to sit next to one of the participants (participant one). I shook his hand and commented on how warm and snug his gloves looked. A must have on a chilly Thursday morning! Soon enough we were discussing his background. He had come to England from Istanbul, Turkey, but had been living in Britain for many years. He previously worked for a pizza restaurant, but three months ago the restaurant lost business and he was made redundant. He was positive about the future, stating he had been offered a chef position, which he would start the day after the session. This participant had a penchant for a story and spoke openly about how he found the sessions welcoming and a great opportunity to meet new people. This setting clearly had forged new relationships for him, as he began to discuss the talent of another participant (participant two) and his skills in drawing. As participant one began to sketch on one of the pages from a Dickens novel (which had been laid out on the table), participant two began to talk about what makes a good artist. A good artist in the eyes of participant two needs to have his own unique style.

"Think about Lowry", he said. Lowry has his own style: "the matchstick people".

He described how he loved to view the Lowry's in the local galleries, but also liked to see how the painter Adolphe Valette influenced him. "We all borrow from other artists", he stated. The participant also speculated that Lowry must have been very good at observing people, their hand gestures and their movements.

"Do you draw people?" I ask. He smiles, "no, I'm doing abstracts at the moment."

He goes on to explain that he likes the freedom of movement, "like Jackson Pollock" he says. This is when participant one joins in and speaks about his hand movements. "He

moves like artist", participant one says. Participant two speaks about the brain damage he suffered from several accidents, in particular a car crash. Participant one says that it gives him a free, loose mark, and demonstrates by moving his hand. "This is what makes him artist" participant one says. This is what makes him unique.

Participant one finishes his sketch. He shows it to me and it appears to be an image of a tree. I comment that it looks Mediterranean, and he agrees. The weather is much hotter there, he comments, and compares it to Africa - reaching temperatures of 30°+

By now there are a group of around twelve participants all sat around the table. Jeni has laid out all the materials and Philip introduces the session. The first thing is to go around the table and introduce ourselves one-by-one, then Philip plots these names on a diagram that he places at the centre of the table, so everyone can refer to it if they need people's names. This round table format seems to work well and appears to create a sense of equality and togetherness. The first task is to each take a page from a printed, early 20th century copy of a Dickens novel and highlight words that speak to the participant. We are making our very own Tom Philips *Humument*! Participant one immediately draws around a portion of text that relates to one of the images from the comic that sits in front of him. Participant three does not seem to engage so well in this task, drawn to the comics, she begins to cut and select images. Unlike participant one and two, she is quieter and does not actively engage in conversation. She seems careful and methodical in her cutting of the images.

To my right is participant four, he is one of the youngest of the group and speaks little English. This presents somewhat of a challenge to communicating tasks, but also in terms of expressing himself verbally through spoken dialogue. He sits with the Dickens page in front of him and I get the impression that he is not too sure how to proceed, so I begin to read it aloud, tracing my pen underneath the words. I read the words aloud, so he can follow them. The story outlines a dying woman who is lying in bed. Her father enters the room and claims not to know or recognise her. After reading the page, I summarise the story and each of the sections in 'plain' English (Dicken's texts can be quite heavy). After my explanations, the participant follows by circling the first section (the woman sleeping in bed), and then encircles a line in that section (a sentence that indicates the girl needs help). It is difficult to judge if he has understood the text and my

summaries, he appears reserved both in speech but also in body language. The next task is to ink around the circled words to block out the other text, so only the circled text is visible. The room becomes quieter at this task; there is something calming about brushing ink onto the paper.

This activity is followed with a show and tell session; Jeni and Philip hold-up each participant's pages to the group. Both keenly highlight aesthetic differences in the pages. They speak about the use of thicker layers of ink, white borders left, comic use of text or the creation of new stories. They are both encouraging, and all of the feedback is positive. The participants sometimes explain their choice of word selection.

The next task is to work with the 1970s comics, in particular 'Victor', a comic Philip explains that he used to read when he was a child. Victor implies victory, so the thematic focus is on bravery, and what acts imply bravery. Philip explains that the war comic implies that bravery stems from killing Germans – it is a form of propaganda. The first thing everyone does is to write what it means to be brave on a piece of paper. For some participants this comes quickly. Participant five writes his comments quickly onto the paper, which Philip notices and comments upon. The participant replies that it came to him while looking out the window, showing an awareness of thinking, looking and writing in a particular space. In the background, the visitor who had been sleeping has woken up. He starts playing the guitar, softly. A few of the participants notice and comment on the nice sound.

The group then go around the table and share their thoughts on bravery. These comments are sometimes too quick for me to write them down.

"Bravery is standing on your own two feet. Fight your own beliefs."

"An act of heroism, risking your life to save others."

"Taking on an impossible task in life."

"Learn to be yourself and like who you are."

"To step outside of your comfort zone for a selfless act"

"Doing something out of the ordinary"

The discussion turns to bravery and its relation to fearlessness, after a prior dialogue between Philip and participant two. They talk about being fearless when confronted. Is this made easier with drink? Drink gives you Dutch courage and makes you fearless. Participant three states that people can be quiet until they have had a drink, "it pumps you up". The discussion then stirs to pacifists and how not fighting is a form of bravery, a conscious act of not involving oneself in violence.

Soon enough I am sitting back with participant one and he begins to tell me more about his identity. In particular, he talks about how he is made of "three bloods" comprised of the three old kingdoms of Istanbul. He does not know which 'blood' he fully belongs to, which he does not like. This diaspora makes him feel like he is in the middle – "keeping the peace" he states. He also explains that when he goes back to Turkey they call him British, which also makes him feel displaced. During this conversation, participant one is making a collage from the comic books. He has found a map within one of the comics, with a graphic of soldiers walking a route to a city in which they intend to attack. Above the map, the participant places an image of a man who is resting on his hand placed under his chin. Another collage image of a sword is stuck over the map to stop the soldiers from reaching their destination. Participant one states that the sword is the peacekeeper and chops off the heads of those that go to war. The image of the man contemplating is thinking about how ridiculous it is to go to war. Participant one then stops and states that sometimes war is necessary but goes no further with this statement.

During the making of his collage, Philip comes over and suggests that participant one sticks the sword the other way around, as the colour of the sword's handle complements the 'blue' of the map. This aesthetic decision relates to Philip's insight as an artist, which he uses to inform and collaborate with participant one.

After the session, I ask Jeni and Philip whether it is difficult to navigate their position in terms of what the group demands. Do they consider their role as teachers, carers or artists? They both state that they are not teachers, that they see themselves more as collaborators: as sharing rather than teaching skills. The way in which they describe this is through the concept of a framework. They establish a framework in terms of materials, subject and space, but the result and dialogue are collaboratively produced

and led by the participants. The unexpectedness of what will come out of the sessions (in terms of both discussion and book art) is part of the process. However, during the session participant one tells me that he calls himself the student, and Philip and Jen (he also includes me under this umbrella) as the teachers. This framing may be his understanding of the hierarchy present in the group – that the authority is the artists as organisers. Philip and Jeni are in a position of privilege, or perhaps better put 'control' of the situation and in turn the framework that forms the workshop session.

As I move to the other side of the table after a tea break, I begin talking to participant six. I make a comment about how the WWI planes drawn in the comics look unstable, and how I would not have liked to fly during the time. Participant six states that he would never go on a plane held together by glue (like the WW1 planes appear to be held together by), particularly due to his fear of heights. I asked him how he got this fear and he replied stating he did not know, but was not scared at a younger age. He follows by telling a story from when he was younger and worked for a local council in East London. A woman who got locked out of her flat on the fourth floor asked for his help, so he got a ladder to break in through the window. He talks about walking up the ladder and feeling it shake all over the place. He could not understand why it felt so unsteady, until he looked down and realised the woman had followed him up the ladder! He quickly yelled and cursed for her to get down before they both fell off. She simply replied that she thought she would follow him in through the window! Participant six had a captivating way of pacing stories. The participant followed the story with an account of when he worked in Dusseldorf, Germany, providing visas. He explained the dangerous side of visitors, with some carrying guns and knives, to British people getting annoyed about getting their bags searched. At the end of the session when the participants presented their comic book pages, he read out his text in a fantastic American film-style voice over. His text described the danger and excitement in children's games. When presenting the comic book pages, all of the participants spoke freely about the formal and thematic qualities of each other's works – the colours, arrangement of images and the themes. Participant four chose an image of American soldiers shooting at Japanese soldiers in masks. He wrote four Lithuanian words around the images. I asked him how each word is pronounced, and he proceeded by speaking the word and then pointing to the image to show what it meant.

As the session draws to a close participant one turns to me and asks, "what have I catch?" Confused, I tell him I am not sure what he means. He then points at his clothes and asks again "what have I catch?" Participant three then states, "He means what have you learnt?" I stop briefly, unprepared for this question. I reply saying, "I should take time to stop and make something for myself, like these collages. Or take time to speak to a new person; this is what I have learnt today." I then asked participant one what he learnt, he replies that he has enjoyed speaking to new people and the experience of meeting new people. He says he does not often talk that much.

At the end of the session, Philip and Jeni collate all the pages, which will be bound into a book. This will form another book in *The Homeless Library*.

A shorter, edited version of this report is in the ebook on The Homeless Library.

Participant one: male, aged 40 – 50

Participant two: male, aged 40 – 50

Participant three: female, aged 30 – 40

Participant four: male, aged 20 – 30

Participant five: male, aged 30 – 40

Participant six: male, aged 40 – 50

Appendix Two: 'Woman's Outlook', Past Present Future: Rip, Mark, Stick, Create, Multi-Vocal Image Making Jo Darnley and Gemma Meek, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Bookmaking Workshop Abstract.

Woman's Outlook Front Cover 1st Edition November 1919 (Image reproduced by kind courtesy of National Co-operative Archive, Manchester) 21st century feminism facilitates space to engage with and create innovative praxes. These contemporary spaces allow individuals to engage in a multi-vocal approach to readdress historical material culture that represents women's lived experience. Jo Darnley's research into Woman's Outlook magazine (1919 – 67) maps the complexity of gender ideology in the interwar co-operative movement. The magazine presents a window into women's everyday lived experience through cooperative movement visual and material culture. A feminist perspective is suggested by Woman's Outlook to the historical and contemporary reader, challenging visual representations of the gendered body. Darnley and Gemma Meek collaborate on a multi-vocal approach to critique, which offers dynamic opportunities for reading images and texts in Woman's Outlook that may not be considered by the single researcher. This collaborative workshop proposal will expand this multi-vocal approach by encouraging participants to select, map and transform imagery from Woman's Outlook magazine. By remoulding a century of feminist practices and methods of dialogue and discussion, we continue a legacy through multi-vocal critiques of visual representations of gender. This variation of subjective, critical readings fosters everyday awareness of gender representations, and can impact individual's everyday lived experience. Participants are invited to 'play' and investigate through ripping, marking, sticking and creating a page in response to the discussions and readings of Woman's Outlook. These pages will be collated towards the end of the session into a book as a space to map connections, disrupt the singular reading of the authoritative historian, and fragment the gendered representations within Woman's Outlook.