

# Art & Social Cohesion a writing retreat

The Taking Yourself Seriously Project set out to explore the relationship between community arts and social cohesion with particular reference to sustainability of projects - beyond the immediate context.

The Taking Yourself Seriously project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Connected Communities Programme. This programme seeks to encourage community co-produced living knowledge that directly works with, not on communities. The funding aimed to explore the role of artists in social cohesion projects in partnership with ARVAC, the Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sectors. At the end of the project, the project team gathered together in Sheffield to reflect on the findings and to consider what we learned. We were joined by Sharon Hutchings, from ARVAC.

We came together as one group, enacting social cohesion in practice. The purpose of the writing retreat was to explore what everyone had been working on and how it all fits together. It was an opportunity to listen to each other and to hopefully learn more together about the ways in which artistic methodologies can inform social cohesion.





#### Literature review on Arts Methodologies for Social Cohesion: Summary

Our Taking Yourselves Seriously project draws on a larger project entitled Connected Communities. The Taking Yourselves Seriously project considers what artists do when they work in communities? The project aims to explore how artists work in communities, with a particular focus on social cohesion. We are interested in the specific qualities artists brought to community development work. This review outlines some of our key findings.

An extended literature review has been created which considers the use of arts methodologies for social cohesion. The extended literature review will be published on the Taking Yourselves Seriously Project website in 2018. This shorter literature review focusses on the five themes that have emerged as part of our work with artists considering social cohesion. Drawing on these themes, the Taking Yourselves Seriously project is working with artists and using artistic approaches to consider new ways of thinking about social cohesion. Working with artistic methods can help us think about the following:

- · Issues of power and trust in communities
- Whose knowledge counts?
- · Where do we locate our understanding? In our bodies, and feelings?
- How can the arts build reflective practice in communities?



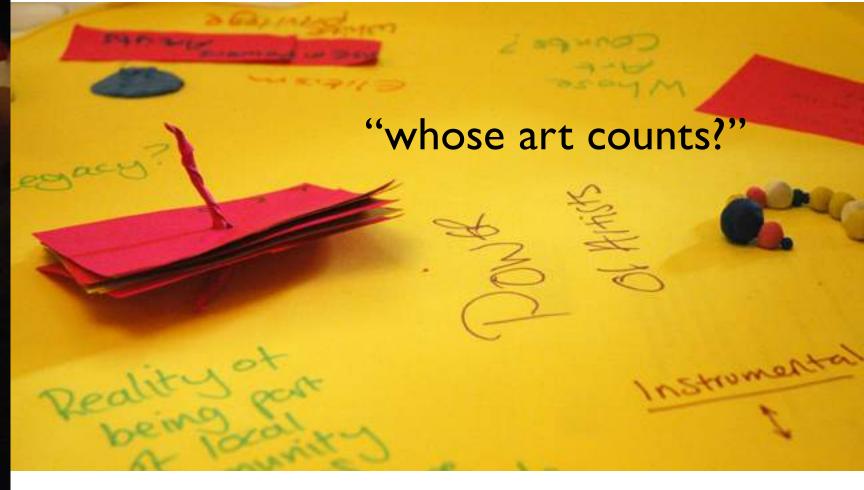
"conceptual art seemed like a strange animal"



"it's about making something"

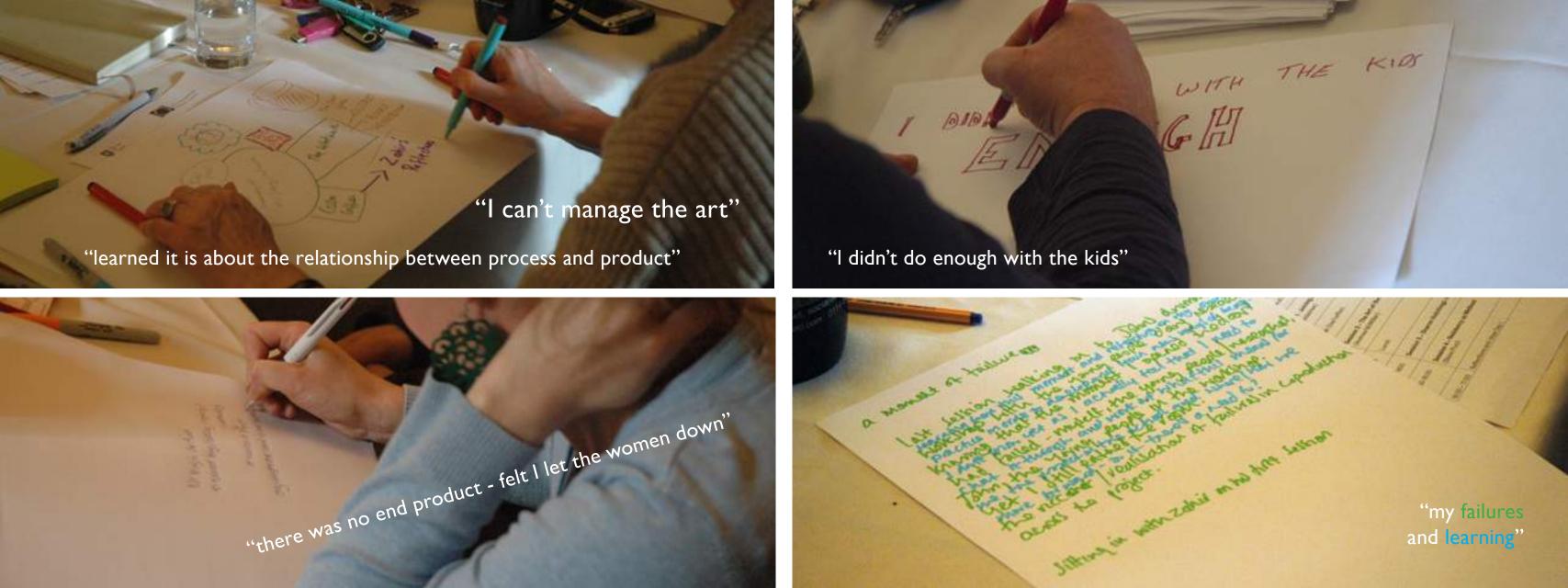


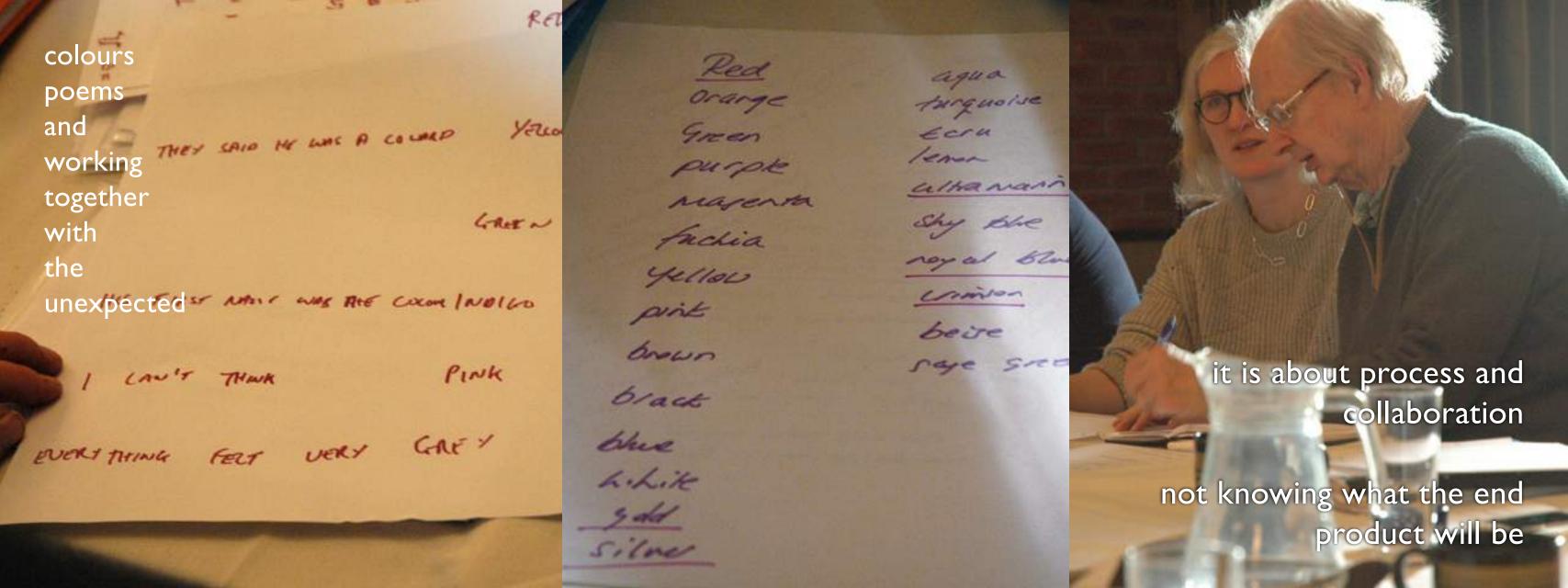




"power and context: there are many layers"







### Reclaiming the radical agenda

Sharon Hutchings

When I received the invitation to come over and share some ideas, it occurred to me that the first time I trod on Maynooth soil, in 2006, was to talk about this very same subject, 'Reclaiming the radical agenda'. I arrived on a dark, cold and uninviting winter's night. Imagine my surprise, the next day, when I found a hotbed of fire-in-the-belly radicalism in the heart of the Irish countryside! Perplexingly, however, the issues are the same today as they were then. The worrying difference is that the political context has dramatically changed, and the global crises of our times have accelerated. We urgently need to become more critical. If community development is to aspire to what it claims to do, and by this I mean practising social justice, it is not just about improving service delivery, about delivering top-down policies unquestioningly. We have to resist this attempt to colonise our minds and become diverted from our purpose. Community development is about radical, transformative change for social justice and sustainability, and this calls for us to situate our practice in its political context. Otherwise, we are easily distracted by the symptoms, rather than focusing on the root causes of discrimination. We drift along the surface of life, patting people on the head, making life a little bit better around the edges, but not lifting the lid off and going deep enough to find

"social cohesion is Just another become blacatory and cohesion in other words, we say we are working for social justice, but there is little evidence label for the perfect society like can end up delivering the very policies that are contributing to the presents, rather

Ledwith, M., & Freire, A. M. (2016). Community development in action: Putting Freire into practice. Bristol: Policy Press.

"(how) could you be more radical?" "the state wants to withdraw... dilemma: social cohesion driven by universities is a fragmented way"





"different ways of thinking"

"holding disagreement"

"by giving away authority"

# Our lottery bid

# Worldizing

\* The great sound engineer Walter Murch coined the term 'Worldizing' while working with George Lucas on the Film Amercan Graffiti in 1973. He was Struggling to balance the sounds of Wolf Mans Jacks radio show, playing on young peoples car radios across the city, with the films dialogue. Eventually he took the sound track out into the street played it through a speaker then re-recorded the sound from down the street whilst randomly moving the microphone. This process blurred the edges of the sound and allowed it to slip into the background, it mimicked the way we hear things in the world.

# residency as method

Steve Pool



"my father helped building the ship, in my back garden"

## YOUR VIEWS ON THE ISSUES "building the pirate ship ... is more about what it holistically means" Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling. The two, however, are also insufficient for dwelling so long as each busies its self with its own affairs in separation, instead of listening to the other. They are able to listen if both...belong to dwelling, if they remain within their limits and realise that the one as much as the other comes from the long workshop of long experience and incessant practice. (Heidegger 1962: p. 362; see also Latimer and Munr Email your photosto readerspics thestar.co.uk well wout to the being dumped, get it sorted a of Jared O'Mara's commit-

TRADITION, FINE ART SCULPTOR LOMMUNITY DEVALOPMENT NORK IN THE MID 1980, Adult commung learny Radical Social work chivism HOLE SYSTEM EP DEMOCRACY MMUNITY ACTIVISM

"Communities are often very vibrant ... we should look at power relationships between the academic and communities"

Parkcipatory Politics Community activism Humanities.

Social activism+ at.

Engaged English Residency Worldizing your thinking, I transmur

Currency Complicating

Charge

histories matter.

what you are doing people living forward.

WOVEN IN

benefits, lennightains. besiding and many other

Expectably at Chirammet.

"it seems important that the artist comes to the place and space of the community ... the playground, the school, the women ... "

"gets woven into what you do"

"it is an emotional space"



# TAKING YOURSELF SERIOUSLY Art and Social Cohesion - A WRITING RETREAT -

DAY 2



13 December 2017





# Artists and collaboration

- People collaborate at different levels and for some it is a new way of working and not to assume everyone understands
- Differentiate between artist working in academia, community research artists and community artists, they all work in different ways and have different expectations
- Artist involvement should be at the application writing stage
- Limited budget for artists was a big issue
- Artists have certain boundaries and their own space for creativity
- Artists like doing things, making things







project too. The contact time has been lir time, it's been inspiring connecting to ith the women you engaged in your local

im that the project was about process, the at the end. However, in order to truly sa for me anyway - it has to mean somethi ting something tangible; by the results. se it could have been something I created ional journey of these women, or a colle themselves having engaged them in a p tory/present/future by writing a piece th n shared but was written with an audien collage of their voices and experiences a er for you to observe or research an artis (for the artist) must be an authentic ain result in order to test the very process still be key. This highlights an interesti world works with the creative sector an and ways of achieving them are differe

stand out points for me is that the proce lication for funding through to the final iences needs, ideally, to be organic, with between those involved. Otherwise I for evitably unsatisfactory as an creative ex-

Kate joined the meeting - and on the tel riam at different points - the difficult thi e gap between me and the women the pr holding the two together were you guys re was your aims for research and acade arate from mine for creative purposes. E ne and the same - the route there can be ne and the same - the route there can be perspectives of individuals involved - inc

with people, let's just say 'communities'engage the artists time, and imagine that creative that term mostly (!) - the connection is the possible for artists to be part of the initial discussions are also as the possible for artists to be part of the initial discussions. satisfying prospect - and the most key, itime should be set aside for those discussions to reason I take the work. There is an exchealistic way of achieving them within the budge and results which takes place and gets mivenues I would love to explore in a project like meeting or addressing a need or desire ords in their own voice felt like having to sit on r which most suits them. It's all about thea of cohesion was key, then its wider in scope to engaging to take part in research for my lity' - it would be fascinating to engage the whi the subjects with a wealth of information get to grips with the scope of the project, how to excavate. In such a case I feel morallyhin the bigger project, read the interviews and to in return for their openness and, often, thliver a workshop to a different generation of w finding out what I might offer them by wibject matter at hand (the generational divide) w or learning process.

creative need over one or more workshop the writer. I could have spoken to them separate a bigger project, so is only one aspect or the Worked on projects where participants are a problem. All it requires is a clear sense her in a group, but once people have listened to aiming to achieve or deliver and enough writer's produced, they feel they'd like to attendesign activities which address this for that the engagement at first before they strike a result of the strike and the strike are the strike and the strike are the strike and the strike are the strike attending. So, in this case, had it been tha creative side. experience and comparing it over the gen for a one day workshop on personal writing about on the drive back participants an opportunity to work on crering of past events. Perhaps from an academic

t enough time. That was difficult for me most as so rich. If, for example, we had had more tin he difficulty of engaging a group of Asian won This doesn't mean that single workshops ins could be side-stepped by the creative endea

be a clear engagement for a one day fee. his is a point to consider. However, as commun

voice and use it, and no doubt you would bout them, then I believe that tells us something ho attended the workshop. Often when I on their experiences from the work and diput what that time/person/gesture meant to us at

### Ideas that contributed to the dream and what disturbs it

- The star fish story each one matters
- Actively finding connections



### an ecological view

### Exploring what social cohesion means to us

Vicky Ward Panni Loh

Taking Yourselves Seriously Project Rutland Hotel, Sheffield - 21st February 2017

### Discovery questions (work in pairs)

- Is there something that gives you hope that there can be good relations between people of d backgrounds?
- Can you think of a time when you benefitted from more social cohesion than you perhaps ex situation?
- What are the benefits of social cohesion that you would talk about if you were making a pres national context?

### The personal IS political

- Individual interactions everyday encounters
- How we relate to neighbours may seem everyday but it can be at the heart of social cohesi
- Public displays of solidarity communities, neighbour to neighbour
- The big movements eg against the Poll Tax is about democracy emphasise what we are for
- Space to open up conversations directly, and seed sowing, then can get watered in other c
- Increasing understanding and acceptance of different cultures / communities / religions / lar
- Is social cohesion a big con? Who controls the issues, who benefits from separation divide





"we thought about mentoring, about the power of telling stories" "the project is experienced as a challenge" "huge amount of learning" "art is in the background... why does it matter to bring in artists, what skills are important?' "what is art offering?" "the presence of the artist!" "whose voices are heard?"







### local government

•••

#### narrative

Legacy: book, CD with wrapped cover as recognition for women's stories and work in project - a tool that can be used in the community.

Suggest contacting the women if they want to participate in meeting about this, then invite the artist.

With thanks to all participants of this writing retreat:

Kate Pahl Manchester Metropolitan University, Principle Investigator

John Diamond Edge Hill University, mentor to Kate Pahl Katy Goldstraw Edge Hill University, Research Associate

Steve Pool Artist and Consultant

Andrew McMillan Manchester Metropolitan University, Co-investigator

Panni Loh Artist, Critical Thinking Group

Mariam Shah Oral Historian, the Clifton Girls Project

Zanib Rasool Community Co-investigator

Sharon Hutchings Nottingham Trent University, Association for Research in the Voluntary and

Community Sector (ARVAC)

Patrick Meleady Pitsmoor Adventure Playground

Mike Fitter Convenor of the Critical Thinking Group

Vicky Ward Community development worker, Critical Thinking Group

Waheed Akhter Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Critical Thinking Group

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If you are interested in finding out more please contact Kate Pahl on k.pahl@mmu.ac.uk



