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1. Introduction. Starting a dialogue

At the core of this research is the investigation of the role of art, design, and other 'creative disciplines' and their relationship with community social cohesion, organised participation, and community development. Over five months (July–November 2016), we explored the means, modes, and practices that artists, designers, and architects could employ to engage with multiple actors connected to a specific place by a variety of interests and attachments. These activities were integrated into the framework of the Mapping Nottingham's Identity project. The main aim was to investigate how art/design and other creative approaches could be used to empower citizens to engage with the places in which they live. Therefore, the main research questions are:

How do creative practices and processes facilitate the identification and appreciation of material (public service provision, heritage) and immaterial (memories, perceptions, imaginations) local culture and heritage?

Moreover, the first phase of Mapping Nottingham's Identity (2016) explored how artists and designers can empower citizens to engage with processes of co-creation and co-design of public life where they live, which introduced a second main research question:

How does the creation of new artefacts and experiences promote a more meaningful connection to the locality? How do creative practices support the co-creation of new tangible and intangible heritage, encouraging community ownership and sense of belonging?

The project started as an initiative focused on encouraging public engagement activities, exchanges, and conversations in three different areas of Nottingham: Carrington, Sneinton, and West Bridgford. Research was conducted in close collaboration between Nottingham Trent University (Architecture Subject Group), city authorities (Nottingham Heritage Strategy), and local communities and key stakeholders, including Sneinton Alchemy, Carrington Tenants' and Residents' Association, West Bridgford Infant School, and Carrington Primary School, alongside volunteers and members of the general public who contributed their time, expertise, skills, and good will. The interactive exhibition at Nottingham Central Library (3 September–1 October 2016) showcased the beginnings of a collaboration between the university, neighbourhoods, and the general public, providing the chance to create a platform for dialogues between communities across Nottingham.

This JAR exposition follows the structure of the research project – you are now at the starting point, a dialogue between people, places, and experiences. The section Context and relevance explains the scientific and social relevance of this project, focusing on four main themes: place, identity, heritage, and co-creation. The section A: participatory methods' toolkit provides a detailed explanation of all methods used during the project. Why would I get involved in this? is an overview of the different profiles of participants in the project and the motives behind their involvement. Results showcases the outcomes of the methods used, as they were presented in the final exhibition at Nottingham's Central Library. Finally, the Discussion in Pictures is a visual overview of the project, including comments gathered from the participants involved. It is important to note that the methodology, results, and discussion are intentionally presented to engage in a new dialogue with all those interested in community projects: academics, creative practitioners, students, and the wider publicⁱ.

2. Context and Relevance

Public engagement is a very current issue, which has been discussed from a number of perspectives in the last few years, particularly in the context of multicultural communities (Umemoto, 2001) changes in urban governance (Healey, 2006; Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014; Tweed and Sutherland, 2007), and the application and development of the concept of participation and co-creation (Beebeejaun, *et al.* 2014; Degnegaard, 2014; Kondon, Pain, and Kesby, 2007). A number of interrelated global challenges, such as population growth, urbanisation, and immigration, promote further social segregation and alienation in urban areas, which consequently highlight the urgent need to bring different communities together through meaningful interactions.

Increasing meaningful interaction is one of the UK national targets linked to community cohesion. This initiative refers to positive interactions that go beyond a superficial level and that should be sustained on a long-term basis. In essence, meaningful interaction is about 'making it easier for people to do all the things they would do naturally, but feel unable to – whether that's about the design of public space, supporting volunteering and clubs, or supporting people who bring others together' (Communities and Local Government, 2008).

Looking at the governmental tiers, growing cultural diversity brings new challenges to the practice of urban planning and public service provision, particularly in communicating values and meanings across multiple cultures, and developing places and processes that are capable of hearing and including everyone's voices. 'Public engagement', 'participation', and 'collaboration' are common terms that refer to opening up decision making and organisational processes, in which users, citizens, and communities actively participate, rather than just accept what has been decided without their input. The main challenge for participation can be summarised by the following quotation from Cullingworth *et al.*: 'Participation cannot be effective unless it is organised, but this, of course, is one of the fundamental difficulties' (2015, 509).

Within this context, Mapping Nottingham's Identity reflects on the role that creative practices (art, design, and architecture) can play in enabling meaningful interaction at community level, thus becoming a tool for social cohesion. To facilitate participation and discussion with the public, we have used a set of participatory art and design techniques to explore belonging, community motivations, emotional topographies, and everyday lifestyles. Projects that engage in careful and practical exploration of these neighbourhood resources are essential if we are better to understand how they affect community planning, preservation, and development, as well as how they can lead to positive community outcomes (Manzo and Perkins, 2006).

Furthermore, we also aim to pinpoint the social relevance of academic research and education within community-based projects. Since Mapping Nottingham's Identity was organised as a volunteering project that involved students, researchers, practitioners, and the wider public, it is our aim to bring academic attention to the benefits of research projects based on current social and cultural issues, research questions that come directly from the communities involved.

This paper will first look at literature on place-making, identifying reasons behind community involvement, such as heritage, the importance of subjective perspective, identity, and place attachment. It will then explore the concept of co-creation, focusing on its limitations and challenges, in order to analyse and evaluate how Mapping Nottingham's Identity worked to overcome them. Finally, it will explain how 'A participatory methods' toolkit' was created and how it will further evolve over the next few years.

Public engagement and place-making

The idea of 'place' has long been central to planning, design, geography, and environmental and community psychology literature. Place and place-making are catalysts for interdisciplinary debate, but the focus of this research is one specific aspect of it – the concern that people are being left out of the design and place-making process.

This research understands place as an 'articulated moment ... in networks of social relations and understandings' (Massey, 1994, 154), constructed from both the outside (globally) and the inside (locally). Rather than being strictly defined by boundaries, a place is a process; its specificity does not result from an internalised history – it is a site of multiple identities and histories; its uniqueness is defined by its interactions (Creswell, 2004). Following this concept, we explored places in Nottingham through the subjective perceptions of people who live and work in the area, and through their social networks and interactions (have a look at methods 1, 2, and 5 in 'A participatory methods' toolkit). Avoiding the 'creation myth' – an effort by governments and cultural elites to solely see and present places and their identities as deeply rooted in national history (Creswell, 2004, 73) – Mapping Nottingham's Identity employed a bottom-up approach to heritage, which aligns with the recently published five principles of networked heritage, which include 'start with people', 'heritage is what you choose to make it', and 'open up and lead the change' (RSA, 2016).

Rautenberg identified two categories of heritage: by designation and by appropriation. Heritage by designation relates to cultural sites that received an honorific label by the experts, and it follows a top-down strategy without contribution from the general public. On the contrary, heritage by appropriation obtains its status through use rather than through deliberate consideration, which allows citizens to play a much greater role in its establishment. In this research we were particularly interested in heritage by appropriation, not only by exploring what would qualify as cultural heritage in people's everyday lives, but also by explaining why it is so (Rautenberg in Tweed and Sutherland, 2007, 62–69). Our main focus revolves around people, getting to understand their needs and motivations by following the existing channels of communication. It was important to acknowledge that 'heritage is what people choose to make it'. Recent research on the clear connection between well-being, heritage, and leisure activities also justifies this bottom-up approach (Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association, 2014). Moreover, there is evidence that a feeling of ownership is an important element in the conservation of heritage and general care for one's own built environment. 'Heritage 2020: Strategic Priorities for England's Historic Environment 2015–2020' argues that 'everyone in England is entitled to define, engage with, and make decisions about the historic environment and how it is cared for' (Heritage Alliance, 2014). This relates to concepts of *place attachment*, *sense of place*, and *identity*, to which we will now turn.

It is important to note that 'place is not merely a container in which identity is re-established, embedded, and evolves', but that identity is formed and defined in relation to place (Main and Sandoval, 2014, 83). In this sense, place-making and meaningful interactions (especially in multicultural communities) are directly connected, as place becomes an opportunity for cross-cultural learning, individual agency, collective action, negotiation of personal points of view and different ways of doing things. Place attachment – people's emotional relationship to places – can contribute to the social sustainability of a neighbourhood and more effective planning efforts since it is a source of community power and collective action. Economic, political, and social factors are usually at the core of neighbourhood revitalisation and development, but understanding particular preferences, perceptions, and emotional connections to a place can play a critical role in processes of community social cohesion, organised participation, and community development (Manzo and Perkins, 2006; Brown, Perkins and Brown 2003). People's everyday lives and the lived experiences through which

they come to know places better, endow places with value and meaning. Place attachment grows through daily interactions with neighbours and environment, local celebrations, place personalisation and repair, and feelings towards home and neighbourhood. Therefore, people's bonds with places have a great impact on their engagement with such places: 'those who are more attached to their neighbourhoods are more likely to invest their time and money into the neighbourhood' (Manzo and Perkins, 2006, 339). By asking people to draw a map of 'their' Carrington, we investigated those places that were important to them personally (see method 2). Also, by connecting our activities in Sneinton to a local festival organised annually by the community, we had the opportunity to directly experience and participate in the creation of local meanings and values.

To summarise – place attachment, place identity, and sense of community are essential parts of the connection between people and environment (space) that directly influences and determines the development of community in all its physical, social, political, and economic aspects: 'affective bonds to places can help inspire action because people are motivated to seek, stay in, protect, and improve places that are meaningful to them' (Manzo and Perkins, 2006, 347). Mapping Nottingham's Identity focused on developing a framework through which a people–environment connection could be explored, improved, and sustained. More specifically, 'A participatory methods' toolkit' is a set of communication tools demonstrating the potential role that creative practices can have in bridging the gap between socio-political context (institutional perspective) and social and political conditions in which places really matter for people. This should lead further to meaningful ways of improving places and communities in which we live.

The importance of involving people in the production, decoration, and maintenance of their environment is twofold: on the one hand, 'an individual, in creating a place, is involved by definition in the appropriation and personalization of a physical space through thought and action' (Sime, 1986, 60), and, on the other, 'both sense of community and place attachment manifest themselves behaviourally in participation' (Manzo and Perkins, 2006, 339). This will be further elaborated upon in the following section.

Co-creation: challenges and limitations

Participatory design is user-centred and user-generated information sharing and negotiation (Holt, 2015); it involves people who have a stake in the design outcome from the very beginning of the design process: 'where we once primarily saw designers using making to give shape to the future, today we can see designers and non-designers working together, using making as a way to make sense of the future' (Sanders and Stappers, 2014, 5).

Co-creation is a more specific term that refers to 'active involvement of end-users in various stages of the production process' (Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers, 2015, 1335; Degenaar, 2014). In Mapping Nottingham's Identity, participants were an essential part of the whole process; they were involved in construction and sharing the development of project aims, values, and methods (have a look at the 'Why would I get involved in this?' section). In the context of co-creation, the act of making is not seen as reproducing or performing but as facilitating a dialogue, as a construction and negotiation (transformation) of meanings (Sanders and Stappers, 2014). By doing so, participants become able to 're-engage with wider structures and processes of inequality to affect change ...; it can also involve and alter spaces of empowerment and action, when it contributes to policy, social or personal transformation' (Kendon, Pain and Kesby, 2007 3). Co-creation enables researchers, designers, and artists '[to build] a more equal partnership with communities and practitioners; working in a dynamic relationship to understand issues, create knowledge and then implement findings for transformational social change' (Beebejaun, *et al.*, 2014, 41). However, the wider

deployment of ethics, politics, and careful consideration of participatory design and co-creation limitations is crucial to ensure that research progresses through dialogue and co-ownership rather than simply 'attractive methodological moments' (Askins and Pain, 2011, 806).

A significant limitation of participatory research is its validity and reliability, especially in questioning whether it produces common-sense instead of scientific knowledge, stand-alone descriptions and storytelling. Therefore, it is important to indicate that we had these limitations in mind before starting the fieldwork process. A coherent theoretical framework, as well as research precedents in this field, has informed the research process. Apart from all limitations related to validity and reliability of data gathered, the research faced the risk of a lack of meaningful inclusion of communities and danger of 'objectification' of participants in the process. This was avoided, for example, by inviting a panel of external experts to evaluate the process (members of the Creative Centre for Fluid Territories, a group of international artists and activists that works in the field of participatory art, July 2016). Recent studies show that researchers find the 'pressure to demonstrate the social impact of their work' (Beebeejaun, *et al.*, 2014, 38) to be a meaningful and essential feature of their work. This research project was originally conceived as an attempt to bridge the gap between academia and educational structures, on the one hand, and communities and 'real issues', on the other; as a result, our dissemination plan includes not only contributions to academic journals but also presentations at local events and on our website alongside a presence in other blogs, to reach a broader audience.

Finally, one of the most important aspects of Mapping Nottingham's Identity was to enable the sustainability of the processes that started within the communities as a result of this project. First, efforts were made to anchor the initiatives in the existing community organisations to ensure that relevant actors inside and outside the project could follow up these initiatives. In both communities (Carrington and Sneinton) we have collaborated closely with local community organisations: the final workshop on Carrington resulted in defining a common vision for community action in the neighbourhood that continued to transform and live in the meetings of the Residents' and Tenants' Association. In Sneinton, the project produced a community resource in the form of pallet wood furniture that can be used for a variety of purposes. When the project finished, the furniture units were stored in the local market and made available through a social network group to anyone who wanted to borrow them. Furthermore, a DIY guide with the instructions for making the furniture is available on the project website, and has already been used by another local project – 'Women with Tools' – which produced more furniture units. Apart from maintaining strong links with local organisations, it was vital to identify and engage other key stakeholders, in order to create visibility, accessibility, transparency, and interactivity throughout, opening the process and its outcomes to the critique of the general public (this was done through the final public exhibition); promoting knowledge exchange; supporting network activities among all participants; and making outcomes available and replicable for further uses. Achieving the sustainability of the project is the most significant element within participatory design research. Iversen and Dindler (2014) mention four important forms of project sustainability: maintaining, scaling, replicating, and evolving, and Mapping Nottingham's Identity is committed to supporting all of them.

Creative practices: a toolkit

Finally, the following section will explain the reasoning behind making 'A participatory methods' toolkit' and reflect on the role of creative practices in public engagement and place-making. This detailed overview and description of methods and results aims at avoiding the generalisation of terms that are usually employed in the explanation of co-creation and participatory methodologies. 'A participatory methods' toolkit' has been primarily designed to investigate ways to engage with the public: it aims to create awareness of the importance of co-creation within architectural practice, and

investigates the role of art, design, and other creative disciplines in place-making. As explained by Sanders and Stappers:

Generative toolkits describe a participatory design language that can be used by non-designers (i.e. future users) in the front end of design so that they can imagine and express their own ideas about how they want to live, work and play in the future ... [generative toolkits] are used to follow a more deliberate and steered process of facilitation, participation, reflection, delving for deeper layers in the past, making understanding explicit, discussing these, and bridging visions, ideas and concepts [scenarios] for the future (Sanders and Stappers, 2014, 7–8).

These toolkits are used to provide non-designers with the means to participate in a co-design process. Therefore, they have to be designed with the intention of understanding, accessibility, and easy operation. Some of the methods presented in 'A participatory methods' toolkit' are oriented to explore the past (e.g., memory hat), the present (e.g., museum of the present), the near future (public experiment), and a more distant future (workshops). Besides enabling people to participate in a co-design process, they serve to understand people's experiences in the context of their lives, and to produce ideas, insights, and concepts that may then be designed and developed (Sanders and Stappers, 2014, 7–8).

One of the most important aspects of toolkits is their materiality. Text is perceived as a 'primary medium of academic research and contains within it power, privilege, exclusivity and exclusion (for outsiders to the academy) and inclusion for those within it' (Beebejaun, *et al.*, 2014, 41). As a result, we tested a variety of approaches, such as material methods, a very popular approach to material culture in the last few years (Woodward, 2016, 359), in order to open up a dialogue and co-create new material culture and local heritage with the local participants. The Museum of Carrington explored how a number of daily and, in principle, unimportant objects, by being acknowledged and exhibited in a glass vitrine, suddenly became objects that represented Carrington's current identity: as Latour argues, socialness is actually made of this kind of 'stuff' (2000, 114). The selection of these objects, and the explanation that accompanied them in the exhibition, was formulated during a conversation between the owner and the researcher, demonstrating how 'language can also play a productive role in defining and recasting material culture' (Shankar, 2006, 297).

Similarly, the co-design of the community furniture for Sneinton has followed a similar approach: the community defined what was needed, the community chose the design that seemed more appropriate, and, even though these tables and chairs are simple ordinary objects, they have become the repositories of new experiences, memories, and material culture since they were produced and delivered to Sneinton. This furniture has been used as part of the Christmas market, a Christmas production at a Sneinton school, and even the exhibition Sneinton Pride of Place, March 2017, by the Caravan Gallery (Sneinton Pride of Place Project', 2017). The co-design of this furniture was essential in promoting new meanings and memories for a community that has certain cohesive issues as a result of the diversity of its inhabitants. Therefore, 'A participatory methods' toolkit' can also be seen as 'a set of tools for exploring the multidimensionality of social worlds' (Mason in Woodward, 2016, 5).

The methodology used to explore issues of identity and sense of belonging with children aligns with other studies that have employed 'creative methods ... as constructivist tools to assist participants to describe and analyse their experiences and give meaning to them' (Veale, 2005, 254). Our workshops share commonalities with initiatives such as 'Educational Turn of the Art', where school children are encouraged to reflect on their space and the consequences of their actions, encouraging and valuing their ideas and outcomes (Lazar, 2017). Children were encouraged to talk about their identities using

a number of prompts, including family, stories, fun places, and hobbies. In the first session, children were divided into smaller groups (five groups of eighteen pupils each), with two adults facilitating the discussion around those topics, supporting the creation of a mind map. Some children took ownership of the writing, while others preferred to draw or simply participate in the discussion. Ultimately, this exercise followed a constructivist and mosaic approach, validated and used in other cases before (O'Callaghan, *et al.*, 2011). The intention of this exercise was to gather not a complete guide of what is available for kids in Nottingham but what these children perceived as the places they knew and were able to visit. As a result, the mind maps generated by the pupils at the three schools brought about new knowledge, co-constructed by them all. Clark refers to this practice as meaning-making, a participatory method 'designed to provide the opportunity for participants to step back and to construct a narrative about their own experiences' (Clark, 2011, 327). All data generated through the workshops with the three primary schools has been articulated into a 'cultural survival kit' for children new to Nottingham, using three formats, a map, a leaflet, and a website for broader access (Kids' guide to Nottingham website).

Mapping is at the core of this project, not only as part of its name but mostly as a research method to engage with the public, to explore the potential of understanding the city and its connections, and to promote an awareness of our built environment. This mapping approach is connected with concepts borrowed from phenomenology, such as Merleau-Ponty's understanding of architecture as sensations rather than stimuli, underlying the relevance of subjective personal and emotional experiences, rather than objective, neutral, and identical experiences as can be created by a conventional map (2002, IX). Moreover, this research method also provides an opportunity to uncover how people and material objects are entangled, since they are not 'inert and unchanging phenomena, but points in a continuum' (Lucas, 2016, 109). We have been able to use this method in other contexts to reflect on the reliability of the mapping as a method to encourage an emotional response to participants' localities.

When we asked people in Carrington to draw a map of their neighbourhoods, we encouraged them to include only what they thought was meaningful to them, instead of asking for as much detail as possible. As a result, each of the forty-seven maps collated during this exercise introduced a very personal understanding of Carrington, and the final composition highlights this. Many of the maps included 'my house', 'my home', or places that are meaningful to the participants, such as the allotments, the pirate park, or the school. It was also quite common to include certain boundaries (such as main roads delimiting the neighbourhood), paths (streets within Carrington), and landmarks (the Gladstone, the church). Kevin Lynch (1960) introduced this methodology of drawing subjective maps of place, to understand the legibility of cities. In *Mapping Nottingham's Identity*, we wanted to discover not only how a particular neighbourhood works as an urban system but also how it is perceived by people who are living and working in the area. The comparison of these subjective maps with heritage assets raised a dialogue about a citizen's role not only as an object in place-making but also as someone who can perceive, understand, and create and should actively participate in urban governance. Also, this visual interpretation of interviews with the public has enabled a constructive communication with city authorities – maps, which, as concrete documents, are able to trigger new strategic discussions.

The public engagement sessions with Sneinton community groups were based on visual/artefact elicitation (Prosser, 2013, 187–89), involving drawings, models and prototypes to stimulate the discussion with the audience, and their feedback. As a result, these methods allowed us not only to identify the most appropriate of the five proposed designs but also to gather comments on how to improve the chosen one to suit the needs of the community (see method 13). Prototypes are often

used in research through design (Sanders and Stappers, 2014, 5-18) – they stimulate focused discussion in a group, to ‘confront the world, because the theory is not hidden in abstraction’ and have a potential to ‘change the world, because in interventions it allows people to experience a situation that did not exist before’ (Sanders and Stappers, 2014, 6). We have used them collectively (designers and co-designers – the public) to explore and test ideas, express opinions, and reach a consensus that everyone will benefit from.

Conclusion: a reflection on Mapping Nottingham’s Identity

As part of our professional practice (in architecture, education, and community engagement) we have realised the need to develop audience engagement ‘in and through’ exhibitions, activating all actors, rather than assuming that the audience and the built environment are simply passive receivers and holders of identity and meaning. This is not necessarily a new idea, since there are many initiatives that have tried to engage audience and artefacts in meaningful ways, as we have explored here. However, this project responds to our locality, where we want to put into practice existing models, theories, and methods in order to create new experiences and connections with our existing built environment, supporting, likewise, stronger societal participation and, ultimately, a sense of belonging and pride.

As explained above, this is just the first phase of a long-term project that, given its organic agenda, will keep responding to local collaborations with existing community associations, as well as the City Council (i.e., Nottingham Heritage Partnership) and members of the public. The sustainability of the project and its impact will be monitored throughout, in order to analyse and improve the methods, perspective, and engagement of Mapping Nottingham’s Identity. The experience so far has taught us the challenges and limitations of the aforementioned methods, and especially the importance of establishing respectful and open-to-dialogue collaborations with key stakeholders. Community organisers, school teachers and head teachers, and members of the City Council as well as the general public have been fundamental (*sine qua non*) to run this project and sustain it into the future. It is our aim to keep working together towards a common goal: a broader approach to community engagement by promoting the use of creative practices in the appreciation (and/or creation) of tangible and intangible heritage.

3. How do you engage? A participatory Methods Toolkit

1. Resident-guided' tours. Building on local expertise and participant observation

Tours led by people who live in the area had a twofold purpose: to introduce the project team to the chosen localities and to observe which points were highlighted by the local guide. **'Resident-guides'** described what they find positive and negative in their neighbourhoods, as well as the choice of their **personal landmarks**, which produced a very valuable **set of data about their own perceptions**. For example, the history of a local community garden was as important to one of the local guides as the history of the local church, one of the most valuable heritage assets in the area. To show that the value of a personal, subjective opinion is as important as an 'objective' one, maps with tour routes were additionally created. The structure of a tour served as a reflection point for residents about how to present their neighbourhood to 'outsiders' by sharing personal stories that they selected as important. This **added value** enhanced a usually neutral (purely functional) site analysis of the built environment, which influenced the planning of our artistic/design interventions.

Tours led by local partners were organised in both neighbourhoods – Sneinton and Carrington. A special tour was organised with Sarah, a very active resident from Carrington. She kindly contributed her photo diary of the community events that have taken place in Carrington over the last ten years (from 2005 to 2015). One of our researchers had a chance to revisit some of those places with her, and documented the current state. Sarah retold these events as she walked around the area. It is worth mentioning that she was not always able to find all the places, and that she could not remember many details. In the final exhibition of the project, the photographs of the past and present Carrington were combined in a sort of agamograph, followed by these questions: **How much should I engage? How often? What kind of involvement will make a difference? What kind of action will be visible?** Motivating residents to express their subjective points of view of the place where they live, as well as the values they recognise, stressed that they are the ones who are responsible for taking care of those places. Once our 'outsider' action is over, future development of the civic action will depend on the community. The artists/designers just mediated an inclusive dialogue about different values and opinions.

<!> **Necessary materials: photo camera, audio recorder.**



2. Personal mapping

'Can you draw a map of your Carrington? A house where you live, places that you visit the most, your neighbour, a couch where your cat sometimes spends the night on ...'

Walking through the neighbourhood or during local events, we asked people who live or work in the area to **draw a map** of their neighbourhood **from memory**. Gathered data was used to see what people in the area see as **important**, what their **perception** is of the **identity** of a particular place, what they usually do in the area and with whom they are connected. Collected maps (forty-seven of them) were combined into a collage that was exhibited in the final exhibition of the project. Moreover, prints of this collective map were distributed to participants creating new tangible heritage, and a new memory about something they drew **together with their neighbours**.

This map was displayed besides the map of heritage assets and historic places in Carrington, showing the information from Carrington History Trail, which was made in association with the Carrington Tenants' and Residents' Association, Terry Fry, and Nottingham City Council. The overlaps between the 'imaginary' map made of memories and perceptions, and the 'real' map are **very few**. Residents may remember the past but do they find connections with heritage assets? **The identity of places is constantly changing over time**. How can we **synchronise** our past with our present? How can an artist/designer mediate the importance of this connection? How can we create new meanings, memories, and attachments with the built environment?

In the 'imaginary' map, the names of some streets appeared written several times, while some other places are not acknowledged at all. For example, a care home that is built on a large plot on the main pedestrian trajectory, very well organised and active in the area, did not appear on any of the subjective maps. As an isolated function with a high wall around the building, it probably does not appear to the neighbourhood as part of it. This result would lead to further questions on **inclusivity and mixed use, isolated and segregated places**.

Personal mapping as a method was repeated in another location, as a way to understand the validity of this research method. This map was drawn in **Hillbrow**, one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in **Johannesburg** (see the second window below). Participants were asked to draw personal spaces and objects, which were further combined with their perception of the street matrix. Another collaborative map shows their perceptions and engagement with the [Outreach Foundation](#). There was a clear difference between these three maps. While in Carrington people were interested in sharing where they spend their personal time (i.e., the park, the pub, the shops, or even their own houses), the map of Hillbrow only offers a very neutral vision of the space: all street names are included, but none of them includes any personal references. In contrast, the map of the Outreach Foundation is much richer, since this is a safe place where the participants feel at ease: they are learning and supporting each other.

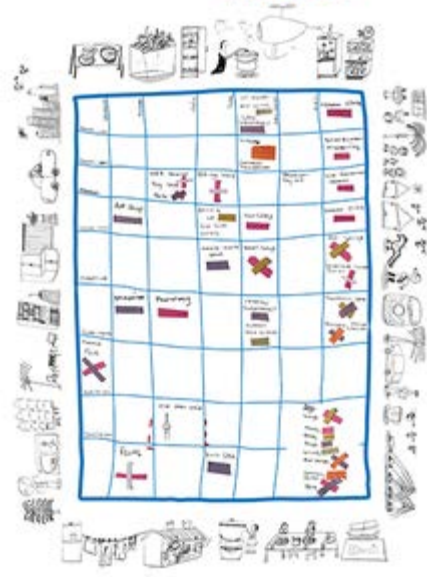
We will continue to produce collaborative maps based on personal perceptions: we believe the information created by participants is very rich, and offers qualities that other more 'neutral' maps cannot possibly offer. They are biased, they are subjective, and that is mostly why we are interested in them.

<!> Necessary materials: MDF board & a clip, A4 paper print, pen.

CARRINGTON how we see it
The map is created in collaboration with the community of Carrington. It is based on the map of Carrington created by the Carrington Community Development Trust. The map is a work of art and is not intended to be used as a navigation tool.



OUTREACH FOUNDATION in Hillbrow



3. Coding the map

A sketch-map of the neighbourhood in focus (Carrington) was drawn on cardboard and hung on the wall. We asked participants to fill in two types of tags: 'I like spending time in ...' and 'If I would have time I would spend it in ...'. The reason behind using **time-tags** was to enhance the initial research, aiming to identify the places people usually spend time and the places in which they would like to dwell. It helped us start conversations with the audience and it proved to be an easy and quick way to engage.

Organising public engagement events on the street are rather challenging, so exercises like this one are very useful: they are **self-explanatory, familiar, not very demanding, and are visually attractive**. This becomes an excuse to start a conversation about the project itself, and may continue with the next exercise or more questions.

<!> **Necessary materials: foam or cardboard for the map, pins, paper (card) for tags, rope, and pens.**



4. Time travelling

Two big masks made of cardboard were used to create the illusion of 'time travelling': one with a drawing of an old face and the other one with a child's face. Interviewees could choose which one they wanted to speak through. With the '**old mask**' interviewees were supposed to imagine how their neighbourhood would look like when they grew old: 'I just turned eighty-two and Carrington is ...'. With the '**young mask**' interviewees were supposed to remember how the neighbourhood looked like when they were young.

This exercise was largely avoided by participants because it was very demanding – participants needed to think carefully and to project themselves into the past or into the future. In reflection, it would be more effective if it was used independently, for example, if this was the only question asked during an on-site session. Interviewees need to be previously prepared for this type of exercise.

<!> **Necessary materials: cardboard, colours or prints, a camera/phone to film the answers.**



5. Museum of the present

The museum of the present was developed as a direct response to the personal mapping exercise – places that people mentioned the most in the collaborative map were additionally explored. Each place was represented through one particular object:

1. A piece of playground bark from the pirate park (coloured in blue because ships need water to sail)
2. Plants from the community garden
3. Gravel from the churchyard, laid by the local community; a cup from the church community centre
4. Pots from a local potter, made in his famous pottery classes
5. Attendance sheet from monthly Tenants' and Residents' Association meetings
6. Beer mats from the local pub, the Gladstone
7. Brick found under concrete flooring in one of the local organisations involved in heritage and sustainability sector, Double T

8. Tamagotchi, brought up from locals' memories – part of the project of the above-mentioned organisation
9. Rim lock from a local reclamation yard
10. Plaster from a construction site in the area on which a new business hub is in construction
11. Community note and a price tag from the local Co-op
12. Air from the underpass – a community project loved by the locals
13. Tile from a bench – a community project loved by the locals
14. Chocolate and coffee from the cheese shop

These objects represent the present time of the neighbourhood, and in the future they will become references of the past. This collection was created to raise questions about the importance of our everyday actions and routines. The power of interpretation that is one of the main skills of an artist or designer has an enormous potential. Moreover, we wanted to question the idea of showcasing heritage in a museum: who decides what is worth being exhibited?



6. Memory hat

A cardboard hat was made in order to collect memories. While a person is wearing the hat, she or he is also recording his or her memory about the neighbourhood. The use of a material object proved to be much more engaging than a simple question; the playfulness of the hat inspired people to share their thoughts in a relaxed way. Additionally, passers-by were more interested in getting involved since they were led by their curiosity – this did not look like just another street survey.

<!> Necessary materials: audio recorder, 'hat', chair and a camera (to take a picture with while someone is in the hat).

7. Interview with the neighbourhood itself (changing roles)

Interviewees imagined that they represent the neighbourhood (or a specific street or building), and we asked three questions:

(1) Hi. To start with, can you tell me how you feel? **(2)** What would you like to be when you grow up? **(3)** What do you love most about yourself?

The personification of an urban area served to change the perspective of interviewees in relation to the built environment.

<!> **Necessary materials: a camera and a house to put on interviewee's head (see the photo below).**



8. Defining "action!"

Each interviewee was asked to finish writing the sentence 'I'm really good at ...', written on a small blackboard, and then they were photographed while holding their statements (written on the board). This exercise served to inspire community action and positive attitudes.

<!> **Necessary materials: blackboard, chalk, photo camera.**



9. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with community organisers to **design a brief** for a community shared structure. Interviews were fifteen to thirty minutes long, usually taking place in the office of the interviewee. The project team was divided into groups of two or three – usually one or two students and a senior researcher. This was also a way to familiarise students with social research methods.

Interview questions (see below) included a picture set that was used to facilitate the conversation.

Interview guide:

1. Cards with pictures of different community structures were used as a conversation starter (inspirational cards). They were shown at the beginning of the interview and discussed with the interviewees (see pictures below).
2. What space do you usually choose for activities and events that you organise (size, inside/outside)?
3. How many people attend your activities?
4. Who is your audience/ participants?
5. Where do they come from? Sneinton?
6. Can you say, by using verbs, what people usually do during your activities (singing, eating, etc.)?
7. Which objects would you need to organise something (table, stage, etc.)?
8. Can you think of an event/activity that you particularly like ... ?
9. Would you like to help with building and designing this structure?
10. Do you have/know about any material available in this area?

At the end of the interview we informed the interviewee about the upcoming **consultation session**, on which the project team would present design proposals.

<!-- Necessary materials: pen and paper for taking notes, a set of inspirational cards, paper with questions, photo camera, audio recorder.



10. Workshops

Five workshops took place during the final exhibition of the project, in Nottingham Central Library. They were used as a method for stimulating a conversation between different actors about issues that the project wanted to tackle. For each workshop, a set of material prompts was prepared, depending on the questions that the workshop tried to answer. Material prompts served to guide the workshop process and to enable all participants to be active and to have their say.

Workshop 1: Opening and tour (3 September, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.)

Invitation: ‘Come to meet Map Nott participants and discuss various ways of mapping, challenges of community engagement, design methods applied to communication and service design, thinking behind the ways of capturing the identity of communities and places in which they live.’

This workshop offered an opportunity to celebrate, in a more official way (by being in the context of an exhibition), the work that had been done with the communities. Participants were able to see their own contributions, and how their individual efforts had merged with the group effort and ambition.

Workshop 2: Discovering Carrington’s identity (7 September, 5–7 p.m.)

Invitation: ‘In discussion with locals – residents, tenants, organisations, and businesses – we will explore Map Nott’s insights, and work together on creating the agenda for the future period. What is already happening in this small but vibrant area and if there is anything we can do to amplify its positive evolution? How do you imagine your neighbourhood in 2023? Come and take a look into extraordinary everyday life in Carrington and share the ideas and challenges of places in which you live.’

The workshop included several residents, business owners, and local authority members from Carrington, and was conceived around building a future scenario: what could Carrington look like in 2023? What kind of people could be inhabiting Carrington? What kind of actions could lead us to that future? Even though we facilitated the workshop, the discussion, and dissemination of the conversation, this document should be finalised by CTARA members and other interested parties, and it should be used as a guideline for focused community action – a tool for achieving the greatest possible impact.

Workshop 3: Discovering Sneinton’s identity (14 September, 5–7 p.m.)

Invitation: ‘Come along to see how Sneinton-based community groups, community organisers, and local residents have combined their efforts alongside NTU staff and researchers to create some community furniture – fit for many a purpose! We will be in conversation with representatives from local groups who will be speaking on the evening about their engagement methods and the many challenges they face along the way.’

The workshop included several residents, business owners, and community organisers from Sneinton, Carrington, and The Meadows, as well as researchers and lecturers from Nottingham Trent University. It was conceived as a future scenario building game in which we were imagining together what impact we would like to have on Sneinton’s identity in the future, which resources we currently have in our hands, and which actions will lead us towards desired futures. Hopefully, this document will be edited and finalised by any of the interested parties and used as a guideline for focused community action, as a tool for achieving the greatest possible impact. Additionally, Discovering Sneinton’s Identity served to create a new community service around kNott – community furniture designed and built as

part of Mapping Nottingham's Identity project. We tried to identify person(s) interested in managing the distribution and sharing of kNott pieces, as well as its future evolution through other projects.

Workshop 4: Participation in art, architecture, and design (28 September, 5–7 p.m.)

Invitation: 'Open discussion and talk among professionals interested in participation, as well as for people willing to contribute to the project in the future. What is co-creation in architecture, art, and design? What is the role of an expert in a participatory process? Is there a place for community engagement in education? What are the lessons we learned from Map Nott? What are our next steps?'

This workshop included a tour of the exhibition, as well as a summary of the workshops and methods used thus far. It was important to share this information, since the future of the project was at the core of the discussion. Key stakeholders, such as Nottingham Heritage Partnership or Sneinton Market, were present and willing to promote future collaborations.

Workshop 5: Welcome week workshops (27 and 29 September)

Three workshops were held as part of the NTU Welcome Week – one with master's students and two with bachelor's students. The workshop with the master's students (group of fifteen) was focused on methodology; during the tour, different methods were demonstrated and emphasised. The workshops with the bachelor's students – eighty students in each group – started with an interactive embodied exercise about communication after which students created a collaborative drawing, based on the 'drawology' method.



11. Public experiment (Sneinton Festival)

The material outcome of the community consultation process (section 13) was a design for **community furniture kNott**. We took part in a very popular local festival (Sneinton festival) to present this idea and to **test the concept in communication with the wider public**. The stall at the festival was designed to describe the process of making kNott and to test the furniture units. We organised two 'games' around kNott – which were part of our methodology. One was the **puzzle game** – a competition in which teams competed to assemble a map of Sneinton drawn on top of several kNott pieces. Another test was asking people to **assemble the furniture** in whichever way they liked – some made a bench, a bar, a bed, a train, a car, or even a house. This proved that the furniture can indeed be combined in many different ways and that it is **playful, safe, and attractive**. It also served to investigate its potential use.



12. Drawing interview (What is my hand)

During a research phase in Sneinton, this playful type of quick interview was conducted during local events and meetings. Similar to the Action! board in Carrington (described in section 8), it was used as a conversation starter and a promotion of the project itself. Each interviewee drew **the shape of his or her hand** on a piece of paper, writing inside that shape what she or he is really good at. This exercise served to inspire community action and a positive (optimistic) attitude, and was later used as part of the final exhibition where it contrasted with published data on local deprivation. kNott furniture was designed together with a DIY guide so anyone can produce it without prior knowledge, skills, or advanced tools. We tried to communicate that the only thing people need to have in their hands is their motivation.

<!> **Necessary materials: paper and pen.**



13. Focus group – community consultation event

A specially designed focus group was organised as a **community consultation session** in which previously interviewed members of community organisations (see section 9) discussed and decided upon a final furniture design solution. The project team developed **five different design proposals**. They were represented in the form of **models** made of recycled MDF – ‘crafty’ objects were made with a purpose to **provoke interaction**.

During the explanation of all five solutions, participants wrote their thoughts on pieces of paper. After placing all these comments around solution ideas (models), someone read them aloud and that served as a start of a discussion. It was not hard to achieve agreement since the comments were very realistic and practical (e.g., transportation of pieces, permissions for installation in public spaces, etc).

The role of an artist/designer was not to represent his or her ideas; kNott furniture was developed through a co-creation process, so the most important part of the artist’s/designer’s role was **to mediate different opinions** and **to facilitate productive communication**. The use of pieces of paper for personal notes gave an equal voice to all participants. After placing the pieces of paper around the models, one of the participants (the closest one to the model in focus) would read out each person’s opinion so the discussion was led by the group itself.



14. Communicating with children – visual interviews

Besides working with the general public in neighbourhoods, we organised several workshops in three elementary schools (Sneinton, Carrington, and West Bridgford). The aim was to explore how children identify with places in which they live, and also how they perceive the identity of their schools. We developed two types of interviews – **‘Discovering your identity’** and **‘little monuments’**.

Before the workshops about their identity took place, the children were asked to bring pictures from home relating to five different themes: their favourite **games, stories, celebrations, places,** and **family member** (someone who cares for them and who they care for). These pictures were combined into **collages**; the data produced in this way was very interesting, because children could express themselves more easily by using photos and combining them. However, the validity of the research is put into question with the interpretation of data gathered this way. This pilot phase showed that this method should be combined with interviews in which children can explain what they

brought and why. Also, the data should be produced in smaller groups (focus group of maximum five children) or in a face-to-face interview.

'Little monuments' is a specially designed interview guide for a workshop with children in Sneinton Primary School. Children from different age groups were asked to select **one object** from their school that is important for them and for the school itself, and to bring it to a group session. They started filling the form from the centre – drawing the object – to a circle periphery (explaining the meaning of the object). This exercise will be developed further by marking on the school plan all locations where the objects were found, and thus analysing the school's environment and its identity through a **curatorial intervention**.



4. Why would I get involved in this?

Students and volunteers:



Why participate?

- To learn how to 'read' the city not only as a conglomerate of buildings but as a place of collective relations, historical layers, flows, movements, emotions, and political and social activities; to learn how to investigate and understand the context in which we need to act
- To improve communicative skills: communicating with different people from local communities (from professionals in the field to untrained and disadvantaged people) and figuring out a way to get them involved in MapNott together was a great challenge and an excellent training for young architects, as part of their personal and professional development
- To learn to ask the right questions and be focused on finding solutions
- To meet real people, face real issues, discover real relations that take place in the public realm: the complexity of tensions and contradictions in public spaces highlights the necessity of artistic/urban/architectural/design research
- To get to know everyone's potential and place in a team: what we are really good at and in which aspects we can grow, what we really feel good doing
- To work with local and international experts, as well as to develop our skills through team work
- To enrich our portfolio with live projects
- To meet students from other disciplines and collaborate and learn from them

How was it?

→ *The most unexpected thing that happened was the uncertainty some people had with the power we were offering to them to shape our design ideas.'*

→ *'It was a surprise to find out that many of my perceptions of Sneinton were wrong.'*

→ *'I feel like those who were engaged in these community projects are more likely to take pride in their surroundings than those who don't.'*

→ 'I enjoy how this project encourages us to be pro-active in the community and ask questions; as when we get older, our curiosity and our boldness in seeking knowledge are sometimes quenched.'

→ 'I feel personally this project has opened my eyes a lot on the areas of Nottingham that are hardly known or used.'

→ 'Visiting the places was like a box with hidden treasures; as the more I learnt about the people in the area and the different things they do, the more I found appreciation for their community spirit.'

→ 'Trying to figure out how to satisfy the community's needs as a whole was difficult; while some people disliked one design, another person would really enjoy it.'

→ 'I had no idea that the final scheme was a physical installation. As a university student opportunities like this are very rare. Additionally I have met several creative and well-known international artists, which was very interesting and inspiring.'

→ 'I feel as though one of the most unexpected things for me during this project was the public reaction at Sneinton festival. In my mind I knew people would take interest in the project but seeing some of the excitement and gratitude people had during the festival was rewarding.'

→ 'I learnt a lot during this process. This was my first real insight into the life of an architect and I was amazed by the amount of thought and consideration that has to be put into project for a community.'

→ 'One of the most difficult aspects of the project was constructing the actual structure. We had a lot of requirements to meet and ideas that needed to be refined. We were also constricted by our resources so it was essential to take everything into consideration and build a structure that was everything the community needed it to be.'

Local organisations and residents:



Why participate?

- To be involved in research that investigates everyday life
- To get to know more about the area where we live
- To invest time in an efficient way in our area
- To collaborate with experts from different fields on the challenges we face and work together towards finding effective solutions

- To learn a new skill
- To get to know other people who live in the area
- To get a new community product/design/service/idea

How was it?

→ *'I've learned that even though Carrington is a small area there is still a diverse selection of businesses and personalities.'*

→ *'It was difficult to try to remember details of events from years ago.'*

→ *'A fascinating project. I would be interested to see whether this leads to any redevelopment of the area other than the planting that is already scheduled.'*

→ *'I saw the real value that a project like this could offer to Sneinton residents and groups.'*

→ *'I was bowled over by the enthusiasm from young people who interacted with the furniture at the unveiling on the festival.'*

→ *'I learnt that having a strong, dedicated team helps achieve the goals of the community. Even when resources are low, sheer determination can help move things along. I also learnt a little about the architectural design process at NTU.'*

→ *'Having so few resources was very difficult – both materials and students to help out with the project. I think the timing of the project which fell during the summer break added to this problem.'*

Artists, designers, architects



Why participate?

- To be involved in socially and economically sustainable research that investigates the borders of architecture, art, and design in contemporary global challenges (including migrations, resource scarcity, community integration and cohesion, spatial justice, ageing and growing population, alienation, and social segregation)
- To test and experiment with design processes' methodologies
- To conduct research in collaboration with experts from different disciplines
- To get to know local stakeholders and spread our professional network

- To connect teaching methods and content with reality – current issues, people, and places

How was it?

→ *'Realising how many small things are actually going on in our communities without our knowledge or acknowledgement was quite unexpected.'*

→ *'I learned that mapping is simply recording and the project needs more of an output to affect positive change.'*

→ *'Dealing with the finances and expenses of a project like this can become burdensome.'*

→ *'I had not done anything like this before – it's a very different way of thinking and designing by running a series of activities to devise the brief from the community's needs.'*

→ *'I was surprised how difficult it can be to engage students and the community in the project.'*

→ *'This is an important stage in making the places that people live more cohesive now, and improving them for the future.'*

→ *'Good architecture responds to people (users, clients, the public, stakeholders) so developing skills in listening to people and developing a conversation with them is vital for architects. Good architecture also responds to place, so "getting under the skin" of particular places is essential.'*

→ *'I learned some good techniques for community engagement, particularly the value of simple exercises that people can complete to start the process of engagement easily and the value of physical "props" – physical items other than just pictures, maps, or documents in getting people to engage and talk.'*

City authorities

Why participate?


- To be involved in research that investigates urban life and addresses social, environmental, economic, and organisational challenges
- To participate in developing a new concept, urban design, or a service in our area
- To deliver a project with tangible outcomes in our locality with limited resources
- To use a university as a knowledge resource, and its capacities in the form of students and experts

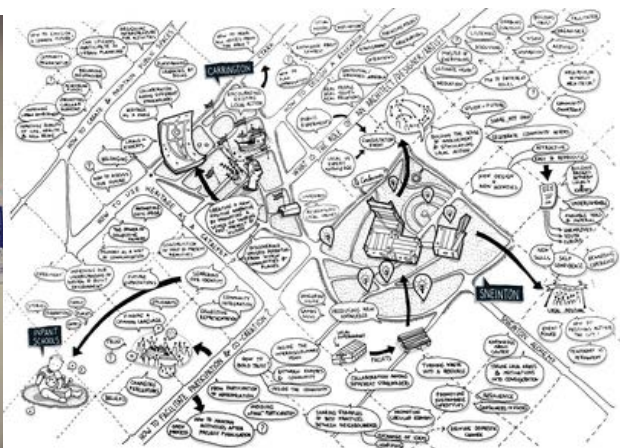
5. Results: Final Exhibition

The outcomes of intensive public engagement through Mapping Nottingham's Identity project were presented in the form of a **public exhibition** (3 September–1 October 2016). It was organised in Nottingham Central Library – a free community space, easily accessible and known to the wider public. It included a **set of workshops** that are explained in more detail in 'A participatory methods' toolkit' [see method 10].


This page briefly explains the results created in the **intersection between public engagement and creative practices**.

1. Co-creation of Knowledge

| | |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Participation lies at the heart of this project. In several experiments participants planned, explored, discussed, engaged, designed, and made things together. Anyone could participate in the project, in any way and at any time to ensure inclusivity and flexibility. The agenda and outcome were not predetermined, which made the process exciting and challenging as ideas evolved and changed as necessary. The process included dealing with time management, negotiating different expectations, accepting risk as part of the process, identifying responsibilities, finding a common language, fighting our egos, and building mutual trust. Every mistake was a way of learning. Improvisation was imperative for the project's success.</p> |
|--|---|




2. Mapping your identity

| | |
|---|---|
|  <p>We build ourselves out of our stories.</p> | <p>Engaging with primary school pupils was a very important part of the project: we wanted to start dialogues about issues of identity and belonging, as well as promote an awareness of the built environment.</p> |
|---|---|



3. Mapping Carrington's identity

| | |
|---|---|
|  <p>I am aware that the space in which I live is something bigger than the space I occupy.</p> | <p>In collaboration with Carrington Tenants' and Residents' Association (CTARA), we started getting to know Carrington through speaking to the residents about local stories, heritage, current activities, and collective memory. By asking them to draw a map of their neighbourhood as they imagine it, we identified places with the strongest community narrative. This small area is bursting with neighbourhood spirit and heritage legacy. We believe that in the years to come, we will be able to use design techniques to amplify good practices that are already taking place in Carrington, and thus inspire new ones. The main potential of this area lies in creative and active individuals, as well as great links and communication between the local community, Nottingham City Council, and local businesses.</p> |
|---|---|



4. Mapping Sneinton's identity

I am aware that I don't need to own the space to be able to have it. Public space belongs to everybody, not to nobody.



Discovery of Sneinton's very active and engaged community inspired us to design and create a common resource that will strengthen the existing links between the various community groups, and inspire new ones in the future. In collaboration with Sneinton Alchemy, kNott (the modular furniture as seen on display) was designed and created through dialogue with the various local community organisations in order to fulfil a number of different functions from community kitchen furniture to a performance stage. Through mapping the work and collaborative links of these organisations, we identified community needs and motivations. kNott is not only an object – it represents and encourages cooperation and trust. kNott elements are now stored and used in Sneinton Market, and will be combined and exchanged among organisations in Sneinton when necessary. Material was kindly donated from the local supermarket TWO J. A DIY guide will enable the future growth of the structure on the basis of the community's capacity and needs.



5. "Loading..." area

This part of the exhibition evolved during the public engagement workshops.



My presence gives form to a place, my memories sustain continuity.

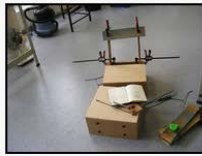
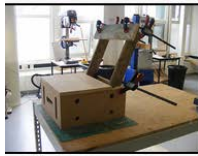
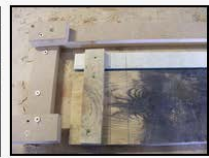


6. Discussion in pictures:





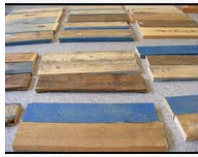
/ presenting /
/ reviewing /
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ethnographic
research



8 on site sessions



prototyping



designing the
process



focusing on
sustainability



workshop with
84 pupils



communicating
through action



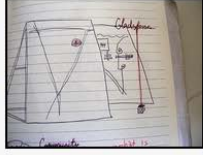
reacting to
existing social
and architectural
conditions



stimulating local
action



5 workshops with
participants



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ⁱ Ethical committee review clearance for this research was obtained from the School of Architecture, Design and the Built Environment, Nottingham Trent University. All images and data have been included with the kind permission of all participants. Unless acknowledged otherwise, all pictures are ours.