STRANGE TIMES

The creation of a nomadic community education Imaginary

Helen Louise Mycroft

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Strange Times: the creation of a nomadic community education Imaginary

"Like Deleuze, I believe in the world and want to be in it. I want to be in it all the way to the end of it because I believe in another world in the world and I want to be in that. And I plan to stay a believer, like Curtis Mayfield. But that's beyond me, and even beyond me and Stefano, and out into the world, the other thing, the other world, the joyful noise of the scattered, scatted eschaton, the undercommon refusal of the academy of misery."

(Fred Moten, with Stefano Harney, 2013 p.125)

Acknowledgements

To all the constellations: #TeachNorthern #DancingPrincesses, #ReImagineFE, #APConnect, #FEResearch, #ukfechat, #PDNorth, #FEForestSchool, #JoyFE💛 - thank you for your courageous spirit. You are the future of education and the engine room of change.

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To Fraser, my lamb, for your pride in me and all the hope you give me that this world has a future (and for those three days in Edinburgh with Connie when – suddenly - I had chapters). I love you.

Finally, this research is dedicated to the memory of my dad, John Fareham (footballer and plumber), who always wanted me to be a 'doctor'. Be careful what you wish for my darling Dee.

Lou Mycroft
The Meadows, Edinburgh, October 2020

Abstract

"Community education would be an act of courage. A leap of faith.
A reimagining of ourselves and each other."

Participant 42

The intention of this research is to re-think English community education through a set of posthuman lenses, in order to re-imagine how it might adapt to make an effective contribution to twenty-first century lives.

The definition of 'community education' proved slippery throughout, and my conception of it shifted a great deal throughout the lifetime of this research. If I could not pin it down, I hope at least to have held it still enough to stabilise the findings.

Posthumanism offers the research a set of navigational tools, rather than a philosophy for life (though it can do that too). Instead of a traditional literature review, a posthuman 'cartography' attempts to map a political and theoretical landscape which guides the development of a bespoke methodology and inspires activist projects which run alongside the research and inform it in turn. Overlaid on this theoretical map is the material from a mass observation survey which engaged just under 400 participants from an intentionally broad demographic (not just community educators). A final layer is provided by the mapping of an affirmative 'posthuman' ethics.

The threads of enquiry which emerged are presented as a Community Education Imaginary, with existing and potential activist projects woven in and some recommendations for action identified. Five 'lines of flight' were identified, for research and activism. The writer is accompanied by a symbolic 'companion species' in the posthuman style: the figuration of the Bowerbird🌳 represents the affirmative ethics of the piece, which are woven through the narrative.

The Imaginary presents a whole-hearted vision of community education as being a practice of care, diversity, equality, joy, love, openness, place, trust and unity. This has implications for the role of the educator, 'teacher'-training and professional identity, design and pedagogy, political influence, funding and organisational 'structure'. It is both practical and unapologetically utopian, containing within it the seeds of radical hope.

The research narrative sprawls across centuries, philosophies, services and projects. I hope to find enough 'crossing places' to tell a coherent story.

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Orientation

The research aim was to render **invisible** the 'noise' made by conventional understandings, assumptions and structures of community education, in order to make **visible** thinking which is already present in the "*undercommons*" (Moten and Harney, 2013). This was made possible by employing a bespoke, critically posthuman methodology, a specific combination of lenses which surface the currently invisible.

The **Foreword** introduces the two protagonists of this encounter (**community education** and **posthuman thinking**) and recognises the circumstances of their meeting during the Covid-19 lockdown of 2020. It acknowledges the complex interplay between *research as knowledge creation* and *research as concurrent activism* in the section entitled **Joyful Militancy**.

This section also provides a working definition of community education, to stabilise the piece. There are many claims on the term, and this threatened to derail the research. The working definition attempts to recognise the breadth of this strange family of education settings, even where they do not recognise or acknowledge one another. 'Community education' is thus defined as:

Intentional adult and intergenerational learning which takes place *communally*, i.e., with others, physically or virtually.

Chapter 1 introduces eight guiding concepts, which construct a directional framework for all aspects of the research.

In place of a traditional Literature Review, **Chapter 2** provides – and argues for – a cartographical approach which brings together philosophical, political and activist thinking. It provides theoretical underpinnings for both **community education** and **posthuman thinking,** whilst at the same time mapping connections and exposing power relations.

Chapter 3 considers the research ethics, which are defined and defended as practised, nomadic, affirmative, connected and embodied.

The research methodology is explored in **Chapter 4**. This chapter provides a reflective and practical account of creating a bespoke, posthuman methodology.

Chapter 5 concerns a similar construction, of a four-stage bespoke analysis of the research material. This is introduced, defended and explained.

Subsequently, in **Chapter 6**, participant contributions are introduced and explored, post-analysis. **Chapter 7** discusses the 'crossing places', a discussion of what emerged from the analysis of material. It includes consideration of the values of the piece and how these might be enacted in activist project.

Chapter 8 provides the 'lines of flight' for future activism. These lines of flight combing the 'crossing places' of Chapter 7 with the practice values which emerged from the research as a whole. This chapter connects to a live 'padlet', through which activist ideas can be operationalised with others working in the field.

Chapter 9 is a conclusion to the work, which brings all the threads together…and cuts them. A brief epilogue in **Chapter 10** is an acknowledgement of hope and possibility.

Research Aims and Questions

Within an overall aim of making the visible invisible, in order to imagine something different for community education from what we have now, or have had in the past, the specific research aims – enshrined in two questions – were diffracted. Diffraction, as we shall see, aims to go beyond mirroring to embrace difference and this interpretation enabled me to avoid the questions being a limiting force. Instead, they became a flexible guide, ensuring I didn't get lost, but allowing for the occasional detour.

Could a re-imagined community education enable those involved to strengthen their sense of agency, leading to informed and engaged decision-making relating to personal choices and public life

Could it be re-invented outside of state provision, in a way that makes it accessible to all? How might this be possible?

Foreword: The Joyful Noise of the Undercommons

Every PhD is compelled to add to the sum of human knowledge; that is its *raison d'être*. In many cases, this is achieved by finely contextualising the experiment, in others knowledge is genuinely new and yet others bring protagonists into planes of encounter, to observe a process of catalysis which could, of course, result in a damp squib. This dissertation[1] belongs to the latter category in that it attempts to mobilise via **posthuman thinking** a genuinely fresh perspective on English **community education**. Put simply, we need new tools – and new language - if we want to imagine something new. It is a fundamental assumption of this research that off-the-shelf methodologies and tick-box ethics will guide us inexorably to what we already know. What follows is an attempt to test that assumption and do something different, rather than doing the same thing differently.

The underpinning research question could be paraphrased, after Erin Manning (2016), as "*what else could community education be?*" To keep this space genuinely open, the posthuman lens works to stay within the 'encounter' (staying with the trouble, as Donna Haraway (2015) might say), resisting the gravitational pull of what community education is now, is limited to become, or used to be[2] and working *together* to be completely in the here and now of moving forward affirmatively on a dying planet (Ulmer, 2017). Findings are presented as a **Community Education Imaginary**, a phrase borrowed from anthropology, where it is used to describe meaning-making around culture and identity (Wolf, 1999)[3].

There is no posthuman literature on community education that I have found. This is genuinely new territory, full of tension and likely to be messy. To employ a standard methodology would be to find solutions for things we already have answers for and in a rapidly changing world that seems like a monumental waste of time. The research is looking for, "*...the clarity of the radically new and absolutely simple idea, which catches as it were, an intuition*." (Bergson, 1998). This makes it a risky venture. Having no methodological roadmap it's impossible to see the destination or whether anything "*radically new and absolutely simple*" could come out of the material at all. But in these apocalyptic times (Ulmer, 2017) maybe a single throw of the die is a worthy endeavour.

The research does have a methodology and ethics, just not one that had an identifiable and pre-formed shape at the start. The methodology arose out of reading and activism. The ethics likewise; they are personified by the figuration – and related emoji - of The Bowerbird🌳 whose presence throughout the narrative is a reminder to be guided by affirmative values. The goal - not just to end the troubles of community education (which are well documented and which will be summarised) **but to end the structures which cause those troubles**. The process

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[1] Conventionally in the UK, the written submission for a PhD is known as a thesis. This word is also used in an Hegelian sense to set up an opposition and some form of victory or consensus: thesis – antithesis – synthesis. I have chosen instead to use the term 'dissertation', which is more widely used on the European mainland.

[2] Within a given spectrum of 'truth': Duffy's "rosy retrospection" (2018, p.238).

[3] Sociological definitions of 'imaginary' (Althusser, Taylor, Appadurai) are not implied here.

emerges from an "*undercommon refusal of the academy of misery*", the term described by Moten and Harney (2013, p7) as a "*joyful noise*", a "*tentative holding in place of fragile comings-into-relation, physical and virtual, that create the potential to reorient fields of life-living,*" (Manning, 2016 p.8). The research questions will be answered collaboratively and as far as possible without recourse to old frames of reference, by those who are already present in the space and those onlookers who were moved to contribute. It therefore stands a chance of challenging the *'monument'* (Braidotti, 2011) of what community education is perceived innately to be (which is of course not innate at all, but a series of social constructs) and maybe even start to tear down some of the *'documents'* - procedures, processes, policies - which uphold it.

Time for this "*subversive intellectual*[4]" (Halberstam, 2013) to introduce the two protagonists whose convergence will hopefully spark something new.

The Protagonists

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[4] The subversive intellectual, "*enjoys the ride and wants it to be faster and wilder; she does not want a room of his or her own, she wants to be in the world, in the world with others and making the world anew.*" (Halberstam, 2013, p.9).

Protagonist: Posthuman Thinking

Critical posthumanism as defined by Braidotti (2018) is a convergence: of posthumanism (critique of the humanist ideal of 'Man') and post-anthropocentrism (human exceptionalism).

"*The exemplary human that no body can approximate*," write posthuman architects Shaw and Duman (2019) about Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, reclaimed in Enlightenment times as the zenith of the human - and the architectural - form; an assumption which persisted through the many years of colonisation that followed. Some bodies come closer to this iconic aspiration of humanity than others: indeed Bignall (2019) claims that the further you are away from the human 'ideal', the closer you are to death. Posthumanism critiques this "*Vitruvian Mannery*" (Shaw and Duman, 2019); it is in fact 'post-Vitruvian'. I will use the term Vitruvian Mannery throughout this dissertation.

Post-anthropocentrism challenges the idea that humans have an unique and exceptional role on Earth, by writing back into the picture living and non-human agents, such as animals, rivers, technology (and the earth's materials which make it possible, amidst blood and war[5]). The notion that anything non-human could have rights is challenging to Western thought[6], where women's and children's rights, never mind the rights of humans of colour, are a relatively recent phenomenon. Being transdisciplinary, posthumanism claims international lawyers among its ranks and they have won some notable victories: the Whanganui river in New Zealand was granted legal rights in 2017 (O'Donnell and Talbot-Jones, 2018) and in 2020 wild beavers were granted legal right to remain on the River Otter in Devon, south west England (Countryfile, 2020).

How can this challenging philosophical stance provide tools which will help free community education from the chains of its complicated history and (low) expectations? There are so many taken for granted 'truths' hardwired into the structures of community education that stripping back the layers is an unfathomable task, not least because the weight of assumption is so heavy that the thinker will find it difficult to withstand "*the gravitational pull of the old*," (Braidotti, 2019, p.214). A significant disruption is necessary to unsettle the norms, assumptions and givens: to make the visible, invisible. The decentring of 'white man' from human, and 'human' from all other forms of life, might just do it.

This posthuman 'frame' provides a lens with which to trouble the structures and systems of a setting where, typically, adults return to education "*having successfully diagnosed themselves as the problem*" (Moten and Harney, 2013 p.36). Moten and Harney are referring to the neo-liberal university, but this is equally true of adult community education students following a state-funded path. Being largely drawn from the least advantaged in society (HOLEX, 2020) they

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[5] See Wan (2019) on the necropolitics of coltan mining (for mobile phones) in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
[6] Non-human agents as spiritual entities are part of indigenous traditions across the world (Kimmerer, 2020).

don't fit the Enlightenment ideal of 'man' and are in some way 'othered' from society's privilege, whilst maintaining the privilege of being human.

The purpose of the posthuman lens is to see beyond not only the *monument* (Braidotti, 2011) of community education but also the "*standpoint from which* [the current system] *makes sense*", to paraphrase Halberstam (2013, p.8) with reference to Frantz Fanon and colonialism. As the **Orientation** suggests, I am attempting here to make the dominantly visible, invisible. At the same time, a post-anthropocentrist approach provides an opportunity for humans to connect with more humility to the world around them, temporally, emotionally and physically. Without this vital disruption to the norms of thinking, any re-imagining will be impossible.

Protagonist: Community Education

Capturing a working definition of community education proved to be a central 'trouble' (Haraway, 2015) of the research. I began with a definition of 'adult community education' most recently laid out by the 'sector representative body' HOLEX (2020), authoritative in policy terms but an uneasy place to start as this brief two-page document employs confusingly interchangeable terms[7] and excludes any 'adult' or 'community' learning not funded by the English Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)'s Adult Education Budget. Like community education's sister-service further education (FE), it reduces the traditional 'skills' agenda of adult/community education to a narrow definition of 'skills for employability', a concept which has been critiqued throughout its history for its limiting nature (see, for example, Peck and Theodore (2000), McQuaid and Lindsey (2005), Crisp and Powell (2017)). A poor place to start, even before Covid-19 shifted the landscape and the empirical material of this research showed emphatically that, when asked what community education *could be*, a definition dominated by governmental ideologies and budgets turned out to be beside the point.

When I began looking at the literature around community education, my troubles compounded. Key contemporary thinkers such as Fergal Finnegan, Mary Hamilton, Lyn Tett and others (see, for example, Finnegan and Grummell, 2020) sketched a far more expansive approach to the term, embracing youth work, family learning and what is still sometimes called 'community development'. Even before I realised how compelling the empirical material was, I did not want to reject the possibilities these more generous definitions offered: but I had tied the narrative in knots by then. It took firm guidance from my supervisors and a significant rethink for me to play with a more capacious definition which was almost the reverse silhouette of the HOLEX (2020) conceptualisation: what is left when everything funded by the Adult Skills Budget is cut away. Of course, this is still not the answer. In a rapidly changing world, adults need to re-skill and prepare themselves for jobs of the immediate future that we can't even imagine now (World Economic Forum, 2018). If community education has a future, it must embrace both: preparing

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[7] 'Adult community education', 'community education', 'community learning'; but ironically not 'adult education', which is the language used in the ESFA funding stream which defines the HOLEX conceptualisation: Adult Education Budget.

adults for work *and* life (citizenship, relationships, leisure). In writing up this dissertation, I try to hold in place – just long enough – a definition of 'community education' which is:

> **Intentional adult and intergenerational learning which takes place** *communally*, **i.e. with others, physically or virtually.**

This excludes the interesting tangent proposed by some research participants, which came to the fore in material collected during the initial Covid-19 lockdown of 2020: learning skills such as sourdough baking via YouTube or other online platforms *where that learning is a solitary experience.* Where a family is learning together, or where a social media platform connects the experiences of students to deepen the learning experience, it is community education. It excludes individuals sitting back-to-back in a community centre, working silently through an online course, *unless the pedagogy intentionally includes class discussion.*

It includes what is left of post-19 further education and those 'adult continuing education' programmes that still continue at UK universities (very few, but notable examples still exist, e.g. Oxford University's summer adult education programme). Other former university provision has continued as stand-alone community enterprises, such as Leicester Vaughan College, and new providers established – or revived – such as the Free University of Brighton ("education for love not money") and the extension of the Co-operative College into a Co-operative University.

Post-19 Institutes for Adult Learning with roots in the movement for working-class education from a decade ago survive – the residential colleges Northern and Fircroft, Richmond and Hillcroft, Ruskin, plus City Lit and Working Men's (now part of Morley College) and that national survivor the Workers' Educational Association (WEA).

Community education is also youth work – with its separate trajectory, history and literature which was a step too far for the cartography of this research - and community development initiatives, often project-based and situated in the voluntary/community/social enterprise world frequently referred to as the 'third sector'[8]. Family – or, more broadly, intergenerational – learning has its own history, literature and presence and both family, youth and community education projects keep an occasional foothold in the narrower sector defined by HOLEX (2020).

I could not do justice to all these literatures in a lifetime, never mind the lifetime of a PhD. The cartography is therefore selective – and subjective. My own positionality emerges from a career which patchily spans much of this breadth: from an HIV worker dispensing free condoms, through nearly two decades at an Institute for Adult Learning, a brief spell as a social enterprise 'consultant'; now a nomadic educator who also trains charities in ethical marketing. To paraphrase Gillian Rose (1997, p.316*) "we are situated not by what we know but by what we uncertainly perform"* and I am a crosser of lines, possessor of a complicated vantage point which threatened the stability of the research.

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[8] A term also subject to contestation; see for example Taylor (2020), where Olaf Corry describes the sector rather pleasingly as 'unruly'.

Eventually I realised that everyone assumes their own definition and that there was nothing existing which would provide the anchor I needed. In avoiding Donna Haraway's 'God Trick' (1998, p.581) – the truth-seeking, transcendent eye - I nearly fell for Rose's 'Goddess Trick' (1997, p.311), the illusion that it's possible to answer big questions of positionality, reflexivity and situatedness. Avoiding the Goddess Trick means accepting that "*we cannot know everything*" (ibid. p.319) and that a modest 'good enough' will allow us to reliably glimpse just a little more than we already know. At the very end of the research, I pinned the vast and contradictory landscape of community education into the working definition, above, and returned to the beginning of this dissertation to recalibrate my thinking.

Covid-19 - Stepping out of Time

The unique (and unintentional) timing of this research, bridging as it does the first wave of the Covid-19 epidemic in England in 2020, provides a further counterpoint. The disruption to 'life as normal' during months of lockdown, when people were told to stay in their homes unless their work was essential to the basic functioning of society, meant that lives were suddenly being lived online and access to 'community education' was beamed into living rooms as (some) people exercised with Joe Wicks, learned to paint with Grayson Perry or danced alongside Oti Mabuse and her family, for instance.

The timing of this dissertation will mean there is little research to draw on about the uptake of these activities and certainly we won't know about Covid's impact on life in the future. The velocity of life under advanced capitalist conditions (Virilio, 2002) is such that any piece of research is moving out of date the moment it's submitted. But it was impossible to ignore such a schism, and so the original survey which attracted 363 participants was revised and re-sent, to see if the disruption to everyday life had also provided a disruption to thinking. Thirty-six participants responded to this post-lockdown 'Take Two'.

In this pause to 'normal life' there is an opportunity to step out of time. Community education has been largely suspended in England and its future seems more uncertain than ever. The posthuman lens has a temporal element, not only in its reframing of 'literature review' as 'cartography[9]' but in its determination to draw on previously ignored indigenous patterns of thought, which see time very differently from Western notions of 'progress' (Kimmerer, 2020). As part of *my* stepping out of time to process this research during the Covid months of 2020, I was influenced by the Walking Lab's 'research-creation', which "*is the interrelated practices of art, theory and research*," (Truman and Springgay, 2016). They used performance art-based walking tours to take a temporal misstep (Springgay and Truman, 2019) in order to unsettle conventional understandings of past, present and future. Their walking tours introduced companion non-human species, made artifacts and natural phenomena, all of which hold equal status to the humans. This research does not use art in the same way, nor does it operate in the

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[9] Cartography - literature relevant to the subject which honours and develops a genealogy of thinking whilst at the same time mapping connections and exposing power relations (Braidotti, 2019).

settler context of Springgay and Truman's Canada, where reaching back in time means encountering a history of peoples whose experiences have been "*preferably unheard*" (Roy, 2004). What it attempts to do is to ask a provocative question couched in the language of possibilities (Giroux, 2014) and analyse it through a posthuman frame which has problematised the status quo of community education in England and where that service sits in a troubled world. My 'companion species' serves as a reminder to me to practice an affirmative ethics throughout the project. I have chosen The Bowerbird for reasons explained below.

The participant material (approximately 45,000 words) will be further troubled by three figurations which arise out of the posthuman cartography - Vitruvian Mannery💪, Rhizomes🌱 and Constellations🌙[10] and out of this process will ultimately come the lines of flight by which the Imaginary is presented. The 'stepping out of time' - aided serendipitously by the Covid 'pause' - will attempt to de-centre Vitruvian Man from 'human', the individual human from its central place in consciousness and community education from the ties that bind it to what it is and always has been. I can only hope that by keeping thinking open, some measure of the conclusions will be usable in any new world which ensues.

Joyful Militancy

The activism of the "*subversive intellectual*" (Halberstam, 2013) is probably the messiest element of this dissertation; and the riskiest. Beyond the stated ethics of the piece, there was no standing back in the name of 'clean' research. If an opportunity for activism presented itself, it was taken, and this, in turn, influenced future analysis. The activism I have been involved in is already showing the potential for change and is included in the final Imaginary, with full disclosure. The emerging culture of communities of practice (in posthuman terms, Constellations🌙) is marked by publications by me and others along the way, some of which can be found in Appendix B. It would have been unethical to delay activism inspired by the research.

My determination to weave activism into this research was due, in part, to an emerging interest in "*joyful militancy*" (a term coined by Montgomery and bergman[11] in 2017, which shares the same Spinozean genealogy as this cartography). Joy as defined by Spinoza is 'immanent' (i.e. not belonging to some transcendental 'God in a cloud'). It is present in the connections between people and in the relational energy that erupts in activism in these constellations, which Brown (2017, p.130) terms "*collective assembly*" whilst honouring Durkheim's 1912 notion of "*collective effervescence*" (ibid., p.130). In the spaces where we discussed this research, connections were made and activism happened which in turn re-informed the research. No claim is made for the sterility of metaphorical 'laboratory conditions' and, to cite Ruthie Wilson Gilmore:

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[10] This is the first time that the reader has encountered the emojis which accompany the three figurations and of course The Bowerbird🌳. They are included to indicate movement and animation; as guides through this dense document. The use of emojis has been an engaging component of much of the activism featured in the Imaginary.

[11] Like bell hooks, carla bergman chooses to express her name in lower case.

"…in scholarly research, answers are only as good as the further questions they provoke, while for activists, answers are as good as the tactics they make possible."

(Gilmore, 2006, p.27)

This research is only as good as the activism it continues to seed and inspire.

Summary

This foreword sets the scene for the dissertation that follows. It provides the context in which posthuman thinking and English community education encounter one another in research and activism during the Covid 'pause'. It introduces the 'companion species' figuration of The Bowerbird 🌳 whose presence throughout the narrative indicates that an affirmative ethics is being practised.

In the next chapter, we encounter some of the key theoretical concepts which frame the work and inform its practice.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> "*How do we get different people from different walks of life in a room*
> *together and really developing a deep connection with one another?*"
>
> <div align="right">Participant 11</div>

This research attempts to use a complex series of philosophies, layered, unlayered and re-layered with meaning over centuries, as a set of practical navigational tools, with which to take a fresh look at a familiar concept: English community education. This posthuman 'toolkit' includes a theoretical cartography, the analytical figurations of Vitruvian Mannery💪, Constellations🪝 and Rhizomes🌱, as well as the multi-purpose Bowerbird🌳 Their origins and purpose will unfold, below.

Critical posthumanism is a "*process ontology*", as defined by Braidotti, (2006, p.199):

> "*…a nomadic activity, which takes place in the transitions*
> *between potentially contradictory positions.*"

A posthuman ontology is anchored to its time and place through a *critical cartography* (see Chapter 2), a genealogy which honours previous thinking whilst at the same time making connections and reading power in the here and now. Yet the thinking – nomadic and subjective – is open to challenge and change. It's a way of seeing the world as journeys, rather than destinations. It is a process ontology which embraces activism, defined as *potentia* energy driven by an affirmative ethics.

It is important to the ethics of the project that anyone who wishes to do so can read and understand the dissertation, but there is tension when trying to express complex ideas in readable language without flattening nuance, a subject of long-running debate in educational research (see, for example, Giroux's challenge of Apple, 1992). I have endeavoured to be as clear as possible in the words I have chosen, whilst remaining respectful of a complexity of ideas, thinking and material.

To continue the journey metaphor of a process ontology, the many activists who have inspired me to all express versions of Horton and Freire's "*we make the road by walking*" (1990) and my own journeying is written explicitly into these pages as a pedagogical tool and story of possibility for others, meaning that the style is a narrative, storytelling one. It is my hope that the reader will think of this as a 'book' of praxis, one which offers both provocations and practice ideas. To paraphrase Sitrin and Colectiva Sembrar (2020, p.xxiv):

> "*The stories in this* [research]*, in different ways, manifest the sort of society*
> *we could have and, in fact, already have. [*My*] invitation with these pages is for*
> *you, dear reader, to garner some inspiration together with concrete ideas for*
> *how to engage and expand the project that exists.*"

What makes this a PhD is that it contributes to new knowledge by systematically interrogating a working definition of community education through a specific set of posthuman lenses, weaving in the perspectives of nearly 400 ethically surveyed individuals. It uses techniques of advanced academic inquiry to substantiate conclusions drawn - however tentatively - and recommendations made, including a robust and theorised defence via written and oral examination.

This 'legend' below introduces guiding concepts which are intended to ease understanding of what follows. Reader, you will encounter these concepts over and again, sometimes accompanied by a social media 'emoji' as a navigational tool. I hope you will find them useful.

1.1 Glossary: Legend of the Map

In any significantly large piece of narrative, it is difficult to know where to begin, but maps always know where the starting point is – a list of symbols satisfyingly called a 'legend' (OED, 2016). Noting the synergy between journeying metaphors of 'legend' and 'cartography', I offer some definitions of concepts used throughout the dissertation. This is an attempt to re-map the assumed norms of community education which will be addressed below, to make the invisible visible, in the hope of dislocating the reader just enough to challenge their own assumptions and provoke some "*critique, possibility and broad-based political change*" (Giroux, 2014 p.22). In a very real sense, I am writing to educate - to process for myself six years of learning and activism and to communicate it to others in what Giroux and McLaren refer to as a language of possibility, which helps us to:

> *"create knowledge/power relations in which multiple narratives and social practices are constructed around a politics and pedagogy of difference that offers students the opportunity to read the world differently, resist the abuse of power and privilege and envision alternative democratic communities."*
>
> (Giroux and McLaren, 1992 p.220)

Reimagining community education is a collective effort and whilst I've made every attempt to do justice to the voices of contributors, a limitation of the research is that ultimately, just one person is bringing it all together from her own individual standpoint (Appendix C), and this has caveats, as I will further explore. It is my intention to publish widely and diffractively - not just academic papers but journalism and social media - inviting fresh ideas and hopefully providing inspiration for others to act according to their own spheres of influence (Eddo-Lodge, 2020).

1.1.2 The 'gravitational pull' of language

The legend takes as its starting point the belief that the language we use fundamentally shapes the way we think (Boroditsky, 2011) and that the 'project'[12] of advanced capitalism has infiltrated

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[12] Neither a project nor a conspiracy but the doxa or ideology of neoliberalism which is so dominant it is considered by a significant and powerful majority to be 'common sense' (Hall and O'Shea, 2013).

the lexicon of education so effectively that, to make the visible invisible, language itself has to be disrupted, in pursuit of disentangling rather than deciphering any given 'truths' (Barthes, 1967). Surplus meanings will be generated; it is the intention of this research to be clear that 'a' meaning is selected and consistently used, rather than 'the' meaning authoritatively imposed. As a guiding example, consider Braidotti's framework for 'posthuman convergence' in pursuit of an affirmative politics:

> *"This method of working draws explicit and acknowledged cross-connections in the hope of being able to constitute planes of encounter and shared work platforms."*

(Braidotti, 2019, p123)

Although more lyrical than many partnership working statements, the above quotation *could* be implemented in a conventional, neoliberalist sense, so efficiently does neoliberalism[13] mirror the language of affect: it could be used for a research steering group, for example. However, where conventional hierarchies remain in place:

> *"This relational activity is not dependent solely upon the supervising control of a transcendent consciousness that centralizes and ordains the information according to a hierarchy of sensorial and cognitive material."*

(ibid.)

A rejection of transcendence is key to the reading of this dissertation and its use as an essential tool in dealing with the persuasive discourse of neoliberalism is explored further below. Posthumanism follows the Spinozean tradition of *immanence*, rather than the dominant 'truth-seeking' tradition of *transcendence* and that's the difference in interpretation. Braidotti's use of 'transcendent consciousness', above, implies an ontology which believes the world is categorised according to some overarching taxonomy of essential truth. This causes language to drop back into pre-conceived and often binary patterns of thinking, even when it is not being employed with the intention to manipulate. Structured, hierarchical organisations and 'sectors' have a lexicon of performativity and which encourages obedience to economic capital, creates 'busyness' and encourages a tendency to be risk-averse (Husband, 2017).

In order to challenge this and open up possibilities to see community education differently, a posthumanist ontology has been channelled as a set of navigational tools. Posthumanism, like any philosophy, has its fans and detractors; it is employed here as a pragmatic methodological tool: simply to be *useful*.

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[13] For clarity, I am defining advanced capitalism as a system of economics and neoliberalism as the ideology which upholds it.

1.1.3 Immanence

Immanence was the philosophy that sealed Spinoza's fate: his failure to retract his belief[14] led to his *herem* (or ex-communication) from the Jewish faith (Deleuze, 1988). Spinoza believed that god was *immanent*, that we each have god within us, whether we are human, animal or rock[15]. To him, all matter is essentially one, with human and non-human on a continuum but containing the same intelligent life force, which is possible to recognise in one another. He referred to this life force by the Greek word *zoë*. Differences matter, but there is no natural hierarchy, only that imposed by humans (particularly the dominant white Western male figure of Vitruvian Man (Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2019)). As Koole (2020, p.2) writes, in her review of Braidotti's *The Posthuman,*

> *"Although the posthuman subject is a reaction to the notion of human, the intent is not to reject the human but to put the human in balance with the rest of the world of which it is an immanent (inherent/integrated) part."*

Braidotti claims that, "*science has accepted we are all matter for 40 years*" (2019a p.157). She is referring of course to philosophies arising from theories of quantum physics, an informed exploration of which is outside the scope of this research but to which I found some access via the work of theoretical physicist and philosopher Karen Barad (2007). Her notion of '*agential realism*': an anti-competitive view that the world is not about the survival of the fittest but the survival of the most collaborative is compelling to this research on *community* education, since how we survive is relational.

How does this potentially abstract theory relate to the subject of this research, a re-thinking and re-imagining of community education? Firstly, it is material. It brings matter back into play which includes 'nature' and also bodies; timely, as human bodies (or body parts) continue to be traded across the world in great number, due to displacement by poverty, 'modern slavery' and war. Necro-political readings of the world (e.g. Mbembe, 2011), are no longer the subject matter of community education, if indeed they ever were, but their effects - and affects - are part of the daily life of community education students in England, playing out in local communities and through news media. This 'new materialism' includes emotions - Braidotti's "*affective turn*" (2013) – so often felt in the body yet demeaned by the logic of the Cartesian mind.

Second, it is relational, which has deep meaning to *community* education. In fact, 'community education' in its state-sanctioned sense (via Department for Education funding) rarely contains any activist sense of acting in community. As state funding for community education has become focused on what policy makers refer to as 'marginalised' or 'vulnerable'[16] people[17], 'community' has become shorthand for a certain kind of community. 'People in communities' tends not to mean leafy Cheshire villages or John Major's warm beer and cricket on the village

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[14] In 'monism' (we are all one matter), rather than dualism (body and soul are separate).

[15] Deleuze securalised Spinoza's 'god' to 'joy' (Braidotti, 2019)

[16] A step up from 'hard to reach people' which was the parlance of only a few years ago, putting the blame on people not services. I choose to use the term 'disowned people'.

green. It tends to mean the poorest communities, those estranged from the advantages of success in a neoliberal economy.

Thirdly, it is agential, which implies that our shared matter, our shared *zoë*, gives us agency - in theory at least. This research resists hypotheses, but nonetheless the theoretical position it takes, one of a Spinozean affirmative ethics, is at least hopeful that the Imaginary will call for a renewed sense of relational agency both in community education itself and in pro-social (community building) pedagogies.

To summarise, it is a different way of looking at the world *as it already exists*. The Imaginary becomes not a call to return to a 'golden age', nor a 'transformational' wish list but a re-thinking of how we can construct a new monument built on agential realist lines.

1.1.4 *Potestas* and *Potentia*

The English language utilises a single word – 'power' – to encompass the Latin (and consequently Romance) terms *potestas* and *potentia*. Here I will distinguish between the two lenses of 'power' suggested by Latin (and corresponding French) definitions:

- · *potestas/pouvoir* (hierarchy, linearity, inequality, power as usual)
- · *potentia/puissance* (rhizomatic, distributed, activist energy)

In English we conflate the two very separate notions of power explored by Spinoza, writing in Latin, and Deleuze, writing in French. This is a deeply cultural over-simplification of the nuances of power. When we use power in English, we tend only to think of *'potestas'* - power as usual. *Potentia* is not a word used commonly in English at all and certainly not in community education. It happens, of course, and is marginalised as 'activism' at best; 'radicalism' or 'do-gooding/meddling' at worst. England has powerful radical traditions from the Peasants' Revolt onwards. Yet the word 'radical' in contemporary public use has been discredited by its 'racialisation' in the Prevent counter-terrorism agenda (see Sian (2017) for a comprehensive history of this shift).

The bifurcation of 'power' into *potestas* and *potentia* provides an opportunity to re-textualise the term as it is flatly used in the English language and will be used throughout this dissertation. Every attempt will be made to remove ideological weighting from it: assumptions that *potentia* is 'positive' and *potestas* 'negative' lead to us getting entangled in binary thinking.

Analyses of power are fundamental to a *critical* posthuman approach. Amongst other aspirations, this research aims to provide,

> *"...grounded analyses of how discursive power operates today and how it provides new parameters of knowledge, while also perpetuating traditional patterns of exclusion."*

> (Braidotti, 2019, p156)

Hegel used power with the verb 'to have' – to have power in the sense of having more than the next person and maybe, too, on the assumption of it being a finite resource: a competitive, social Darwinist view. Spinoza used both *potestas* and *potentia* with the verb 'to be' – literally enacting your capacity in relations with others: an anti-competitive, mutualist view. At the heart of the 'Joyful Militancy' approach to activism (Montgomery and bergman, 2017) is the channelling of *potentia* energy and the *potentia* activism inspired by this research continues alongside it and re-informs it, in ways which will be impossible to disentangle.

At the start of the research, it was difficult to see any uprising of *potentia* activism in community education. The Community Learning and Mental Health Research Project 2015-18 (CLMH[18]) (DfE, 2018; Mycroft, 2018, 2019a) revealed a workforce which was disconnected, geographically disparate, contractually precarious (ETF, 2019) and petrified in a Bergsonian sense[19] (Foley, 2013) by the indignities of the policy rollercoaster. This research considers whether there is a need to see community education in a broader sense[20] written back into policy reform, whilst bearing in mind Moten and Harney's (2013, pp73-4) warnings about the limitations of policy, which they refer to in terms of credit and debt (those who don't make policy being always in debt to policy).

Is there also an equally pressing need to stoke *potentia* in state-funded community education, an affirmative activism which arises from an 'undercommons' of people who are here already (potentially all of us) and who can lift up their heads from the '*naturalisation of misery*' (ibid, p.117) endemic in the workforce culture (Mycroft, 2019a)? This has proved an unpopular thing to say about hard-working educators, an unkindness almost, yet research evidence from CLMH was inescapable. Yes, community education is underfunded[21]. Yes, it is invisible in the policy agenda (witness its absence from Westminster's 'return-to-normal' briefings post-Covid). Yes, it is necessary in a society where so many are disowned[22]. But there is something else going on which leaves the community education 'undercommons' subdued: a lack of hope, hence the Utopian nature of the methodology. Hope is an essential element of *potentia;* Amsler describes this as "*looking for light*" (2015, p.1):

> "*I tried to imagine a knowledge that would allow us to recognize light even when it does not appear to us in familiar and predictable forms.*"

Echoing the themes concerning this research, though drawing on a different genealogy, Amsler cites Hannah Arendt, whose own philosophy emerged from dark times:

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[18] CLMH was co-produced with 63 state-funded 'community education' centres in England.

[19] Metaphorically turned to stone.

[20] A reminder of the working definition of community education adopted by this dissertation: intentional adult and intergenerational learning which takes place *communally*, i.e. with others, physically or virtually.

[21] Our experience of CLMH (Mycroft, 2018) shows that even with generous funding, and freed from the absence of Ofsted scrutiny community education, like the elephant who believes he is still secured to the stake, remains downbeat inclined not to respond with hope to new initiatives.

[22] Evidence is emerging in the UK and globally of inequalities further deepened and laid bare by Covid (e.g. Tubadji, Webber and Boy, 2020).

> "*Such endarkenment happens in many ways, such as the capture of social institutions by functionaries of power who eschew legitimacy and render power invisible, the restriction of free movement and social activity, and the proliferation of 'speech that does not disclose what it is but sweeps it under the carpet' - practices of power which are now often taken for granted in neoliberal societies…*"
>
> (Amsler, 2015 p.2, quoting Arendt, 1968 pp xviii)

Hope has its own history of analysis in critical theory, and Amsler explores this more fully than I have space for here (Chapter 2, 2015). She writes about refusing despair as an active practice, activating *potentia* in a time of exhaustion with the political *status quo* (and its opposition). Discussions around power often descend into oppositionality, so the question of who constitutes 'we' will be troubled throughout this narrative. This is particularly crucial in the polarised political landscape of England in 2020, where most of the right stays broadly united (in public at least) in pursuit of *potestas* and the left turns more viciously in on itself than ever, battles in which skirmishes around both *potestas* and *potentia* are clear to see[23]. "*We-are-all-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same,*" claims Braidotti (2019, p.52), distinguishing our shared life-force as an animated species from notions of 'The People' so beloved of British tabloids. Identifying ways of enhancing our relational capital (*potentia*) in the struggle against the oppressive forces of 'policy' and capitalism-as-usual (*potestas*) - and rethinking our own *potestas/potentia* along the way - is an aspiration of this research.

1.1.5 Territorialisation

Throughout this work, community education is envisaged as a series of 'spaces' which contain possibilities (and the 'undercommons') and which are repeatedly colonised (or territorialised) by various agents: students, teachers, funders, policy makers etc. The research is concerned with how that space can be differently occupied, rematerialized or re-imagined. Dolphijn (2018, p303) makes the point that in Deleuzian terms, to occupy space "*is not about critiquing (or opposing)…but rather about fully affirming (or absorbing) it.*" Deleuze (and Félix Guattari) also used the concept of re- and de-territorialisation to explore how such spaces are claimed and re-claimed by different forces.

The word 'space' is chosen from a number of alternatives because it echoes the 'spaces to dance' metaphor used by me and a colleague, in our earliest theorisation of our practice (Mycroft and Weatherby, 2015). It can mean a real (geographical, organisational) space, a virtual space or a conceptual space. It differs from the Deleuzian 'plateau' ('sections' of thinking assembled in a book, according to Young, Genosko and Watson, 2013) and is related to the Spinoza-Deleuze-Guattarian 'assemblages' (human and non-human actors who encounter one another on 'planes of immanence', ibid.). An assemblage, according to Ulmer (2016) is a

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[23] Michael Apple often quotes his grandfather (e.g. Peters, 2015): "*When the left lines up a firing squad, it lines up in a circle.*"

process, rather than a space. I will use the word 'territorialisation' (re- and de-) to describe how power (*potestas* and *potentia*) shifts in the 'spaces' of community education.

1.1.6 Monuments and Documents[24]

Throughout this dissertation, there will be frequent references to the *monument* of community education (which, as we have seen, is less a single monument than a hilltop settlement of divided buildings) and to the *documents* which uphold it. The terms are common in historical analysis. Ceserani (2019, p16) explores the etymology, paraphrased here:

Monument - from Latin *mens* (of the mind), *memeni* (memory) and *monere* (recalling the past). Monuments are therefore the heritage of the past, what remains of what was established then. The 'monument' of education is as it is, because of a) what happened in the past to establish and maintain it and b) what remains of that, i.e., what historians choose to tell us. It "*connates intentionality*" (ibid); it stands for something (or a set of somethings).

Document - from Latin *docere* (to teach or instruct); this evolved in the Middle Ages to mean 'proof'. It has "*connotations of truth or objectivity*" (ibid.) The documents we see are always a selection of what 'evidence' has been available, however ephemerally, and the human mind - believing itself, as the essentialist human, to be the curator of the process - has made the selection. The documents therefore uphold a certain form of monument, which is believed to be its essential form. They are not literally documents - though they can be[25] - think also of hierarchies, buildings, laws, language, culture, job roles, custom and practice.

Foucault, exploring the archaeology of knowledge (1972), contended that any examination of history had to examine the monument, rather than the documents, otherwise the original monument constructed by those documents would continue to stand; new documents would proliferate that replicate the same inequalities. This is another way of saying, we want to do something different, rather than do the same thing differently.

1.1.7 Lines of Flight

The Deleuze/Guattari term "*lines of flight*" will be used here to explore the way nomadic figurations (carrying ideas) and people who work nomadically (also carrying ideas) operate across landscapes of theory and practice which are constantly de-territorialised and re-territorialised. Remember that Deleuze and Guattari described both state machinery *and* the nomad as always present, not taking it in turns to occupy the space: the tension between them is forever shifting. Usher (2010, p.5) wrote about lines of flight in terms of vectors:

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[24] I could have chosen to use a different model/metaphor, that of systems thinking (see, for example, the work of Debora Hammond (2003)) and indeed I considered this route for a while, but ultimately the pseudo-scientific language was a poor fit with Spinoza's immanence and I took the metaphorical route.
[25] Research, theory (and counter-theory), policy documents, job descriptions, schemes of work etc.

> *"Deleuze and Guattari suggest thinking about rhizomes as vectors, where two*
> *kinds of vector -- lines of consistency and lines of flight -- both work across*
> *rhizomatic formations. Lines of consistency connect and unify different practices*
> *and effects and by so doing establish hierarchies and define relations between*
> *center and periphery. They create rules of organization which lead to stasis and*
> *solidified strata. Lines of flight in contrast disarticulate relations between and*
> *among practices and effects, opening up contexts to their outsides and the*
> *possibilities therein."*

The two vectors should not be seen as intrinsically 'bad' or 'good'; sometimes the state (whatever that means in a given situation) operates with good intentions[26] and as I learned from Mackness and Bell (2015) and Mackness, Bell and Funes (2015a, 2016), rhizomes can be fascistic in actors' relations with one another.

Here in this Imaginary, lines of flight have been identified via the processes of research as being *possibilities* arising from the 'crossing places[27]' of inquiry, imbued with values arising from the research. The stars, as Solnit writes (2005) are givens, and the constellations drawn between them are the praxis of nomads and others. Danger lies in viewing a line of flight as a project, or a pathway. Both approaches, enshrined in strategic planning, try to layer certainty on a fractured and shifting landscape. Like building a solid structure on an earthquake zone, you're heading for trouble. Lakhiani (2020) counsels changing identity, rather than developing a planning pathway, for in turbulent times, "*we do not know what will happen or how we will respond*" (McCormack, 2016, p.11). Drawing upon innovative business and educational practices Price (2020, loc. 3766) showcases similar initiatives. Gwyn ap Harri, of XP School: "*Get the next two weeks really sharp, details, the longer you go beyond that, the fuzzier you should be planning.*" Flexible planning which allows for uncertainty is a hallmark of all Price's case studies and of the increasingly influential Three Horizons planning model (Public Health Wales, 2020), which has been taken up by some of the most innovative local and regional authorities in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In state-funded community education, 'business planning' conventionally takes place in April, up to the end of the following year's July. Third sector community education projects anticipate outcomes when writing the funding bid and are penalised for not meeting them. Recent years have shown how much can change in weeks and months, never mind years.

What if, instead of action planning, community education works on its values, to bring together a disparate range of provision? Keeping a far horizon in mind, whilst shaping the individual services as a *practice* of values. This won't prevent re-territorialisation, but it might resist more effectively in the face of, for example, a tempting sponsorship offer which flies in the face of

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[26] As I began to write up the Imaginary, I attended a webinar by Katie Shaw as part of the Freedom to Learn Festival in August 2020. One of the participants, Niall Mackinnon, was talking about how community mutual aid initiatives are sometimes co-opted by the state in a 'helpful' manner: "*That's a good idea...now let us tell you how to do it.*"

[27] Crossing places: where the three layerings of the cartography – theory, empirical data and ethics – correspond.

lived, articulated and shared practice values, or a curriculum which ignores the lived experience of students and communities.

One danger of this Imaginary is that it will make the same suggestions for 'fixing' community education that others have already made, and which seem unlikely to happen. Another is that it will do what so many academic and journalistic pieces have done across the history of 'radical' education: hang together a series of noble vignettes without nailing how these can be joined up and spread outwards via rhizomatic processes. There are pockets of excellent practice which mirror the values expressed in the material, from the mutual aid initiatives of the Lifeboat Association (now RNLI) and the Black Panthers Breakfast Club, through the long-standing Summerhill schools to short-lived experiments like the Nottingham Free School (Shaw, 2020). Learning from these experiences is useful and vital. To change community education, rather than seeding isolated nodes of effective new 'projects', not only is a critical mass needed but also some attrition - at least - to the *monument* as it stands, and a fundamental re-writing of the *documents* which uphold it which are inscribed to their core with inequality. Anything less will mean that inequalities continue to reproduce[28] (e.g., Bhopal, 2017) and it is impossible to enact the spirit of participant material without attempting to reverse this situation. Any progress made in community education has at least the potential to spread through its sister service FE and that's to be welcomed. But this research is unlikely to find any easy answers, only tributaries which might at some point flow into a river of change.

What I will attempt to do, entangled in the cartography, is present lines of flight for activism which incorporate the values-led practice ideas encountered. I will also attempt to present lines of consistency, which do not, in Usher's words (2010, p.5) lead to "*stasis and solidified strata*" but which allow for movement and the smoothing of spaces where change can continue to happen. Inevitably, much of this will require significant changes of 'state' which are way beyond the scope of this research, though some recommendations will be made. **All lines of flight are high-level 'headlines' with only the existing initiatives to give granular depth[29].** The limitations of the research are many, but I must keep hold of radical hope that some achievements are possible (Amsler, 2015; Tett and Hamilton, 2019; Purcell, 2020).
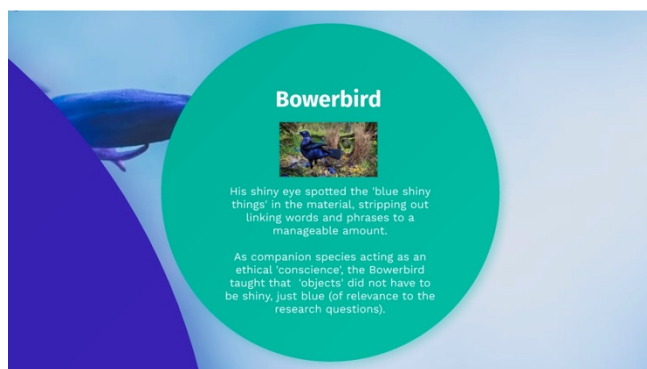
1.1.8 The Satin Bowerbird #bowerbird 🦚

The key figuration in this research is the Bowerbird, a "*conceptual persona*" (Braidotti, 2019a, after Deleuze), who began as a metaphor and has come to act as my companion species.

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[28] To use a Covid analogy, though of course the process for reimagining community education is only metaphorically viral, there needs to be significant environmental changes to ensure a replication rate of R=>1.

[29] Don't be disappointed when you get to the end. This is not a thriller.

The companion species role was unforeseen, but gradually the Bowerbird began to accompany my[30] work and consequently became associated with posthumanism (and me) as I practised my nomadic trade. I found myself associating him with practising a daily ethics and his role developed separately to the other three figurations, becoming multipurpose. He was by my side as I selected 'blue shiny things' for the Cartography, made the first 'cut' into the participant material looking for treasures and became an internal 'voice of conscience' throughout the piece, and particularly when drawing it to a close. He is presented early in this work, as he inhabits many of its pages.

The Bowerbird has come to have 'a life' of its own. In the illustration (left, PDNorth, 2020) the Bowerbird features spontaneously, not introduced by me (I wasn't there), but present and recognisable amongst a group of people (some of whom don't know me and my work), representing 'research treasures'. This is an example of a figuration becoming 'animate'.

The male satin bowerbird creates beautiful bowers to attract a mate, which he decorates with blue shiny things; often the detritus of human life in the Anthropocene: discarded bottle tops and straws (the occasional sapphire). The female views the bowers and selects a mate, after which the unsuccessful bowers are kicked over, their materials repurposed for the next breeding season. As a metaphor for sustainability, the bowerbird has credibility.

The Bowerbird metaphor in research practice arises from the work of Australian academics Pam Greet (2006) and Tess Brady (2000), who in turn drew on the work of feminist artist Helen Lillecrap-Fuller (Tupikoff, 1987). All practised narrative research, employing a bowerbird metaphor in storytelling through various media.

The Bowerbird is particularly important to community education because many of the stories of the service are based on tropes of 'tragic life history' (Mycroft, 2019a). The sprawling CLMH project (2015-18) trained 63 community education teams as co-researchers and required them to contribute additional qualitative evidence as case studies to the MHFE (Mental Health in FE) website[31]. Not only did we receive little that wasn't written in 'FE report-speak', there wasn't a single story about pedagogy and the reporting was focused on the back-story of students rather than their future possibilities (Mycroft, 2018; 2019a[32]). Where community educators have

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[30] I don't have a real or even a toy Bowerbird🌳 but as outlined above, the figuration is illustrated in images (I use postcards) and presentations, trailed and reviewed on social media so that I have come to be associated with the conceptual persona.

[31] www.mhfe.org.uk

[32] positively, a real outcome of the research was a shift amongst educators towards reflecting that mental ill-health affects teachers too: it's about all of us.

worked with the Bowerbird, they begin the process of collecting, curating and amplifying the stories (or 'blue shiny things') of their own practice, as well as student outcomes[33].

A glance at the chronology of my online photo collection shows that the Bowerbird joined me in this research endeavour during 2018 and from that point on, accompanied my thinking, publications and presentations. As a figuration, he proved his worth during the fieldwork and analysis phases of this research, and as a diffractive praxis he was utterly engaging. A virtual companion, he was visible across my nomadic work, which brought me into contact with community education practitioners in the UK, with fellow academics – those with a posthuman interest and those without – and with national and international 'constellations of practice' such as those established after four seasons of Posthuman Summer School with Rosi Braidotti at Utrecht University. His striking image inspired my trip to Australia[34] to speak at the annual Deans' conference (a confederation of university vocational education academics) and an invitation to the Punk Scholars Network. He has encountered practitioners, policy makers, professional development agencies, politicians and thought leaders.

As well as curating community education's 'blue shiny things', the Bowerbird 🌳 serves to remind me of my nomadic status. He is uninterested in boundaries, hierarchies and limiting definitions. Freed from the limitations of being compliantly 'human', nomadism requires me to walk a personal ethics through the research. More of this in Chapter 3, below.

The figuration of the Satin Bowerbird 🌳 is used to raise awareness of stories and artefacts of community education which could be educative, but which are lost because they are of no significance to the confused *monument* of community education as it stands, i.e. not part of its *documentation*. They exist, but are not curated, due to the fractured nature of 'community education' itself. These include the 'blue shiny things' which are collected in the Imaginary, and the activist work which has taken place during the process of this research. **He is also symbolic of an affirmative, nomadic ethics.**

Summary

Chapter 1 briefly explores the theme of language, which runs throughout this dissertation as I attempt to challenge norms and givens hardened by the current lexicon. It introduces us to key concepts of posthuman thinking which the reader will encounter. These are also outlined in a series of brief videos available here.

The chapter presents an introduction to posthuman process ontology, which, following Spinoza, rejects transcendence in favour of a relational ethics of immanence in furtherance of activist work. This includes not only theoretical and empirical material relevant to the research aim, but

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[33] An example of this is Lynn Naylor's podcast series: The Inner Coach
[34] Professor Erica Smith was very clear that she was inviting me *and* the Bowerbird, having encountered him at the ARPCE Conference in Oxford earlier that year.

also a posthuman assemblage of figurations, also a process (according to Ulmer, 2016) which form the posthuman toolkit. Each figuration has been outlined above, and I will expand upon its use, below.

The next chapter will further develop the notion of cartography and will provide a joint cartography for posthuman thinking and for a working definition of community education.

Chapter 2: Cartography

*We like herding or swarming rather than the root and branch model
of coming together (which is even a misconception about trees) but
anyway, we aren't trees - we are mammals and if there have to be
leaders or teachers - then they should be the people who are elders
who are speaking from experience rather than people who have learnt
the language of the dominant class in order to reproduce their values
(either consciously or unconsciously)."*

Participant 13

A few years ago, I saw something that really struck me. It was a map of the London 2012 Olympic Park overlaid on an older map of pre-demolition Stratford. The area was utterly transformed; I enjoyed seeing how the river, some roads and crossing places still corresponded with one another and allowed me to anchor 'then' to 'now'. This was before I was introduced to a posthuman way of seeing the world, and the Braidottian notion of 'cartography'; a mapping of theoretical and political journeyings which is both temporal and spatial. This cartography joins the assemblage of figurations which operate as a methodological, posthuman toolkit.

I have been rightly challenged to defend my decision to offer a 'cartography' in place of the more traditional literature review. I will attempt to defend it as a living thing, another significant non-human actor in the creation of the Imaginary, which accords with a posthuman process ontology which is always becoming, and never fixed. A review, once written, is finished, a map is in constant flux. The earth can shift, or be built upon, and new things can be discovered. Amsler writes about *"[mapping] co-ordinates of hope on otherwise 'flat' surfaces of possibility,"* (2015, p.53) and that is what I am aiming to make possible here.

As with my companion species The Bowerbird, the notion lays me open to accusations of self-indulgence: both could be seen as 'flights of fancy', as could the motif of the three analytical figurations, their accompanying emojis and my use in analysis of the Bowerbird's colour blue. I will attempt to defend each of these in the appropriate place, in the context of research which is also contemporaneously activist practice. Their intention is pragmatic: they are a toolkit; with an additional hope that they will help bring an extensive narrative to life, both here and in activist endeavours.

This cartography brings together two protagonists: critical posthumanism and a selected literature around 'community education'. The cartography has accompanied me throughout this research, from my first encounter with Braidottian posthumanism in 2015, to now and beyond. It has been five years in the writing, constantly worked, reworked and woven through with emerging narrative threads. I hope to show in this chapter what posthumanism offers community education and what community education offers posthumanism, by overlaying them: 'plugging' one into the other (Jackson and Mazzei, 2018).

The Cartography

The posthuman protagonist is concerned with the ontology and epistemology of this piece, as well as its expression in methodology and the posthuman research toolkit, which will be explored in the next chapter. The community education protagonist is concerned with the definition, history and policy of a concept with contested boundaries. They are brought into conversation in a landscape which ranges widely, though not beyond its own borders. I have tried to be clear throughout about the threads I cannot follow.

Written into the following pages are the books, articles and blogs I've read, conversations I've had, the lectures and podcasts I've listened to. It is annotated and over-written, discussed with others formally in co-reading groups and informally in passing, viewed differently over time. It is *diffractive*, in the Barad tradition of disentangling human and non-human actors in any assemblage or situation and thinking through how the actions of each impact upon the world (Geerts and van der Tuin, 2017). I hope that sense of collective endeavour and flow is communicated through the writing.

Although I have chosen to use the engaging Bowerbird methodology, suggested by Pam Greet (2006) and others, as a challenge to posthuman post-anthropocentrism and as a device to engage others in activism throughout the life of this project and beyond, I could equally have employed the term *bricolage* (initiated by Denzin and Lincoln in the spirit of Levi-Strauss and picked up by Kincheloe, 2001). Indeed, Greet uses this herself, seeing in the Bowerbird a

metaphor of the *bricolage* process. There is much in common between Joe Kincheloe's take on *bricolage* and Braidotti's concept of a cartography:

> *In particular, critical bricoleurs employ historiographical, philosophical,*
> *and social theoretical lenses to gain a more complex understanding of*
> *the intricacies of research design.*

<div align="right">(Kincheloe, 2001, p.679)</div>

Bricolage appeals to Kincheloe because it "*signifies interdisciplinarity*" (ibid., p.681); Braidotti tends towards the "*transversal humanities*" in her posthuman university (2020) and participants in this research project seem hardly to think in terms of subject siloes at all. Both concepts imply the slipperiness of 'truths'.

What I am initiating with this research is an Imaginary of ideas and activism. Metaphors of journeying and motion sit well with a research process which keeps on the move both physically and across digital spaces and conversations, reflecting the posthuman process ontology at the heart of the work. Staying fleet of foot during turbulent political and social times recalls Kincheloe's mention of the Greek god Hermes (2001, p.680); navigated by an affirmative ethics I imagine myself traversing myriad disciplines to a horizon which transforms the inherited siloes of the past 250 years into a transversal future. There are always dragons hidden in the corners of the map, as many of the essays in the third of the Dancing Princesses trilogy acknowledge (*Caliban's Dream*: Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2020). One of the dangers of this cartography is that it sketches a broad, shallow knowledge of many disciplines, glossing over some deeper nuance, but I argue along with Brady (2000) that the Bowerbird's skill in identifying the blue shiny materials that build any new bower necessitates its own version of critical thinking as well as the nomadic ability to keep on the move.

I will begin by defining cartography before presenting a narrative analysis of the learning and thinking which has gone into the ultimate (continuing) project of the Imaginary.

2.1 Principles of Cartography

Taking a posthuman approach to what is traditionally called a literature review involves mapping cartographies of both dominant and regressive genealogies: acknowledging the givens of the *status quo*, whilst seeking out and honouring hidden histories (Gilborn, 2008; Maudlin, 2014; Said, 1993). These include histories of community education neglected by a literature that focuses on other settings and the 'hauntology' of perceptions of a 'community learning' Golden Age (Bayne, 2010; Fisher, 2014), which is limiting of wider perspectives. It also politically and practically means "*rewriting your practice to include missing peoples*" (Braidotti, 2019a).

Critically, the posthuman approach also includes a disidentification with established patterns of thinking, as an intentional practice (Braidotti, 2016) and a rejection of binaries, following Deleuze and Guattari's identification of the 'schizophrenia' of advanced capitalism (1972, 2004). The slowing down and 'stepping out of time' of the process ontologies is developed below,

alongside diffractive practices; these have interrupted the noisy velocity of academic (and daily) life in order to enable a weaving together of cartographical threads.

Cartography as a research concept is defined and has been defended by Braidotti (2014, np[35]) as:

> *"...a theoretically-based and politically informed reading of the present, which fulfils the function of providing both analytic and exegetical tools[36] for critical thought and also creative theoretical alternatives. This political passion sustains the process of nomadic writing as ethically accountable and empowering."*

Cartography resists *critique*, in the sense of it being an affirmative practice which does not pick holes for the sake of it, though critique of course has strengths as well as limitations. This does not mean it isn't critical, rather that it is not what Sedgwick (cited in Boyzalek and Zembylas, 2017 p.119) refers to as 'paranoid' reading: not pitting theories, approaches or research in binary opposition to one another but engaging them in conversation. Critique buys into making an enemy of difference and needs at least one aspect of the *status quo* to bounce off, thus making it "*difficult to extricate thoughts from the taken-for-grantedness of the tenets of humanism and of how human subjects are constituted."* (ibid, p.113). Affirmative practice, as we shall see later, enacts an ethics of immanence in life, as Gilles Deleuze would term it (ibid, p.115) which Vivienne Bozalek and Michelinos Zembylas describe as "*a moment-by-moment ethics of how, in specific ways, things come to matter in an encounter."* (ibid.) This is a cartography of what matters now, which gives due respect to its genealogical underpinnings.

To unpick Braidotti's definition of cartography, above, this chapter offers:

2.1.1 A theoretically based and politically informed reading of the present

Based on six years of transdisciplinary reading, including policy and mainstream media, research, blogs, podcasts, thought pieces and theoretical books and journals, plus a working engagement throughout with political landscapes relating to community education, education more generally and political systems and structures. Twitter informed my choices as did recommendations from friends and colleagues, particularly relating to anti-racism work and this more urgently in the final few months of writing up, following the murder of George Floyd. The reference list will acknowledge the contribution of the academy and draw on less traditional contemporary sources, essential in times of rapid change.

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[35] Recorded lecture.

[36] Posthuman Summer School at Utrecht University was my first introduction to the practice of 'annotation', which became part of my diffractive work with others.

2.1.2 Providing both analytical[37] and exegetical[38] tools for critical thought and creative theoretical alternatives

I will not be the first, nor the last, scholar to reach for critical commentaries in reading the work of Deleuze and Guattari and as I don't read French I also relied on the translator's skill, so it was reassuring that Brian Massumi, translator of A Thousand Plateaus, triangulated in other ways with this cartography.

I read Deleuze on Spinoza and Foucault, Foley on Bergson and came to appreciate book reviews. I watched videos of lectures and recordings of interviews when I could find them. Teaching videos were also helpful when I was trying to unpick a new concept and the best ones brought critical theoretical alternatives to mind: the Muppety 'Theoretical Puppets', for example, show a recognisable Foucault and Deleuze in conversation (Theoretical Puppets, 2018): entertaining for sure and also helped me understand Deleuze's 'old habit': "*I get behind famous authors and make them say something unexpected.*"[39]" I found this suited a posthuman process ontology; not dead words on a page but words written in another time which say something - even if not the intended something - for now. Having found a way in, I then often (though still not always) returned to the original texts with more confidence to engage.

The usefulness of these entry points for me has led me to invest in providing a glossary to this dissertation (see Legend of the Map) and I have also challenged myself to describe each concept on video in one minute. The point of these challenging conceptual ideas is to disrupt the normalities of thinking; the difficulty is in communicating complex notions with clarity.

I am with Giroux in acknowledging that complex ideas cannot always be expressed simply (2019); language itself has been weaponised for neo-liberal ends[40]. I am with Boroditsky (2010, 2011) in believing that language shapes the way we think and if we use old words for new concepts, we'll soon be drawn back into the "*gravitational pull of the old*" (Braidotti, 2019, p.214). I also firmly believe that new concepts remain rarefied and out of reach if they can't be communicated widely, which brings me into tension with Giroux. In his entertaining debate with Schrag (summarised in Schrag, 1996) I remain on the Giroux side until Schrag's devastating Primo Levi checkmate:

> "*Talking to one's fellow man in a language he cannot understand may be the bad habit of some revolutionaries, but it is not at all a revolutionary instrument: it is on the contrary an ancient repressive artifice, known to all churches, the typical vice of our political class, the foundation of all colonial empires. It is a subtle way of imposing one's rank.*"

<div align="right">(Levi, 1988, p.60)</div>

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[37] Analytical = related to or using critical reasoning
[38] Exegetical = a critical explanation or interpretation of a text
[39] They also got his jumper just right.
[40] These are conversations I continue to have on a daily basis in my activist work and no doubt my opinions will be troubled and challenged by others, but I am cutting the threads here.

I tried to find a balance. Much of the conversation between myself and others during the development of this cartography was around a common lexicon and the activist practice of new ideas.

2.1.3 Nomadic

During this research, I have come to describe myself as a 'nomad' when asked for my job title. For Deleuze and Guattari, the 'nomad war machine' freed itself from the machinery of state to open up smooth spaces for change to happen (1980). For Braidotti, the 'nomadic subject' is not quite a metaphor but a 'figuration' (see below), which allows thinking to be freed from the machinery of state, enables it to take place in smooth spaces, to allow thinking to stay on the move away from the gravitational pull of the old.

For me, and other posthuman thinkers who formed a diffractive constellation which entangled with this work, being a nomad was both a real thing (in terms of how I conduct the practicalities of working life) and a figuration which strengthened that resolve. Through the lifetime of the research, I came to see myself as someone who followed lines of flight, opened up smooth spaces, worked in constellations with others for a time and then, as the space became inevitably re-territorialised, moved on, leaving some of the constellation to form a more conventional structure to carry on some remnant or development of the work. My anchor, then, was Rosi Braidotti's affirmative ethics (2011), of which more in Chapter 3. Nomadism is deeply entangled with the Deleuzian concept of 'becoming-minotarian' that is, going beyond empathy to identify with an essential shared '*zoë'* (Spinoza's 'life force') which makes us all - human and non-human - players on the same board. This compels analysis of power relations and of difference as being essential and equal, not 'other'.

Nomads transgress subject-boundaries (context-boundaries, sector-boundaries) and this brought a challenge to the research: when does it stop? As my supervisors repeatedly warned me, I cannot do justice to all that I introduce here. And that is also where a cartography is so useful: as long as I am clear about what I cannot pursue, there will be a thread in the references for the reader to follow another map.

2.1.4 Ethically accountable and empowering

My early exploration of Actor-Network-Theory as a possible vehicle for this research revealed an empty core at its heart: in its 'scientific' scrutiny there was an ethical void exposed by the refusal to move to any activism. The work that has most informed this research is activist at heart, often involving art or physical activity (e.g. walking) to address the global issues of the day, attempting to adopt minority perspectives (refugee perspectives, landscape perspectives) taking account of non-human 'actors', attempting to disrupt the velocity of neoliberal advance through what Bradiotti describes, via Spinoza, as, "*a politics of immanence*."

There is much to explore in the ethics of this research and I have devoted a chapter to it, <u>below</u>. But perhaps the most important ethic is activism, despite the additional complexity it has brought to the research journey.

2.2 A Posthuman Cartography

2.2.1 Spinoza's Enlightenment

As we have seen, this re-theorising of community education is based on a posthuman process ontology, which is in turn drawn from a reading of the Enlightenment which follows Spinoza rather than the Descartes route which was dominant at the time and for the following several hundred years. Spinoza offers a new way of seeing the world. His work was 'rediscovered' by Deleuze in the 1960s. Because of the very separate traditions of European and Anglo-US philosophy[41], Deleuze's reading of Spinoza remained confined to continental Europe until Australian scholars made English translations[42] in the 1990s and the 'Deleuzian moment' arrived (Braidotti, 2019).

Where Descartes separated the world into binaries, Spinoza believed in an essential 'monism' – which Braidotti (2019, p.52) simplifies into various riffs on the formula '*we-are-all-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the- same*'[43] (2005, 2013, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2020a). This phrase, which Braidotti has been arguing through for more than a decade, claims that the "*proper subject of the posthuman convergence is not Man, but a new collective subject."* (2019, p.52). We share a life force – *zoë* – whether human, animal or otherwise non-human and there is no separation of body/soul, body/mind, self/other; on the contrary thinking is embodied and bodies are 'embrained' (ibid.). Where this is relevant for re-theorising community education, rather than remaining esoterically aloof as high theory, is in its application. Deleuze and Guattari (1972, 2004) took the interconnected energies, the 'radical immanence' of Spinoza into 'One Thousand Plateaus', where they used the botanical language of rhizomes (see below) to challenge the prevailing (and still prevailing) arboreal, hierarchical structures of control societies. Braidotti reworked Spinoza's vital materialism into the political praxis of an affirmative ethics and into her vision of the 'nomadic subject' (2013).

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[41] Caused by the flight of Jewish intellectuals to the United States during the rise of Nazism.

[42] An interesting footnote is that the first English translation of Spinoza was by the novelist Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot): "*If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heartbeat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence."* (Middlemarch)

[43] To some, this may have echoes of neo-liberalism's claim that we are all equal but different. In 2015**,** Braidotti was rueful about the term, as the (then) UK Prime Minister David Cameron had adopted 'we're all in this together' as his catchphrase for several years at this point. Neo-liberalism does, of course, adopt the language of its opponents, as Braidotti herself has explored (in *The Posthuman*, 2013). In fact, neo-liberalism atomises individuals, finessing a sense of identity-'belonging' whilst engaging divisively with the individual 'consumer'. Braidotti's riff acknowledges both difference and the life force we share.

This transversal convergence is also expressed as and/and (not either/or), most famously by Deleuze when he talks about 'a life' that we all share, rather than the individualistic, separated life of an individual our society celebrates and reveres (1997). Honouring this, I refer to 'a' posthuman methodology. Robin Usher (2010) explores the and/and concept further, from his reading of Deleuze and Guattari (2000), where they identify the tree (arboreal structure and hierarchy) as imposing the verb 'to be' and the rhizome to unsettle this with the repeated conjunction 'and':

> *"The conjunctive 'and' here becomes integral to rhizomatic approaches that shake the tree of knowledge and disrupt the arboreal. In this disruption, meaning is mobilised rather than grounded. An essentialist ontology of being and the binary logic of either-or are displaced with one of becoming, of flux, movement flow...and the 'and' of conjunctions and alliances."*

(Usher, 2010 p.73)

Usher here develops his earlier thinking with Richard Edwards (Edwards and Usher, 2001), which points out how 'and' can hold incommensurate ideas together; something we might recognise 20 years later as the 'spin' dressing of political rhetoric; in applying a posthuman affirmative ethics to a flattened out, dichotomised debate of popular politics in 2020, and/and could yet be a useful tool.

Nietzsche's call to be 'worthy of the times' is also Braidotti's call to action in this interregnum between advanced capitalism and extinction. Her application of Gramsci's concept 'interregnum' to our current times is powerful. For Foucault and Deleuze, the aftermath of the Paris Uprising in May 1968 was the critical moment in which the Marxist project failed and acceleration to a shifting, mutable, advanced capitalism began[44].

2.2.2 Diffractive Cartography

As Karen Barad points out (2018), optical metaphors abound in writing about education and it is a pleasant synchronicity that Spinoza, whose affirmative ethics infuse this research, practised for much of his life as a lens-grinder (i.e., an optometrist). Along with nursing, social work and many other social science professions, teacher training has employed 'reflective practice' since the 1980s as a continuing professional practice; it continues to be a cornerstone of professional formation via the state agency The Society for Education and Training (ETF, 2020). Later iterations include 'reflexive', after Brookfield (1995), which brought in socio-political-economic considerations and which I and others brought into our 'social purpose' teacher education practice at The Northern College 2006-2017.

We could not claim to be fully research-informed in our choice of the word 'reflexive' back then. Although familiar with theories around 'reflection', especially those which extended into the

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[44] Guattari in 'Three Ecologies' (2014) took a crystal ball to the future, identifying a young Donald Trump as the agent of future destruction.

socio-political domain such as Jack Mezirow[45] (Husband and Mycroft, 2019), it is only in building this cartography that the theoretical history of 'reflexion' is revealed and then dissipated, as what we believed to be its epistemic difference from 'reflection' has been flattened out by a literature eager to follow belatedly in Barad's championing of 'diffraction'. Bozalek and Zembylas (2017, p.111) honourably refuse to pit 'reflexion' against 'diffraction', instead engaging them 'in conversation' with each other. In post-structuralist, feminist academic circles, diffraction is now the order of the day (Geerts and van den Tuin, 2017) and reflection/reflexion is seen as only being capable of reflecting what is already there: that is an unjust and unequal world which is structured in Cartesian binaries.

Before I go on to explore how 'diffractive practice' is differently helpful, it is worth doing a reality check. These nuances of application will mean little to community educators, who are likely to trail behind even their FE counterparts in terms of the initial teacher training they have received and the professional development they are encouraged to do. Indeed, this wrangling of academic terms will seem an indulgence to many, employed as they are on precarious term-time, zero-hours or rolling fixed-term contracts (an oxymoron which is technically limited by employment law, though term-time contracts offer a way out for employers) (UCU, 2016). Reflective practice is also enshrined in youth and community work practices, though with similar managerialist appropriation. Unlike nurses and social workers there is no requirement for annual 'CPD' for community educators and some evidence that they are either discouraged or *de facto* prevented from pursuing professional formation in the state-funded sector by employers fearful of losing them to schools (Scattergood, 2019).

The term 'diffraction' was coined by Donna Haraway (1997) at the apex of a growing dissatisfaction amongst feminist researchers with the way reflection was rooted in representationalism and consequently mired in assumptions about who are 'we', layering on unexplored meaning without going on to interrogate why (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2017). Diffraction, on the other hand, is "*understood by both Barad and Haraway as a process of being attentive to how differences are made and what the effects of these differences are.*" (ibid, p.112) As Phillips and Larson powerfully claim:

> *"Barad (2008) asks us to stop: stop giving language so much power; stop with language as representational; stop the belief in the power of the Word to pre-exist and create; stop with our illusion of time as linear and always already cause-then-effect; stop placing our human selves in the centre of all things that matter."*
> (2013, p.722)

For Barad and others (e.g., Haraway, 1997; Geerts and van der Tuin, 2017), stepping to one side and establishing 'diffraction' enabled a cleaner practice; preparing the ground for activism which avoids the sort of reductionism that follows siloed thinking[46]. Neo-liberalism controls us by

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[45] As we argue in Husband and Mycroft (2019), Mezirow has been co-opted by neoliberal individualism. He is seen as writing about individual transformation through education, whereas in fact he was interested in collective transformation and was a follower of Paulo Freire.
[46] I'm reminded of Rose (1997) and the 'Goddess Trick' here. A 'cleaner practice' knows its limitations.

dividing us in order to rule – a cognitive form of colonialism. Both Evelien Geerts and Iris van der Tuin (2017) and Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) lay out a process for reading diffractively, which has been influential in developing the diffractive cartography which underpins this research.

Geerts and van der Tuin begin before they begin, by providing not only keywords for their journal but also synonyms, antonyms, hyper- and hypo-nyms and, critically, a genealogy or, as Bradotti (2019) would term it, a cartography. The ancestors of their thinking are Trinh Minh-ha, Donna Haraway, Karen Barad; mine are presented in the cartography of this dissertation. For Geerts and van der Tuin, diffractive practices are a weapon against the Hegelian dialectic which provides such a fertile ground for othering, as we have seen in the previous section (self/other). Diffraction recognises difference without attempting to assimilate it, the reterritorializing process of advanced capitalism which results in eradication of some groups and dominance by others (2017).

For Bozalek and Zembylas (2017), the diffractive reading process is less structured and the diffraction is in the space, working online with international colleagues from many disciplines, writing together in Google Docs, sharing information in Drive and meeting synchronously, via video conferencing. This more closely resembles my experience of working with colleagues to prepare, extend and rethink this cartography. The period of its development (2015-2020) built upon earlier reading and the document itself was available for comment and annotation in its early days, until I began writing up the research findings. Added to this, I participated (and in some cases initiated) reading groups around key texts: Barad, Deleuze, Braidotti amongst them. Rhizomatic online courses such as those offered by Kay Sidebottom around posthuman topics (Sidebottom, 2020) and Twitter chats such as Clear the Air UK (focused on anti-racist reading) opened up new networks and new thinking. In their 'Meeting the Universe Halfway' reading group Bozalek and Zembylas (2017, p.122) describe how a portion of the text each week was read aloud by everyone 'there' (even if they were joining via video link), to encourage close engagement with the text: "*Affect moves through voice, language and text amongst those physically present and those virtually present from a distance.*" I read aloud to myself. That material depth of entanglement was necessary for me to engage with complex thinking that shook up my own 'givens'.

Thinking together shifted into phases of action at various points, as people formed constellations to advance a project or idea. The #JoyFE💛movement emerged from these spaces in lockdown and continues to grow, as did the first international Working-Class Academics Conference. Other encounters took place in The Bower, a virtual writing space and the domain of the Bowerbird online. Writing created in the Bower went on to be published by myself and others in various publications, including academic journals. Opening up smooth spaces of encounter came to be 'that thing I did' throughout the lifetime of this cartography's development but the point is that not all those spaces were opened up by me, far from it, nor were many of them intentionally Deleuzian. Those involved came to appreciate an effective, collaborative and safe way of working, where they were able to be vulnerable in pursuit of new

ways of thinking, amongst critical friends and without the brutality of 'critique'. An appreciation of process moved to the foreground, reflecting a posthuman process ontology:

> *"And so we moved to engage "plugging in" as a process rather than a concept, something we could put to work, for as Rosi Braidotti (2002, p.1) urges us in this time of change, "the challenge lies in thinking about processes, rather than concepts."*

<div align="right">(Jackson and Mazzei, 2013 p.262)</div>

Jackson and Mazzei's 'plugging in', a concept they "picked up[47]" from Deleuze and Guattari, is what eventually led me to the use of Figurations for material analysis (see more <u>below</u>).

Physicist Barad's (2007) reading of 'diffractive' through the lens of her scientific discipline brings the notion of a 'quantum leap' into play; and as Geerts and van der Tuin attest, "*quantum leaps happen in texts too*" (2017, p.1) – I had several during the writing of this dissertation. For them, those leaps are most likely to happen when we are thinking with others, in reading groups (real or virtual), co-writing, or, in slow ontology of Jasmine Ulmer (2017a), talking and thinking on the move. The benefit of these practices is not simply to reach new places of knowledge, via a diversification of pathways and the chemistry that happens when stars collide, but in the *potentia* for diffracted understandings to demolish canons of literature that form when the written word is territorialised by hierarchies. And in the *potentia* for activism too.

2.2.3 The Nomadic Subject

A hallmark of the 'fourth industrial revolution' is a form of capitalism which no longer relies on material production but profits instead from ideas, knowledge, material, information: to whit, 'cognitive capitalism' (Braidotti, 2019) or, as David Price describes it 'the knowledge economy' (2020):

> "*Cognitive capitalism is the qualitative proliferation of differences for the sake of advanced capitalism: possessive individualism. The only reality is the commodity.*"

<div align="right">(Braidotti, 2019a)</div>

Glenn Rikowski (2011) sets out the history of human beings becoming 'human capital' and how this notion has influenced all UK education policy since at least 1997[48]. In the same article, Rikowski describes a posthumanism which could not be further from Braidotti's critically affirmative practice; "*a tragic feeling*" about being human which seeks cyborgisation to resolve. Rikowski and Braidotti might find more agreement about the 'Capitorg'; the capitalist organism

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[47] Inevitably, I love the light touch informality of this.
[48] Interestingly although the genealogy of 'human capital' as a concept has a long history, as a term it was resisted due to some delicacy following the abolition of slavery. This is certainly not the case now.

which is each of us. Rikowski argues that UK education[49] has fundamentally misunderstood the relationship between education and the knowledge economy, which, despite an "*almost exclusive concentration on employers' needs*" (2011, p.13) has led to a flawed understanding of what employers want in their human capital: human beings with attitudes and behaviours concomitant of ingenuity and teamwork, rather than the prevalent approach of narrow compliance plus skills. Nearly a decade later, Price's (2020) research accords with this.

Rikowski, Braidotti and Price would undoubtedly converge in agreement that the flawed project of education to turn out 'human capital' was "*inflated with ungrounded hope*" (Rikowski, 2011 p.2). They might find a different kind of hope in Rikowski's assertion that the tension between "*becoming capital and humanising our souls*" (ibid., p.1) might be what drives an activism which overthrows education as it stands.

Braidotti also believes (2020) that capitalism is embodied within us; we are part of it every time we 'Just Do It' or believe 'We're Worth It'. This may seem like a strange place to start a chapter on nomadic working but think about the figure of the nomad for a moment. Although we *may* think of nomadic tribes, it's more likely that a 'lonely goatherd' comes to mind, a shepherd in search of pasture for the flock. Neo-liberalism – described in Deleuze and Guattari's unfortunate term as 'schizophrenic' (1980) – relies on us operating as individuals, not a collective: individuals who see ourselves as unique, but whose purchasing choices are all about being like other people (the latest phone, the newest hair colour). Unless we live completely off-grid we are each – more or less – already territorialised, which is what makes the Marxist collective response ('*we are all in this together*"), though rightly concerned with an accelerated deterioration in labour power (Avis, 2018), ultimately futile, because "*we are not one-and-the-same*": our differences are exploited to keep us at loggerheads with one another. Nor were we ever really one-and-the-same, hence the bitter fragmentation even on the left. If this was ever in doubt, the polarising, mediated discourses of the last few years – using the very media on which we have come to rely - are proof indeed (Bradotti, 2019, p.156-7):

> "*Nonetheless, we do remain confronted by a number of painful contradictions that affect us all: for example, climate change is planetary and digital interconnections breed immediate intimacy, but also hatred and paranoia… 'we' are immanent to, which means intrinsically connected to, the very conditions we are also critical of.*"

To be a nomad in a Deleuzian sense is therefore to be *relational* and affective, as well as on the move. Returning to Spinoza's practical philosophy (Deleuze (1970; 1988), *joy* is defined as something which is relational: when one 'mode' (human or non-human actor) encounters another which has "*a certain capacity for being affected*" (ibid, p50) – i.e., openness to vulnerability - and a transition occurs which leads to something more 'perfect' (in Spinoza's words) than what went before:

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[49] He includes 'lifelong learning', a prevalent term at the time.

> "*The passage to a greater perfection, or the increase of the power of acting, is called an affect, or feeling, of joy[50].*"

<div align="right">(ibid.)</div>

So joy is relational and it is the work of the nomad[51] to maintain an affirmative ethics which keeps it so, as they follow lines of flight across a colonised landscape, opening up (smoothing out, or deterritorialising) 'spaces to dance' (Mycroft and Weatherby, 2015) and engaging human and non-human actors in 'constellations of practice' (Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2018) which affirmative *potentia* work before the space is closed down (reterritorialised by the state or other agent of *potestas*/power). The constellations disband, the actors move on.

2.2.4 Decolonising Knowledges

> "*Pain tattooed in your flesh. Pain carried across generations. Pain you forgot to forget.*"

<div align="right">(Braidotti, 2019a)</div>

I have never been able to completely disentangle Braidotti's deceptively simple statement in my head, although Amsler's "*mass forgetting*" (2015, p4) of the possibilities of hope brings me close. Pain you forgot to forget. How to enact an affirmative ethics when society's pain goes bone deep into the days of colonialism? How to respect and be driven by that pain, without driving deeper divisions into society? Braidotti's phrase has niggled at me since 2015 and I don't pretend to have resolved it, but it drives my work and the research I present here.

As we have seen, this dissertation operationalises the post-Vitruvian posthuman landscape curated and imagined by Rosi Braidotti and situated in a genealogy which reaches back to Spinoza via feminist critical theory, her teachers Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, and which draws on the ignored voices of post-colonial and indigenous thinkers in a posthumanities which she actively shapes as transdisciplinary. Braidotti refers to this work as 'anti-fascist'.

As the research process unfolded, so did the role of anti-fascism in an increasingly fascistic world. Deleuze and his writing partner Félix Guattari turned to (writing about) rhizomatic practice[52] following the Paris uprisings in 1968, where they believed that the socialist 'project' had failed. Meanwhile a young Braidotti was doing the photocopying with Simone de Beauvoir, so their anti-fascist approach clearly did not apply equally to everyone (Braidotti, personal recollection). Rhizomes can also be fascistic (see Japanese Knotweed, also Mackness and Bell,

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[50] The converse, of course, is also possible; Spinoza called this sadness (he reserved 'hate' for those who restrict others' freedom of growth (McCormack, 2016 p.9)).

[51] Deleuze and Guattari (1980, 2004) referred to the 'nomad war machine', but times change and I am choosing to simply use, 'nomad'.

[52] And, to be fair, rhizomatic practice at the experimental University of Paris 8 (Vincennes-Saint-Denis), founded in direct response to the events of 1968 by Foucault and others.

2015 and Mackness, Bell and Funes, 2015a and 2016) but are freed, notionally at least, from state apparatus. Anti-fascism echoed through the later decades of the 20th century, criticised sometimes in its practice but generally seen to be in opposition to something much worse (i.e., the fascism which was still in living memory from World War 2 and which was slowly being revealed by the 'modernisation' of the Soviet Union post-Stalin). Until 'Antifa' was identified as a terrorist 'organisation' by Donald Trump in 2020, whose cunning recognised that for everyone who sneered at him for trying to ban a movement, others would internalise 'antifa' as something to be fought in the name of liberty.

As I write, the decolonization of educational structures, symbols and practices has ramped up internationally following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on 25th May 2020. Floyd was neither the first, nor the last person of colour to be murdered by law enforcement but his death exploded onto the world stage, already febrile after the apocalyptic events of the year. Debate around #BlackLivesMatter and #AllLivesMatter, for instance, dominated social media in increasingly dichotomised terms and educators of colour resisted the call of their white colleagues to tell them what to do, instead insisting that white people educate themselves.

Self-education and white activism are also essential anti-fascist work, since, as Braidotti says, *"The first thing fascists seize is the curriculum"* (2019 p.141) and I might argue that this has already happened, when we consider the creeping colonisation of adult and community education in pursuit of 'economic progress'. As this dissertation entered its final draft, the Westminster government in the person of Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch claimed that any 'school' which promoted 'critical race theory' was "*breaking the law*" (Trilling, 2020); adding to an earlier ban on teaching anti-capitalism[53] and yet the UK education system as a whole is designed on colonial lines. Patel (2016, p.18):

> *"The system is, in many ways, doing exactly what it is designed to do, which*
> *is to segment land, people and the relationships among them into strata."*

Witness the endless turf wars over students, "*bullshit jobs*" (Graeber, 2018[54]) and growing 'quality assurance' departments, reshuffle and restructure, even at the level of keeping community educators moving from department to department in local authorities or trapped in administrative tasks like "*battery hens*" - all in the name of 'professionalisation' (Khosla, 2017). This reaches its peak in megalithic general FE colleges, but community education does not escape, even in the third sector, where larger charities have come in for criticism about senior executive pay (Third Sector, 2019).

In all of this, there is little time even for politically engaged educators to think about the bigger projects of equality and decolonisation - not just of the statue but of the *monument*. To return to Drew, one of the community educators Amsler worked with in 2011:

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[53] Which was slightly undermined by national treasure David Attenborough calling for the "curbing of *Chi* capitalism" days later (Chiorando, 2020).
[54] David Graeber passed on the day I completed the first draft of this dissertation. Rest in power ✊

> "*So many movements, he says, 'don't speak from the heart.' They are rather focused on 'doing the next action, the next project, the next campaign, just continually knocking into brick walls because there's no love ethic, there's no understanding of what really pushes people, whether it's violence or through the power of community."*

<div align="right">(Amsler, 2015 p.169)</div>

There is no space in this dissertation for a thorough analysis of the decolonisation project, only this heart-felt sketch to affirm its importance. There is no place for colonising practices in a community education service reimagined through a posthuman lens. Patel (2016, p.16) invites us,

> "*...to contend with our places in an iniquitous system that has amassed, and is invested in, a collective educational debt.*"

More recently, Eddo-Lodge (2020) tackles the subject of anti-racist practice in her podcast *About Race.* Asked by an anxious white broadcaster what she can do Eddo-Lodge replies:

> "*I don't know where you hold influence in your life. I don't know your friends, I don't know the extent of your jobs, I don't know where you can assess where the institutional racism is really taking hold of your sector, what you as individuals can attempt to do to try and change that.*"

"*Decolonization is not a metaphor,*" wrote Tuck and Yang (2012), nor is it a fad, a performance of white guilt or the responsibility of people of colour to put right. It is at the heart of the ethics of this research, which means an unwavering questioning of the monument and the documents which uphold it, through a post-Vitruvian and post-anthropocentric posthuman lens.

In teacher education, thin as its application is in community education and despite the best efforts of this author and others, reading lists remain stubbornly packed with the writings of dead white men[55] (Ghopal, 2019). Challenging this involves on the one hand breaking up axioms which have persisted since the discipline's dawn and on the other hand preventing the reterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) of the space by a new breed of state-sanctioned 'influencers' such as Michaela School and the #ResearchEd movement. Their certainties[56] are seductive for busy educators looking for a quick fix and may prove refreshing, as they are presented as 'depoliticised', sidestepping the simmering and often vicious outbreaks of disagreement, as the '*repressive tolerance*' arguments of the twentieth century left (of e.g., Wolf, Moore and Marcuse, 1965) is pushed back by the '*illiberal liberalism*' movement of the twenty-first century right (e.g. Fox, 2018). Deleuze (1988, cited in Bozalek and Zembyas, 2017 pp114-5) used the word 'moralism' to refer to judgements against a set of ideas, rather than the

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[55] Maybe it takes George Floyd's death, or Breonna Taylor's, for this to change.
[56] 'Zero tolerance' approaches to 'behaviour management' and 'evidence-based' approaches such as retrieval practice, interleaving, SLANT (sit up, lean forward and track the teacher), cognitive load; some of which may help manage pressured situations, but don't look upstream to see what's causing the pressure.

affirmative ethics of immanance attempted by this research, liberated by a posthuman process ontology. Where each set of ideas is different, arguments will inevitably fall on deaf ears, what the philosopher Bernard Williams referred to as "a fetish of assertion" (Sennett, 2013 p.18).

As I am writing this even the word 'decolonise' is being hotly debated, whether by white reading groups earnestly studying 'Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race' (Eddo-Lodge, 2020) on Facebook or by the founder of the Free Black University in London. Melz Owusu has been calling on universities to decolonise curricula since undergraduate days, giving a TEDx talk in 2017 and recently launching the Free Black University in recognition of the way black students are "*traumatised*" by the education system as it stands (Swain, 2020). Interviewed on TV about Black Lives Matter, Owusu claimed that "*What is happening now is 400 years of pain rising to the surface*," (ITV, 2000). A tsunami of pain that all of us should forget to forget.

What, then, is the work that this research needs to do? "*I don't know where you hold influence in your life,*" says Reni Eddo-Lodge (2020a), author of the aforementioned book which has taken a white readership by storm. White people, it is our work. I'll take up that challenge here the best I can and in the meantime people of colour may well take up their own spaces, away from our deference, guilt and tears.

Practising a daily affirmative ethics, I naively believed my work was to open up thinking spaces; eventually enough people would engage, to make a collective rhizomatic difference. In fact, the people with the most privilege are the ones who attend, in nearly all cases. It seems clear that, while those of us with privilege work on bringing down the monuments of inequality (if we can see past our own guilt and grief), for others the need to find a safe space to be, without the pressure of educating others, is powerfully necessary, sometimes before any other activism can happen. The first international Working-Class Academics conference in July 2020, which attracted 600 delegates, and the popularity of the associated #SolidaritySpaces fortnightly Thinking Environment event testifies to just one example of the need for such spaces. Which is not to say that reading lists should not also be de-colonised. But queer people, disabled people, working-class people, people of colour have fought hard enough for that to happen and been ignored (Eddo-Lodge, 2018). As Ibram X. Kendi said, in discussion with Brene Brown, everything leads back to policy (Brown, 2020). The white (male, middle-class, able-bodied, white) policy makers need to get involved and this will be addressed in the Imaginary.

Together with the diffractive constellation of readers who contributed to my construction of this cartography, I have created a reference list which is - to a great extent - diverse. We sought out and shared with one another writers from disowned backgrounds and made valiant attempts (with some success) to diversify our own number. It would have been very difficult to draw on references from less-heard voices had I focused on academic texts only. People of colour find it harder to be published. Working-class people find it harder to be published. Someone on the intersectionality of 'black' and 'working class' would have to be a rapper with the profile of Akala or Stormzy to get a writing gig. But anyone who has the confidence and a little digital wherewithal can write a blog, or create a vlog, a podcast, an Instagram feed and there are an

increasing number of 'alternative' media platforms which claim, if not neutrality, journalistic principles: such as The Conversation, Tortoise, Medium, as well as the digital return of the punk 'zine (Smith, Dines and Parkinson, 2017).

The arguments against these are, of course, that they are not peer-referenced, i.e., subject to the critique of 'peers'. Once again, the concept of 'critique' stands problematising, as does the notion of 'peer' in an academic world where a lifetime's experience can be swept up into the infantilising label of 'Early Career Researcher'[57]. Posthumanism calls out the "*epistemic privilege*" (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2017 p.119) within taxonomies of research, which is another form of inequality. Posthumanism itself is not a straightforward example of "*powerful knowledge*" (Young, 2014), of course. It has taken all my skill as a communicator to convey its complexity even at this level of study, without getting lost in its obfuscating language. My own practice of Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment (Appendix A) refers to an equality where people are 'equal as thinkers' (2009), with role, rank (and hopefully ego) left at the door, but assuming this will always happen is just another 'Goddess Trick' (Rose, 1997). This research values the diffractive scrutiny of critical friends[58] and the *zeitgeist* presence of non-academic sources.

2.2.4 A Brief History of Imaginaries

In modernism, an 'Imaginary' is a limitation not the 'frontier' of Bloch's possibilities of hope (Amsler, 2015, p.53). Sociologists Steger and James (2013, cited in Buckles, 2018 p.28) place imaginaries as being the framework in which ideologies sit:

> *"These deep-seated modes of understanding provide largely pre-reflexive parameters, within which people imagine their social existence…"*

Given the yearning unleashed by Brexit for a long-lost UK (Price, 2020), it seems appropriate to turn the sociological definition of 'imaginary' – the collective consciousness of what a country is, even when it is not (Anderson, 1983) – on its head. Not surprisingly, given the rejection of pre-defined categories, an Imaginary created within a posthuman ontology is a more fluid anthropological concept (Wolf, 1999), which concentrates on future possibilities in order to re-imagine the social order, rather than identifying an existing imaginary (Gaonkar, 2002, Silva, 2017). This is useful when considering a definition of community education[59] which has never actually existed in fact, drawing together as it does traditions of youthwork, adult continuing education, working-class education, community development etc. We return to the meaning of the word itself: literally to exist in the imagination, or, to borrow a posthuman term, to exist *in potentia*. The Imaginary you will see below is the accumulated *potentia* of research contributors,

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[57] By the time I graduate I will have been operating as a thinking and agentic human being in the world of work for nearly 40 years.

[58] As well as the diffractive constellation, this included for me the editors of periodicals such as the Journal of Postcompulsory Education, where my articles were subject to challenge which was both rigorous and compassionate. This, too, was my experience of PhD supervision, including progress reviews. I refuse to believe I am 'lucky'.

[59] To remind the reader, the working definition of this dissertation is, "intentional adult and intergenerational learning which takes place communally, i.e. with others, physically or virtually."

others who engaged in diffractive conversations, the genealogy of this cartography, and myself operating within an ethics of affirmation. All of it is *possible*; and it is beyond the scope of this research to make an informed assessment of how likely it is to happen, since that depends on its mobilisation and whether a critical mass of collective *zoë* can be gathered.

Continuing the work of this cartography into an activist sphere, the intention of the Imaginary is to "*map co-ordinates of hope on otherwise 'flat' surfaces of possibility.*" (ibid. p.1) This practice is in itself generative of possibilities:

> "*I think it is important for scholars and activists to know that crossing these borders [of the front] in the context of experimental, durational, collective work can be, in its own right, a possibility-enabling practice.*"
>
> (Amsler, 2015 p.201)

This "*process ontology*" (Braidotti, 2018 p.52) channels *potentia* energy driven by an affirmative ethics, in which activist encounters happen which not only amplify 'missing peoples' but consider the non-human actors in any situation. For Braidotti, this is the academic work of now, necessarily activist in these critical times and the Imaginary is a transdisciplinary space where collaboration can occur. This research aims to harness the activist power of a range of people, to contribute their ideas of how *they* can change the culture and practice of a sector, given that we are all complicit in how things currently are. It is hoped that the Imaginary will give strength and voice to many, so that they may speak truth to power.

2.3 A Community Education Cartography

Surrounded by contemporary literature of community education, the scope of this project revealed itself in full[60]. Once I began to look beyond the narrow definition of state-funded community education (HOLEX, 2020), to what I knew through my own positionality and experience to be a landscape of considerably more complexity, the task grew messier and yet more hopeful. Tett and Hamilton (2019) provided what Avis (2020) calls "*a resource of hope*"; Finneran and Gumsell (2020) inspiration from other parts of the world. I take in a lungful of Rosi Braidotti and remind myself that anything is possible:

> "*We can extract ourselves from this sad state of affairs, work through the multiple layers of our exhaustion and co-construct different platforms of becoming. This…can only be enacted collectively…shared exhaustion actually unfolds upon a deeper wisdom.*"
>
> (Braidotti, 2020a p.5)

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[60] And petrified me for a while, I must admit.

2.3.1 The Policy Landscape

The pace of change in the UK education policy landscape[61] has accelerated over past decades and continues to be obscured by a churning nimbus of (often dichotomised) debate, rumour and speculation (Institute for Government, 2017). Indeed, the UK political landscape wobbles on a day-to-day basis, making any attempt to future-proof this dissertation futile[62] - this was true even before the global disruption of Covid-19. The intensification of 'velocity' (Virilio, cited in Armitage, 1999) has become visible to the naked eye. The 'end of capitalism' has been widely discussed for some time, if not agreed upon or in any way assured (see, for example, Jacobs and Mazzucato (2017), Braidotti (2013), Haraway (2015), Mason (2015), Bregman (2017), Free Exchange (2019)).

Capitalism has its death dance partner, classical Marxism and its many iterations, and community education has a proud critical leftist tradition exemplified in the work of Tuckett, Field, Holford, Thompson, Blunkett and others. This dissertation is intended to sit alongside righteous socio-economic critiques from the left and finds much to agree in them. However, such critiques, like the recent commissions on adult education[63] are only the latest in a series of publications which 'prove' the value of lifelong learning: then nothing changes in line with their recommendations. Three commissions which include state-funded community education in their scope (though not the wider definition of this research), reporting within 8 months of one another; the first two comprehensively ignored by the incoming administration; the third's fate to be decided. Without giving into cynicism, it is difficult to feel optimistic about change[64]. We know what the problems are; we need different solutions.

Since 2015 regional devolution has offered more localised opportunities for influence, in theory at least, and in some areas of England (Torrance, 2019). These new configurations of *potestas* were each privately negotiated with the government and all but one (Cornwall) combine local authorities into a regional power. This research, grounded as it is in a Braidottian reading of the posthuman, operates outwith the traditional dialectic which sees power with the verb 'to have'. Instead, it tries to identify *potentia* power: to be. The purpose of the research is to act, not rely

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[61] The working definition of community education in this research extends beyond education policy, since youth and community work, and the third sector, come under the remit of (currently) the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

[62] As I write, the UK is currently on its fourth Prime Minister since the research began and I have revised this footnote twice.

[63] Commission on the College of the Future, reported July 2020
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c8847f58dfc8c45fa705366/t/5f1712a7b7c02d65b1b8c822/1595347633317/English_ICCF+-+People%2C+productivity+and+place+FINAL.pdf

Labour's Independent Commission on Lifelong Learning (genesis of the National Education Service), reported November 2019
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c8847f58dfc8c45fa705366/t/5f1712a7b7c02d65b1b8c822/1595347633317/English_ICCF+-+People%2C+productivity+and+place+FINAL.pdf

The Centenary Commission, "A permanent national necessity…", reported November 2019
https://www.co-op.ac.uk/news/adult-education-a-national-necessity

[64] Hint: of the 46 commissioners across the three combined boards, 42 are white. Two of the four people of colour are from student organisations.

on the action of those who already hold the reins of power. To do something different, rather than do the same things differently. The recommendations of this research will be actionable within a praxis of community educators and will include actions of influence in its lines of flight. The intention is to channel the *potentia* of educators who lack *potestas* in the sense of 'politics as usual' or, as Amsler writers, those people who,

> *"…do not realise that they are such important sources of illumination in dark times, and many of those whose work informs this book specifically would probably refuse such a grand identification, not least of all because they often struggle to see it as well."*

<div align="right">(Amsler, 2015 p.5)</div>

A posthuman lens opens up the possibility for debate around what community education is, and what it is 'for', challenging assumptions which have been hardening into taken-for-granted neoliberal hegemonies that *all* education should be geared around a country's economic productivity (as Pember, 2019, assumes) and which Biesta (2013) refers to as 'learnification': the neoliberalisation of education which assumes the 'hard to reach' "*refuse to live up to their learning duty"* (p.67).

This cartography draws on Lyn Tett's excellent summary of the history of community education in the UK, and more broadly the EU (2010). Much of Tett's research is based in Scotland and her work is infused with a Scottish perspective which, despite its current limitations, seems far removed from English community education in 2020. As we have seen, since the heady days of the Transformation Fund (2009-10), state-funded community education in England[65] has been returned to the DfE and clawed back into line with the skills agenda, separated organisationally from youth and community work, much of which now takes place in the charities or social enterprises. In UK governance, funding streams are powerful gatekeepers to collaborative work; they effectively keep the siloes apart, as does funding scarcity; doing 'more for less' might improve 'efficiency' in narrow financial terms up to a given breaking point (the Institute for Government, 2019, believed we have already reached this), but it also ensures that ingenuity is focused on the here and now, rather than future change (Price, 2020). It is clear that these divisions have to be healed, for a whole-hearted community education to thrive.

For community education to survive in any healthy sense, the need for this research is compelling. As Biesta wrote in 2007: 'what works' (i.e., evidence-based practice) clearly doesn't work, or it would be working. Evidence-based practice might tell us some interesting things about what we already know, but it's not going to lead us to anything new - by definition. Biesta concludes his thesis by suggesting that the 'democratic deficit' in educational decision-making is mirrored more widely in society:

> *"The extent to which a government not only allows the research field to raise this*

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[65] https://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/lfi/173887

[limited] set of questions, but actively supports and encourages researchers to go beyond simplistic questions about "what works," may well be an indication of the degree to which a society can be called democratic."

<div align="right">(Biesta, 2007 p.22)</div>

This research attempts to address this by re-imagining a community education which is re-designed within a posthuman ontology and on more expansive lines.

2.3.2 What is community education?

Following an extensive immersion in literature around 'community education' and the 'adult community learning' of policy (HOLEX, 2020), community education was defined as '**intentional adult and intergenerational learning which takes place *communally,* i.e., with others, physically or virtually.'** This broad definition runs the risk of diffusing focus to an unmanageable degree, but it does justice to the broad vision of research participants. John Field (2000, cited in Biesta, 2013 p.66) warned of the increasing individualisation of what he referred to as 'lifelong learning': a "*silent explosion*" of individuals outside of the state-funded sector doing their own thing. Biesta offers respect for this perspective, whilst offering a critical analysis of 'lifelong learning' as existing for the production of 'human capital' in a Rikowskian sense. The lifelong learning paradigm, argues Biesta (p.72), views equality as lying in the future, once the educator has enabled the learner to address their learning deficit. Although the term 'lifelong learning' was sometimes used by research participants, this was not the vision of community education they contributed to the Imaginary, in the main. They challenge the research to think through how community education might yet survive and even thrive in a policy context where many human beings are increasingly being left behind (see, for example, Nunn and Tape-Belfrage, 2016).

Tett's (2010) expansive take on community education draws on two strong traditions – the radical and the philanthropic – noting that, "*these traditions are also influenced by the ways in which the nation state attempts to adapt education policy and practice to social and economic conditions."* (ibid., p.2). State-licensed community education in England is certainly not radical, is to some measure philanthropic and in its reductive nature serves the interests of neoliberalism in its focus on assisting marginalised people to be economically productive (Finnegan and Grummell, 2020). Tett also challenges the rebranding of adult community education to 'lifelong learning':[66]

> *"…without careful intervention within a social justice framework it can also serve to reinforce inequalities."*

<div align="right">(ibid., p.*ix*)</div>

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[66] As Biesta points out, 'lifelong learning' was dominant throughout the national Labour administration 1997-2010 and its neoliberalist associations have survived, even as the term has waned.

Community is a slippery concept and one which can be manipulated "*as a smokescreen to fudge some of the key issues, about power, accountability and resource allocation*" (Martin, 1987, p.13). The division between the two traditions identified by Tett is not always straightforward, since many adults are well-equipped to take what they need from what's on offer, whilst others are not. Tett (2010) led me to the comprehensive work of Bryant, who researched the adult education experience in Scotland (1984). He notes scathingly that,

> "*Many providers overestimated ordinary people's educational background but underestimated their intelligence.*"

(ibid., p.9)

For many adults today, overcoming negative experiences of school limits their educational achievement and confidence, though not intelligence, in later years. For Price (2020, loc. 527[67]), this is likely to be exacerbated as less privileged young people of now grow to adulthood having had,

> "*…a form of schooling that insists upon compliance, recalling facts and test prep – when the fast-growing knowledge industry hires on rebellious curiosity, problem-solving and critical thinking.*"

Re-making community education in pursuit of 'rebellious curiosity' seems a valorous pursuit. Price's comrade-in-arms, Ken Robinson, wrote famously of the incapability of the education system to help people 'find their element' (Robinson and Aronica, 2014) and we have the tense situation in community education of educators revering Robinson yet finding his conclusions impossible to implement (Mycroft, 2018). The research considers alternatives to the prevailing institutionalisation of state-funded community education within the FE sector (often within - and sidelined by – the political environment of local authorities (HOLEX, 2016)). Is it possible that some form of community education could flourish outside of these two behemoths which, arguably (ESRC, 2007), marginalise its existence and limit its impact? Could a new, expansive community education also embrace youth, intergenerational and community work more broadly?

It's no coincidence that the shift from physical production – the post-industrial turn – happened around the same time that the UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was confirming an ideology that had become self-evident throughout a decade of confrontational labour dispute: "*And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families[68].*" (Thatcher from 1987, cited in The Guardian, 2013). Ironically, given the arguments over Brexit which have raged throughout the lifetime of this project, the fact that community education (and community work more broadly) continued to have any sort of foothold in the face of this ideology was due to its presence in many parts of the country being underwritten by post-industrial regeneration money from the European Union, which kept it running (on empty) for another fifteen years: riddled with short-termism and fear of failure in an increasingly competitive

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[67] Price (2020) is currently only available as an e-book.
[68] Families as a purchasing unit.

landscape which directly acted against any genuine partnership working. By 2017, when the CLMH began to report[69], the impact of this scarcity culture was writ large (Mycroft, 2019a).

Recent literature around community education is often focused outside England; experiences from Ireland (e.g., Fitzsimons, 2017) and continental Europe (e.g. Kolleck, N., Jürgens, H, and Well, M. (2017)) are useful to provoke thinking but of limited direct application to community education in England, though Tett and Hamilton (2019, loc. 5084[70]) underline the importance of "*making links with adult education…internationally in countries where essential core values are still in evidence*". Many English based academics focus their intentions on an international view (see, for example, Tett's (2010) writing, which is infused with Scottish experiences though she takes an informed view across Europe more generally).

One of the challenges of this research is that having taken an expansive view of 'community education', it is impossible to make even an informed guess about what participation numbers might be, so distributed and complex is the landscape. The most recent HOLEX briefing paper (2020), published only weeks before the submission of this dissertation, claimed that state-funded communication alone engaged half a million people in England. No mechanisms exist to provide additional data from provision not funded via the Adult Education Budget. This, in turn, makes an integrated service difficult to argue for.

Drawing on international contributions to their 2019 book, Hamilton and Tett identify a number of propositions for the future of community education. They describe these as "*points where it is possible to intervene to disrupt the dominant neoliberal regime and to help emergent, more emancipatory, cultures to take root.*" (ibid., loc. 4491). By contrast, Finnegan and Grummell's edited collection of papers written after the ESREA conference in 2016 found that "*relatively few papers 'imagined diverse futures'; the emphasis was more on the reconfiguration of the field.*" (2020, p.4). Could it be that that the politically and globally chaotic events of the intervening few years; Arendt's 'endarkenment', reworked by Amsler (2015, p.3) has galvanised more radical thinking?

> "*There is a sense that these possibilities are somehow connected to the 'uncertain, flickering and often weak light' that is being thrown onto the present by projects to dismantle both neoliberal rationality and the hegemonic power of capital…*"

The opportunity community education provides for a convergence of 'missing voices'[71] is a thread in this cartography. The language of social justice is what makes the difference between deficit and equality, as Tett theorises (2020, p.94), drawing on the work of Nancy Fraser which

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[69] I use this term loosely. The main research findings, by IPSOS Mori, were published very quietly in 2018 and they offer no critique of the socio-political-economic context for the work. The corresponding stable of research 'offcuts' were ignored by the funder (the UK state Department for Education) and were never formally published (Mycroft, 2019).
[70] E-book.
[71] "*Preferably unheard,*" Roy (2014).

drew an intersection between (economic) redistribution and (identity) recognition and participation:

> "*The focus is on the democratic assumption that people are equal in a variety of different ways but social structures operate to deny social justice to some whilst privileging powerful others.*"

The Enlightenment influence still dominant in the UK education system remains ignorant of schools of thought which are not indigenous to Western Europe and which do not rest on an assumption of inequality: a monologic approach where the emancipation of one relies on the intervention of another (Biesta, 2013, p.72). There is currently a hard-won resurgence in indigenous philosophies which, in a totally separate tradition from Spinoza, see all matter as one (Patel, 2016). Posthuman schools of thought are increasingly informed by indigenous thinking, as well as the more established cartographies of critical race, feminist, queer and critical disability studies (see, for example, Tuhiwai Smith, 2012) and are united in being anti-Vitruvian (see Braidotti's own cartography, 2013); naturally, since indigenous peoples also did not figure highly on the Enlightenment taxonomy of 'human'. Sork and Käpplinger (2020, p.47) spell out what is necessary, at a programme design stage, to offer any sort of balance to power relations in community education:

> "*The need to design and deliver a new generation of programs that address urgent global problems – while not ignoring more local concerns – has never been greater. We believe that technically capable, politically-astute and ethically responsible planners will play key roles in exercising these possibilities. Program planners must learn to* deal with power *and exercise their own power in responsible ways in order to contribute to a greater "common good.*"

Yet even with these attributes, energy and will, programme re-design opportunities are limited, where structures are still designed on traditional lines. Some local authorities are beginning to embrace complexity and some element of genuine third sector partnership: see, for example The Wigan Deal, which describes itself as,

> "*a major process of change involving moving towards asset-based working at scale, empowering communities through a 'citizen-led' approach to public health and creating a culture which permits staff to redesign how they work in response to the needs of individuals and communities,*"

(Kings Fund, 2019).

Community education is vital to the Wigan Deal, as it was to the Rochdale Integrated Commissioning team (Plant and Ravenhall, 2019), which took a similar approach, working with social return on investment (SROI) models (Lawler, Neitzeit, Nicholls and Goodspeed, 2009), to make the case for early intervention: more community education means less offending and lower public health costs down the line. Other local authorities are making various attempts to

follow suit, working now as combined authorities[72]. However, SROI was an initiative of the previous administration and in any case, Covid may carry all before it in the scramble for economic survival: Sheffield City Region's draft 'Recovery and Renewal' plan makes no reference to adult – never mind 'community' - education, save a passing mention of 'skills' (SCR, 2020). State-funded community education has faced immense challenge during Covid lockdown. Historically estranged from digital learning in many cases, due to the various barriers of local authority firewalls, ancient hardware and rural/inadequate broadband (Mycroft, 2018), if they have stepped up to the challenges of digital learning they have done so silently and with limited reach. Recent research shows that adult learners are the most likely to be in material poverty and unable to access digital learning, should it exist (EPTT, 2019)[73] and for families struggling to survive the emotional and economic impact of Covid, community education may fall way down a list of priorities.

Community education's leaders are also silent, when compared with the cacophony of schools and college leadership in the public domain[74]. Who are they? The governmental divisions between state and third sector provision, education and 'communities' ensure there is no cohesive voice and I uncovered no evidence of collective co-identification on a national level, beyond the various Commissions of 2020. Much state-funded provision, falling as it does within local government, shifts from department to department and any third sector partnerships are local, rather than national or regional.

This part of the cartography proved the most difficult to map. The expansive working definition adopted here does justice to the voices of research participants but opens up a messy landscape, whereas the initial, much tighter focus on state-funded community education may have led to more focused recommendations, but potentially might have had little to add to three commissions and a significant body of research which have not so far effected any meaningful change.

Ultimately it was my judgement, as a researcher working in a posthuman process ontology, to open up rather than close down; to refuse to ignore the broadest definition of community education as it made sense to participants – to 'forget to forget' (Braidotti, 2013) state education's reductive approach. The Imaginary presents a horizon which exists *in potentia*.

2.3.3 Professional Learning and Leadership

There is not, nor as I understand it, has there ever been a *teacher training* qualification that is designed for community educators. During the 2000s, the Federation for Community Development Learning (FCDL) co-produced professional standards for community development with the Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Council, an arm of the Department for Education, as a

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[72] See, for example, Sheffield City Region https://sheffieldcityregion.org.uk/project/adult-education-budget/

[73] For example, Fircroft College surveyed its adult learners at the start of lockdown and found 40% had no access to digital learning.

[74] By this I do mean social media, and also the outpouring of articles by 'new' writers to TES FE during the lockdown period.

precursor to nationally recognised qualifications, but these did not close on parity with teacher training qualifications[75][76].

Developing a community education-focused teacher training qualification was a recommendation of the Community Learning Mental Health Research Project 2015-18 (CLMH) but none of the recommendations of that research were ever taken up, or indeed acknowledged by its funders, the DfE (Mycroft, 2019a). There is, in a separate tradition, a professional pathway for youth and/or community workers, to degree level and beyond, which includes facilitation and group work skills; until a decade ago there were also lower-level professional qualifications in 'community development', widely available across community education, including the WEA and various confederations of community work organisations, including the FCDL[77].

Beyond the limits of the CLMH educators' survey[78], little is known about the teaching qualifications of community educators, but the CLMH findings suggest that in state-funded community education qualifications are drawn from the teaching, rather than the community work, domain. 96% of teaching respondents[79] had some form of teaching qualification, the majority at degree level or above (Mycroft, 2018). Although we did not directly ask about community 'development' qualifications, qualitative evidence seemed to suggest that most had entered the sector after working professionally in a skills area (e.g., floristry, fitness), rather than via community work more generically, which wasn't mentioned. Two different workforces, two professional communities, yet both would consider themselves to be in the business of community education.

In the world of state-funded community education, there has been no regulatory requirement for professional qualification since the Lingfield Review (2012) and no legal requirement for community educators to be qualified as teachers, though as we have seen from the CLMH educators' survey this is refuted in practice. Many will have qualified in-service, meeting the requirements for standard further education initial teacher training qualifications, ranging from a 30-hour Preparing to Teach to a two-year part time PGCE. None of these are contextualised to community education[80].

Experience of curating the CLMH research 'offcuts' (Mycroft, 2019) surfaced a loss of specialist skills and knowledge relevant to community education: curriculum development, practitioner research, community development, partnership working. Asked for stories of their pedagogy,

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[75] The 'cliff-edge' qualification at the time (the point at which you could professionally call yourself a teacher and be paid accordingly) was the Certificate in Education and the PGCE, both awards of Universities.

[76] Indeed, parity of 'post-16' Cert Ed/PGCE and schools PGCE was not legally recognised until 2010 and even then many schools refused to recognise the post-16 qualification.

[77] By 2017 the FCDL, the Standing Conference for Community Development (SCCD) and the Community Development Foundation (CDF) were all defunded.

[78] 111 participants.

[79] We also surveyed learning support workers.

[80] My own team's programmes at The Northern College 2003-17 were designed for community educators; fitting appropriate content to pre-defined qualifications was a tense balance, leading to challenges and even suspensions each time a new external examiner was appointed.

educators were unable to provide any, telling instead the (tragic life) stories of learners. CLMH also revealed resistance to researcher and digital practices (as well as organisational barriers in dispersed learning centres). Part of the Imaginary has to be to support community educators – wherever they work - with initial training and professional development which is relevant to them.

Wilson (2014) calls on anti-heroic leadership for complex and unpredictable times; a form of leadership which is distributed and relational and which resonates with rhizomatic practices, although this theoretical background is not specifically referenced in his work. For a dispersed workforce, mostly part-time, 'sessional', or, in the third sector, short-term or unpaid, many rural, such a leadership practice could be transformative. CLMH respondents were highly critical of communication, leadership and management within their organisations (Mycroft, 2018). Wilson's commission for the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), the arms-length, professional development agency of the DfE, was concurrent with other initiatives[81] which began to break up the 'drive-by CPD[82]' approach to professional development in further education after the devastating 2016 national CPD survey which showed that less than a third of educators in the FE sister-service had undertaken any professional learning in the previous year; a failure for the ETF (ETF, 2019). CLMH upheld this finding amongst state-funded community educators (Mycroft, 2018); no evidence is available for the broader landscape of community education. A posthuman reading of Wilson's anti-hero approach would acknowledge that, '…*separation is not the way to deal with complexity. Convergence is the only way to deal with complexity*' (Braidotti, 2019a).

2.3.4 Legitimate Knowledge(s)

Education is conventionally seen as a social science, one which carries the disciplines of arts, humanities and science (in all their manifestations), the enablers of literacies[83] and numeracy, and the applications of manifold skills as well as being worthy of study in its own right. Its formation is a political act (Apple,1999), in that it shapes the thinking of every human being in England, where it is compulsory for children and young people up to the age of 18. From a social justice perspective, education is a right (Biesta, 2013). Although in itself it is viewed as 'character forming'[84] (DfE, 2017) - especially for the young - it is only peripherally concerned with 'life skills[85]' (or human relational skills) which in England at least are often termed 'soft skills'; the term itself is demeaning, in that it minimises the importance of these *vis á vis* the 'harder' skills deemed more important by a succession of policy makers (though not necessarily employers (Price, 2020)).

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[81] Such as the – to some extent – co-created Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training.
[82] One off sessions focused on 'fix it' practicalities.
[83] Now including digital.
[84] Also a loaded political term.
[85] Indeed the reductionary and expensively funded 'Skills for Life' strategy launched by the Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2001 was concerned only with English/ESOL and with Maths.

Education in England in 2020 is an ideological and practical battleground. Nothing I write can be ideology free, entangled as it is in my own thoughts, opinions and experiences. I turn to Apple (1979), to present the idea of 'legitimate knowledge' and how it is selected by those with power over education and targeted at specific groups in specific ways: "*these relations operate at a fundamental level to help some groups and serve as a barrier to others*". Since we live in what is undoubtedly an unequal society (see Pickett and Wilkinson, 2010), without a strong, persistent and deliberate steer towards equality, education in all its state-owned forms continues to replicate and deepen inequalities.[86] There is a crossing place to acknowledge, therefore, around the 'legitimate knowledges' of community education and how, if the Imaginary is to be implemented, these knowledges can be designed, structured, empowered and funded in ways which do not penalise those involved. Apple is concerned with schools, but his thinking can be gently extrapolated to community education, which often falls under the radar:

> "*It's almost as if [education] itself as a collective process is an enemy,*
> *a source of pollution that threatens the purity of market solutions and*
> *possessive individualism.*"

(Apple, 2013 p.4)

Young's hugely influential notion of 'powerful knowledge' is relevant here. In Young (2013, p.195) he criticises John Beck's interpretation of 'powerful knowledge' as focusing on the social ("*the power element*") as opposed to the epistemological ("*the knowledge element*"). For Young, education begins with the subject disciplines[87]; in order to prepare students for life in a meritocracy, they need to be grounded in knowledge which is not contextualised to them but which comprises the unique key concepts of the subject under consideration. The teacher's subject knowledge is therefore prized above their pedagogic knowledge.[88]

Young proposes that, "*powerful knowledge is both an epistemological and a social justice issue.*" (ibid., p.196); yet his thesis diverges from those of commonly regarded social justice educators such as Paulo Freire, in nuance and application. He seems to accept (2013, p.197) that teachers, "*are unlikely to be successful with more than a proportion of any cohort.*" He easily writes that, "*A deeper change in the distribution of educational opportunities would involve political as well as educational issues.*" Young, essentially, does not believe that education can change social fabric, nor should it try. This is why his 'powerful knowledge' is fundamentally different from Freire's 'practice of freedom', which can only come about through the radically loving process of engaging with dominant discourses (1972).

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[86] As I write this, a political storm rages over the Government's handling of the 2020 exam results in England, where these inequalities were exacerbated.

[87] John White (2018) compellingly argues that the 'powerful knowledge' thesis is patchy in application, working for some subjects better than for others. Those subjects – maths, engineering, the 'natural' sciences (another social construct) – just happen to be subjects held in higher value in the current education system, than subjects such as the humanities, music and dance.

[88] Essentially, this argument is the one which has been flattened out and personalised on social media to 'traditional' vs 'progressive' education.

Freire was concerned with community education in its broadest and most transformational sense, Young with schools. What can consideration of powerful knowledge(s) bring to community education as it is defined in this research? Should community education be transformational of society, or just individual lives? Herein lie critiques of social mobility, ironically allied to the work of Young's namesake, another Michael Young, whose work around dystopian visions of meritocracy was equally influential in the latter half of the twentieth century (Meredith, 2020). Social mobility always leaves some people behind. The earlier Young was an initiator of broad-spectrum 'community education' institutions; as Appiah (2018) describes, his base for many years was the Bethnal Green community education centres he founded; he was instrumental in the setting up of consumer fairness organisation 'Which?' and the Open University.

From a feminist perspective, Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon (2007) are equally concerned with 'possessive individualism', its trajectory from the Enlightenment (Biesta, 2013) to the neo-liberalism of now and how it renders invisible the human relational love, care and solidarity, which were also evident in the earlier Young's work:

> "*There is an implicit if not explicit assumption that the development of autonomous rational public citizens remains the core educational project.*"
>
> (ibid., p.4)

They describe this as a "*serious educational deficit*", one which has been identified by feminist scholars for many years (they cite Oakley, 1981, amongst others), calling out the dichotomy which has been created between fact and value (ibid. p.1): "*values influence what we choose to study, the methods that we employ and the interpretive paradigms we invoke.*" Inescapably, the material returned by the mass observation question were dominated by words and phrases connected to values:

> "*The rejection of values is deeply embedded in Western scientific thinking for a number of reasons, one major one being because values are defined as being tied to emotions and devoid of reason. Emotions are seen as partial, subjective, irrational and feminine. Reason, in contrast, is defined as detached, objective, rational and masculine.*"
>
> (Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon, 2007 p.2, drawing on Martha Nussbaum)

Although they do not directly reference him, this is essential Spinoza, rejecting the division between body and soul. Whilst acknowledging that respondents to this research were largely female and that community education is dominated by female teachers and students, it is evident that the overwhelming majority of respondents are driven to re-imagine community education along affective lines. This provides a clear line of flight for the Imaginary.

Apple (2013, p.11) suggests that new knowledges might be formed along the lines of "*thematic complexes*", identified by community research. Participation, he asserts, has to be constructed, and he draws on experiences with radical schools education in Porto Alegre in the south of

Brazil, where such curricula have been developed, as have school councils comprising teachers, students and parents with decision making and budgetary powers. Training in technical knowledge and the monitoring of impact is all part of the package. This is an example of Apple's "thick" (i.e., intersectional) democracy in action.

Summary

This chapter presents a literature review in the form of a cartography. The process of cartography has been chosen to intimate a living form of engagement with other thinkers, in written, oral or aural form. The chapter outlines the posthuman concept of 'cartography' and presents The Bowerbird✸ *in situ*. It then goes on to explore a transdisciplinary literature relevant to the research. This layer of the cartography will later be overlaid with research material from the mass observation study; and the justification for an affirmative 'posthuman' ethics.

This cartography is another element of the assemblage (including three figurations and the dual-purpose figure of the Bowerbird, as well as an affirmative practice of ethics) which makes up the posthuman toolkit. The posthuman toolkit enables the nomadic researcher to practice a posthuman process ontology, keeping on the move and staying out of the grasp of arboreal systems, processes and hierarchies. Thus, the visible is made briefly invisible, in order to envisage possibilities of hope.

The next chapter lays out and defends the affirmative ethics which infuses the research.

Chapter 3: Ethics

> *"... it would be the way we interact, the basis of our existence and recognised as part of a greater good, a way of engaging with each other that is not sectioned off, professionalised, specialised, compartmentalised, mentalised."*

<div align="right">Participant 10</div>

Practising an affirmative posthuman ethics is a choice I made in 2017 as a way of life, not just this research. In this chapter, I will attempt to defend that choice and also explicate it as a practice rooted in a posthuman process ontology which rejects transcendence in favour of relational immanence and is always becoming, never fixed.

> *"With responsibility in affirmative ethics comes activity, affectivity, creativity and the solicitation of the unpredictable expressivity of other incarnations of life."*

<div align="right">(McCormack, 2016 p.18)</div>

3.1 Posthuman Ethics

Braidotti has been developing and defending a nomadic, affirmative, posthuman ethics since 2011 and she has defined it in several, non-contradictory but developmental ways. In The Posthuman (2013, pp49-50):

> *"A posthuman ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism."*

Here, 'non-unitary subject' means nomadic subject; an individual connected immanently to others and which is symbolised in this research by the Bowerbird. By 2019's Posthuman Knowledge she devotes a chapter to 'Affirmative Ethics', expanding her argument and getting closer to a neat encapsulation. Returning to Nietzsche, she writes (pp.172-3):

> *"Being worthy of what happens to us* – amor fati – *is not fatalism, but pragmatic engagement with the present (as both actual and virtual), in order to collectively construct conditions that transform and empower our capacity to act ethically and produce social horizons of hope, or sustainable futures."*

Her language has become more active as the 'project' (of *amor fati*) becomes more urgent in the crisis of the world: an activist praxis[89]. She explores the notion of a transversal assemblage[90] - ethics as collective *potentia* praxis – and advises the necessity of endurance (as opposed to the neoliberalist concept of 'resilience' (p.171)). Within any transversal alliance, the nomadic subject is required to be affective, in touch with their own vulnerability, in order to work through pain, anger, fear and negativity, channelling it into activist work. *Here* the pain we "*forgot to forget*" finds its affirmative outlet: from pain to *potentia*. In this dense, complex paragraph, many echoes converge. The vulnerability work of shame researcher Brené Brown, who reaches millions of people through her practical, folksy books and podcasts, based on decades of serious research (see, for example, Daring Greatly, 2015). The call of Moten and Harney (2013) to resist the misery of academia and find activist solidarity in the 'undercommons'. Montgomery and bergman's (2017) 'joyful militancy'. Ulmer's (2017) politics of 'hope, creativity and imagination.' Amsler's "looking for light" (2017). Tett and Hamilton's (2019) belief in 'resources of hope'. Not everyone mentioned drinks from the same source, not all follow Braidotti or even Spinoza; there are several genealogies at work leading to the same place. McCormack (2016, p.20) says of the theories we map to create our own ethical landscape:

> "*Theory is…what one makes of it and doing theory is creating theory in posthumanism, where flesh and thought, activism and philosophy are not bifurcated.*"

It seems axiomatic to posthuman freedom of expression that no-one writes a roadmap for an affirmative ethics, so I have written my own, which relates to me alone. McCormack again (ibid., p.19):

> "*It is Nietzsche's call to create the bridge over the goal, not knowing what will be on the other side but knowing there is a reason to extend one's own side.*"

A neat encapsulation of a process ontology. Imagine this ethics overlaid on the maps of posthuman thinking and community education in the cartography, with the rivers and roads and crossings all in the same place. I will close this introduction with Braidotti, her simplest expression yet of a posthuman ethics (2020, p.30):

"…the shared intimacy with the world and our common care for it."

Through this research, I hope to add to the Braidottian landscape by applying critical posthuman concepts to a fresh area of study: community education.

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[89] Even as I complete this dissertation, Braidotti is publishing monthly articles headed with the familiar formula, but with a different word emphasised each time, for a shifted perspective (e.g. 2020, 2020a).
[90] Her formula, familiar to the reader now: '*we-are-all-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same*'.

3.1.1 A Personal Posthuman Ethics

> "*Anxiety is also present in ethics…there is anxiety in forsaking privileged positions and annexations to reliable significations but there is also anxiety in jubilance, trepidation in liberty and in the cliché of fear of the unknown the fear is as exhilarating and creative as the jubilance is frightening, by facilitating an encounter with a beyond.*"

<div align="right">(McCormack, 2016 p.120)</div>

In 2017 I enacted a mindful intention to work nomadically, essential to which was the daily practice of an affirmative ethics. I wasn't quite sure what this would mean in practice, but I knew I did not want to become entangled with an organisation on any permanent basis and I wanted to be able to work beyond the boundaries of the education 'system' if opportunities arose. I also wanted to maintain an activist practice alongside practical considerations of earning a living. My nomadic reversal of Braidotti's maxim of a good career – in my case, one third *potestas* to two-thirds *potentia* - was in my mind from the start, and I wanted to pursue ideas I'd developed as a teacher educator around the practice of values. I began with the notion of 'walking my ethical boundaries' each day, and with each potential piece of work – Spinoza's "*practical philosophy*" (Deleuze, 2001) – and I didn't want to be always 'doing', I wanted my ethics 'to be'. From the start, I realised that standing back and enabling others was, in its apparent passivity, also an activist practice, and I began this research by always referring to the collaborative 'we'[91]:

> "*Describing passivity as active shows the dynamism of ethics and the quiet magnificence of grace.*"

<div align="right">(McCormack, 2016 p.11)</div>

This played out in the research when I made the decision to stand back from over-complicating the research question into many, or selective, questions. I stood back to give participants space as, in the analysis, I stood back – with difficulty sometimes – from over-reading my position into their words (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006).

3.1.1.2 A Practised Ethics

As a teacher educator, I began every cohort by inviting participants to identify which values were important to them, and how those played out in practice principles. I encouraged the language of values and practice principles in our conversations together, and in reflective work. The devastating skill of neoliberalism is to take the fine words of values and manipulate them into mission statements, political speeches and memes, thus making arguments difficult to refute (Husband and Mycroft, 2019; Price, 2020). This practice reclaims those words and turns them into action. "So how do you practice that?" became a question I asked of myself and others. Often the initial response was silence; time, patience and peer power eventually elicited responses from participants' own thinking, as they climbed out from under Young's 'powerful

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[91] I ended up entangled in this, since this PhD is essentially an individual piece of work. Taking advice from my supervisors, I revised my language to 'I', though this still felt odd, at first.

knowledges' (2013) and began to make meaning of their own beyond the stated words, imbued as words are by what is already thought. This is a form of activism, as Amsler defines it, "*about nowness and the immediate future.*" (2015, p.172). Amsler is talking about artistic practice, rather than the unsettling of taken-for-granted language, but her 2011 research participant Jane's words (ibid.) resonated with me and protected me from rushing towards anticipated outcomes:

> "*…there is an understanding that art can act in a very slow and sometimes ineffable way, a way that can't be predicted or described…some of us still make space for work which is much less quantifiable in terms of what actual changes have got made and others of us find that quite hard…I think that tension is useful.*"

In such an everyday practice, taking opportunities as they occur, changes may ripple out rhizomatically that I will never know about (and that's OK).

3.1.1.2 A Nomadic Ethics

This is the emerging pattern of my work across the lifetime of this research: an intentional application of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic theory to a career which is further guided by Braidotti's flavour of Spinoza's affirmative ethics. That sounds so pompous. But in the absence of an external framework (an organisation's contractual conditions of service or a religious moral framework; Deleuze's 'morality'), something had to provide a set of parameters; to quote the central paradox of a Thinking Environment (Kline, 2009): 'freedom needs boundaries'. I experienced a gradual process of moving from the organisation (i.e., its survival) being the work, to the work being the organisation, a move unlikely to be popular with workplace leaders (Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2018). I increasingly looked outside the organisation for inspiration, critical friendship and support. When the schism came - quite suddenly - between myself and the organisation, many years' patient nurturing of networks - my nomadic apprenticeship - came to fruition.

Nomadic working in the last three years of this research, its operational years, has enabled me to be an activist alongside being a researcher (and earning a living). The ultimate (emerging, conditional) Imaginary will be a moment in time which presents cleared and reclaimed spaces and opportunities for deterritorialisation, all in the service of empowering a *potentia* response. Community education, as the material defines it, will be impossible to achieve without an engaged, tenacious and active community.

> "*Ethics is not just the application of moral protocols, norms and values, but rather the force that contributes to conditions of affirmative becoming*."

> (Braidotti, 2019, p168)

A nomadic ethics is therefore also a practice. The values which emerged from the material will be the starting point for re-imagining what community education might look like as a practice of its expressed values.

With Dennis (2020), I explore the notion of Caliban, Shakespeare's half man/half 'monster' from The Tempest as a nomadic subject in the Braidottian sense (2011), reimagining (the whole of) FE:

> "*Situated at the digital crossroads, Caliban signifies intersectional spaces (Crenshaw 1989) where the space between I and others, between educators and managers, between students and educators is one of inevitable connections. Interlocking aspects of identity don't allow us to swerve the responsibilities of a collective. Instead they nurture a space of not merely 'becoming' but 'becoming with'*."

Caliban is both settler and colonised half-human (in the Vitruvian sense of being 'less than'). He has been dealt an 'othered' hand, yet he takes deep joy in his surroundings, as many do who have experienced the transformational potential of FE/community education (James and Thériault, 2020). Defiantly and finally making his voice heard, he is left on his beloved island when the coloniser Prospero departs. It is a line of flight in the Imaginary to seek out the 'preferably unheard' voices, not via 'outreach' but via a shift in the educators' role towards a genuinely co-produced body of research.

3.1.1.3 Affirmative Ethics

The notion of a personal, affirmative ethics operating outside a standard research ethics ('morality') is challenging for the academy. The notion of an externally imposed ethics (e.g., BERA) is axiomatic and essentially problematic, infused as it is with neo-liberalist principles of 'what works' (Biesta, 2007). Conceptualised from within a posthuman paradigm, a personal ethics is part of the cartography begun above:

> "*It is critical to create an ethics from within…you could call it a cartography.*"

(Boers, 2019)

Spinoza's philosophy was a refusal of despair. His belief in the immanence of all life was his ethics; joy being found in the pooling of vitalist *zoë* we share with other humans and non-humans. The readings which have converged on this moment, those which have most informed the cartography of this research, all have some form of words for this, informed by different genealogies: from Hamilton and Tett's (2019) 'resources of hope' (Raymond Williams) to Brown's (2017, p.130) 'collective assembly' (her words for Emile Durkheim's 'collective effervescence'). Amsler channels Hannah Arendt's 'weak light' (2015, p.3) in the introduction to her book that she calls 'foreshining'. She also draws significantly on Ernst Bloch's notion of 'frontiers of hope'. She describes 'The Front' as a "*co-ordinate of hope*" and I imagine it mapped onto the cartography as part of the posthuman ethics overlay. The problem manifest in community education (see Mycroft, 2019a) and in everyday discourse more generally, is that many people feel that the prevailing conditions are immutable. Trust in public life, as Price (2020) found, is at an all-time low. This situation can only advantage current power relations under neoliberalism:

> "*Relations of domination are most durable when people believe that they are not only permanent, inevitable and natural, but also desirable (that is, that they are free within it or liberated through them), and while it remains possible for them to engage in other practices of freedom and resistance without challenging the fundaments.*"

<div align="right">(Amsler, 2015, p.56)</div>

In short, we may not be happy or particularly fulfilled but we believe we are free, because we have the trappings of freedom on which we come to rely and which entrap us in turn. "*A misreading of the conditions of our un-freedom reduces our ability to become freer,*" writes Braidotti, (2019, p.47), reminiscent of Rose's 'Goddess Trick', the illusion that we have solved the "*big questions*" (1997, p.311). We are fearful of losing our relative privilege, so we won't rock the boat. Who 'we' are here is problematic. I did not write that sentence with the voice of a refugee crossing the channel in a dinghy, or of a single parent raising her kids on Universal Credit.

Bloch's 'Front of Hope' is a semantic twist which turns "*limits into frontiers*" (ibid., p58). At these frontiers, during Covid times, Price (2020) describes some of the many lockdown initiatives which did not stop to bemoan government action, but set to, designing, printing and distributing personal protective equipment, for example. James and Thériault (2020, p.130) describe practical responses across community education settings and Sitrin and Colectiva Sembrar (2020) do the same for community-led initiatives globally. My own collective work during lockdown was concerned with developing a movement across social media which sought out joyous practice in challenging times, uncynical but where appropriate critical of education's limitations - #JoyFE💛 Affirmative ethical practice as defined by Braidotti (2019 p.158) does not forget the 'places of pain' but reaches beyond, channelling negative energies into activist 'work':

> "*The ethical ideal is to mobilize the active powers of life in the affirmative mode of potential.*"

It is remarkable that the material shared by just under 400 contributors to this research was almost entirely affirmative in nature. The question helped, of course, its slow gestation allowing for simplicity and affirmation in tone. Imagine how different the outcome may have been if I'd labelled the mass observation survey, "Now's your chance to have your say![92]" But something less tangible was happening, certainly in the networks immediately within my filter bubble. I noticed that the affirmative language I was using to invite participation was being replicated by others, as they passed the message on. Price (2020), my most immediate co-respondent, his book published only a few days before I am writing this, dedicates a whole chapter to how the world might change post-Covid in terms of people's self-determination and collectivism. He writes:

> "*As leaders grappled with the balance between containing the virus and*

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[92] An invitation beloved of community consultation work, which is already loaded with scarcity.

starving an emaciated economy, a consensus emerged: we are the economy.
not the purchases we make, but the rather the way we reward our newly
appreciated key workers. Not the number of journeys we make but rather
the number of vulnerable citizens we protect. And despite all the ambiguity
that Covid provoked, on this issue at least, there appeared to be an unanimity."

<div align="right">(Price, 2020 loc. 3874)</div>

3.1.1.4 A Connected Ethics

This leads us to the fourth of my ethical practices: connection, collaboration and collectivity:

"*Becoming-posthuman is at the heart of a process of redefining one's sense of*
attachment and connection to a common and shared world, a territorial space:
urban, social, psychic, ecological, planetary as it may be. It is a sort of
becoming-world. This grounded perspective allows for multiple ecologies
of being."

<div align="right">(Braidotti, 2019 p.157-8)</div>

How to account for multiple ecologies of being in research material collected in response to a single question? Firstly, the material is only ever partial; it reached who it reached and to some extent, despite efforts, this was limited to my own filter bubble and partially beyond; this is discussed in more detail in the methodology section, below. I have no way of accurately knowing how far participation snowballed outside my own networks, as I did not ask respondents to self-identify, but the social media 'reach'[93] expressed by platform analytics suggested it was way in excess of my four-figure 'following'. Secondly, the words generously given were then subject to analysis by another human – me – extracted, annotated and interpreted. The sequential 'agential cuts' (Somerville, 2016) were intended to glimpse different perspectives, yet as one writer bringing it all together in this dissertation, a robust personal ethics was not proof against over-interpretation (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006), hence my presentation of the findings as trustworthy, rather than truthful. I am not claiming the 'God Trick' (Haraway, 2015). The findings are presented with these limitations.

Both iterations of the survey – the original, pre-Covid version and 'Take Two' – were scheduled using social media marketing techniques, with personal engagement and using a hashtag to stimulate interest and discussion. I have continued to write, blog, tweet and otherwise publish learning from the findings as they emerge and, as I've said elsewhere, activist projects were generated from this and informed this dissertation in turn. The Imaginary, a moment in time, will hopefully go forward as a transversal project of ongoing ideas.

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[93] Including clicks through to the survey itself.

3.1.1.5 An Embodied Ethics

With a cartography which comes in large part from studying with Rosi Braidotti, feminist influences are significant, although I have not chosen to pursue this line of genealogy: something had to give. Nowhere is this more evident than in the notion of embodiment. I have grown into my body during the process of this research and a strong sense of locality and place also infuses the research material contributed by participants.

> "*Feminist theory is one of the precursors of posthuman thought, especially the neo-materialist and vitalist tradition that stresses the embodied, embedded and sexed roots of subjectivity and their unexplored resources. It put the emphasis on embodiment and lived experience, as well as underlining the intersectional inclusion of other axes of analysis, such as race and class.*"
>
> (Braidotti, 2019 p.48)

Research participants told me about *themselves*; not just in their desires for community education but in their histories and, most surprisingly, in their situatedness; inviting demographics via an open question led to short essays in some cases. As Lala and Kinsella, (2011, p.78) suggest, the body can be overlooked in research:

> "*The lived body as a path of access to inquiries about the world can readily be overlooked because the everyday body is typically recessive and invisible.*"

As I have learned to feel my affirmative ethics in my body (that sense of physical unease before it appears in conscious thought), research participants responded to an engaging, informal invitation to be present wholly as themselves.

3.1.1.6 An Ethics of Endurance

> "*I think at this conjecture it rather begins in the ordinary, challenging, often unarticulated and inarticulable, and in some cases disrespected and punished work of learning to refuse despair within the concrete circumstances of our everyday lives; to recognize and generate and work on fronts of possibility that unlock the 'undecided material' in our own thinking and relationships, and in the social arrangements we inhabit.*"

What Amsler (2015, p.201) describes here is what we in Yorkshire refer to as graft: a practice of endurance. There is a paradox here, because this concept is qualitatively different from 'grind' – the work we are forced to do – or punished for not doing – in order to keep up with life in neoliberal times (Sennett, 2012, p.193). Grind is 'resilience', an ambiguous term, an individualistic concept and a policy driver: in recent years, educators have been required to imbue resilience in students, with its concomitant sense of 'acceptance of the status quo'. McKinnon and Derickson (2012, p.255):

> "*…resilience policy is devolving what Peck and Tickell (2002: 386) call*

> *'responsibility without power' by effectively setting up communities and places*
> *to take what our collaborator Gehan MacLeod has called 'knock after knock'*
> *and keep getting up again. By contrast, we contend that the processes which*
> *shape resilience operate primarily at the scale of capitalist social relations."*

Endurance, on the other hand, requires breaking with common-sense notions of what it is to be a subject in the world: the inevitable break-ups and breakdowns, medicated with drugs, kept at bay with yoga, all individualistic responses to a collective *malaise*. I have done all of these things, but in the process of this research decelerated to Ulmer's "slow ontology" (2017) in order to be able to *think*. Resilience is a kind of blinkered un-freedom: the illusion of the 'Goddess Trick' (Rose, 1997, p.311). Endurance is manifest in recognition that, while the work is urgent in a planetary sense, it is also a long-term goal. It took me nearly two years to write the single mass observation question which generated such rich insight from participants. Even the revolutionary Paulo Freire did not envisage his work as ever finishing and this helps me position this project as just a pause in an ongoing, collective, ethical, affirmative, activist life:

> *"The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character*
> *of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity."*
>
> (Freire, 1972 p.78)

3.2 Cutting the Threads

The survey returned in the range of 45,000 words and there was little 'waste'. There were no spam entries, just a few which were so brief as to be impenetrable and the rest were thoughtful, well-considered responses. I could not include them all, and I aimed to be illustrative rather than representative, since I did not want to wield the power of making representative choices (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013). The original 'Bower' (findings) section of this dissertation was 25,000 words long, and editing it was a labour of love. I have tried to find room for some of the edited material elsewhere.

The ethical contract[94] was clear that in the interests of future co-production[95], material may be re-used (under the same stringent conditions) for future research and evaluation; this was inspired by a discussion with #FEResearch colleagues[96] around material-sharing and the importance of not leaving anything on the cutting room floor which could be used in activist practice. Activist ideas that have not been directly included in the narrative remain in scope for concurrent and future work.

> *"[The world's problems] require and deserve all our institutional, social,*
> *and individual commitment and critical attention, because they challenge*

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[94] https://loumycroft.org/research/feimaginary/ formal permission was given via the survey.
[95] This was not co-produced research in line with the literature around co-production, as I explore below. However, the Imaginary is intended to be shared and further developed as a co-produced resource.
[96] The Research Roundtable 1.7.20

established conventions of thought and set mental habits."

<div align="right">(Braidotti, 2020, p.26)</div>

Summary

This chapter outlines both the theory and genealogy behind a posthuman affirmative ethics and how it has worked in practice, personified by The Bowerbird:

> "*I think that at this conjuncture it rather begins in the ordinary, challenging, often unarticulated and inarticulable, and in some cases disrespected and punished work of learning to refuse despair within the concrete circumstances of our everyday lives; to recognize and generate and work on fronts of possibility that unlock the 'undecided material' in our own thinking and relationships, and in the social arrangements we inhabit.*"

<div align="right">(Amsler, 2015 p.201)</div>

The following two chapters explore and defend 'a' posthuman methodology and associated approach to analysis.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The research methodology has been an area of uncertainty from early draft stage and it took a long while to realise that this is what a posthuman methodology is all about: an extreme approach to grounded theory which leaves nothing unquestioned and takes nothing for granted:

> "*This is what posthumanism not only allows, but encourages: reconceptualizing our place in the world as we reconceptualize research.*"
>
> (Ulmer, 2017a p.847)

The chapter begins by summarising the process of creating 'a' bespoke methodology which operationalises a posthuman toolkit (an 'assemblage') which emerges from a process ontology which rejects both transcendence and the 'Goddess Trick' (Rose, 1997) and which is always 'becoming', guided not fixed.

The presentation, below, shows how the various elements of a posthuman approach fit together; slides are also used individually throughout this work. Themes will be further developed in the next two chapters.

I have attempted, throughout this work, to define posthuman process ontology in various ways. This decision was influenced by my own experience; how long it took the penny to drop that what was required of me was to see life differently – as immanent, not transcendent. This world view plays out through the stages of knowledge creation.

Posthuman **ontology** takes immanence as its starting point. To quote Ulmer (2020, p.783), "*when everything is connected, everything matters.*" She goes on to write, "*More to the point, community matters.*" A posthuman ontology is guided by an affirmative ethics and carried by the rhizome.

Out of this understanding of 'reality', a posthuman **epistemology** asks, how do we know things? Here the research aim (not the specific research questions) emerges: how can we see beyond the 'tired old friend' of community education, to other possible realities. How do we make the visible, invisible, in order to see what's also there but unheard, unregarded, unremarked?
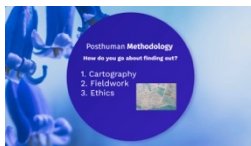
This sets the scene for 'a' posthuman **methodology**, which arises from a specific set of circumstances and which is constructed from a critical cartography, fieldwork and analysis using a posthuman toolkit, and the *practice* of an affirmative ethics which relate to the process ontology.

The posthuman **toolkit** includes a mass observation survey, which gathers participant material which is then analysed five-fold: by the Bowerbird for its 'blue shiny treasures', for its expressed values and then via three further sifts, the 'plugging in' of three figurations, each of which engages the material in conversation through a different lens.
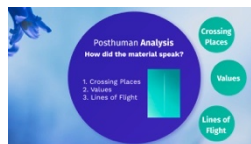
Finally, the cartography, the research 'findings' and an affirmative ethics are layered over one another to provide **crossing places**, which are imbued with emergent values to provide lines of flight for activist work.

4.1 Reflections on the Process

> "…it would look like a thing of collective and relational beauty with critical edge and political purpose that could be both local and global …"
>
> Participant 144

4.1.1 Writing Slow Ontology

> "Across these pauses, my duty has been to quiet down enough so that I can learn from and within those unsettled pauses, particularly related to the ways that educational research should pause far more frequently in its seemingly unrelenting quest for material and publications." (Patel, 2016, p5)

The necessity of finding quiet spaces to think during an epoch of political and social change was a central challenge of this research. Being a nomadic worker enmeshed in social media

networks meant that many voices demanded my attention and the need to earn an income sometimes obscured finding "*physical, social and mental places to live.*" (Amsler, 2015). Connections that could closely be anchored between the purpose of the research and immediate praxis/activism were sometimes dropped as I became caught up in the latter. The two practices were enmeshed but at times my attention was diffused to the point of petrification; at other times it focused obsessively on 'urgent', whilst 'important' went ignored. This research process was not one where "*academics critique from a safe distance*" (Ringrose and Renolds, 2019). There was always something in the flow to be discovered, always a new space ready to open up. The oft-seen advice to 'switch off' felt inappropriate, given the diffractive nature of this endeavour. This personal experience finds its echo in the accounts of other educators. Leigh Patel (2016, p1) begins her book, 'Decolonizing Educational Research' by testifying to the centrality of 'pausing', "*...a productive interruption to those competitive ways of being, doing and knowing.*" She is referring to the acceleration of capitalist, colonial, control, as evident in education as elsewhere:

> "*...colonial projects have shaped technology, knowledge, and connection to be a veritable nonstop stimulation of tweets, status updates, and deadlines, all competing for our attention.*" (ibid.)

Paradoxically, this uber-connectivity led to me seeking out what Jasmine Ulmer (2016, p.201) refers to as a "*slow ontology*", a process of "*scholarly being...that is not unproductive but is differently productive.*" Slow ontology is not incommensurate with a posthuman process ontology, which rejects both transcendence and the inevitability of speed. It emerges from a critique of the commodification and increased pace of social science research by Michael Apple (2005) and many others, leading to "*a growing sense of ontological insecurity*" amongst scholars (Ball, 2012 p.20). Questions around scholarly purpose, lost in a scarcity culture focused on career trajectory and performativity, are re-found and re-purposed, emerging for example in Patel's call for intentionally decolonised and re-claimed methodologies: "*Why this? Why me? Why now?*" (Patel, 2015 p57). I paused often to ask myself these questions. All research is relational (ibid.), yet I wanted to take care that I did not close the walls around who 'we' are, even as the research drew to a close. For the lines of flight in the Imaginary to be useful, their boundaries needed to be endlessly permeable and engaging. This was challenging to manage; with endless temptations to become overwhelmed or diverted. Here, a slow ontology and the diffractive perspectives of an activist community were helpful in keeping it simple. During the slow summer of the first Covid lockdown in the UK, detached from commodified education, I was able to sit with participant material, reading, sifting and putting it to one side. I came to think of this process as 'composting'.

Ulmer sketches out methodologies which can be developed to disrupt conventional axioms of growth, assumptions which are focused on product and output at the cost of depth. She returns to the ancient practices of writing - etched on stones or scratched on bark - and places them firmly at the heart of academic identity, suggesting that to disrupt the dominant rhythms of neoliberalism we should reconnect with the materialism of times past, not returning to writing on bark but re-turning as Karen Barad would have it (2018): creating a new materialism for

Anthropocene times. Ulmer explores posthuman approaches to writing, which resonate with the recurring metaphor of the Bowerbird throughout this research; closing the Cartesian dichotomy of either/or she picks up the continuum of Spinoza's and/and or, as Rosi Braidotti would have it, "*the embrainment of the body and embodiment of the mind*" (2018, p1). In posthuman and new materialist thinking, viewing the world as a series of continua and crossroads – the 'crossing places' of this research - rather than binaries, re-connects us with the environment, natural and/or built, and invites its rhythms to inform our thinking and writing as a way out of the panic and petrification of the neoliberal academy (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008).

Slow ontology stands in the face of the increasing velocity of capitalism (Virilio, 2002). Virilio's grasp of physics has been questioned (see, for example, Redhead, 2004) but his decades' old observations about the pace of change stand true. The performative demands of accountability in community education fill educators' working hours with bureaucratic noise, which seems never to decrease, and endless re-organisations as local authorities (usually, but not always, the hosts of state-funded community education) try to manoeuvre within austerity budgets since 2008, leading not only to precarity but to cycles of change which seem infinite. In third sector work, short-termism is rife in project-based funding streams. In 2011, Amsler (2015, p.169) worked with community educators who were frustrated with the challenges of democratic practice at pace. Here, she quotes community educator Heather:

> "*The scarcity of space, time, resources and energy for such work, Heather argues, creates an 'evolutionary missing link – time where people get to sit down, with a weekend or a week or a month (with such individualised lives it could take forever) to actually start thinking about things in a different way.*"

I found slowing down and clearing space to be a radical move which ultimately enabled lines of flight which could resonate vitally with others until a critical mass is found which might counter prevailing patterns of action and thought:

> "*…politically crafted but often non-deliberate process of mass forgetting that radical social resistance and transformation are possible, that education is always a political activity and that 'teachers in their lives and works have the remarkable capacity to make [light] shine in all sorts of corners and, perhaps, to move newcomers to join with others and transform' (Greene, 1997).*"

(ibid., p.4)

Teaching - as an act of undercommons rebellion against 'policy' - is one of the ways in which a slow ontology can be practised institutionally, though the refusal to engage recommended by Moten and Harney (2013), Spivak (1988) and summarised by Braidotti (2013. p.37) as "*I would prefer not to*", is dangerous ground for educators on often precarious contracts[97], what Ulmer (2016) refers to as working in a different rhythm to that of the organisation. Ulmer (2016) notes that marginalised disciplines (and marginalised voices within disciplines) need the very best new

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[97] The 2019 Further Education and Workforce Data for England survey reported that 40% of community educators were on zero-hours contracts (ETF, 2019) and in the third sector many are not paid at all.

ideas and research, in order to survive. Safety will only come in the criticial, influential mass which Gibson-Graham (2006, xxvii, cited in Amsler, 2015 p.57) remind us is a "*politics of possibility*": Braidotti's "*transversal assembly*" (2020a, p.5).

4.1.2 Thinking on the Move

A posthuman ontology rejects transcendence; what Donna Haraway (1988, p581) calls 'the god trick': "*seeing everything from nowhere.*" Research is a situated practice, that is, situated to the whole individual, rather than situated to one silo of an individual's identity. I research not only as a 'woman' or 'cis-woman' (a biological concept, socially constructed) but as a person whose 'woman-identity' intersects (Crenshaw, 1993) with race-identity, class-identity, regional-identity, health-identity etcetera. The choices I have made in designing, conducting, analysing and writing up this research are influenced by what Leigh Patel (2016, p.5) refers to as, "*my own set of co-ordinates[98].*" I own the uncertainty of the analyses I present here and acknowledge that, "*the academic text…becomes part of a number of discourses which engage with it, revise, transform and reuse it*" (Rose, 1997, p.317). This research is, therefore, constitutive: it contributes a further 'making' of community education to the whole. "*We should keep hold of these worries,*" writes Rose (ibid., p.318), "*and work with them.*"

I wrote much of this dissertation on the move. This 'drifting', sometimes alone, sometimes with others, detached me from my books and compelled me to compost my own thinking in the gaps between reading. It also unsettled my perspective. Rubin describes drifting as, "*hard to do because it requires active disorientation, an untethering from what grounds us,*" (2012, p.176), making it an appropriate practice for the creation of an Imaginary. This 'urban pedagogy' or 'psychogeography' (ibid.) contributes to a constellation of theoretical metaphors which centre on landscape - embodied, materialist - such as Braidotti's 'cartography' (2018), and Deleuze and Guattari's use of 'territorialization' (2004). This thread of connection to the physical environment both grounds this research and provides it with a lexicon to present complex ideas with clarity.

Throughout this dissertation I interweave situatedness with theories of materialism, embodiment and grounding. Though I appreciate the nuances of individual philosophers' personal ontologies (and the pragmatism of being associated with certain words, i.e., academic branding), I hope to show enough common ground between the various paradigms to use them with a relative degree of interchangeability. With Michael Apple (Peters, 2015), I would be "*truly disheartened*" if philosophies that I hold in such esteem remain statically moulded to the times they were written. My intention is to make them work for this research, here and now.

4.1.3 Independent Scholarship

In the power relations of modern academia, it would be difficult to adhere to a slow ontology, particularly for an 'early career' researcher seeking a permanent contract in precarious, gig-zone times: a trajectory which only seems likely to worsen post-Covid (Loher et al, 2019). The demands of university league tables play out in an emphasis on regularly produced, 'REFable'

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[98] My co-ordinates can be found at Appendix C.

(Husband 2017) material and increased teaching loads (never mind endless meetings) cut down both writing and thinking time (ibid.). Ulmer suggests that working collaboratively and efficiently with slow principles[99] can provide a way of balancing the requirements of work-related *potestas* with the *potentia* energy of properly thought-out, embodied and materialised slow ontologies (2016, p.208). She recognises that slow ontology is currently aspirational in education, "*more respite than remedy.*" (ibid.) and counsels a graduated approach, very much in line with Braidotti's conceptualisation of '*a good career*' as being two thirds potestas and one third *potentia* (Braidotti and Regan, 2017).

I began this research journey as an employee and ended it as an independent scholar and educator trying to enact a personal, posthuman ethics in my work. Coming late to Ulmer's writings, our shared genealogy - Bergson, Spinoza, Deleuze - enabled me to select yet another lens through which to diffract this process and to accept that the slow emergence of clarification at a part-time, self-funded pace was an advantage, decelerating my thinking, "*thus granting [the] time and political potential of actualizing alternatives*" (Braidotti, 2019, p124). Following a stroke in early 2019, I began to deliberately de-accelerate my frequent travels, extending my stay, choosing ferries over aeroplanes and the train in preference to the car. Writing became part of the fabric of my life during times when my own natural preference for speed was anchored to the pace determined by the mode of travel. The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic stopped my travelling and further slowed the pace by imposing a lockdown situation in England. Acknowledging the tragedies of this period, it was also timely in terms of providing (many) thinking and composting opportunities when writing up this research[100].

4.2 Introduction to Posthuman Methodology

From its earliest stage, the research provided inspiration and impetus for activist work, which has informed the research in turn. This section is intended to set the scene for that element of the narrative. There is no posthuman research 'how to' handbook. Whilst I own my lack of academic research experience, it has to be said that conducting research *without* reference to a pre-existing form of methodology was not something I considered during the taught portion of the EdD on which I originally enrolled, so caught up was I in the *monument* of educational research, its givens and norms within the institution: trying to fit my practice to what it 'ought' to be[101], all caught up with getting it 'right'[102] (see also Biesta, 2020). None of the methodological traditions I encountered sat easily with my emerging ethics as I explored posthuman thinking; each of them had merit but felt like a compromise. Unable to settle, I engaged openly with the

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[99] See, for example, the Thinking Environment (Kline, 2009, Appendix A).
[100] Not just time alone at home but also the space to develop activist projects commensurate with this research.
[101] I transferred to PhD four years in.

field[103] for several years before ideas for a practical posthuman methodology began to take shape.

The *document* of knowledge content during those EdD modules was thus further strengthened by the hidden curriculum, the students who said to one another, "I'm doing critical realism, what are you doing?" "I'm doing an ethnography," and so on. I did not, at first, have the courage to say, I want *couture* not off the peg. The danger of 'off the shelf' methodologies, so taken for granted, is that they offer what Deleuze refers to as 'repeition' - endless boxes repackaged with same content but enough 'difference' for us to think each one is unique (Ulmer, 2016). Although I do offer here yet another *document*, it is one which temporarily troubles the idea of the *monument*, even if, in seeking the approval of the academy, doesn't attempt to knock it down.

As it turns out, the *monument* of educational research is under constant attrition. It appears to have givens and norms which differ by institution and subject discipline, but which are hugely and sometimes hotly contested. The 'research wars' rage on although the gladiatorial forum may have shifted (search #ResearchEd on Twitter).[104] In the 15 years since Hodkinson (2004) and Hammersley (2004) found themselves able to both agree and disagree on to move an argument forward, research itself has been through the mill, a political pawn in the discrediting of 'experts' in favour of ideology. At the heart of this are those assumptions about 'truth', rationality and objectivity which have their own Enlightenment roots, pressed to service in the name of advanced capitalism:

> "*Within the field, knowledge formation develops through the making of embodied judgements, which can only ever be partly rational, and are related to developing researcher identities.*"
>
> (Hodkinson, 2004, p.9)

Note the word 'embodied', which is a key element in posthuman thinking, derived from Spinoza's immanence, rather than the Cartesian splitting of body and mind. Hammersley's counter argument has some sympathy with this: "*...as researchers we are implicated in our own work in terms of both emotion and identity.*" (2004, p.140). He argues that "*we do not have to define 'objectivity' in the 'empiricist' way that Hodkinson assumes.*" (ibid., p.149). Hammersley continues,

> "*...'rationality' is an evaluative term...it is a judgement about whether the actor took account of all relevant considerations in pursuit of a particular goal.*"
>
> (ibid.)

With some caution around the word 'goal' (that it should not assume a particular outcome), Hammersley's words echo the affirmative ethics of posthuman research, an ethics which is mapped developmentally as the research proceeds. Hammersley concludes that "*the current*

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[103] Reading (during a time of richness for the posthuman 'canon'), conversations, publications and also immersive attendance at Braidotti's annual posthuman summer school, University of Utrecht 2015-19.
[104] Search #ResearchEd on Twitter.

political and institutional environment is such that educational inquiry cannot flourish." (ibid., p.152) and declares himself "*even more pessimistic than Hodkinson.*" His closing point is that it is unhelpful for researchers to be arguing amongst themselves even as the academy is neoliberalised.

We can engage, or we can step aside and a posthuman process ontology informs the method I have chosen of 'stepping out of time'[105] with research traditions which seem to be eating themselves and each other. After all, as Denzin writes,

> "*We are beyond the arguments of even 10 years ago. Critics are united by commitments to social justice. The arguments for and against material (new old version[106]) are debated, new places are sought.*"

(Denzin, 2013 p.354)

The methodology outlined below seeks to move pause the argument, not to win or even to compete, but to provide an intermission, smooth out a space for some possibility thinking to happen.

Braidotti's posthumanism is intentionally transdisciplinary (2019) and her annual summer schools are a microcosm of this, comprising clinicians, lawyers, educators, business analysts, artists, scientists of many disciplines, activists, programmers and many more. Her "*transversal*" assembly (p.145) seeks out a genealogy of power and ideas, sidestepping traditional divides of subject discipline:

> "*Transversal interconnections across the disciplines and society is the way to implement an ethical praxis that aims to cultivate and compose this new collective subject.*"

Throughout this research my thinking has been influenced by posthuman colleagues from across this great transversal assemblage. Braidotti believes passionately in this 'posthuman university', in the power of the academy to counter consumerist capitalism. Others such as Shukie (2017) and Neary and Winn (2019) whose work academically and actively around "*social knowing*" diffuses the parameters of university and community, find the student-as-producer missing from the posthuman university, as might many of those surveyed for this research.

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[105] My supervisors suggest that this positioning may have been lost in the 'hurly burly' of research, with some justification. However, the slow ontology (Ulmer, 2017) that I adopted through a series of research retreats during the writing up of this dissertation, and the existential moment of the Covid 'pause' (during which I have largely shielded, as a carer), have provided material steps 'out of time', which have enabled me to untangle the many theoretical and methodological knots within which I frequently ensnared my thinking.

[106] Denzin refers to his own argument that, despite decrying data, "*left pole epistemologies*" (he includes posthumanism in the list) still use the term. This spurred me to replace the word 'data' with the word 'material'.

This is not a co-produced research methodology in any conventional sense, and I do not make this claim. Rather, it has a co-production *intention*, in that the Imaginary exists as a springboard for activism, some of which has begun concurrently to this research, informed and informing in turn. Co-production is a methodological tradition I investigated, and did not pursue, despite its 'transformational' potential (see, for example, Beckett, Wylie, Farr, Kothari and le May 2018). Beckett *et al* examine approaches to co-production through six case studies and conclude that:

> "*Co-production is challenging; it demands flexibility, reflexivity and boundary crossing, but when it works it results in insights and actions far greater than the sum of its contributory parts. Co-production can actively support the democratisation of knowledge and incorporate and blur the boundaries between different forms and sources of knowledge. It can produce the rich evidence required for effective policy and practice and foster 'contextually adroit' research-informed decision making.*"

(ibid., p.15)

Enticing though this is, the complexity of a co-produced methodology (Thomas-Hughes's ethical 'mess' (2017)) felt like a step too far for research which already embraces an open-ended process ontology and its associated ethics and methodology. The consideration of co-production enabled me to decide in favour of a more straight-forward research tool: a single 'mass observation' question. Enabling participant voices to be heard places this research low in Beckett *et al*'s co-production spectrum (2017); nonetheless it is intended to be meaningful.

In recent years, there has been a grassroots groundswell of research engagement amongst practitioners in further education generally, though little evidence of this in community education beyond a few self-directed individuals[107]. Hodkinson (2004) would certainly find evidence of the 'new orthodoxy' in government-sponsored 'OTLA[108]' projects, but the #FEResearchMeet network, although accepting state-sponsorship for some events, amplifies a diversity of research approaches through its widely accessed podcast and video series[109] (Crowson, Fletcher-Saxon, Jones and Woodrow, 2020). There is a strong history of research about community education's sister service FE, often by University-based academic refugees who retain their passion for and interest in the sector; and a recent resurgence of interest in community education (see, for example, Finnegan and Grummell, 2020). The demise of the research-influential charity NIACE (the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education) in 2016 had previously marked a shift in emphasis away from broader definitions of community education; merging with the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion it became the Learning and Work Institute, a name-change which tells its own story. Research into adult and community

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[107] We learned from the DfE Community Learning Mental Health Research 2015-17 that community educators, although trained, funded and released from Ofsted scrutiny for their role as researchers, struggled with the practice of research (Mycroft, 2018).

[108] This acronym is so dominant that no-one seems certain what it stands for; probably 'Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment' - new parlance for 'education' which remains endemic in the sector, despite Ofsted replacing the corresponding 'TLA' with 'education' in their observation framework (2019).

[109] BrewEDFE https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMXYDo8TQbAHFfJm4Tz3rw and the #FEResearchPodcast https://feresearchpodcast.podbean.com/

education is now found in pockets such as the European Union funded EPALE adult learning project and - rather improbably - the £20million investment by the Department for Education in CLMH, thanks to the political influence of Vince Cable MP in 2015. By the time the findings reported, they were quietly hidden and never acted upon (Mycroft, 2019a).

It took me years to work out that methodologies - as well as material - can also be grounded. Here, what emerges as a method for research is grounded in philosophies which refuse to follow the Cartesian line of separating out body and mind. Such approaches are not new. Manning (2016) draws upon the *process philosophy* of mathematician Alfred North Whitehead, writing a century ago:

> "*Unless we produce the all-embracing relations, we are faced with a bifurcated nature; namely warmth and redness on one side, and molecules, electrons and ether on the other side.*"
>
> (Whitehead (1938: 32), cited in Manning, 2016 p.19)

I did not want to create the Imaginary from what people already believed it was. I wanted to create it from how education *made them feel,* its 'emotional wake'[110], as a lever for how it could then be re-imagined. Manning, in her discussion of Whitehead's *Modes of Thought* (1938) explains,

> "*What we know is what can be abstracted from experience into a system of understanding that is decipherable precisely because its operations are muted by having been taken out of their operational context.*"
>
> (Manning, 2016 p.29)

The 'operational context' of this research is the inner and outer life of human beings and the place and potential of community education in that life. It was central to the purpose of the research that the research tool and any associated questions enabled thinking that was - as far as possible - detached from the documents upholding the monument of community education as we know it, in the tradition of Lather's embodied, activist practice[111] (2017): genuinely research as praxis (Lather, 1986).

4.3 Research Aims

The research aim, of making the visible invisible in order to imagine Nietzsche's "*bridge over the goal*" (McCormack, 2016 p.19), led to the creation of an Imaginary with lines of flight for current

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[110] Many thanks to Kathryn Morgan whose mention of this concept at a CollectivEd event in June 2020 provided a jigsaw piece for my life and work.

[111] Lather is no posthumanist ("*I have long argued nothing goes away, certainly including the "humanism" that we are suppose to be "post".* Lather (2017, p.7). In the trajectory of her collective writings, however, I discern some common ground, not least in the de-centring of the human and the troubling of Western academic 'arrogance'.

and future activism. This was accompanied by a re-thinking of community education, which provides context, ballast and critical stimulation for the work.

To do this, to even lift the ideas up and out of any relationship with the *monument* of community education, requires the very language we use to be unpicked and problematised. Even the commonplace metaphor 'deliver', ubiquitously used in community education - in *any* English state education - actually equates in the mind's eye to posting a letter into a postbox; an image reminiscent of Freire's "banking education" (1972), so that the notion of transmission has to be fought past before other pedagogies get chance to flourish. Other pedagogies which might rather more effectively build the capacity for informed and engaged decision-making and which offer opportunities for collaboration, empowerment and co-construction.

Another example is the ubiquitous word 'outstanding', the gun held to UK education's temple as a classification not only to aspire to, but which is so dominant that achieving anything less is seen as failure. 'Outstanding' is thus the norm, when in fact the word literally means, 'to stand out'. Deconstructed in this way, the language we frequently use seems like a nonsense but this is not a party game. This "*dominant discourse*" (Freire, 1972) controls, oppresses and defeats us.

As Mayo writes (2013, p.62), Freire cautions us to take heed of the dominant discourse, since ignoring it marginalises us, and this practice is at the heart of his literacy work. There are connections here with Spinoza's bifurcation of 'power' into *potentia* and *potestas*, which has been explored above. This dissertation argues that *only* engaging with the dominant discourse anchors us to neo-liberalism in a David and Goliath death-dance that we cannot win. Challenging the norms and axioms of language is one of the themes running through the research and I will circle back to it in several places. Through the posthuman lens and the 45,000 words of generous respondents it *may* be possible to reimagine, and even suggest ways to build, an alternative future. To do this, a new lexicon, fresh ideas and newly constructed frameworks will need to be identified, or the *monument* will continue to stand.

There are three main strands to the research, each of which uses language arising from a posthuman process ontology which differs from that conventionally used in a research dissertation, though the categories themselves remain relatively conventional:

Strand 1: A Community Education Cartography
To diffractively explore the Imaginary via a re-theorisation of community education - although entitled 'cartography', after Braidotti (2018) this is the **literature review**, which also includes broader readings around an array of supporting concepts and which makes connections and maps relations of power.

Strand 1: Critical Posthuman Methodology
To create a Community Education Imaginary (via Mass Observation survey, the findings of which are analysed via a posthuman toolkit) - these are the **research tools**.

Strand 3: An Affirmative Ethics

To develop a posthuman affirmative **ethics**, after Spinoza, to guide the research. See Chapter 3, above for an exploration of the daily practice of 'walking my boundaries' and the 'voice of conscience' provided by the Bowerbird, my research companion.

These three strands are overlaid on one another, to identify the presence of **crossing places**, which form the basis of the Imaginary (the image is presented as a gif):

4.3.1 The Research Questions

I chose the hard path because I wanted to find out something new, which emerges from the imaginations of those of us who are already there, our voices drowned out by the dominant discourse. In a world of "*evidence-based practice*" (Hodkinson, 2004) it seemed logical to me that we wouldn't find new ideas by looking backwards. For the same reason, identifying research questions at the start was problematic, as I didn't want to constrain what might be discovered by setting an agenda. My study of posthuman research methodology (e.g., Ulmer) seemed to suggest that questions should arise from working within the research assemblage, so I channelled Deleuze, who wrote that he did not expect to be copied, but that we should each do our own thinking for ourselves (Ulmer, 2017). I knew I wanted to cast the net wide, beyond

my own filter bubbles, and with a one-shot mass observation question. To frame my own thinking, I spent nearly two years trying two questions on for size[112]:

Could a re-imagined community education enable those involved to strengthen their sense of agency, leading to informed and engaged decision-making relating to personal choices and public life?

Could it be re-invented outside of state provision, in a way that makes it accessible to all? How might this be possible?

I am indebted to Ulmer (2017a) for helping me navigate these tensions. Writing conterminously with this research, Ulmer reminded me that posthuman approaches have "*shifted what is possible in research methodology*" (p.832). The questions referred to in Ulmer's article are not those which guide the thinking of research respondents, but those which explore, "*how methodologies might respond to injustice within broader contexts*" (ibid.) Writing now at the end of the research, I am relieved to see that the research questions remained relevant, in the sense that they are not dissonant with the findings. They helped me find my way to a mass observation question which generated 45k words from nearly 400 correspondents, for which I am humbled and grateful.

Ulmer gives a practice example as an appendix to her 2017 article, that of education and water during the 'Flint water crisis[113].' Much as I was trying to go it alone, I am indebted to this stimulus, which helped me find a way in by "*thinking differently about research.*" Crucially, Ulmer does not claim posthuman methodologies as the *sine qua non*:

> '*Understanding the causes, effects and implications of the Flint water crisis will need traditional research to measure lead levels in the bloodstreams of residents; study the effectiveness of household water filters in screening out toxins; replace lead pipes and other damaged infrastructure; examine the role of the media in documenting the crisis; and ask difficult questions regarding why the concerns and safety of local residents went unexplored for so long.*"
>
> (Ulmer, 2017 p.847)

A posthuman ontology sees the interconnected nature of all of the above: people and pipes and news media and blood and land and ideology and everything else and posthuman methodologies reflect this. Ulmer (2017a, p.834) charts a complex landscape of posthumanist research, extending her own adherence to 'new' materialism (after Barad, Malabou, Bennett and Deleuze/Guattari) to acknowledge the urgency of ecological action. The 'Flint water crisis' example illustrates the posthuman belief that humans are not "*the only species capable of producing knowledge,*" (ibid.) Ulmer's litany of all that posthuman research might consider (ibid., p.847), although potentially overwhelming, actually helped me to understand that I didn't have to

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[112] These are the product of too many diffractive conversations to remember.
[113] In Flint, Michigan, in 2014, the authorities changed the city's water supply from a clean to a lead-polluted source, to save money.

'fix' anything through this research; rather my responsibility was to illustrate the web of issues, its influences and immanent potential.

Ulmer also notices the velocity by which posthuman approaches are emerging - a velocity which bewildered and blocked me, in the thick of it during my Utrecht summer school years - and, typically for her style, she stops the clock to consider posthumanism as an embodied practice (ibid., p.836):

> "*Because posthumanism involved a theoretically rich, yet contested set of terms, it can be confusing and promising and rewarding all at the same time.*"

I experienced all these emotions on a regular basis, getting sharper and cleaner with each retelling of the narrative, whilst navigating the messiness of my entanglement. Somerville (2016, p.1155) sounded another cautionary note, one to which I returned whenever it felt like 'too much'. Drawing on Barad's 'agential realism' (2003), Somerville reminded me of Barad's claim that language has been given too much power (ibid.), and that all I could hope for was to make 'agential cut' after 'agential cut' (2016, p.1165)[114] into the material until I had something to work with; that guided me ethically to activist outcomes based on truthfulness rather than truth (Williams, 2002). Every cut brings a different perspective; this gave me an idea for cutting and recutting (mixing and remixing) the material, for freshness and to resist over privileging individual voices (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006).

Above all Ulmer's article, which I encountered whilst in the postgraduate research 'doldrums[115]', reassured me that, "*the openness that often marks posthuman writing waits for the postscript to emerge.*" (2017a, p.833). A postscript happens after the main body of the work is finished and that was my vision of the Imaginary. The research threads have to be cut as there is no finite end (2004) but the Imaginary will continue to unfold. For this reason, it will be presented both as a narrative and as a Padlet, open for future comments and contributions. I hope that the openness of the research questions - and of the research tool (mass observation) question, would be enough to make the postscript worth the effort.

4.4 'A' Critical Posthuman Methodology

4.4.1 Introduction

As we have seen Braidotti (2018, p.1) defines ''*the posthuman predicament''* of contemporary times as,

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[114] I found anything emerging from Barad very difficult, but I also recognised useful concepts that I could not get elsewhere. I thought of the 'agential cut' as a Director's Cut in film; or the remix of a track.
[115] Cooksey and McDonald, 2019 - though their advice to set up a personal reward system did not resonate with me as research and writing genuinely proved to be its own reward.

> *"...the convergence, across the spectrum of cognitive capitalism, of posthumanism on the one hand and post-anthropocentrism on the other."*

What, then, might a critical posthuman methodology look like? From those early stressful attempts to shoehorn my thinking into pre-defined categories (critical realism, autoethnography etc) I stumbled across actor-network theory (ANT). I had some un-learning to do. I painfully cast off a life-time's adherence to binaries alongside a culturally absorbed and badly thought-out Marxism. ANT, founded by Bruno Latour and others was the disruptive force, shocking me out of modes of thinking I had taken for granted for nearly half a century. Ultimately, ANT was not for me as its heart seemed bereft of ethics and any warmth; I found its playfulness arch and needed a more activist edge. I found the approach I was looking for in Braidotti's critical posthumanism (Braidotti, 2013) and in Lather's post-qualitative notion of research as praxis (Lather, 1986): shaping for myself an affirmative, materialist landscape (i.e., situated in the physical, visceral, grounded landscape of now) which resists privileging humans over non-humans and some humans over others. It is probably no accident that Braidotti and Lather both come from intentionally feminist research practices, where the material body has never not been present (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008).

Naturally, posthuman thinking is rejected by those in the humanities and political/social sciences who go in search of more empirical and scientific 'truths', despite science itself questioning its own empiricism in recent years (Manning, 2016). While Braidotti calls for a going beyond the humanities to a 'critical posthumanities', others such as Gilroy (Braidotti and Gilroy, 2016) ask in the spirit of Vitruvian Man, how can we be posthuman when so many of us were not considered fully human in the first place? This is a fair point, and I take heart again from the concept of the 'undercommons' (Moten and Harling, 2013), which resists - indeed refuses - the "*misery of the academy*".

Acknowledge those places of pain, advises Braidotti (2013) and move beyond them, not denying them but using that energy of that anger to channel Spinoza's affirmative joy (Mycroft, Shukie and Sidebottom, forthcoming 2021). This is at the heart of a posthuman affirmative ethics and it took a long process of studying the Deleuzian concept of 'becoming' before I was able to come to terms with 'moving beyond' as a process which neither ignored or denied the pain of oppression or alienation.

Gray (2018) agrees with Braidotti that the prevailing left/right spectrum of politics is flawed and he considers the humanities of today, taught in neoliberal universities, to be less about critical thinking than about having the freedom not to think at all. Like ANT, Gray's philosophy lacks a praxis element and the ethical heart of Spinoza's immanence to be found in Braidottian posthumanism. There has to be a point, and if the activism of this work has sometimes got in the way of research theorisation, I felt that was acceptable collateral within a personal, *potentia* ethics.

Any hint of postmodernism (even the word 'post', it seems) enrages Marxist thinkers (see, for example, Hill, McLaren and Cole, 2002) so it's worth stating here quite categorically that this is

not *that*, that abandoning a meta-narrative is not in my considered view the 'end of history' predicted by Fukuyama (2012) which again only offers neoliberalism and totalitarianism as possible futures and is pessimistic about both – the Hegelian dialectic vs nihilism. Nor is posthumanism the 'flat ontology' of Morton and others, which seems oblivious to the othering of minority identities. And it is certainly not the posthumanism of Zîzêk (e.g. 2016), who seems pre-occupied with sex and reduces the term to the techno-becoming of Haraway's cyborgs. There are as yet no answers, but alternatives to capitalism have been emerging throughout the life of this research: beyond its scope, maybe, but worth weaving into the Imaginary as having the potential to fertilise its ideas. An example of this might be Universal Basic Income (Bregman, 2018). Like many ideas which manage to emerge freed from the metanarratives of left and right, Universal Basic Income has drawn criticism from each extreme in its embracing of the collective.

So much was new and by the writing up stage, having attended five Utrecht University summer schools with the cream of posthuman thinkers (Braidotti, Simone Bignall, Goda Klumbyte, Rick Dolphijn, EJ Renold, Jessica Ringrose, Donna Haraway and others) it was becoming clear that – apart from some earlier work (e.g.by Edwards and Usher (2001) and Usher, 2010) no-one was connecting posthumanism with any kind of community education. Striking out into unknown territory was an uncomfortable and incremental process[116], a daily walking of ethical boundaries. Ulmer (2017) cautions that, "*at times, the fluidity of posthumanism might be unsettling as it disturbs the comfortable prescription of method*" and this stalled me for the longest time, causing a crisis of confidence every time someone asked me what methodology I was using. I should have just said, 'posthuman'.

I needed a concrete example and, when I was about to go under, Ulmer's City of Flint example (2017) came to the rescue. As we have seen, she presents a suggested posthuman methodology, which brings into play every aspect of the situation and its impact on human and non-human actors. Like Deleuze, she is absolutely not advocating repetition, any re-purposing of 'off the shelf' methodologies:

> *Deleuze explicitly asks you not to do that, which puts you in the paradoxical position of being all the more Deleuzian, the more you disobey and refuse to imitate the master's voice, which is precisely the essence of his teaching. What Deleuze does provide is a set of crucially important conceptual tools and an ethics—how to go about the project of critical philosophy.* (Braidotti and Regan, 2017 p.175)

Ulmer freed my thinking, to design a posthuman research 'toolkit' (Braidotti, 2013) and identify a number of 'figurations' – characters or conceptual personae - which provide the wherewithal to collect ideas for a community education 'Imaginary'. This freeing of thinking from the axioms is not easy[117]; like everything it's a practice. Learning to hunt out assumptions and givens is difficult enough; challenging it in others requires patience and diplomacy. No-one wants to think

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[116] It probably didn't help that I came away from my first engagement with posthumanism – Braidotti's 2015 Summer School – having grasped about 10% of the content.
[117] "*...confusing, promising and rewarding all at the same time.*" (Ulmer, 2017).

they are not a thinker, which makes it even more crucial that the material gathered went through a number of 'agential cuts' (Somerville, 2016). In the language of the Bowerbird, the sapphires were cut and recut. Ultimately none of the possibilities presented by the Imaginary should be traced back to one over-weighted respondent excerpt (Corden and Sainsbury 2006). This was particularly important given the demographic of respondents, which was broad. Some people wrote hundreds, even thousands of words. Others expressed their vision more simply and this was equally worth honouring[118].

4.4.2 Abandoning the Hegelian Dialectic

I grew up in a political place at a political time and inhaled left-wing politics in the smoky air of the 1970s and 1980s South Yorkshire coalfield. Now, we might call this sort of non-choice political education 'radicalisation'[119]; in truth I just learned to think like everybody else did. For most of my life, I unthinkingly equated my desire to work in the service of equality with a 'left-wing' (socialist, essentially Marxist) politics. These assumptions continued during nearly two decades at an adult education college which had been established in the late 1970s by the trade union and labour movement and whose very bricks (never mind the curriculum, pedagogies, and industrial relations) were dialectically infused. My unlearning came in an inkling that the Marxist/capitalist death dance could be side-stepped in the construction of a different politics; immersion in critical posthumanism over a number of years provided me with a set of design tools.

This was a fundamental turning point in my thinking. As a student of the Thinking Environment (Kline, 2009, see Appendix A), I believed that adults could learn how to think. It took me a while to disentangle this from something quite different, which is endemic on the left, where 'we' believe we are right: teaching people *what* to think (Apple, 2013). Realising that there could be a different politics was a massive step for me. That this politics has not yet emerged is frustrating but does not preclude fresh thinking in uncertain times. Amsler (2015, p.5) describes global capitalism as "*virulently ascendent but unstable*" and draws on Arendt, Bloch and others to sketch out a "*politics of possibility*" (ibid. p.3), beyond the limits of the old dichotomy (which, after all, has spanned only the tiny fraction of human life since the Industrial Revolution). This language of hope and possibility is also used by Giroux and McLaren (1992, p.22) as we have seen, opening opportunities to "*read the world differently, resist the abuse of power and privilege, and envision democratic communities.*"

Braidotti claims that the critical tool of posthumanism is *convergence*, which has deep philosophical roots associated with Spinoza's theory of immanence and which is read here as human and non-human actors meeting on a plane of encounter, as an *assemblage*, or

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[118] The reader will notice that each chapter begins with an excerpt from the participant material. It felt important that the voices of respondents should be woven throughout the narrative and not confined to their place in 'Findings', yet that this should be balanced with Corden and Sainbury's warnings about over-claiming on the basis of single persuasive 'quotes'. Each chapter heading is therefore illustrative, rather than instructive.

[119] Kenan Malik has long linked 'radicalisation' to belonging and how, in the absence of diverse and inclusive community fabric, human beings take refuge in being part of something (2009).

constellation (Hlavajova, 2017). In this work, the research *assemblage* is formed of the cartography, the three figurations, the Bowerbird and a live, affirmative ethics, making sense of the participant material together. Braidotti argues that the complexity of twenty-first century Earth – another convergence, that of the fourth industrial revolution and the sixth extinction (Braidotti, 2019) - shaped and dominated as it is with the mutations of advanced capitalism, can only be addressed by individual human/non-human actors gathering on a plane of encounter to enact an affirmative politics. By this, she does not mean a political party or any group of people who identify as 'same' – she means exactly the opposite. Following Deleuze and Guattari (2004), though critical of the absence of any post-colonial perspective in their work, she claims that the uber-segregation of humanity into identity and interest groups, into endless repetitions of the individual, organised by category (identity politics), is not the way to deal with complexity. On the contrary, "*…convergence is the only way we can deal with complexity*" (Braidotti, 2019a).

Braidotti's 'posthuman convergence' insists on the formation of assemblages or 'constellations' (Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2018) which actively bring missing voices such as those of indigenous peoples (as in Ulmer's Flint example) and others who are marginalised and disowned by society, to work on time-limited projects when opportunities arise to smooth out (or deterritorialise) landscapes for action (or 'spaces to dance' (Mycroft and Weatherby, 2015). Posthumanism asks, how can new knowledges from previously "*deliberately unheard*" voices (Roy, 2014) assist us in moving beyond exclusion of the sexualised/racialised/naturalised/classified 'others': human and non-human (Braidotti, 2019a)? This has reflections of Jürgen Habermas's search for the ideal speech community, which resists privileging the language of social administration (with its colonialist roots), over that of "private, family and local values" (O'Neill, 1985).

The problem with Marxism (in any form) is that it exists in opposition to capitalism; a capitalism which is too clever for its enemy as it quickly mutates, whereas socialism more or less keeps faith with a philosophy published in 1867, falling out with itself over the finer detail. And 'we' (every human on earth, in some form) are part of capitalism, whether we are victims of it (through the necropolitics of war, exploitation or climate change), beneficiaries or both. In the UK, most humans are both, using our mobile phones – bloodied as they are by brutal child and earth exploitation - to post on social media even as we join Extinction Rebellion (as I have shown, Rikowski charts the shift from 'labour power' to 'human capital', 1999). For the left, taking leave of Marx and Hegel is difficult, but times have changed. Braidotti (2019a) exhorts us to "*take critical distance, or you can't make sense of the first half of the 21st century*". 'We' are part of the problem and posthumanism adopts the Spinozan tradition of Enlightenment, which rejects the nature/culture divide[120] in favour of a radical immanence that believes we are all one matter and, as such, we need to be - as Nietzsche said (Prideaux, 2018) - worthy of the times. This maxim, and the determination to hear the 'missing voices', propelled the methodology towards mass observation as a research tool; hearing from the broadest possible representation of voices, including people who may never have thought about community education before.

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[120] And many other binaries derived from Cartesianism.

4.5 The Posthuman Toolkit
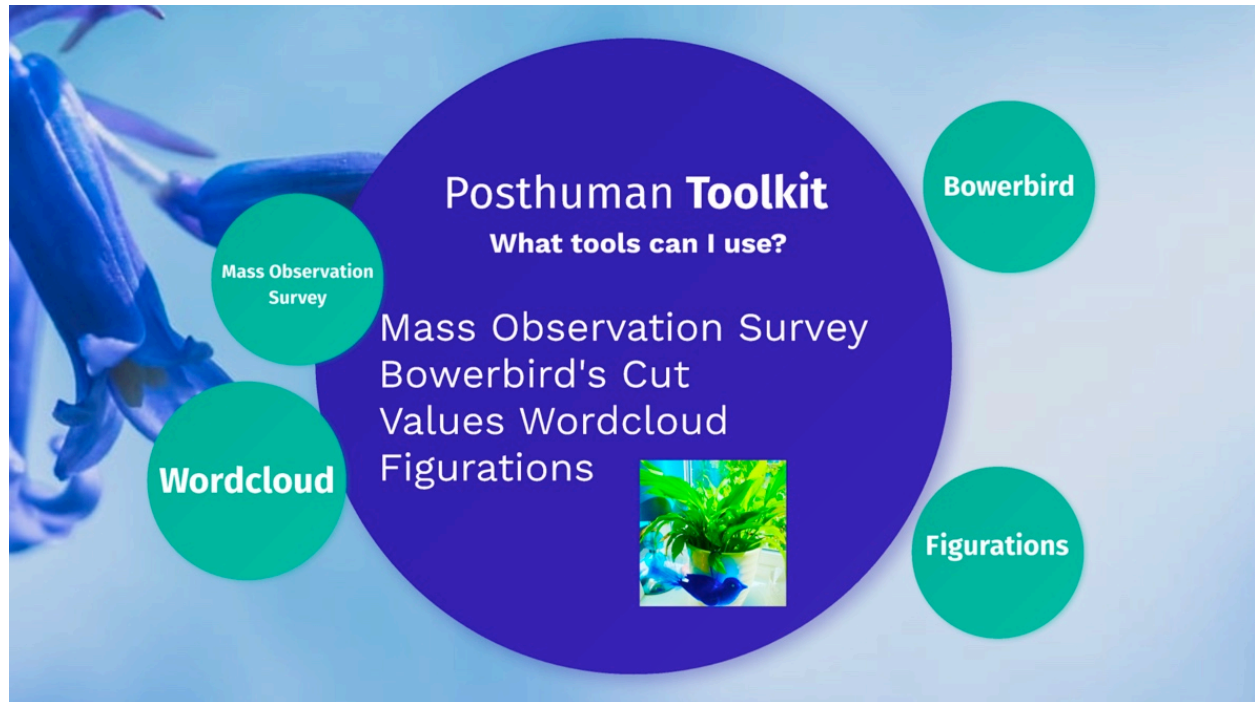
The posthuman toolkit, emerging from a process ontology, provides the wherewithal to both collect and analyse participant material in a golden moment when the visible is briefly made invisible. This chapter will go on to present the 'data' collection tool: a mass observation survey. It will then further explore the posthuman concept of 'figuration', before defending the analysis process in Chapter 5.

4.5.1 Fieldwork in a Digital Landscape

4.5.1.1 Mass Observation

Mass observation as a method of research has been largely under-theorised since its heyday in early 20th century Britain. Revisiting it nearly a century later (and drawing on the 'vox-pop' work of Aardman Animations to illustrate its enduring appeal) Kushner, Stannard and Walker (2017) note that from its earliest incarnation, mass observation had the potential to open up research to diversity.

By opening up an accessible question(s) to the broadest 'unknown' audience possible, then recording responses verbatim, there is some potential for not only diversifying but also potentially 'decolonising[121]' received thinking about what community education is and can be, providing genuinely effective attempts are made to extend beyond the self-referential filter bubbles of the sector (Pariser, 2011). The waves, pauses and physical expressions of this

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[121] Absolutely not a straightforward concept; in fact a very troubled one. Please see Chapter 2.

research allowed this stream of competition to be interrupted and, maybe, for thinking to take a post-colonial turn. As Patel writes:

> *"...pausing is useful, even necessary, particularly in these modern times in which colonial projects have shaped technology, knowledge and connection to be a veritable non-stop stimulation of tweets, status updates and deadlines, all competing for our attention."*[122]

(2016, p.1)

Potentia thinkers are all kept so busy in neoliberalist times that we have little opportunity to do the deep questioning about the world around us, its monuments and how they are constructed, that is necessary to rethink society (after Freire, 1972). Patel talks about "*reaching beyond oneself*" (ibid, p.5) whilst remaining mindful of how we have been influenced by growing up in settler or coloniser societies and the ways in which colonialism is inscribed in us, not least in the language we use (see, for example, Jeffrey Boakye's extraordinary 'Black, Listed' (2019)).

Every attempt was made to get beyond the limiting 'group speak' of further education, the language not only of acronyms but of words weighted by ideology: delivery, plenary, outstanding etc. Posthumanism carries its own burden of insider language, from the oft-quoted (and unpronounceable) 'chthulucene' of Haraway to the portmanteau words of Barad, Deleuze-Guattari, Haraway herself and many others - becoming-minoritarian, sym-poeisis, onto-epistem-ology - culminating in all that is wrapped up in Braidotti's seemingly straightforward[123] "*we-are-all-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same*" (2019). Attractive as linguistic deconstruction/reconstruction is, echoing as it does the repeated territorialisation of other spaces, the very fact that even posthuman scholars struggle to keep a straight face at new terminology does not bode well for transmuting new concepts to activist projects. This research was determined from the start to express complexity in language that was inclusive and possible to understand. Using mass observation as a tool to invite diverse perspectives seemed to make complexity possible, by offering the opportunity for a broad group of people to contribute their verbatim thoughts, without closing down the invitation to a favoured few, or couching it in words that participants might barely understand[124].

That the Imaginary will also be communicated using language is inescapable. Even had I expressed it using creative multimedia – as a film, for example – language would have been involved in communicating the lines of flight which have emerged from this research[125]. Each line of flight is an activist project in *potentia*, and as such will have a mutually agreed starting point (which may be a step further still). Language remains the way in which humans co-communicate. By keeping each line of flight clearly worded, emerging relatively unencumbered

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[122] This project and its spin-off constellations caused much social media noise of its own, an irony which is not lost and which needed the pauses of thinking on the move to interrupt.

[123] ...but really not. This phrase has been deconstructed elsewhere in this dissertation.

[124] No intention to infantilise.

[125] Unless, of course, this is a limitation of my creativity.

from the research, I hope to provide a starting point for any constellation to take up its activist work.

The potential of the mass-observation method for widening both the participation and consumption of research is illustrated by the way in which the original Mass-Observation Project 1937-1960s has captured the public imagination variously down the years, with the collected letters of the WW2 years continuing to be processed and re-processed into various artefacts throughout subsequent decades[126]. Kushner, Stannard and Walker argue that "*both mass observation and the writing of ordinary people ought to be taken seriously*" (2017, p.vii) and this was a compelling reason for not placing any restrictions on the length of submission. Offering an opportunity to all those involved in community learning – as students, guidance workers, administrators, tutors – as well as those who may have never thought about community education before, provides an opportunity for the erstwhile 'Cinderella sector' to have imaginations tapped, and additionally provides opportunities for creativity in terms of research dissemination, as submissions were also welcomed in visual form[127].

The mass-observation research tool, to be read in tandem with a diffractive cartography and enfolded with it in an affirmative posthuman ethics, was a single question published in the 21st century version of a popular newspaper: freely available social media[128]. The original mass-observation study used the popular press of the day, such as the Daily Express, to invite participants as diarists during WW2[129] the difference being, of course, that today's social media platforms employ manipulative algorithms which potentially limited the diversity of reach (Eubanks, 2017)[130]. The approach, which arose out of a more conventionally ethnographic project in the north of England, solicited 'enigmatic trivia' which continues to be presented and re-presented down the years (Hall, 2016 p.295). In a sense, the original Mass-Observation movement was an early example of what has since come to be called 'citizen science', coined in various places including by the British social scientist Alan Irwin (1995). Mass-Observation found its moment during the war years, drifting into consumer market research in the 1950s[131] before being rehabilitated by the University of Sussex in the early 1980s[132] as a public archive, allowing its material to be sustainably set to work. In Covid times, citizen science continues to have a place, with four million people currently contributing daily to the COVID Symptom Study

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[126] See, for example, the Victoria Wood film Housewife, 49.

[127] Only three people took up the offer, but nonetheless it was made and their contributions have been folded into the analysis as they were all summarised by text.

[128] As we will see, material was collected via a Googleform, attached to a landing page on my website which contained the ethical statement, and associated with a padlet for any participants who wished to contribute images or artwork. The link was then shared on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

[129] 480 signed up. The number of respondents to this research is not far short of that although, of course, they are not providing longitudinal material.

[130] It can be argued that the popular press of 1939 were also manipulated. 'Media' have always 'mediated'.

[131] An excellent example of re-territorialisation as any history of the Mass-Observation movement reveals it to have been founded by maverick subversives.

[132] The Mass-Observation Archive is stored in a building called 'The Keep' just outside Brighton. In non-COVID times, it is fully open to the public.

(Spector, 2020). The COVID Symptom Study initially received no public funding[133] and ran a successful crowd-funding campaign during the lockdown period. On August 20th, 2020 it was announced that the Department of Health had issued a £2million grant to the study, to allow it to operate throughout the winter. Interestingly, "*the study remains independent of the government"* *(*COVID Symptom Study, 2020). Maybe negotiators were mindful of the dangers of re-territorialisation; the study's findings were initially not considered by policy makers, so this grant represents not just money but an potentially increased opportunity to influence decision-making.

Experience of two Mass-Observation projects in 2017 ignited my interest in this process to crowd-source new ideas for community education. 'A Day in the Life' (MHFE, 2017) accompanied the Department for Education's Community Learning Mental Health (CLMH) project across 52 research sites, with the aim of illustrating real-life stories of students, teachers, guidance workers and others involved in community education. 'What Women Want 2.0' repeated a similar survey of two decades ago, which drew "*a bold collage of women's diverse hopes, dreams and demands which went on to change policy and perceptions*." (What Women Want, 2017). Of the two, the What Women Want 2.0 model provided a useful practical format for this figuration.

The danger is that respondents will be unable to think beyond the limitations of what they already know. This statement is not intended to patronise. Thinking the yet to be thought takes a boldness and insight which might be a stretch to some people for reasons of confidence, compliance and fear (Montgomery and Hope, 2016). It is also a deliberate social strategy:

> *"Cultures of domination rely on the cultivation of fear as a way to ensure obedience."*

> (hooks, 1999, p.130)

To overcome this, the mass observation question was kept deliberately open, relying only on contributors having a personal impression – however vague – of community education[134]. I was not looking for any particular level of understanding; on the contrary I was keen to invite participation from people who were not chained to any sort of mental map. Although the question itself was straightforward, it was presented as part of a wider information package, which included an ethical statement and guidance designed to be embracing of all contributions.

4.5.1.2 The Survey

The initial plan was to have a single question, designed to crowd-source 'newness' ideas for community education, in the style of Mass-Observation. Like What Women Want 2.0 (2017) the plan was for an online survey to be released via freely available social media: *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *LinkedIn* and *Instagram*. I would therefore be using my own networks, which are

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[133] It is a private finance partnership between UK healthcare science company ZOE (!) and King's College London.

slightly different on each platform but which inevitably have limitations which reflect my own identities and 'filter bubbles' (Pariser, 2012).

I considered a single day's material collection in the style of A Day in the Life (DfE, 2017), with a social media marketing campaign to ensure reach, but could find no advantage in this. Community education does not enjoy its own awareness day or public holiday; this approach would limit the reach without compensation. In the end, material collection took place in July 2019 and was repeated in June 2020 ('Take Two'), during the Covid lockdown.

The question took more than two years to craft. I went to Braidotti's summer school in 2018 with the intention of coming back with a formed question; thinking perhaps that my own busy life as a self-employed nomad was blocking my thinking in some way. I made no progress and ended up, in early 2019, piloting a series of questions. This was a diffractive practice, in which I used Thinking Environment techniques to create space for my own thinking (see Appendix A). The questions were piloted by ten colleagues in April 2019.

4.5.1.3 The Pilot Questions

The three questions were piloted in an online *Slack* discussion space[135] with members of the #FEResearch 'rhizome'[136]. The original intention was to select one of the three questions for the Mass-Observation survey, based on feedback from the pilot phase. In fact, discussion strayed into whether all three questions could be useful and for a time I contemplated a 'pick and mix' approach, where respondents selected one, but I could find no compelling advantage when weighed against the disadvantages of a significantly more complex analysis.

For each of the three questions pilot participants were asked to:

1. Answer the question and
2. Say something about how the question was constructed

I was aware that I was working with peers, in some cases fellow PhD students, who worked in the domain of questions and would not be phased by the meta-nature of being asked a question about a question.

- **Question A**: what if you forgot everything you know about community education and re-imagined it for <u>now</u>? What would it look like?

Genesis of the Question

This question emerged from mulling over the research, without using any particular elicitation technique. It took some reflection for the burden of thinking of the 'right' question to reveal itself, flying in the face of posthuman resistance to unwitting axioms. I also had to keep disentangling

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[135] A free discussion board set up for the purpose of piloting the questions. It has since been archived.
[136] A grassroots movement emerging in 2018, via ResearchMeet events and a Twitter hashtag. As I write, efforts are underway to integrate with state-funded initiatives whilst resisting incorporation.

the question from true and untrue assumptions. In popular coaching parlance, there is often pressure on the coach to notice the 'golden moment' and as a 'killer question' that unlocks the coachee's thinking (Kauffman, 2010); this has the potential to become entangled in the beliefs and experiences of the coach. Strangely, as someone trained in a Thinking Environment (Kline, 2009) I should have been wise to this but eventually I got there with an open question. In Thinking Environment coaching, questions are formed from the thinker's own words and that led me to forget I actually was the thinker in this case and lose faith. Responses were, however, varied, forward-looking and appeared to flow. Getting some feedback from one pilot respondent that this question was "a bit vague" and seeing this as a disadvantage, I turned to the Thinking Environment application of Incisive Questions, to see if this would work better:

- **Question B**: if you knew that community education was the most effective vehicle for producing "an educated public" (Furedi, 2006), what would you do?

Genesis of the Question

This is a classic Thinking Environment 'incisive question', with an affirmative initial clause and an open second clause. Arising out of Quaker practices of sitting in ease with silence, incisive questions are designed to open up possibilities to new thinking (Kline, 2009), by provoking an affirmative re-imagining, which is in line with the affirmative Spinozan spirit of this research. Kline describes the stepped questioning process of identifying an incisive question as being one which identifies the assumptions at the core of our thinking; in particular the *untrue* limiting assumptions that block your path. I wanted to make it possible for respondents to move beyond their own untrue limiting assumptions about community education, to a further horizon. "*The presence of assumptions at the core of our lives is actually an electrifying concept*," writes Kline (2009, p.87). Using a botanic metaphor which sits well with the rhizome, she describes being given a Morning Glory[137] plant which is just a stick and two leaves, but which contains within it already the voluptuous purple flower. Her concept of an incisive question is one which contains the seed of hope, allowing you to move beyond the assumptions that are blocking you.

The problem with Question B is that the question itself was laden with assumptions. Pilot respondents spotted it at once. 'What do you mean by an educated public?' asked one. 'What do you want me to say?' asked another, worryingly. They certainly didn't want to have to read Furedi before they could answer. Back to the drawing board.

- **Question C**: How can community education best "support people to feel hopeful, identify their own purpose and take action?[138]" (Nesta, 2018)

Genesis of the Question

This question made its way in just before the pilot phase and was included because of a personal commitment to threes; not for reasons of superstition but, as a public speaker, for

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[137] It would be so neat if Morning Glory was a rhizome, but it is in fact an annual. Its cousin, the Bindweed, is indeed a rhizome, and an invasive one at that.

[138] As the question was not, ultimately, used I have not taken the space to problematise it here.

balance. The question emerged from the Nesta thinktank (2018, p.3) research into what they believed constituted 'good help' in the public sector (not just education)[139]:

> *"Good help supports people to feel hopeful, identify their own purpose and take action."*

This question provoked a lot of interest. In particular, it seemed to draw pilot respondents into reflecting on their own practice. Some were interested in reading the Nesta Good Help Report, which was an activist outcome as their work then spun off in different directions, even if it didn't help shape the question. But it did feel as though the question somehow set up the 'gravitational pull of the old' (Braidotti, 2019), with respondents critiquing past and present practice, rather than imagining anything new. The 'Good Help' research is also not without critique, not least that its presentation (Good/Bad Help) sets up the kind of binary posthuman research attempts to see beyond. This was also the only pilot question that elicited no new ideas.

Discussion around the pilot questions did not elicit any sort of clear outcome, which threw me back on my own thinking. The contributions of colleagues enabled me to reaffirm my original purpose: to create an Imaginary which "*lets the newness*" into axiomatic thinking about how community education is delivered (Rushdie, 1991, p.394) and to accompany this with a re-theorising of community education, which provides context, ballast and critical stimulation for the work.

4.5.1.4 Final Question

What if you forgot everything you know about community education and re-imagined it for <u>now</u>? What would it look like?

The final question was in fact the first. Discussions with the pilot group may have been inconclusive, but they enabled me to disentangle questions from assumptions and binaries and to revisit the research aims more confidently, thanks to the thinking generated by the pilot discussions. The pilot group also made a couple of further suggestions, which I will deal with here:

> *To limit responses to seven words or less.*
> This came from a colleague who had recently completed her PhD, reflecting on the intensive labour of very wordy material. It was a tempting thought. But even before I could articulate the reasons why, my body told me that it would go against the ethics of the piece; a great example of posthumanism's new materialist thinking: we think affectively with our bodies as well as our minds (Lala and Kinsella, 2011). This in turn prompted an extension of the Ethics, please see Chapter 4, above.
>
> *To allow for multi-media responses.*
> I had not thought of this as an option. My own preference for the written word means that

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[139]Disclaimer: the author was part of the project's steering committee in its report writing stages.

words come easily to me, and I had forgotten that others might have different preferences. In the event, only 3 multi-media submissions were made (via Padlet) and all were accompanied by a textual narrative but it felt important to offer the opportunity.

4.5.1.5 Survey Design and Reach

The survey was a single question which was sent out via freely available social media on a Google form, though of course it wasn't quite as simple as that.

4.5.1.5.1 Survey Design

Although a single question formed the material collection tool, the survey was more than this. It was designed to be eye-catching on social media (despite the limitations of the Google form, which is made to be efficient rather than attractive) and, more importantly, to irrefutably spell out the research ethics. The header image, which pulled through into social media, played on the theme of #DancingPrincesses 💃 at a time when that hashtag was live; the blue colour reminded some who saw it of the Bowerbird and both hashtags were used on Twitter and Instagram, along with a hashtag for the research programme itself #FEImaginary[140].
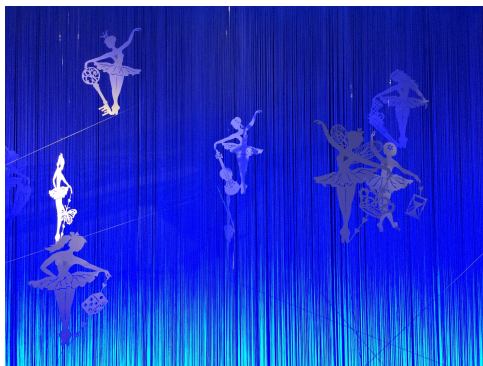
Hashtags allow threads of discussion to be followed in the vast and sometimes gladiatorial arena of Twitter. I have continued to post to it during the writing up of this research, leading to insight and the shifting of my own thinking[141].

The ethical statement was hosted on my personal (professional) website, which afforded more space and the opportunity to engage with images. This was deliberate, as I wanted respondents to intentionally engage with the ethics of the research. The opportunity was taken to explain a posthuman affirmative ethics in terms which were straightforward and understandable. Chapter 3, above, explores this ethics in more detail. Respondents were asked to return to the survey (link provided) and give their informed consent to participation. Only when all questions were ticked in the affirmative was the research question revealed.

Participants were asked to comment on "those aspects of identity they choose to reveal". Responses verged from a straightforward first-and-last-name, through various often quite humorous offerings, to what amounted in some cases to a short essay, leaving the impression that those who chose to engage in detail were glad to be asked. I made a deliberate decision to ask people to self-identify. This inevitably made analysis difficult[142] and I will be revealing no neat graphs which anchor certain identity groups in with certain ideas. Instead, I present the

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[140] CEImaginary was already taken.
[141] As an example of this, @drivedigileeds posted a tweet which made me think about commitment to personal action, which proved useful to the 'final' construction of the Imaginary.

demographic information in the form of a computer-generated wordcloud, in which font size increases according to the number of incidences of a word. A rough measure, but one which allows for a limited amount of critical narrative.

Finally, in the thank-you paragraph I invited anyone who would prefer to submit a multi-media piece to do so via a Padlet; only three people did so, which is less than 1% of respondents. With hindsight, I would have made this offer before the written questions, not afterwards.

4.5.1.5.2 Survey Vehicle

The vehicle was a free '*Google* Form' which does not differ in any material sense from the platforms of rival organisations: *Microsoft Form*, *Survey Monkey*, *Smart Survey* etc. I took the question to the *Slack* community about whether one was better than another; the response, affirmed by the *Zapier* recommendations website was that they were pretty much the same. The decision was taken on the basis of it being convenient to myself as I work within *Google* Suite most of the time. The *Google* Form was able to do everything I asked of it, including exporting the material into a spreadsheet which could then be imported into the analysis software.

Throughout the lifetime of this research, debate has raged around the manipulation of social media algorithms for political ends and about the misuse of web-hosted data. Schneble, Elger and Shaw (2018) are quite right to claim that, "*aspects of security and privacy are often not taken into account*" and Eubanks (2017) writes compellingly about how 'big data' is used for the systematic surveillance and oppression of welfare state beneficiaries in the US and elsewhere. Keeping everything in Google means I could not be certain of how they used the information, but I would personally be legally compliant; as an extra precaution I did not collect the emails of participants. This is a fascinating and essential area of study, but it is one that is outwith the scope of the project.

4.5.1.5.3 Survey Reach

Mass observation inevitably implies reaching people you do not know and here I re-introduce the concept of 'we'. Although this research is mine, I operate as 'we' in the sense of being part of a networked, connected 'undercommons'. Since 2017, when I left Northern College[143], my place of work has been social media, my shop window, my reflection and evaluation space, my library, my water cooler and my staff room. As I will further explore in an exploration of diffraction, in the Cartography above, I make no particular distinction between my thinking and the thinking of others, in that I am deliberately disinterested in the ownership of knowledge, seeing it as a Deleuzian 'reterritorialization' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). This goes beyond making a case for open learning (Price, 2013) and is further explored in the Cartography. It does not, of course, mean that I am insensible of the power relations of the knowledge economy (as we have seen, Eubanks, 2018, Rikowski, 2011) or that I plagiarise. In fact, following Sara Ahmed (2017), I see citation as a political act.

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[143] Convention would anonymise this but why? Anyone could google it. I worked at one College for the whole of my FE career, so it's a research convention which is disingenuous in my case.

Because of this deep entanglement together in social media networks, 'we' had the capacity to send the mass observation question far and wide, even if it did not capture any particular *zeitgeist*. A survey about community education was unlikely to 'go viral', overlooked and undervalued as the sector is. The final tally of 363 respondents (with a further 36 for 'Take Two', the survey's reprise during the Covid-19 lockdown) provided a breadth of thinking and perspective which suggested a healthy response.

The questions were sent out across my personal learning networks (PLN), an acronym in wide usage but one which I've never used myself. The ability I have to do this is entirely dependent on many years' nurturing of social media networks across a wide demographic. No parameters were applied to selecting respondents. It was important, for example, to get beyond educators' own preconceived thinking about what community education is, or could be (or, perhaps most significantly, used to be: the 'hauntology' (Bayne, 2010; Fisher, 2014) of some mythical golden age of community education dominated every conversation I had with people who had been involved in it for some time). My *Twitter* PLN - and that of most of my closest colleagues who were supporting the research - is focused around 'work', even if many of us are typically people who don't only work in work time. Not all of us are community educators, but many are in adult learning, as well as universities and schools. Even with the extra efforts described above, *Twitter* would be unlikely to get the question out beyond educators or one form or another. *LinkedIn* plays a similar role; but also extends to the third sector (locally in South Yorkshire) thanks to my work with South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau. I hoped through this channel to reach educators involved in third sector provision.

Instagram and *Facebook*, especially Facebook, occupy a different space. At the time of the fieldwork, Insta was relatively new to me and had a broader audience, encompassing as it did many of my son's friends; it thus offered a younger demographic. *Facebook* anchored me to home and in doing so crossed a class divide which I've explored elsewhere as a working class academic.[144] During the period of fieldwork, up to and including the release of the refreshed 'Take Two' survey post-Covid lockdown, I was running five Slimming World groups each Monday in what used to be my secondary school. This brought me back into the orbit of the working-class community I'd grown up in and, in every way but geographically, moved away from. Yet since I had taken on this role, the friendship extended to me had increased my *Facebook* following by most of the 600 people who had joined the groups I ran. Seeing me fondly as a bit of an oddity, scores of them were willing to complete the survey (and commented that they had), leading to some refreshing, often left-field responses.

Each, slightly different, audience had something unique to contribute. Posts were scheduled across my own networks daily (on *Twitter*) and twice weekly (on the other, less populous, spaces) for the duration of one month, July 2019. One interesting observation was that although the social media posts were heavily liked and shared from the start, many people did not respond right away. Only when, dismayed at the low response rate, I started putting the closing date in the post did responses speed up, going from 60+ to 300+ in a matter of days. Several

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[144] See, for example, my presentation at the Working Class Academics Conference, July 2020 https://workingclass-academics.co.uk/post-conference/

people commented that they wanted time to think about it and certainly many of the later responses were detailed, thoughtful and considered.

Cognisant of the filter bubble effect, I had long conversations about how I could breach it. I was particularly conscious of the (not complete, but dominant) whiteness of the pilot group and my other close allies, and the fact that we were largely female, largely of an age and all connected in some way with further education (though not always community education.) I'm an experienced and skilled communicator but transcending the bubble in the sense of reaching out to others from different backgrounds particularly across race and ethnicity, was challenging if it was not to be tokenistic[145]. I invested in Thinking Environment[146] coaching, to help me figure out an approach which might rid me of any "white guilt" diffidence I might be indulging in (Eddo-Lodge, 2020) without making individuals (particularly of colour) responsible for the limitations of my social reach. After two coaching sessions and many, solutions-focused discussions, the following strategies were put into place:

4.5.1.5.3.1 Working through networks

Reaching out to individuals on the basis of one (to some extent even assumed) aspect of their identity felt like exploitation. I imagined how I might feel if someone asked me to get involved with something on the basis of being an adopted person: fine if they were adopted themselves or clearly working in solidarity with adopted people[147], not so fine if they were wanting to 'add local colour' or buoy up their own limited networks. Eddo-Lodge (2020), interviewing the intersectional activist group Sisters Uncut, discusses the tokenism of wanting 50% visible representation of colour on social media images without considering whether the more meaningful practices of decision-making invited the same level of diversity.

Working through networks was one way in which a legitimate but not deferential approach (Eddo-Lodge, 2020) could be made. I reached out to those diversity organisations with whom I had previously worked, such as the #BAMEEdNetwork and #MHFECrowd, asking for amplification in the form of likes or shares/retweets. Where I had not had previous contact, a private message with a polite direct request was sometimes taken up, sometimes not.

4.5.1.5.3.2 Paid-for advertising

During the fieldwork period, both Facebook and Twitter offered the opportunity to pay small amounts of money in order that the message be amplified beyond my own networks and those of my close contacts: beyond, in fact, the filter bubble. There was also the opportunity for a

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[145] Although it's outside the scope of this work, I'd like to note here that my own anti-racist education has progressed rapidly during the fieldwork period, particularly after the murder of George Floyd. As Reni Eddo-Lodge admits, sad to say it maybe lockdown rather than murder that has compelled very many white people like myself to think more deeply about their own anti-racist practice (Iqbal, 2020).
[146] Kline, 1999 (please see Appendix A below).
[147] I am indebted to D.Hunter's definition of belonging to an identity group useful here: *"The working class is the home of those who constantly commit acts of solidarity within their class, and against the systems that seek to divide us."* (2011)

broad-brush geographical target, which I set at the furthest reach ("all England"). Although I work nationally, after a lifetime of living and physically working in Yorkshire I have stronger links there and I wanted to get beyond these. I also asked for the ad to reach more male than female users, though there was no option for ethnicity, disability or refugee status, or sexuality, since the major social media do not ask for that data when someone signs up (they do occasionally publish demographic statistics, which raises ethical questions about how they harvest it).

It is impossible to gauge how far the paid for ads reached, as they only measure engagements (someone has seen the post) and clicks (someone has clicked on the survey). In total, there were >12k engagements (relatively meaningless since people only had to scroll past) and 37 clicks.

4.5.1.5.3.3 Requests to extend reach

This was a simple direct request in the body of the post: "Please share 🙏" or "Please RT 🙏". A few people always did, in each case, which contributed towards exceeding my own networks.

4.5.2 Figurations
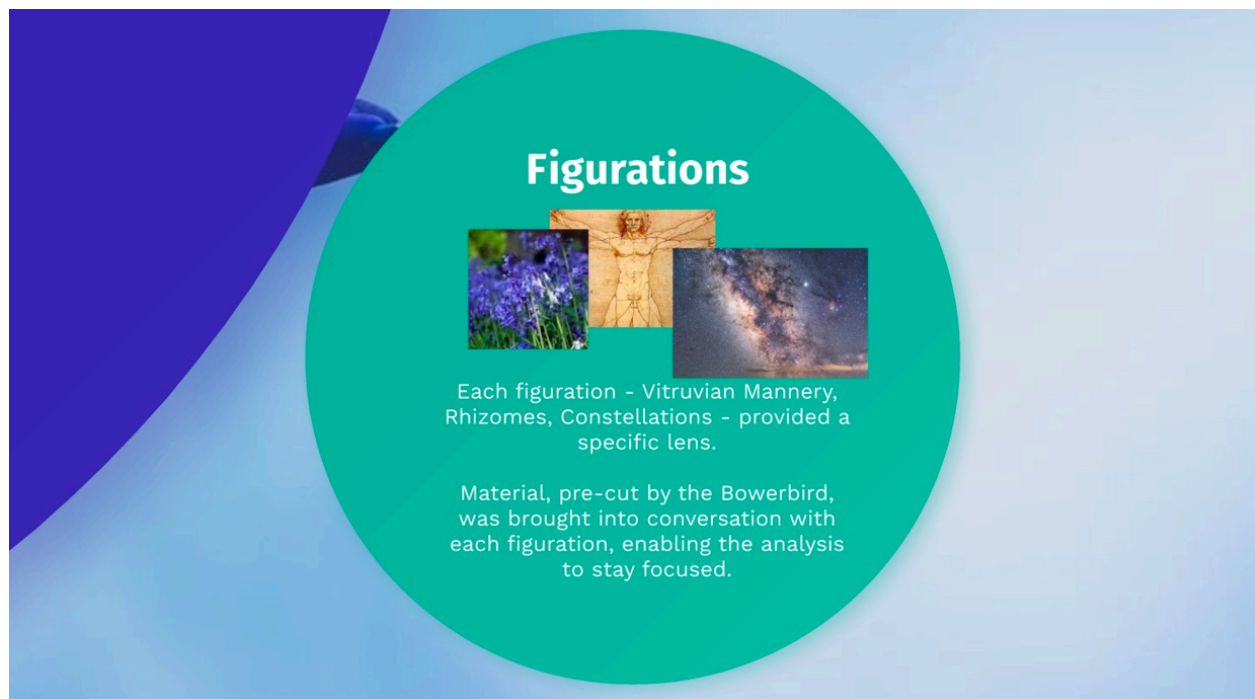
'Figuration' was described by Deleuze and Guattari (1994), writing before the affordances of Web 2.0[148] as a 'conceptual persona or personae', that is to say a concept brought to life as a character with an active role in the process of creating new knowledge. None of the figurations which feature in this research are human: thus, the non-human comes into play. Deleuze and Guattari refer to Nietzsche's work, brightly populated by figurations alongside the

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[148] Essentially, social media.

autobiographical thoughts of the philosopher himself (Prideaux, 2018) and they comment that the history of philosophy is studded with similar figurations:

> "*Philosophy constantly brings conceptual personae to life: it gives life to them.*"
>
> (ibid., p.62)

Figurations are *immanent*; they animate concepts, which Deleuze and Guattari define as constructs which are nomadic, they move from thinker to thinker mutating with each new situation. 'Theory' is always contextually situated, and never fixed. Again, the agential cut:

> "*Every concept has an irregular contour defined by the sum of its components, which is why, from Plato to Bergson, we find the idea of a concept being a matter of articulation, of cutting and cross-cutting. The concept is a whole because it totalizes its components, but it is a fragmentary whole.*"
>
> (ibid., p.16)

Deleuze and Guattari were not fond of metaphors, claiming instead to describe the world as it is, just in a different lexicon. This influenced the concept of the 'undercommons' which opened this dissertation, in which Moten and Harney are clear that the undercommons already exists, it doesn't need to be formed (2013). The figurations that follow each have a life of their own in the sense that they are animated by the way in which transmission through the rhizome (see below) means they are picked up and used in different ways by others. They are not academic branding or packaging, they are, essentially 'open source' (Price, 2013) in the way in which they invite engagement. In this way, they keep on the move and avoid being 'owned' in a system of knowledge capital (Markusen and Strand, 2009); they are nomadic (Braidotti, 2011).

Figurations have been important for this research, and for the bigger activist project happening in real time, publicly on social media: to reimagine further education as a whole. Concurrent with this life of the research has been the rhizomatic development of different 'constellations of practice' (Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2018), each of which I have been involved in catalysing to a greater or lesser extent. Naturally, each of the actors would claim a different narrative, so what I present here is my own, aiming once again at trustworthiness rather than any absolute truth (Williams, 2002[149]). These constellations are fundamental to the transmission of the figurations.

My own trajectory since 2014 has been one of increasing nomadism, in both a material and virtual sense, including a deliberate move in 2017 to leave my workplace of twenty years and follow nomadic paths, or "*lines of flight*" (Guattari, 2015; Usher, 2010), guided by an affirmative ethics of affirmation (see Ethics, above). From the point at which I left the organisation my 'workplace' became the landscape of (initially) English further education, in a very visible virtual sense via social media networks. I began to work very much in the public domain, nothing hidden in my practice, even writing in a public-facing, collaborative space where I invited the

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[149] See also Nietzsche's figuration of 'freedom' or 'the free spirit: "*In the course of its apprenticeship it discovers the laws of perspectivism and the impossibility of truth as a changeless and otherworldly value.*" (Brinsmead, 2009, p.227).

perspective of others[150]. A growing 'following[151]', combined with an ethical practice grounded in anti-competitive Thinking Environment practices (Kline, 2009, see Appendix A) of offering a perspective, rather than imposing any imperative advice or certainty, enabled me to develop public figurations as a pedagogical tool which connects individuals across a landscape of ideas, organisations, activism and funded projects. In this I am of course indebted to students, friends, colleagues, family members and other posthuman scholars for diffraction and amplification. Put simply, the four figurations and the way in which they are animated in discourses around education – as non-human actors – enable the essence of some 'high' theory (Braidotti, 2020) to become an operational praxis.

Through an emerging practice, each figuration came to be translated into the following tools of recognition and engagement: an attempt, if you like, to harness the branding and marketing tools of capitalism (Mycroft, Shukie and Sidebottom, 2021 forthcoming), which seems a poor exchange for all capitalism has stolen from ethical practice[152].

Each figuration came to have:

- · A photograph, or familiar set of photographs (the photogenic Bowerbird has many) – examples of these are posted below.
- · A hashtag[153], to gather comments and reinforce recognition, to track conversations and as a shorthand for a more or less shared understanding of the figuration
- · An emoji (usually following the hashtag), to enable visual recognition.

It is important to stress that any 'material' made available via the figurations' presence on social media is posted by individuals in a public space and, although it is ethically available to be drawn upon for this research, it will be treated with caution and care will be taken not to identify individuals without permission. Ethics should not be the bare minimum you can get away with.

To summarise, the emergence of the four figurations is a conceptual tool which enables individuals to engage in a posthuman praxis, without direct reference to complex theory, and which provides a shared 'ideas lexicon' in which to exchange, enhance and amplify thinking.

The figurations open up new - or hitherto unseen - doorways to disentangle thinking from what already exists. So, for example, the Bowerbird (who had an early introduction, above) has been enabling grassroots practitioners to see beyond the demands of 'data' in an educational compliance sense and harvest the 'shiny blue' treasures of their practice - words, images, sounds, artefacts - which might otherwise be lost in the velocity of life and work.

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[150] The Bower Writing Rooms, a Google Site.

[151] The word is accurate, though I employ it with unease.

[152] See, for example, the beautifully written mission statements of oppressive organisations (Husband and Mycroft, 2019).

[153] Hashtags (expressed as #hashtag) are searchable on most social media platforms, enabling an interested party to follow thread(s) of communication.

4.5.2.1 Vitruvian Mannery[154] #vitruvian 💪

The most compelling image of the Enlightenment is the Leonardo da Vinci figure of Vitruvian Man (see below and also Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2019). The image prevails, together with the enduring philosophy of Descartes, whose binaries (nature/culture, body/soul, self/other) formed an intellectual crucible for the accelerating colonisation of the world by Western cultures: 'they' are not like 'us' and therefore 'they' (human and non-human) can be exploited for 'our' profit. This powerful inheritance seeped into the ontology of what it is to be human:

> "*The dominant idea of the human modelled on the European "Man of Reason" distributes differences according to a hierarchical scale centred on both humanistic and anthropocentric values...those who are excluded from this dominant vision, or classified as hierarchically inferior within it, are the devalorized, less-than-human "others" dehumanized or excluded from full humanity. These qualitatively minoritarian, or marginalized subjects - who often actually are quantitative majories - are the sexualized others (women, LGBTQ+); the racialized others (non-Europeans, indigenous people); and the naturalised others (animals, plants, the Earth). Their voices, experiences, perspectives, and knowledge constitute powerful but as yet untapped alternatives.*"

(Braidotti, 2000 pp28-9)

Descartes' legacy eclipsed that of Spinoza and nurtured the conditions for an ideological capitalism - with colonising potential - that regards some humans as more human than others. Vitruvian Man is white, male, adult, urbanised, able bodied, by inference affluent (certainly well nourished) and assumed to be heterosexual, despite Leonardo's own sexuality. Braidotti describes him as "*speaking a standard language*", which has relevance for a community education which increasingly plugs a social welfare gap for migrants (Morrice, Shan and Sprung, 2018) and an education system as a whole which places recent emphasis on 'character' and 'oracy'[155] (DfE, 2019). By extension, and despite Enlightenment thinkers' commitment to the social mobility of education[156], some of us can never be less female, less black, less able-bodied, less queer. Those of us who don't measure up to the David Beckhamesque figure of Vitruvian Man (Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2019) are 'othered': less than human and, as Bignall (2019) argues, the further we are from the Vitruvian ideal, the more vulnerable we are to premature death[157]. Hence the now commonplace assertion that the world is run by rich, white men that is often heard in these uncertain times and the compelling Occupy slogan of 'the 99%'. As Amsler remembers, the Occupy movement was not the first to identify that the richest 1% of the global adult population owns more than 40% of the world's wealth, but

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[154] Phrase taken from Shaw and Dorman, 2019.

[155] This framework is for schools and reflects a broader ideology around the hotly contested topic of 'education'. The education system in the UK seems determined to mould only a certain type of 'human' (Apple, 2013).

[156] [156]See, for example, Rousseau - who didn't, however, practice what he preached with his own children.

[157] Never more true than now, with Covid.

they "*heaved it in our faces*," (2015, p.14). The evidence is clear to see that "*such extreme inequality is lethal*," (ibid., citing Dorling, 2014) and Pickett and Wilkinson's inequalities work over many years also evidences this (2010). Although large-scale research is yet to emerge, it seems impossible to imagine that Covid-19 has not made things worse (Blundell, Costa Dias, Joyce and Xu, 2020). We already know that people of colour are more adversely affected by the pandemic in both the UK and the US, as part of a complex web of social inequality (Bibby, Everest and Abbs, 2020). Using an Enlightenment term, Bibby, Everest and Abbs call for a "*new social compact*" post-COVID[158], to address health and other social inequalities; a compact based on genuine equality rather than the false meritocracy revealed by not only Covid but the fiasco of the UK exams system in 2020 (Sodha, 2020). The acceleration and mutations of advanced capitalism (Virilio, 1999), which make us complicit in its continued existence, mean this convergence of rallying calls is an urgent one (Braidotti, 2020).
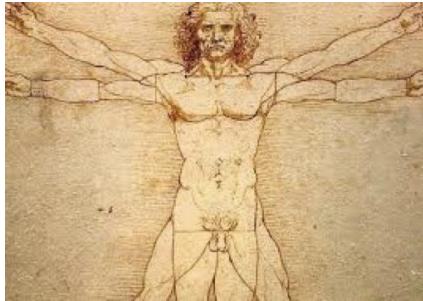
The figuration of Vitruvian Mannery 💪 is used to indicate 'othering' and call out situations where privilege occupies the foreground, unseen. Whether the othering is of an identity group[159] or a role within education ("student", "learning support" etc), the concept of being post-Vitruvian can be invoked as a shorthand to call inequality. You will hear more in The Bower, below.

4.5.2.2 Rhizomes #rhizome 🌱

After the Paris uprising in May 1968 Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, amongst others, concluded that the tools of revolution – Marxism in all its forms – needed to be replaced by new forms of thinking. Arguably a cultural success, they considered the uprising to be a political failure. Addressing the need to provide an alternative *monument* for education, Deleuze and Foucault both joined the experimental university of Paris VIII (Braidotti, 2015). Deleuze went on to write with the Freudian psychoanalyst Félix Guattari, complex texts that they nevertheless considered playful. Here they developed new patterns of revolution and one of the things Deleuze brought to this partnership was a reverence for Spinoza's alternative world view, his embrace of monism: we are all one matter, capable of meeting on planes of encounter where work can be done, driven by shared passions and determination for change.

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[158] Note that the World Economic Forum have been calling for the same, though perhaps interpreted differently, since 2018 (WEF, 2018).

[159] Any identity group, not the incomplete 'Nine Protected Characteristics' of the UK Equality Act 2010, which do not include, for example, social class or refugee status.

Deleuze and Guattari imagined the rhizomatic world, hidden by the arborescent one (1980; 2004): the underground entanglements of bluebells, to give one example, challenging the dominance of the heirarchical root-and-branch system of the oak. For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome was not a metaphor and neither was the tree, materially existing everywhere in the hierarchies, binaries and inequalities of the late twentieth-century world which could trace their genealogy back to Descartes. For them, the rhizome was a present, alternate and ignored way of being – Spinoza's monism, all matter as one[160]. To awake the rhizome meant collecting together as an '*assemblage*' (or 'constellation') of shared passions on planes of encounter, smoothing out spaces to operate (deterritorialising) and doing as much context-changing work as possible before the forces of state seized (reterritorialised) the space and the nomads broke up and moved on. An example of this nomadic practice might be the Dancing Princess🦆 constellation in FE more broadly from 2015 (Appendix G). The term carries an emoji because it was very nearly a fifth figuration of this research.

Rhizomes are stubborn, persistent and unpredictable plants. They are lily of the valley, bluebells, ginger, even couch grass – dig them up and they carry on moving and gathering underground, popping up again where they (not you) choose – over the road, between the cracks of the pavement, in the neighbour's garden. Rhizomes may colonise (though you will find that they quickly take over – fascism is, after all, present in all of us (Foucault, writing the Preface to Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.xiv-xv[161]), see also Mackness and Bell, 2015, Mackness, Bell and Funes, 2015a, 2016). They are also capable of staying on the move, finding fresh places to be. They provide the perfect route map for the "*nomadic subject*", which Braidotti (2011, 2019) envisions as a series of shifting *assemblages*, or constellations.

So far, so lyrical. Yet what does the rhizome in action look like, what are its drawbacks and how is it relevant to this project? Usher (2010, p.69) in one of the few articles to connect posthuman (at least, rhizomatic) practice with what he terms 'lifelong learning', explores the world wide web (as it was a decade ago) as an enabler of rhizomatic practice:

> "*The internet works against the fixity of texts, transferring ownership and thereby author-ity[162] from the writer to the reader - a very Deleuzian process of decentering.*"

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[160] Sometimes, they called this the Nomad War Machine.

[161]"...not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini..but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us."

[162] The hyphenation of words, either to connect two concepts (as in Springgay and Truman's 'research-creation' (2019) or to deconstruct a taken-for-granted word, as here, is a feature of posthumanism (following poststructuralism) designed to disrupt the way language is used, to enable axioms to be seen differently. After all, as Usher asks, "...how do you critique given that you must do so in the language you are critiquing?" (2010, p.69).

This perception of the world wide web now seems simplistic, even naive. The affordance is still possible, but harder to find amongst the overwhelming complexity and new oppressions of Web 2.0 communications. Still, the rhizome continues to offer possibilities for the nomad to follow 'lines of flight', distinguished in Deleuze and Guattari's work from those 'lines of consistency' which establish hierarchical relations. The various entry and exit points of the rhizome mean that "*possibilities for change and movement are offered*" (ibid, p.71), without engaging the arboreal structure in a direct conflict that the nomad is unlikely to win. Instead, nomads, "*...connect signs, energy flows, material, knowledge, fantasy, objects and other bodies in new forms of desiring production*," where 'desire' is finally liberated from the capitalist-Marxist meta-narrative of consumerism. 'Desire' in a rhizomatic sense is a force or energy: to combine, to create, to do.

Usher argues that 'learning' is institutionalized and, writing in 2010 before the explosion of social media platforms, he sees potential in the rhizomatic internet to liberate learning from its constraints and (re)store it to, "*...the accession to a new way of perceiving and understanding the world,*" (ibid, citing Bogue, 2004 p.328). This means in practice that ideas and artefacts are co-produced and made available to all, that discourse is transparent and that 'groups' have permeable boundaries allowing for the 'legitimate peripheral participation' written about three decades ago by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their foresightful communities of practice work.

In 2014 the cMOOC (connectivist MOOC[163]) #Rhizo14, an example of the rhizomatic expression of learning encountered by research, provided rich material for Mackness, Bell and Funes (2015, 2016a, 2016) to explore in their three-part analysis of the experience (in which they - and I - were participants). They were ultimately critical - not of rhizomatic theory itself, but of the way in which the "*warm glow*" (ibid, 2016 p.16) concept of 'community' (based on shared values) worked against the rhizomatic principle of heterogeneity, despite exhortations of the course 'leader'[164] to bring in participants from the periphery. They suggest, instead, that an adoption of Kogan's (2000) notion of community as being a place of reciprocal trade, might mitigate against the "*move from networking to clustering*" (ibid.), which led to homogeneity rather than the intended rhizomatic heterogeneity.

The most significant increase in the velocity of change globally has occurred in the last decade, where social media has transformed the way that (largely the most privileged) people encounter one another. Eubanks (2018) presents heart-stopping case studies which illustrate how what Usher regarded eight years earlier as a democratising process has been co-opted (re-territorialised, in Deleuzian terms) as oppressive algorithms controlling the lives of those people who have least in society: actual fascism, directed against working class people, people of colour, refugees and others living in poverty. Algorithms were also complicit in Mackness, Bell and Funes' final article about convergence in #Rhizo14 (2016) and whilst not the primary focus of this research, must be kept in mind, as must critiques of Deleuze and Guattari from their

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[163] This actually stands for 'Massive Open Online Course'.
[164] Not a leader, of course.

earliest days which centre on their unacknowledged whiteness and their inability - even post-Fanon - to acknowledge the historical context of colonialism (Bignall and Patton, 2010).

The figuration of the Rhizome 🌱 is used to describe the way in which the research process has been informed by - and, in turn, informed - the development of grassroots collaborations within English further education (not just community education), which may offer up some ideas for the Imaginary. It also refers to the research process itself and its attempt to heterogenise the reach of the research tool, via rhizomatically-informed networks and 'constellations'. You will hear more in The Bower, below.

4.5.2.3 Constellations #constellations 🪃

The concept of constellations derives directly from Deleuze and Guattari's work on rhizomes (1972; 2004) via the lyrical mind of posthuman art curator Maria Hlavajova (2017) and mobilised by myself and colleagues in the wake of the Dancing Princess 💃 assemblage which followed the release of 'Further Education and the Twelve Dancing Princesses (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015, see Appendix G):

"*In rhizomatic working, 'teams' are not forever, projects are time-limited[165] and the work becomes the organisation, rather than the organisation being the work. People come together in 'constellations of practice', gathering around shared drive and energy for a limited period of time (and potentially working in several constellations at once)."*

(Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2018 p.171)
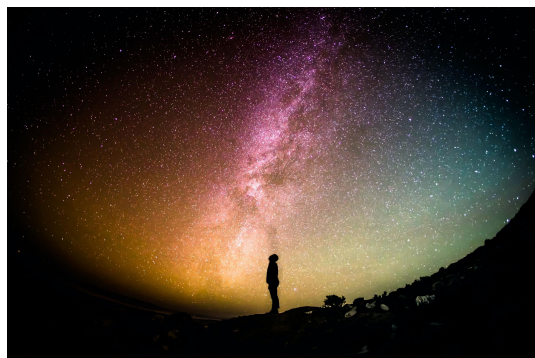
Accompanied by a shooting star emoji on social media, the concept of 'constellations of practice' has begun to take root across English (and Welsh) FE, including community education, and it is driving a shift in professional development (sometimes termed CPD) from the 'drive by' approaches of yesteryear, bought in by organisations, to self-driven, self-identified initiatives (EduFuturists, 2020). Writing in 2018 about constellations of practice, Kay Sidebottom and myself identified five examples from the previous couple of years; we could probably now name fifty. Constellation opportunities gently liberate practitioners from putting the organisation first: the 'gratitude culture' that pervades the UK public sector, encouraging us to exploit ourselves in the name of public service (Husband and Mycroft, 2019). Expressed another way, the organisation is no longer the 'work'. There is a bigger project. The 'work' is the organisation. There is ethical and intellectual freedom to be found in constellation working:

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[165] My supervisors challenged me to identify what was different about this definition of constellations, *vis à vis* the project work of late capitalism. My answer is that the work is guided by the affirmative, Spinozean ethics of the Bowerbird (see Chapter 4, above).

> "*Constellations of practice contain the possibility of anti-fascist working, as long as they don't hang around too long after the work is done to become reterritorialized, or incorporated back into the 'machine'…they grow agency in places where agency has forgotten to grow – in a patronised student population and a depressed teaching one.*"

<div align="right">Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2018 p.176</div>

The Covid-19 context has provided an interesting series of opportunities for constellation working, but the word has been increasingly in circulation for several years in English further education, community education's sister service, since it became embedded in #APConnect, a nationally funded professional development programme for advanced practitioners[166] (in state-funded community education and other FE contexts and settings) on which I have worked for the past two years. This *potestas* programme was ripe for the release of *potentia* and the Dancing Princesses🐎 (Appendix G) experience had provided a sketchy road map. After a period of experimentation with communities of *praxis* in my previous role (teacher, student, graduate working alongside one another on various projects (Mycroft, 2016b)), we designed the conditions for a loose and permeable network of educators, co-producing various projects and amplifications across organisational and context silos: events, podcasts, twitterchats, webinars. This is another example of how figurations, animated by the immanent rhizome, take on something of a life of their own. Hearing the 'term' constellation echo throughout FE in the last year, as graduates of the #APConnect Constellations🔍 led the field in making and re-making plans for the uncertain new academic year, was a memorable illustration of the influence of a 'metaphor'[167][168].

4.5.2.4 The Demise of the Dancing Princesses

At the time of writing, #DancingPrincesses 🐎 – one of the original figurations of this research - seems to have had its moment, despite the publication of the third book in what ultimately became a trilogy (*Caliban's Dance*: Daley, Orr and Petrie (2020)). Constellations are time limited. Mackness and Bell (2015) and Mackness, Bell and Funes (2015a and 2016) found that over time the heterogeneity of the rhizome closed down, via a 'warm glow' notion of community, into convergence. Six years is a long time to hold deterritorialised space and Deleuze and Guattari always saw the rhizome and the tree co-existing in relationships of tension; re-territorialisation is always inevitable and the point of rhizomatic theory is the flux of it:

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[166] These job roles would have been entitled 'senior tutor' or 'senior lecturer' back in the day; again, a telling shift of language away from 'academic' terminology and, indeed, words commonly associated with education.

[167] The ultimate and ultimately defeating 'success' of any constellation comes from the (incorporation, colonization) re-territorialisation of the space. The Education and Training Foundation, for whom I do paid work and which oversees the Department for Education spend on teacher professionalism in FE, are planning their next focus: on 'communities of practice', following the success of #APConnect and recent ALT-C research (Deepwell, Hawksey and Proctor-Legge, 2020).

[168] Again, I am in danger of drifting into FE more broadly. There is a huge amount of work to do, to bring together the expansive and fractured range of community education but these experiments are worth mentioning, as they provide loose templates for new approaches.

> *"Deleuze and Guattari characterise the life of any capitalist society as always in the process of collapsing and being restructured, of de-territorialising and re-territorialising."*

<div align="right">(Usher, 2010 p.71)</div>

Finally, are constellations really only Lave and Wenger's 1991 concept of 'communities of practice?' Well, maybe. But to return to the thread flowing through this dissertation about how language shapes thinking and practice, repurposing the term for the Covid-age unsettles some people's perceptions and introduces a new concept to others. Lave and Wenger were always clear that communities of practice should arise from the grassroots, and as moves are afoot by powerful infrastructure organisations to re-occupy the space (Deepwell, Hawksey and Proctor-Legge, 2020[169]) it is timely to rethink the concept.

The figuration of constellations 🪝 is used to describe how community education might re-make itself structurally post-Covid and how its activists might wish to organise and reorganise rhizomatically in order to work towards that aim.

4.6 Research Limitations

The paradox of a posthuman research methodology is that it can never be 'perfect'. There are always too many variables - human and non-human - plus the impossibility of considering what cannot possibly be known in advance.

The key limitation was that the single mass observation question might lead to a lack of complexity or even intelligibility and indeed some responses were impossible to code: they made sense to the respondent but needed context to be understood without assumption. It's conventionally agreed in qualitative research literature (see, for example, Poth and Cresswell, 2016) that surveys go wider, interviews go deeper, but this research relied on casting the net wide. It was important that at least some of the people who responded did not already have pre-conceived ideas about what community education was or could be and it was clear from the personal context of some responses that this was the case.

The question itself was limiting - anything beyond the ultimately open 'what do you think?' has parameters placed on it, not least the respondents' sense of what community education broadly is. Participant 32 said, "*I don't know what it is. I've never had anything to do with it. I just wanted to help,*" which is lovely, though it doesn't advance us.

The analysis, discussed in detail below, was also limited. With such a broad question there had to be a certain amount of inference. The danger of 'material' being coloured by the researcher's

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[169] The authors of this research list many 'communities of practice' though actually the majority of them are 'top down'. Lave and Wenger (1991) were not writing at a time when Web 2.0 allowed anyone to start a community; their research is helpful and influential but we should not be afraid of ethically building on it.

bias was ever-present (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006) and so the 'agential cuts' (Somerville, 2015) were essential to sift and re-sift the material from different perspectives, looking for the 'blue shiny' ideas and suggestions that will populate the Imaginary. Barad (2007) might call this a diffractive analysis, seeing through the data to its impact on the world, which is the bigger project here[170]. The epistemological stance of the methodology was not to mitigate for this but to acknowledge it. As I've said elsewhere, the research aimed for trustworthiness, rather than some objective, elusive, impossible 'truth'.

Summary

This chapter tells the story of the methodology as it unfolds. This is a bespoke process, navigated with the use of posthuman tools and an emerging affirmative ethics. It also presents some limitations of the research. The next chapter continues to unpack the methodological process, with a focus on analysis of participant material.

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[170] Catina Barrett, who project-managed the Community Learning Mental Health Research Project for the Department for Education, described the similar methods we collectively employed there as a 'kaleidoscope'.

Chapter 5: A Posthuman Analysis

"*This is an 'institution' that understands that in order to become, vulnerability must be encouraged and celebrated, as hope is located in these spaces.*"

Participant 327

The analysis of participant material had one aim: to provide direction for future activism. This chapter provides a theoretical justification for a complex and rigorous process of analysis which aims for trustworthiness, rather than truth. It introduces and expands upon the five 'agential cuts' (Barad, 2007), which ultimately led to identifying 'crossing places', imbuing them with values, and laying out lines of flight.
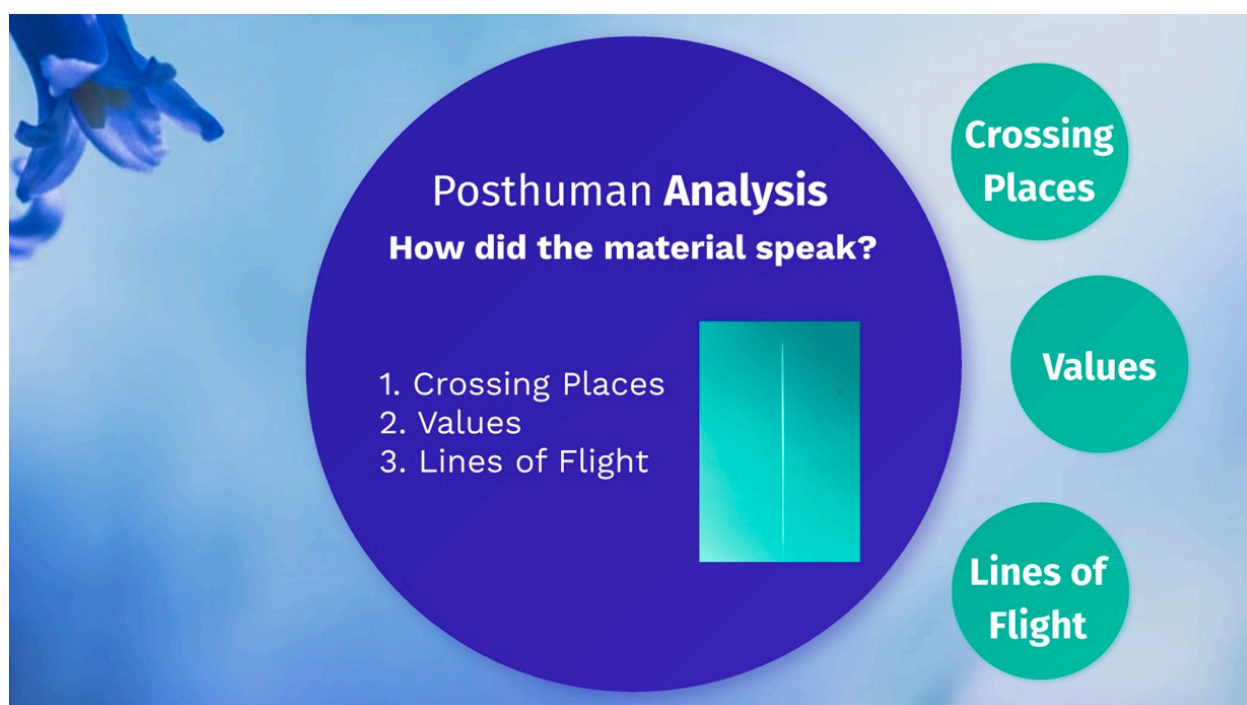
The participant material – all 45,000 words of it – was manually sifted five times during the process of analysis. This brief introduction draws on concepts and methods from previous chapters and these will be explored further below. A further question which invited self-identified demographic characteristics is also explored.

1. The Bowerbird's Cut reduced the material to a more manageable 25,000 words. The Bowerbird selected 'blue shiny things': material which related directly to the research questions, stripped of connecting words and phrases.

2. The material was then manually sifted for 'values words', which were fed into wordcloud software: this gave an indication of which values were most prevalent for research participants.

3. Vitruvian Manner was the first figuration to be plugged in. This lens sought evidence of power in its *potestas* sense, by asking the question, what are or might be the power plays and relations?

4. Next, the Rhizomes figuration was employed. Evidence of grassroots movement, transmission of knowledge, energy and ideas and collaborative approaches were viewed through this lens.

5. Finally, the Constellations figuration engaged the material in one final conversation: how might community education re-make itself and how might students, educators and others re-engage in new possibilities.

These five specific posthuman lenses enabled the next stage: the overlaying of cartography, ethics and analysis of material which enabled crossing places to emerge and ultimately, be imbued with the values of the piece to provide lines of flight for activist work. The chapter more deeply explores these processes of sifting, and 'composting' which allowed an alternative way of seeing the 'tired old friend' of community education, providing some hope and possibility for the future.

5.2 Analysis Praxis

The analysis process was a long time in its gestation. It draws on the work of feminist thinkers from settled territories (the USA and Australia), whose theoretical genealogy includes Barad, Bradotti and Lather. Add to this mix the 'bowerbird' analyses of Australian artist academics Greet, Brady and Lillecrap-Fuller and perhaps there is something in how women are drawn towards the complex, the nuanced, more resistant perhaps to the hierarchies of the status quo, particularly in countries where the deep scars of land seizure continue to have a visceral resonance which seems unlikely to be resolved. Where lines are drawn, complexity, humility and nuance are perhaps the only approaches[171]. All are explicitly writing with acknowledgment of the Anthropocene, an epoch where the fates of natural and human life are dependent on one another and both are under threat[172]. Not all would define themselves as 'posthuman'; insisting on this would make a mockery of posthuman resistance to representation and categorization. Somerville, referring to the work of Lather and St.Pierre, claims there is much common territory:

> "*if we give up 'human' as separate from 'non-human', how do we exist?...*
> *How might we become in becoming? Isn't this question affirmative?*
> *Experimental? Ethical? Insistent? Are we willing to take on this*
> *question that is so hard to think about but might enable different lives?"*
>
> (Lather and St.Pierre, 2013 p.631)

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[171] I am not aligning this with any particular feminist methodology, rather attempting to honour the thinkers, writers and researchers who have gone before.

[172] The Anthropocene is more than a philosophical concept - it was also ratified by the Geological Society of London in 2016 (Somerville, 2016 p.1162).

In a personal conversation in 2019 (Braidotti, 2019b), Rosi Braidotti said that the most frequent criticism of her work was that she never wrote anything original. Her opponents were referring to the dense genealogies she employs in all her writing; open acknowledgement that her thinking is based on the work of many who have gone before[173]. The commonly used phrase 'standing on the shoulders of giants' dates back to the 12th century, so it is hardly a new concept. Braidotti's point was that genealogy has always been a tool of feminism, resisted by canons of thought which privileged the genealogies of men. This analysis, like the cartography above, draws on what's useful to get the most out of the material in an ethical, reliable way.

Lather and St.Pierre continue the theme of embodied complexity (2013, pp629-30): "*if we give up representational and binary logic; if we see language, the human, and the material not as separate entities but completely imbricated…*" Imbrication was a new concept for me, despite my public health background. It's the term used for the way a wound is stitched together, with overlapping layers of tissue which ultimately fuse into one. It became a helpful metaphor when I began to dive into the material. The challenge was not to lose the entanglement, nor to obscure the activist lines of flight into the Imaginary.

Jackson and Mazzei's (2013) work appealed because, like me, they caught hold of an idea, investigated it further and put it into practice. Their abstract described "picking up" (p.261) a concept from Deleuze and Guattari: that of "*plugging in*" (ibid.). Deleuze and Guattari, both together and separately can be obscure, yet with the help of commentators such as Colebrook, Braidotti, Usher and Massumi I was enabled to catch hold of what made sense then explore around it, rather than being continually over-faced by the whole. In line with posthuman thinking I did not regard theory as a dragonfly preserved in amber, but rather as part of a genealogy that built new thinking, for new times. Jackson and Mazzei's (2013, p.262) notion of plugging in came out of their own conversations; they had each rejected the traditional coding of material on the grounds that they wanted to avoid

> "*the representational trap of trying to figure out what the participants…'mean',*
> *[plugging in] helps us to avoid being seduced by the desire to create a coherent*
> *and interesting narrative that is bound by themes and patterns.*"

This led to another challenge: as activist work was arising out of all that I was reading and learning, and in turn led me to rethink what I had read and learned, it was tempting to see 'the end' - or several 'ends' - to the research before the material emerged. The plugging in process enabled me to practice an ethics of openness, as I filtered and refiltered the material through the various figurations that had arisen theoretically.

I did this by holding in place a clear definition of each figuration: you will see them highlighted in bold <u>above</u>. At this point, the material was manageable as it had already been sifted by the Bowerbird into blue-toned themes (see <u>below</u>). Taking each figuration in turn, I worked through

the material, reading it through the definition of each figuration; for three figurations I naturally did this three times. It was a painstakingly slow method of hand-analysis, one which brought me very close to the evidence. Without falling into the 'God Trick' of transcendent truth (Haraway, 2015) I found that the filter of the figuration enabled me to focus quite clearly, to see what, if anything, emerged. The time-commitment, over a period of months, enabled my thinking to compost and deepen.

Jackson and Mazzei are very clear that plugging in, although conceptually easy to grasp, is a challenging process, following Braidotti: "*the challenge lies in thinking about processes, rather than objects.*" (Braidotti, 2002 p.1). They refer, too, to "*what territory is claimed in that connection*" (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013 p.262). This resonated with me, as my activist work increasingly became about creating smooth spaces in which myself and others could operate; territorialising them, resisting territorialisation and, when necessary, moving on.

Jackson and Mazzei planned originally to plug theoretical constructs into their material (such as phenomenology, critical theory etc) but the process itself quickly taught them that they had too much material to read, across the frameworks they had in mind. Not because of the labour involved but because, "*to illustrate from all the material was to revert to the macro and to sweeping generalisations.*" (2013, p.263). This was a danger for me. With nearly 400 respondents, some of them writing small essays in response to the mass observation question, I could easily fall into this trap. Jackson and Mazzei narrowed their material down to two interviews (for the purposes of their 2013 study, which was less about the material content and more about testing a new process). Ethically, I was not prepared to do this, because this research is more about the material content and less about testing a new process.

Jackson and Mazzei then had an interesting experience:

> "*We began to realise how plugging in creates a different relationship
> among texts: they constitute one another[174] and in doing so create something
> new. This "something new" was how the larger theoretical frameworks
> dissolved and what sprouted in the assemblage of our thinking were
> people, or theorists...they make each other in the plugging in and
> create new ways of thinking about both theory and material. Articulation
> is about making new combinations to create new identities.*"
>
> (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013 p.264)

This "something new" was what I wanted for the Imaginary. I was very excited to see what would emerge once the figurations were plugged into the material.

Ulmer's work around 'slow ontology' (2017) framed the research process, enabling me to slow down and compost my thinking. Her work draws upon some of the same sources as Jackson

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[174] Lather and St.Pierre's 'imbrication' (2013, p.629).

and Mazzei and while she does not suggest a posthuman analysis process, she explores posthuman non-representational methodologies which converge on the 'plugging in' concept:

> "*Non-representational theory is situated in the world, allows scholars to correspond with material settings and is grounded in local formations.*"
>
> (Ulmer, 2017a p.839)

This offers the perfect setting for a community education Imaginary which takes imaginative leaps (Ulmer, citing Whitehead, 1978) but remains workable and practicable, at least on the far horizon.

> "*In this sense, non-representation is at once creative, practical, ethical and wild. It embraces the uncertainty of knowledge and the forces that accumulate to produce events; it views the uncertain messiness of knowledge production as an ongoing opportunity in a politics of hope, creativity and imagination.*"
>
> (ibid.)

During this analysis phase, I encountered Ellington's 'crystallization framework' in a posthuman reading group, one of the diffractive experiences of this research. Drawing on the work of poet Emily Dickinson, Ellington blends poetry, art and other mixed methods in her research, aiming to:

> "*[present truth] not in a single, unequivocal statement but as nuanced and complex if it is to "dazzle" audiences with its validity, relevance and aesthetic merit.*"
>
> (Ellington, 2014 p.442).

No pressure, but this research also needs to dazzle if it is to shift the stubborn and petrified thinking of English community education. Coming to Ellington's work late in the lifespan of this research, the crystallization metaphor enabled me to see a way in which I could bring together not only the material findings but also the activist work which had been informed by, and in turn informed, the research process. Ellington drew on poems, interviews and newsletter articles; I interwove the activist practices and the material, with the cartography and affirmative ethics, to crystallise the Imaginary.

5.2 Establishing the Demographic

The complex task of cross-referencing material with a tick box demographic could have yielded some interesting evidence but it was beyond the scope of this research. Nonetheless, and after much discussion with critical friends, it felt important to enable participants to say what they wanted about who they are. Some chose to leave this question blank; it wasn't compulsory. But many others told me, what they wanted me to know. Some offered their names or gave other identifying features - that was their informed choice. By immediately importing only the material

from the Mass Observation Question into the initial sifting via the analysis platform Dedoose, I made it easy when analysing the material to resist any temptation to connect excerpts with known individuals. To do justice to a broad demographic of generous, thoughtful people I present here a wordcloud, which gives just a flavour of who was involved[175]:

Inevitably, I can see myself here, a white, female, working-class teacher, single parent from Yorkshire. My filter bubble writ inescapably large, despite all my efforts. This research must be read as only partial, through that knowledge. Additional attempts to bring in "*missing voices[176]*" (Braidotti, 2013) will come via the cartography and through ensuring the Imaginary is informed by projects and initiatives designed by the identity groups I have been less successful in accessing. Some of this work will take place long after this dissertation is submitted.

Given its commitment to hunting down binaries and transgressing boundaries, what does a posthuman research analysis look like? Jackson and Mazzei (2013, p.261) acknowledge the complexity we are facing globally, channelling Deleuze's comment that we are occupying "*spaces we no longer know how to describe.*" Old containers will give us old thinking and Jackson and Mazzei have been experimenting with methods of multiple analysis which they hope will,

---

[175] I stripped out identifying names, linking words and words which were not related to identity. I hyphenated words to keep them together in the wordcloud, where the sense was clear, eg working-class.
[176] Not missing at all of course. Just, as Arundhati Roy (2004) says, "*preferably unheard*".

> "*Begin creating a language and a way of thinking methodologically and philosophically together that is up to the task.*"

<div align="right">

(ibid.)

</div>

The analysis of this project's research material honours complexity by being multi-layered in itself, in the hope of creating an Imaginary which presents nuanced and complex learning which is "*a rich and openly partial account*" (Ellingson, 2014 p.444) of the material participants have given time and trouble to share, one which,

> "*problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers' vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them.*"

<div align="right">

(ibid.)

</div>

This is also activist research: as Braidotti exhorts us, posthuman thinking has to have an outcome which is "*worthy of our times, while resisting them*" (2014, p.182). The route to this, according to Braidotti is nomadism, or as she puts it "*nomadic becoming*" (ibid.):

> "*Nomadic becoming is neither a reproduction nor just an imitation, but rather emphatic proximity, intensive inter-connectedness. Nomadic shifts enact a creative sort of becoming; they are a performative gesture that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction, experience and knowledge. They urge us to reflect upon the affects and ethics of our own writing practices and the potency of our own figures of speech, so as to fully assess their potential for empowerment. Critique and creativity are informed by this joyful nomadic force and can be seen as the self-styling of different modes of resistance. I see nomadic subjectivity as both an analytic tool and a creative project aimed at a qualitative shift of consciousness that is attuned to the spirit of our age.*"

<div align="right">

(ibid.)

</div>

I am the nomad, and throughout the lifetime of this research I have engaged relationally in projects and communities, in conversations and social media; I have followed openings and initiated collaborative projects, I have written, spoken and connected, accompanied always by my companion species, the Bowerbird. Nearly 400 people over a huge demographic have shared their thoughts and ideas and this analysis attempts to do the material[177] justice without jamming them into containers - however grounded their labels - because I want them to fit. It will be messy. But at the end of it, I hope that the Imaginary contains viable seedlings of ideas, which can be tended to rhizomatic growth.

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5.3 Agential Cuts

5.3.1 Cut 1: The Bowerbird's Cut

I did not know what the figurations would do, at first. I trusted that lines of flight would emerge, and so they have. The difficulties Jackson and Mazzei (2013) faced when trying to plug in theoretical constructs to large amounts of material convinced me of the need to do some form of initial sift of responses to the two phases of mass observation material collection: the 363 responses to the first survey in July 2019 and the 36 respondents who replied during lockdown in June 2020. Step forward the figuration of the Satin Bowerbird, always on the hunt for blue shiny things. The writer and academic Tess Brady describes her work with the Bowerbird:

> "*To work with this metaphor, I needed to pick out the dark blue pieces of ecclesiastical history, the azure lines of cartography, the sapphire decorations of medieval manuscripts and the Nile blue theories of archaeology. I needed to be able to write on a range of issues and yet I knew I was not an authority in any of them.*"
>
> (Brady, 2000 np)

This research is incredibly wide-ranging and so it needs to be, to curate an Imaginary for a whole sector of education, one which means very different things to different people. I do not claim to be an expert in anything other than the activist work that I do, acting as a nomad to open up spaces to think differently. Note that Brady describes the bowerbird as a metaphor, whereas here, the Bowerbird is a figuration, as well as a companion species, who keeps me mindful of the ethics of the piece. Deleuze was very clear that he did not use metaphors.

Deleuzian scholars have picked over this endlessly (see, for example Smith, 2019; Braidotti and Dolphijn, 2014); my understanding is that to Deleuze a metaphor was still a representation, which anchored thinking to what already exists; when he and Guattari wrote about rhizomes, for example, they talked about a means of operation that was already there, rather like Moten and Harney's 'undercommons' (2013) and which had the potential to mobilise differently, as it was not anchored to the representation of something else. I position myself with St.Pierre (2004, p.264) in making pragmatic use of Deleuzian theory

> "*Give up worrying about what Deleuze might have intended and*
> *use him in [our] own work 'to free life from where it's trapped,*
> *to trace lines of flight' (Deleuze, 1990/1995, p. 141) into a different way*
> *of being in the world.*"

The theoretical underpinnings of conceptual figurations have been explored above, but it's worth remembering here how the Bowerbird assumed the position of companion species. Like Jasmine Ulmer,

> "*I adopt a more-than-human approach to posthumanism (as opposed to*
> *a strictly non-human or anti-human stance). I situate my thinking within*
> *the field of educational research - a field that often gravitates in some way,*
> *shape, or form towards students. The critical humanism that often finds its*
> *way into [my] work thus illustrates the challenges of taking up posthuman*
> *research for, as Lather and St.Pierre (2013) observe, 'We always bring*
> *tradition with us into the new (p.631).*"

(Ulmer, 2017a p.844)

In the same paper, Ulmer explores the "*creation of an alternative methodological vocabulary - one which remains at once partial, situated, earthly and prepositional.*" (ibid. p.842) 'Companion species' makes its way onto her list of examples. During the research, the Bowerbird developed a life of his own, as I introduced the concept into various activist projects. He spawned a Writing Room[178], many Padlets[179] and found his way into numerous organisations as a memorable reminder to collect evidence and - particularly during Covid lockdown - memories of a time and place which might prove useful in the future. In this way, the Bowerbird made a significant contribution to the flourishing of a grassroots, rhizomatic FE research culture during the lifetime of this research. When this dissertation is finished, the Bowerbird will continue to be recognised across FE as a call to store, share and diffract the myriad experiences of FE educators. The challenge will be to take him into a newly imbricated community education landscape.

To aid the Bowerbird's task, I imported the material into Dedoose, a web-based material organiser. This was simply to ease the handling of a large amount of material, as the 'blue shiny

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[178] A Google site entitled The Bower, open to anyone who wanted to write semi-publicly, offering their work to the critical friendship of others.
[179] A visually attractive web- and app-based platform which offered spaces to share and collate digital artefacts and resources, again open to comment by others with access to the site.

things' began to be identified by hand, sifting the contributions into themed areas not to draw any firm conclusions - as Jackson and Mazzei warn against - but to offer a more manageable distillation of material which was grounded and inductive, to be crystallized via further processes into the Imaginary.

The Bowerbird's cut sorted the raw material into Brady's sapphires, azures and Nile blues, ready for further work by the remaining figurations. This allowed extraneous words to be stripped away as twelve themes were identified, not imposed at the beginning but grounded from the material itself. Originally, there were themes and sub-themes, however, as Jackson and Mazzei (2013) warned, this led to an overwhelming complexity; in addition, by reaching for sub-themes I felt I was reading too much of myself into the data. Sub-themes were abandoned and the material went forward into The Bower (the 'findings' section), to be woven into a narrative account.

The colour nomenclature was used to aid cross-recognition and to bring an element of organisation to this huge wealth of material, which hopefully would foreclose any further temptation to over-read or over-claim meaning into participants' words. As I have briefly justified, above, this is not a co-productive methodology as I made all the methodological decisions, nonetheless value was placed on the verbatim words of participants and on the potential for the Imaginary's lines of flight to be taken forward co-productively in activist work.

5.3.2 Cut 2: Values

On first reading of the material, it was clear that participant responses were often expressed in values. Once the Bowerbird had sifted out linking words and phrases, coding the material in shades of blue, all the values words were manually extracted (see Appendix D). The words were adjectivised and I combined obvious replicants like 'co-created' and 'co-produced'. I removed the word 'community'. Although it was frequently used as a value - and may indeed have had the highest frequency in that sense - it was used in so many ways that any inclusion would be assumptive. These were then fed into a wordcloud which presented the top one hundred words, foregrounding those with most instances.

As with the figurations, I had no idea what role the values would play. I returned to 'composting' the material: sifting it, putting it to one side and returning to it with purpose. I returned to the wordcloud often and began to notice where it corresponded with the continuing project of the cartography. In the end, ten key *practice* values were significant in the emergence of activist lines of flight, and a move from process ontology to practice.

5.2.3 Cut 3: The Figurations
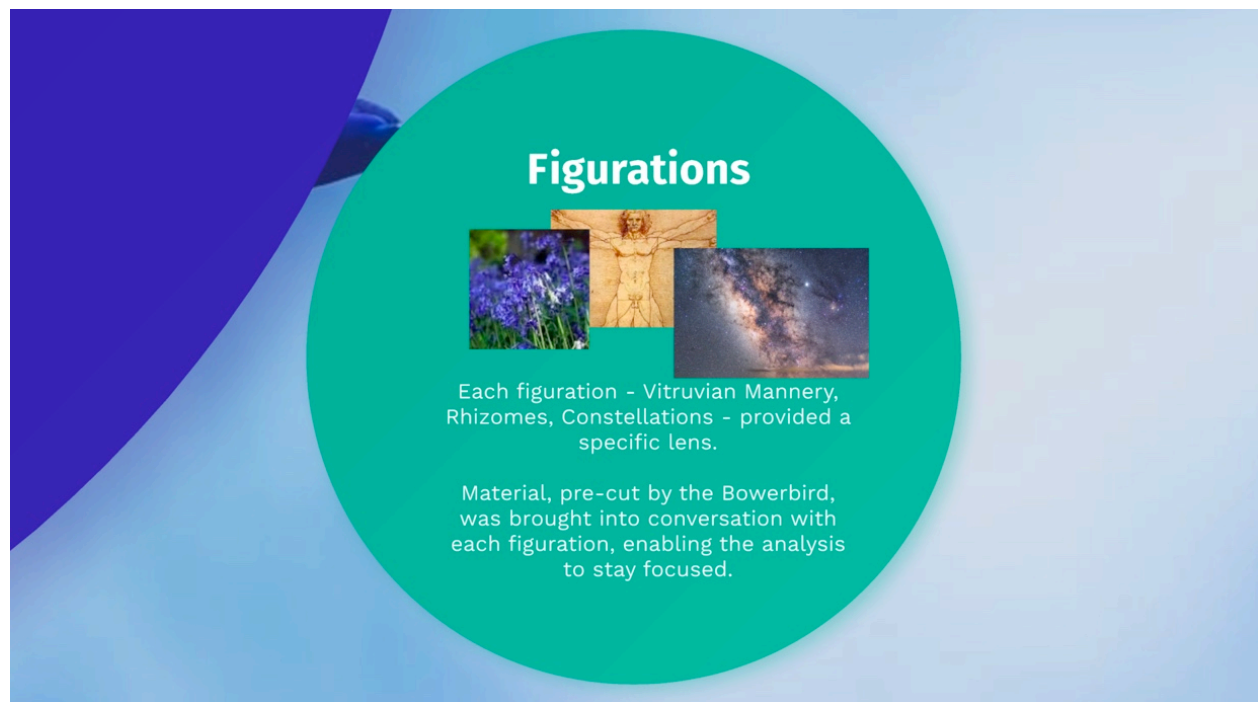
The three figurations of Vitruvian Mannery, Rhizomes🌱 and Constellations🪄 have been introduced <u>above</u> and their inclusion defended. Once the Bower was populated with a narrative studded with verbatim quotes from participants for illustrative purposes, each of the figurations were plugged in (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013). In this way, the material was read through a conceptual filter, in order to minimise my own positionality over-reading meaning into participants' words. The figurations plugged into eleven of the 12 blue-themed sections; each further 'agential cut' (Somerville, 2016) contributing to a 'transversal encounter' which takes interpretation away from the individual and into the collective. The twelfth – values – was given its own analysis; here plugging in the figurations just didn't work. The material was thus edited into three separate sections, cut away from the themes and into the figurations' lens. Edited for repetition, this is presented to the reader in '<u>The Bower</u>'.

5.2.4 Finding the Crossing Places
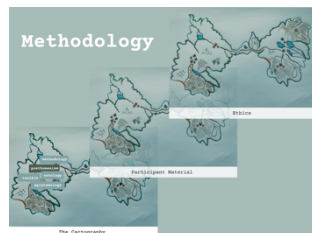
At this point, I had 25,000 words, organised by figuration and in the practice of Ulmer's 'slow ontology' (2016) I took a step back from the material and worked on other aspects of this dissertation. My thinking needed to compost and I made a welcome return to the cartography, since this was the point at which the material was overlaid onto the original map, alongside the ethics.

This allowed me to see the encounter between the genealogy of thinking, the material offered by participants in response to the mass observation question, brought together in an affirmative,

transversal ethics. In this new assemblage, I looked for the crossing points. You can find these in the Discussion section, below.

5.2.5 Lines of Flight – Creating the Imaginary
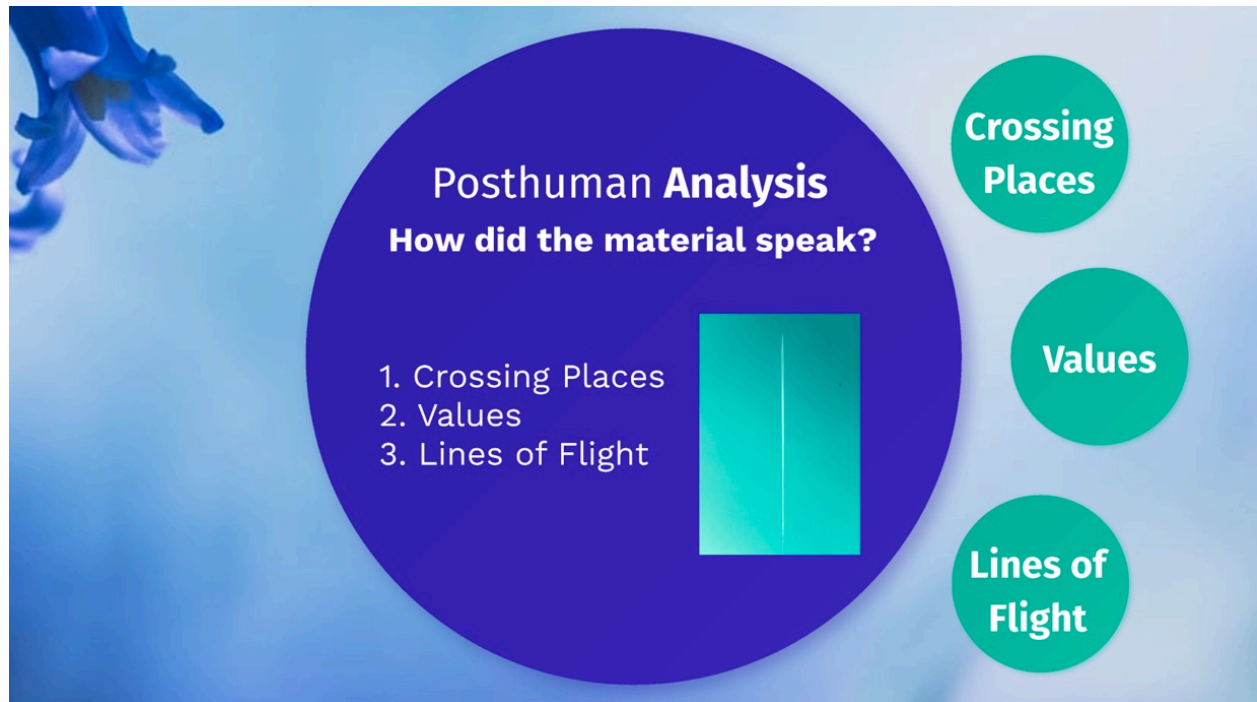
The final analysis stage took a temporal shift from material existing in the now, to the activism of future ideas presented by the Imaginary. It also marks a shift in the cartography, moving from the genealogy of ideas which have shaped, guided and strengthened the research process to this point, to the genealogy of activism.

The Imaginary exists as a narrative, below, and also as a collaborative Padlet, freely shared for others to 'knotwork' (Yasukawa and Osmond, 2019 loc. 4035): to contribute their activism after the end of this research project. In this way, the rhizomatic project of transforming a reconfigured community education service can continue (Yasukawa and Osmond's genealogy is not the rhizome of Deleuze-Guattari but the '*mycorrhizae'* of Engeström (2008); botanically and practically the effect is the same).

Summary

This chapter presents the praxis of analysis as a series of 'agential cuts' to the material produced by just under 400 respondents to a single narrative question. By cutting the material several ways, it is hoped to avoid any claims to 'truth', whilst maintaining loyalty to the material in pursuit of 'truthfulness'.

The following chapter presents the 'findings', fancifully termed the Bowerbird's 'bower'. Here, participants' voices emerge.

Chapter 6: The Bower ('Findings')

> *"Everyone would be a thinker."*

<div align="right">Participant 166</div>

This section explores the outcome of the analysis, moving from the presentation of the Bowerbird's thematic sifting to an analysis by three conceptual figurations. In the <u>next chapter</u>, these findings will be overlaid on the cartography, along with an affirmative ethics, to identify crossing places of value to the Imaginary.

6.1 The Research Questions

The research questions are repeated here as a way of anchoring what follows to the intentions of the research. Whether they are answered or not is beside the point; the Imaginary, formed by the process of plugging in the figurations to the material selected by the Bowerbird to decorate his bower, will tell its own stories which can only be "*partial, incomplete and...always in a process of a retelling and remembering."* Jackson and Mazzei (2013, p.262) go on to cite Cixous and Calle-Gruber (1997, p.178): "*all narratives tell one story in place of another story."*

Could a re-imagined community education enable those involved to strengthen their sense of agency, leading to informed and engaged decision-making relating to personal choices and public life

Could it be re-invented outside of state provision, in a way that makes it accessible to all? How might this be possible?

6.2 Shiny Blue Things

Using the Dedoose web-based data management platform, and accompanied by the figuration of the Bowerbird, participant material was sifted into 12 sections (the Bowerbird's 'blue shiny things). Themes were inductive; they arose from the material and were not pre-determined. To aid the manipulation of a huge wealth of material, the themes were each given a colour and arranged in a table, with no attempt at sense-making[180][181].

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[180] The nomenclature of blues is taken from Werner's Nomenclature of Colours, ironically the book Charles Darwin used to describe colours in nature on his voyage on the HMS Beagle. There were only 11 blues, so a green was co-opted.

[181] To some, this may seem fanciful, even an indulgence, but the presence of colour and the colour names/animal, vegetable, mineral associations acts alongside the visuality of the figurations to help me navigate the sheer volume of this dissertation with ADHD wiring. Colour-coding is a recognised strategy for ADHD people to help keep focus; although I could find no scientific foundation for this it has been helpful to me in various ways for many years. Many thanks to Cheryl Reynolds for the suggestion.

	Name		Animal	Vegetable	Mineral	Bowerbird's🌳 Theme
1	Scotch Blue		throat of blue titmouse	ingle purple anemone	blue copper ore	accountability and governance
2	Prussian Blue		beauty spot on wing of mallard drake	blueish purple anemone	blue copper ore	assessment
3	Indigo Blue				blue copper ore	Community
4	China Blue		rhymchites wrens	gentian flower	blue copper ore from chessy	Curriculum
5	Azure Blue		emerald crested manakin	grape hyacinth	blue copper ore	Funding
6	Ultramarine Blue		small blue heath butterfly	borage	azure stone or lapis lazuli	Impossibility of fresh imagining
7	Flaxflower Blue		wings of devil's butterfly	flaxflower	blue copper ore	Leadership
8	Berlin Blue		wing feathers of jay	hepatica	blue sapphire	Location
9	Verditter Blue				lenticular ore	Pedagogy
10	Greenish Blue			great fennel flower	turquoise fluorspar	Political Landscape
11	Greyish Blue		back of blue titmouse	small fennel flower	iron earth	Uniqueness
12	Blueish Green		thrush's egg		beryl	Values

After Jackson and Mazzei (2013), the original sift was in some senses a shortcut; a return to traditional coding with me playing the 'God Trick'. They selected only two participants from the ten women they originally interviewed. Their intention was to explore a process. Here the intention is to distil upwards of 45,000 words into a workable form. The twelve sections are deliberately broad[182]. There was no pre-defined categorisation; the themes arose from the material itself and this flexible form of thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2017) inevitably reflects preoccupations of community education which could be seen as a weakness if those categories were used to present "*a supposed coherent narrative that represents truth.*" (Jackson and Mazzei, 2013 p.262).

The Bowerbird's selection is an exercise in failure; it betrays posthuman methodologies in its conventional pragmatism. Jackson and Mazzei took the same practicable approach to their material collection method: the interview, with its inevitable centring of the subject and consequent side-lining of alternative perspectives:

> "*To acknowledge and accept the centredness of interviewing practices is to work both within and against a project that is failed from the start. Yes, starting with the interview as a failed practice does not mean that we give up on the interview as method. Rather, we make very specific assumptions about material, voice and truth.*"
>
> (ibid.)

The assumptions made here are to be questioned as the analysis continues. The question is always why is one story told and not another? When no absolute, positivist truth is sought, there is acceptance that the material has to be cut somehow, to allow new thinking to emerge. Massumi, in his introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*:

> "*The question is not: is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body?*"
>
> (Massumi, 2004 pp.xv-xvi)

Accepting that knowledge is only ever partial, and that the first cut needed to be made, the material was now in a manageable state to be able to plug in the three figurations. The excerpts which went forward to the second stage of analysis had a reduced word count, with repetitions and hesitations taken out, personal experience (which often offered a 'why') kept in. Although many responses were erudite - poetic, even, in some cases - I was careful not to privilege these where a shorter, plainer, more simply worded response would do. Some of the responses blew me away with their insight and expression, but all were equally valued[183].

Please note that the three figurations could not always offer insight to a blue theme. The analysis has been careful not to overstretch where there was no natural fit.

6.4 Plugging in the Figurations

Jackson and Mazzei (2013) warned that conceptualising plugging in was the easy part, the process of reading the material against each of the figurations was more challenging and the outcome not assured, but I didn't let that deter me, after all this is ethical activist work: "*we don't know what will happen or how we will respond.*" (McCormack, 2016 p.11)

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[183] A note that direct quotations were tidied up for spelling and grammar. This may on the face of it seem like Vitruvian Mannery: fitting into the dominant discourse. My discomfort was around presenting a patronising view of some respondents, which might put the focus on the error rather than the meaning of the words and in this I am supported by the research of Corden and Sainsbury, 2006.

Beginning with theoretical concepts, Jackson and Mazzei soon found that these dissolved and the thinkers themselves took over: Derrida, Spivak, Foucault, Butler, Deleuze and Barad or rather - critically - Jackson and Mazzei's diffracted understanding of these, since the thinkers themselves were not actually present. To anchor themselves, they identified the assemblage they were preparing to plug into the 'field of reality' (in this case, the material contained in each of the twelve blue shiny containers). For this research, that is not only the three remaining figurations - Vitruvian Mannery💪, Rhizomes🌱, Constellations🌀 and their theoretical underpinnings - but also my own positionality which cannot be written out (Ulmer, 2017a). This is material analysis in 3-D: reality (the 'blue shiny things' material), representation (the figurations and their theoretical lens) and subjectivity (me as the nomadic subject, as far as I can free myself from the traditions of my practice). Each of the 12 'data' sets would be subjected to repeated analysis through the lens of a figuration, to see how far they would go towards the furthest horizon of thinking:

> "*And so, we worked with unstable subjects and concepts-on-the-move that
> would intervene in a process to diffract, rather than foreclose thought. We
> "plug in" to help extend a thinking at the limit. This then is at least one of our
> aims, a thinking at the limit of our ability to know as made possible by these
> theorists and their concepts at work, these materials, and their excesses.*"

(Jackson and Mazzei, 2013 p.264)

For 'theorists' substitute 'figurations'. As we have seen (Ulmer, 2017), posthumanists coin new terms and it was only in the practical application of the figurations that their usefulness crystallised:

> "*To think differently, then, scholars interested in posthumanism might begin
> by exploring some of these [new] terms, finding others, and perhaps even
> making their own.*"

(Ulmer, 2017a p.842)

6.4.1 Vitruvian Mannery💪

The figuration of Vitruvian Mannery 💪 is used to indicate 'othering' and call out situations where privilege occupies the foreground, unseen. Whether the othering is of an identity group[184] or a role within education ("student", "learning support" etc), the concept of being post-Vitruvian can be invoked as a shorthand to call out inequality.

6.4.1.1 Scotch Blue - Accountability and Governance

No-one had any words of appreciation for current (largely local government) accountability structures; this theme was notable, however, for its focus on future change. Social Return on Investment (henceforth SROI, see Lawler, Neitzeit, Nicholls and Goodspeed, 2009) was

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[184] Any identity group, not the incomplete 'Nine Protected Characteristics' of the UK Equality Act 2010, which do not include, for example, social class or refugee status.

mentioned several times as a foundational system for community education and would suit the rethink called for by Halfon (2020), a Conservative MP widely seen as a rare champion of FE. Halfon's vision of a community education centre in every town, however, only encompasses 'disadvantaged people', to help them become more economically productive: classic divisive Vitruivan thinking. 'Disadvantaged people' othered from the successful in a meritocracy is the ideological position here, channelled into certain jobs which, despite the public outpouring of appreciation for 'keyworkers' during COVID lockdown, does not appear to be leading to better pay, conditions or job security[185], although the Government's rhetoric of 'low skilled workers' seems to have quietened following advice that this tone would be 'out of step' with voters (ICM Limited, 2020).

A Vitruvian Mannery 💪 reading also notices that 'disadvantaged people' also hides the very real inequalities of certain identity groups: people of colour, working class people, people with disabilities, older people in the workforce, women in unvalued jobs and the intersections therein (Pickett and Wilkinson, 2010). The language of disadvantage has been pervasive in community education in recent years, as it struggles for survival and although the trajectory has been rapid, it is rarely questioned (see Pember's uncritical 2019 research). This rhetoric is a powerful '*document*' which upholds the '*monument*' of community education and mitigates against any genuine re-imagining. To play devil's advocate, SROI plays into this narrative, by setting out to 'prove' the fiscal advantage of - for example - community education against future savings on health, criminal justice, out of work benefits. This was seen as positive by several respondents:

> "*Not a deficit model, though. This imaginary version gets plaudits for its contribution to economic and social wellbeing.*"
>
> Participant 140

Freire (1972, see also Mayo, 2013) famously advised engaging with the dominant discourse as part of a journey towards transformational change; in this sense SROI could be effective. A criticism of posthuman thought is that it is so difficult, complex and esoteric that policymakers can easily resist engaging with it; the Imaginary hopes to overcome this.

Accountability is king, currently, in community education with the demands of Ofsted overlaid by local government scrutiny systems - more powerful 'documents' that uphold the monument as it is. Some respondents found this reasonable:

> "*I recognise the need to ensure there is no abuse of people, funding etc so self-regulation would need to have checks and balances.*"
>
> Participant 267

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[185] …as well as making keyworkers more vulnerable to Covid-19, exponentially so in the case of keyworkers of colour.

Some participants called for 'insight' to form the basis of a new accountability system: accountable to students and teachers, rather than an overweening hierarchy of scrutiny systems. Participant 300 works in healthcare:

> "*We can only navigate based on advice given by industry, research or our GP. There is no insight or knowledge from material, from the patient side, so no personal knowledge to make the choices we need to get the healthcare we need.*"

Participant 274 called for "*no political interference or ideological distractions";* even posthumanism, which attempts to move "*beyond ideology*" (Braidotti, 2013, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari) would recognise this more as a process of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation. The same participant called for community education to be "*constantly supervised*" which could equally be said to be open to abuse on a more personal and organisational scale.

> "*And, most of all, it would have the strength to resist efforts to mainstream or co-opt it for wider social engineering.*"
>
> Participant 48

Educator respondents often cited how the bureaucracy of accountability had taken the joy out of community education:

> "*The beauty of learning is being destroyed and beauty is being engulfed by bureaucracy. I would make education more autonomous and I'd allow teachers the freedom to think outside the box. Teaching should be a creative and magical cocktail not a toil to tick boxes and hit targets and Ofsted grades.*"
>
> Participant 338

Autonomy was supported by critical friendship:

> "*Quality comes from critical friendship, rather than strict observations, so teachers welcome those advising into the classroom, knowing they are there to develop thinking and talk through how to better practice in a productive way, rather than labelling them.*"
>
> Participant 331

A hint, here, to Vitruvian Mannery 💪🏻 of how teachers are also 'othered' by managers and leaders within an organisation (and students othered by teachers). Respondents called for governance to be "*representative of all participating groups*" (Participant 31). Joyful re-imagining did not preclude some solid critical thinking around governance. Participant 185:

> "*True community would be a cradle to grave scenario with formal underpinnings yet plenty of space for local autonomy. Would need to guard against takeover by*

*the village hall committee/mafia as much as too onerous and inflexible
programming by staffers."*

This deeply resonated with my own experience in community regeneration/education during the noughties, one which left me deeply jaded by the micro-fascisms I experienced in one group's dealings with another. We return again to Mackness, Bell and Funes (2015, 2015a, 2016) and their exploration of the dark side of rhizomatic learning. Other participants, such as 228, called for a return that seems unlikely to happen, were it even desirable: un-incorporation, de-marketisation. The Labour Party's 2019 manifesto for a National Education Service got several affirmative mentions in the original survey, no-one was thinking about it at all a year later. And with a Vitruvian Mannery💪 reading there was another salutary reminder of how power plays out in ways that only educators see:

> *"Collapsing the tyranny of awarding bodies who rip into every detail
> one minute and then say holistic the next."*
>
> Participant 174

When we plug in Vitruvian Man💪 we are hunting for the weasel words of advanced capitalism, the 'values-lite' mission statement and corporate speak which allows this to happen (Mycroft and Husband, 2019).

Participant 187 put forward the idea that,

> *"community education is not for all, [we need] the foresight to think globally as
> well as internally and how our country and its people can best work towards
> common goals that humanity considers important."*

They went on to suggest a structure accountable to central government with local governance. Community accountability, they said, *"is more problematic."* Participant 52 imagined a community education where outcomes did not need to be measured in a league-tables kind of way because *"there was no competition."* Anti-competitive practice is essential in order to endure the oppressions of neoliberalism.

Finally, a reminder that others are working to the same ends. Participant 125 described developments in their locality:

> *"across the city we've mapped learning sites...colour coded for formal,
> nonformal and informal, funded, unfunded...there was some debate over
> the coding - its potential hierarchy, but commonsense won out...
> and the routes are mapped between the sites…"*

6.4.1.2 Prussian Blue - Assessment
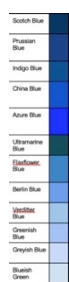
Plugging the figuration of Vitruvian Mannery💪 the material was almost entirely anti-Vitruvian in that it called emphatically for assessments which were not exam-based, which were not necessarily affixed to any qualification structure[186]. The material foregrounded student-led, individualistic pathways, sometimes co-created. The chasm between this and the reality of some (state-funded) community education today, with its excessive scrutiny, top-heavy hierarchies and othering focus on 'disadvantaged people' is breathtaking. No place here for an ideology of meritocracy, the Enlightenment belief that we can all 'improve ourselves' through education (and if we don't, we are not trying hard enough; we have diagnosed ourselves as the problem, as Moten and Harney say, 2013).

Bearing in mind that respondents potentially came from all walks of life, not just education, the consistency is remarkable. The strongest mention of qualifications referred to teaching qualifications: there is no dedicated community education qualification, although community educators can currently squeeze their experience into standard quals. Participant 331 is perhaps the respondent who wraps up much of the feeling into one, quite casually worded comment:

> *"The education would not necessarily be qualification based, though there would be an option to gain 'credits' towards a qualification if you wanted to, but that would not be the driver for it at all. It would just be a regular part of the social culture."*

This puts qualifications in their place, as part of a social learning culture (Participant 307 refers to the "'*worship' of qualifications"*). There is evidence that some potential employers agree (see for example, Hooley 2019 and many examples in Price, 2020), which is ironic, given that community education has been pushed so hard to focus on 'employability'. Other respondents talked about "*demonstrating proficiency in skills*" (Participant 325) and "*necessary benchmarks for competence"* (Participant 307). There was a strong push for 'no exams', even before the 2020 fiasco. Participant 141 suggests that the currency of qualifications would drop, if other learning was valued as highly. Participant 104 talked about the "*public good*", new social contract valued "*by both government and society...essential for the integrity of democracy and the democratic participation of a well-educated and informed citizenry."*

7.4.1.3 Indigo Blue - Community

This theme had 195 excerpts, a reminder that, for many people, the most important part of community education was the 'community' bit. In many organisations, the service is called something quite different: family learning, perhaps, or adult and family learning.[187] It was heartening to see such a profound response to the word from the mass observation study.

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[186] This was before the exams debacle of summer 2020, which also affected adults in community learning, though you would not think so from the media coverage.

[187] The sector body HOLEX hedges its bets, referring on its website to 'Adult Community Education Learning www.holex.org.uk

Scotch Blue
Prussian Blue
Indigo Blue
China Blue
Azure Blue
Ultramarine Blue
Flagflower Blue
Berlin Blue
Vestitor Blue
Greenish Blue
Greyish Blue
Bluish Green

Plugging in Vitruvian Mannery💪 what does he make of community? It is certainly an arms-length word, useful for 'othering' groups of people whilst still sounding compassionate. Tett cites Raymond Williams (1976, p.66): *"the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships"* (2010, p.11).

As we explored earlier, people are both brutally and subtly othered from full membership of the human race in many ways: the way 'parent' doesn't mean the social care worker, but a certain type of parent, the way 'my learners' is used with a good heart to infantilise (Mycroft, 2019). The importance of overcoming this social divide was to the fore:

> "*How do we get different people from different walks of life in a room together and really developing a deep connection with one another?*"
>
> <div align="right">Participant 11</div>

For community education to maintain a separate and expanded purpose from its sister service FE, its community heart needs to be rearticulated and state-funded community education needs to be joined up with its lost siblings. This was the most eagerly awaited sapphire of the Bowerbird's haul. Participant 334 lay down the gauntlet

> "*When CE began, "community" was largely locality based. Now it is sort of "cast to the winds" owing to migration, the Internet, extent to which people travel to work, growth of "generic" jobs. CE needs somehow to reflect these seismic changes, and I don't know if the "C" word still has value, or whether it is a distraction.*"

Hopefully this research will be bold enough to signal the end of "*the C word*" if the Imaginary ends up like a bargain basement, but what a challenge to begin this theme with, one which lays bare how out of step community education is with the world. The overall 'feel' to the excepts collected under this heading[188] was that people were describing a network: a rhizome not a tree. Participant 169 described "*the rebirth of organised reciprocity[189]*" Here the hint of a social purpose got stronger:

> "*…it would look like a thing of collective and relational beauty with critical edge and political purpose that could be both local and global …*"
>
> <div align="right">Participant 144</div>

Indeed, it would be difficult to find any trace of Vitruvian Mannery 💪 thinking in nearly 200 excerpts and they have all been scrutinised for this purpose during the plugging in process.

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[188] Without reaching for it.

[189] Viewed in context, Participant 169's excerpt was from a poem so complex and beautiful it frames the Imaginary.

Back in the Enlightenment, when Leonardo's Vitruvian man became code for "human" (Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2019), those Western European thinkers, explorers and naturalists began to codify the world differently: classifying rocks, classifying butterflies, classifying humans. And not only classification but hierarchies of classification. In time, knowledge itself became classified: into branches of science, branches of humanities and so on and this pattern continued into the establishment of the English welfare state. Several respondents suggested healing those rifts:

> "... *it would be the way we interact, the basis of our existence and recognised as part of a greater good, a way of engaging with each other that is not sectioned off, professionalised, specialised, compartmentalised, mentalised.*"

<div align="right">Participant 10</div>

There were calls for localised geographical communities and many more advocating virtual communities - even before Covid lockdown. Participant 5:

> "*The thing that needs reimagining in this country is community, not community education. I don't want to say we're a country of irredeemable individualists but I think the awful structures we ourselves have created have dislocated us [from] much sense of community.*"

There were 52 separate entries (nested under Curriculum) themed 'Safe Spaces to be Vulnerable". Participant 327 succinctly summarised this culture-shift:

> "*This is an 'institution' that understands that in order to become, vulnerability must be encouraged and celebrated, as hope is located in these spaces.*"

The concept of vulnerability is a triple threat for community education. Firstly, of course, because the sector is itself profoundly vulnerable, as we have seen. Secondly, the angling of the service in recent years has meant that it is now focused - more or less helpfully - on the most vulnerable in society. And thirdly because vulnerability is at a premium in public service, where the stakes of failure are high (Brown, 2018). The expectation 'more for less' in the last decade has led to a culture where mistakes are punished and expressing vulnerability is counter-cultural, leading to shame, self-pathologisation and high levels of illness. Yet vulnerability is a cornerstone of Braidotti's affirmative ethics, "*an expression of the intensity of our potentia*" (2019, p.169).

Perfectionism makes us sick, according to shame researcher Brown (2018). Participant 202 shared that they: "*...have recently been working with refugees in rural communities, who feel lonely and afraid to step into the community.*" Respondents talked about there being no judgement, no stigma, accessible to people from all walks of life. Many participants wrote that community education should be a place to be yourself, no matter what your life experience had been:

"it is not full of shoulds or shouldn'ts that don't convince anybody. We recognise and rejoice in the dark sides of human beings to throw up the light. We do not condemn when things go wrong as it's a part of learning - not labelling it as failure. We offer balancing ideas. Stories. Not pity."

Participant 169

The kindness endemic in this vision is, of course, a form of love. Writing of radical community work[190], Purcell (2020), suggests:

"Foregrounding the relational nature of community work…practice must be infused with hope, and that the most radical way to achieve this is to demonstrate our love of humanity in all our interactions with oppressed individuals and groups in these communities."

Drawing on Giroux (2017, pp.901-2), Purcell goes on to note how "*empathy for others 'extends only as far as recognising those who mirror the self.'*" Plugging in Vitruvian Man💪 shows how different participants' visions are compared with how society is increasingly individualised. Identity 'groups' proliferate and family - rather than community - becomes the collective unit. It is if, as a world, we have forgotten how to be together without comparison (in popular parlance, 'the thief of joy') or blame.

Community was everywhere in Take Two. This was interesting, given that many participants talked of how education had taken place in 'quarantined' homes during lockdown - one might have anticipated further capsulisation on family lines. Instead, participants reflected on community mutual aid, on families, friends and communities coming together digitally - and of the people excluded from this through digital poverty.

"COVID has demonstrated that communities are essential for health and wellbeing, connections, sense of belonging and mutual trust."

Participant 27a

For many, such as Participant 1a, "*the Covid-19 crisis has reaffirmed the importance of community education*." They continued:

"Our communities can sometimes feel fragmented and community learning can be an area to allow for safe and trusting environments where people become to feel part of their society."

"*There is hope for change,*" wrote Participant 6a, "*but only if we actively and collectively cultivate it.*"

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[190] Which, as I have explored, is not the practice of state-funded 'community education' (but it could be).

Even those working in community education[191] could see that services needed to change:

> "*Nothing in our lives will ever be the same. Community education will have to change in line with the change in people's demands.*"
>
> <div align="right">Participant 14a</div>

6.4.1.4. China Blue - Curriculum
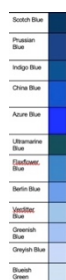
Curriculum is the great document which upholds the monument of education. It is the chalk face, the knife edge, a powerful political pawn; sometimes the only thing we think education *is.* As capitalism has accelerated, so too has the ideological grasp on curriculum under both Labour *and* Coalition/Conservative administrations. For a long time state-funded community education escaped the stringent push towards the skills agenda (English, maths, 'employability') but curriculum follows funding and in the last five years the service has been starved into the narrowing of the offer (Pember, 2019). The hatchet job has been so thorough that it is difficult to remember what came before, except through a golden(age) haze. It was therefore intriguing to see what respondents thought a community education curriculum *should* be.

"*Keep fit, cooking, French or silver-smithing,*" said Participant 337 firmly, heralding an eclectic list. Participant 332 extended the practical skills vision, imagining an *"Adult Enrichment Award":*

> "*focused on individual development, including developing relationships with different people, increasing awareness of the world and environment and trying new things, as opposed to attendance or following an externally written curriculum.*"

This vision flies in the face of the siloed, strictly parcelled-up, rigidly timetabled classes of now. It found an echo throughout the research. "*One person's goal could be making more connections with people or learning how to manage and understand their mental health, someone's else could be start selling their artwork or running workshops,*" continued Participant 332.

It is easy to see how this could all get very messy. It would certainly undo some of the work of the post-Enlightenment taxonomies and maybe bring down some of the monument with it. Is that an impossible task? The majority of respondents seemed not to think so. Participant 313 wrote about how moribund intensive planning processes made learning, in the current culture:

> "*A teacher has time to develop new resources, tweak their curriculum without justification in lesson plans, but through trust it is the best thing for the learners and their learning or new thinking. The classroom is seen as fresh thinking and not become stale due to teacher freedom in content and research.*"

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[191] Evident from the context.

An honourable mention must be made for those who retained belief in the current provision, that it should be focused on those with low-level or no qualifications:

> *"Maths and English should be the access point to learning with a wider range of approaches and less formalised qualifications. Having said that formal quals should be clearly signposted and learners prepared by learning specialists to deal with a new more formal environment."*
>
> Participant 289

This view was very much in the minority. However, it would be wrong not to represent it here. Participant 237 talked about meeting communities' actual needs, locally identified through processes enshrined in local devolution arrangements:

> "*It would enrich people's lives in the community by meeting actual needs - eg skills retraining for retail workers facing job losses, food and nutrition training for all, cookery classes that bring different communities together, outdoor fitness from yoga to boot camp training along the lines of the OurParks model, library expansion including art house films and video games but still built around books books books, use the Good Gym Model to bring young and the fit together with the old and the isolated, more misery/ care home crossovers and lifelong access to vocational skills education for all.*"

It seems that for some people, perhaps people who are already educators, curriculum was the hardest thing to move away from, but social purpose came to the fore:

> "*This is where we could make the difference for a sustainable and healthier future and environment…
> we need transparency in science and research, freedom of speech, laws to protect all lives including all sentient beings. All this requires change now. Or we won't have a planet for the future. This is my vision of community education.*"
>
> Participant 224

Again, many responses were holistic, not separating out mind/body, academic/vocational or any of the other Vitruvian binaries and silos which infect education in the UK:

> "*…community education could start with a shared idea that everybody has something to give and that nothing is too hard if the right support and time is given, and that specialising is great if you want to go into something deeply but that doesn't stop you from being able to move into other ways of thinking and picking up different things.*"
>
> Participant 157

Participant 112 gave a concise summary: "*Curricula are focused around big or little ideas and not strict subject delineations.*"

An appreciation of digital and blended curricula was the great shift in Take Two, circulated during the Covid-19 lockdown in England. Many viewed both as desirable - and there was also a thoughtful consideration of those excluded via digital poverty:

> "*The deeply worrying trend is that the digital poor are getting further behind and without a positive will to prevent this could find themselves totally excluded from community education in the post Covid world.*"
>
> <div align="right">Participant 36a</div>

Participant 4a noted that some people would always feel "*uncomfortable"* in digital learning spaces and that "*community education should be offered in traditional formats."* Participant 11a, on the other hand, observed that "*...a lot of people feel intimidated in classroom environments.*"

Others posed the interesting idea that blended learning offered the opportunity to make the physical element a space where uncomfortable conversations took place and indeed the Vitruvian world order was very much challenged by several calls for social purpose education, again referencing community efforts during lockdown:

> "*Also lots of the education has had a social purpose to it - making of PPE for frontline workers, batch cooking for people sheltering, support with digital skills etc.*"
>
> <div align="right">Participant 29a</div>

Several participants considered the environmental impact of blended curricula (even quantified by Participant 9 as 3:2 physical:digital) - less travel time, fewer cars on the road, savings on room hire. Vitruvian Mannery💪, privileging even the lowest human above animal, vegetable and mineral, would not factor in these considerations.

6.4.1.5 Azure Blue - Funding

This was always going to be tricky. Culture-changing ideas were rich; bright ideas for funding new provision were thinner on the ground. Most respondents agreed community education should be free or low-cost but no amount of 'should bes' (and there were a lot) could make this happen or it would no doubt be happening already in some form. Vitruvian Mannery 💪 holds the purse strings and the survey did ask a very open, imagining question, a what? rather than a how?

Respondents did not shy away from novel ideas, though some were still wedded to the idea of state funding. Some grasped the implications of devolution, which allocates adult education funding (for post-19 provision in colleges and other learning providers, as well as community education) and this was one area in which local authority provision may be well-placed to get a bigger share of the spoils. Opinion seemed fairly divided between "*free for all at the point of access"* (eg Participant 335) and "*some provision might be paid by those who could afford it, to subsidise others"* (eg Participant 328). Participant 328 also suggested that a local

community contribution could be gathered; taxation is never popular but it is something to be considered, perhaps within Council Tax:

> *"This could make it affordable, no matter what your level of income."*
>
> <div align="right">Participant 180</div>

Devolution also offered an opportunity to join up services, with Participant 187 suggesting this could lead to the evening out of wealth locally. Participant 122 was one of several to support the idea of community learning being available "*on the NHS".* But the spectre of "*scratting around for money"* was never far from the door (Participant 185). The eloquent Participant 169:

> *"We should have a better understanding of the role of money and power and how that has shaped our thought in the western world and contributed to world inequality. Meanwhile understanding that finance is needed in some shape or form to build infrastructures of thought and community structures. Finance as we know it, or not yet as we may dream it?"*

A number of people suggested "*pay as you feel"* which certainly appeals but would need quite a significant culture change particularly in austerity times when scarcity is perceived (for many) and real (for many more). Others returned to the idea suggested above of individual education budgets on the model of personal care budgets (eg Participant 143). Social return on investment was mentioned again, as part of a longer-term evaluation strategy (there is a formula for assessment in the shorter term, but a longitudinal study would be more compelling). Participant 35 extended this idea to suggest an employer levy of equal value to the benefits saved.

Others (eg Participant 257) suggested seed funding community education initiatives hosted by local charities and micro-enterprises. Bursaries were suggested (eg Participant 288) for low income (not just unwaged) families and young people for whom a "*community apprenticeship"* might be helpful.

Participant 140 was unequivocal:

> *"Funded from gov departments - ALL of them. Currently 25 I think so top slice the lot. Transport as much as Digital and Culture have a responsibility. A true cross cutting theme."*

Little was said about funding in Take Two, except that it should ensure community education was affordable. Perhaps in the days when it was still fresh for people to receive paid furlough it was possible not to worry about this.

6.4.1.6 Ultramarine Blue - The Impossibility of Fresh Imagining

Plugged in here, Vitruvian Mantololgy💪 expects to be satisfied. His world is so capitalist, so patriarchal, so unequal, so completely commodified that we race through it, terrified of scarcity.

Spinoza's alternative ethics of joy is critically affirmative, and we anticipate that in this space the Bowerbird will have collected all those responses which lack hope or vision for change.

The good news is, there are only 13 excerpts. The bad news…

"It will always still be shit because no matter how you look at or reposition things, the privilege will always be privileged and the rest of us will have to prove by merit."

<div align="right">Participant 272</div>

There were two or three more in this vein. For Participant 48 it was "*utopian*" and Participant 337 was nostalgic for the big white book of courses when they were growing up in the 1970s[192], bringing to mind Page's satirical take on such hauntology (2017). Participant 16 acknowledged the impossibility of forgetting what they knew, when they had been steeped in it for so long. And bravo to Participant 23 who said:

"Perhaps it's cloud cuckoo land, but if even a bit of it could become real, how wonderful could that be?"

6.4.1.7 Flaxflower Blue - Leadership

Plugging in Vitruvian Mannery💪 enlivens him like Frankenstein's Monster and thoughts immediately turn to Machiavelli, whose philosophy was subtle enough to be adopted to many perspectives, in Daley, Orr and Petrie (2017), from Page's ironic defence of Principals (2017) to my own, more utopian[193] "social purpose leadership" (Mycroft and Weatherby, 2017). Community education, now mainly found as part of a wider service in cash-strapped local authorities, does not suffer the overweening hierarchy of college-based FE, with its recent press of six figure salaries[194] at the top (and increasingly precarious zero-hours contracts at the bottom). But leadership in a political environment has its own tensions, with community learning led by career local government officials, rather than educational specialists. Participant 329:

"transparency, trust, integrity, real leadership is what I'm craving."

Not, in the view of Participant 169: "*patriarchal systems where someone has to lead and give direction.*" Participant 332 notices the differences between community learning and its more prominent sister, college-based FE:

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[192] Huge thanks - genuinely - to Participant 240 who wanted to help but "*I don't understand what community education is so I can't answer the question?*" I so appreciate that you took the time.
[193] With Jane Weatherby
[194] ...and overwhelming whiteness, see Weale, 2020 (published the day I'm writing this)

*"Community learning's success is down to the hard work, professionalism
and value base of the people who work in the sector. In a re-imagined future
this too would be recognised. Too often community learning is deemed as less
important than other parts of the sector, especially colleges. This despite the
hard work, dedication, expertise, experience and qualifications of its members."*

Trust was very present here, in its absence, making connections with Donovan's (2018) work on trust in FE:

*"Trust in the teacher that they are qualified and passionate to do their job
wholly for the best of the learner, progressing them and offering further
opportunities without being judged or scrutinized."*

Participant 313

Many respondents referred to the teacher as leader, as commensurate with a professional role; commenting that leadership was not valued in teachers (e.g. Participant 249). Leadership should be:

"*Driven by professional educators at the top of their game, not at the end
of their careers nearly retired. They should inspire great thinking and debate.*"

Participant 141

Those respondents committed to localism envisaged strategic boards driving community education, as we have already seen:

*"It would be run by the people who want it and need it, not by experts from
another outside world."*

Participant 120

Participant 195 had definite ideas about how communities should establish their own agendas:

*"So, to reimagine community education is to involve the communities within
the community. Have communities directing funding, project ideas and directions
and leave them to it. If communities don't want it - that also tells us something,
namely that we're pushing a thoroughly middle class ideal on a community that
doesn't want the ideal pushed on them. It might also tell us that it's the communities
that refuse/don't look for community education that might be the most healthy. We
might want to appear to do good, but there's an unhealthiness to pushing what we
want to educate other communities into. It belies a desperation to validate our
erudition and privilege. Communities that are strong don't need to constantly
look outside themselves for meaning."*

6.4.1.8 Berlin Blue - Location

What does Vitruvian Man💪 think about place? Probably not too much at all, as long as it

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Blueish Green

replicated the inequalities of the monument, so an edifice which stratified people by role, rank and possibly identity group would be ideal. Place occupied the thinking of many of the respondents. 166 excerpts were dedicated to Location. A number of correspondents called on institutions to open their doors to community education at times when they would normally be closed - to extend their service to the community:

> *"I do think the great institutions such as libraries, schools, museums and galleries could play a role. Imagine if they had a massive remit for community education, what could they offer?"*

<div align="right">Participant 312</div>

This is hugely challenging to the silos of Vitruvian Mannery 💪 thinking; you may already be imagining curators worrying about the exhibits and doctors about their supplies. Others suggested opening non-public institutions such as "*coffee shops, supermarkets, farms"* - not co-opted to local authorities but operating as private enterprises via a centralised, perhaps digital guidance service.

For some, geographical areas were far too broad; communities did not necessarily identify with one another just because they were in the same local authority area, where they reside for ease of being centrally controlled. Community education should be more localised said, for example, Participant 296: "*they should not be anonymous halls for rent. Village/town networks."* Echoes, too, of Tett's (2010) caution that the least advantaged in society (single parents on benefits, asylum seekers) are placed into communities with no choice and little affinity.

Others criticised public institutions which did not make participants feel welcome. Here is Participant 248:

> *"I was on a course once in a group of adults for French speaking/reading.*
> *It was in a secondary school where nothing made me feel any of what I have*
> *said here… possibly that's what I am saying here really: "please value me".*

Please value me, rather than please control or imprison me. Where dedicated buildings were mentioned, the call was for them to be spacious, well-lit, well used, ergonomic so that their use and even shape would change. Participant 112 deserves a special mention[195]:

> *"Can we have an all-ages playground where you can do everything from*
> *meditation to roundabouts, ball-pool, giant chess and dress up as a mushroom?*
> *Massive library as well. Big building with glass wall so the community can see you*
> *reading as they walk past. Ooh it looks good in there. Actually, is that the crux of it?*
> *On some level at least it needs to be cool.*
> *Jack Kerouac, Patti Smith, Primal Scream, Gil Scott Heron, Minnie Ripperton*
> *cool. I think we need capes as well. Flowing capes. Yeah, capes."*

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[195] I personally love the idea of the all-ages playpark!

6.4.1.9 Verditter Blue - Pedagogy
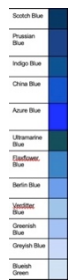
Despite digital being largely left out in the cold, there was a huge call for learning to be available not just during the day but weekends, weekdays and holidays too. 'Flexibility' came up quite often, alongside 'self-directed' and 'go at your own pace'. All approaches that would challenge the die-hard timetabling fan. Plugging in Vitruvian Mannery✋we could also see places where control stepped back in:

"High attendance and progression levels. No mixed ability classes."

Participant 302

Participant 302 was in a small minority. Several respondents (eg Participant 303) advocated small class sizes. Participant 303's assumption seemed to be that ('vulnerable'?) participants would need a lot of support: "*Maximum class sizes of 8. Support workers available."* Participant 246 suggested an alternative decision making process:

"It would stem from ideas and topics generated by a 'people's assembly'
that consisted of a diverse group of community members. How does the
community feel about education? What would they value and what would
they avoid?"

Some respondents were exceptionally eloquent, others more succinct; still others worked in the 'language of FE' to communicate their radical message:

"Genuinely sharing good practice - not just a tick box activity or an
onerous chore. Replicating successful models. Learning from unsuccessful
projects. Taking education to the people, ensuring it's local and relevant
rather than imposing it on people. Taking advice from stakeholders far and
wide and most importantly at all levels regardless of size. Not just the LA."

Participant 257

Participants had been invited to be utopian, but some still recognised the realities of pulling down the Vitruvian 'monument':

"I'd like people to identify for themselves the things they'd like to learn,
whilst recognising that this might also need some work to open up areas
of learning that have been traditionally closed off to some groups of people."

Participant 16

Discussion of pedagogy only infrequently touched on the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, which was how teaching was envisaged in Enlightenment times: Freire's banking 'delivery'. Come to think of it, the word 'delivery' rarely appeared. For many respondents, the teacher's role became one of broker and facilitator: "*It would involve space and time to think*," wrote Participant 264. Participant 166: "*everybody would be a thinker."*

Participant 306: "*Somebody (a teacher? But really more a guide) would pose a question that would trigger a variety of activities.*"

There was not much here for Vitruvian Man💪🏼 to get his healthy white teeth into. The shift from the tree to the rhizome was evident in the imaginary of a community education system which was led by values.

> "*This is supported by flattened hierarchies where boundaries are permeable, where what counts as learning is co created and decision making is participatory at all levels from staff to student voice.*"
>
> Participant 327

In Take Two, participants were determined to blur the Vitruvian lines, with several participants talking about interdisciplinarity or intergenerational work:

> "*Too often our communities are sectioned into age brackets and there isn't opportunity for groups to share learning experiences together.*"
>
> Participant 2a

6.4.1.10 Greenish Blue - Political Landscape
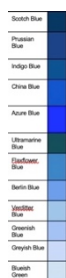
Excerpts themed under 'political landscape' were few and richly powerful; without exception reflecting negatively on the political conditions of today. To illustrate:

> "*The community education I'm re-imagining starts with meaningful relationships between people and shared commitments (trust and respect) between them, and the people in those communities need to be able to walk amongst one another for quite some time, and to feel able to learn and change and grow; it presupposes an end to austerity and to the invasive meanness that's being forced into people, anything that concentrates people into having to make decisions to be brutally instrumental in all things.*"
>
> Participant 157

> "*Nelson Mandela suggested that 'education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world', a compelling reason for denying access to those you wish to oppress. Full participation in a re-imagined community education will bring personal satisfaction and achievement but also, perhaps, a collective desire for more and the will and means to achieve it.*"
>
> Participant 114

Participant 37 laid down the gauntlet to Vitruvian Man💪🏼: "*Encouraging the development of questioning and critical thinking to thereby better equip people to understand our political and governance systems and democratic processes.*"

In contrast, there were 70 responses sub-themed under 'Barriers to Education' by the Bowerbird which equally betrayed the influence of the political environment. Those respondents who were educators took the opportunity to describe their own working situation, as well as outlining the barriers faced by students:

> *"I understand we all come from different perspectives and have different ideas but it sometimes seems these decisions are financially motivated or to tick a box for Ofsted. Challenge to these decisions can create friction. Dialogue is not always welcomed. People are not listened to and do not feel valued. A blame culture is often the norm. Inadequate training is 'done to' staff who then feel resentful or frustrated by what they have endured. What I am trying to describe means that learning cannot thrive and grow in these institutions."*
>
> <div align="right">Participant 329</div>

"*This is a pipe dream, of course,*" writes Participant 304, having set out their community education vision, *"We live in a world where we are all forced to comply in an education system created for robots where one size fits all."*

There were few entries which envisaged community education being for disowned or marginalised people only (Participant 245 is a great example of a thoughtful response based on this assumption); far more representative was Participant 293:

> *"It would be a place that everyone had the support they needed. It would be a place where the community helped everyone rather than only the people at the bottom. Everyone, regardless of status need support too."*

Plugging Vitruvian Mannery 💪 into respondents' visions is stark. Participant 221 called for community education to be "*released from its current binds.*" It would be "*actively inclusive,*" wrote Participant 179, "*with an explicit goal of addressing educational inequalities.*"

Working with a posthuman ontology for several years I have realised that once you start looking for traces of the Vitruvian monument, you'll find them all around you. Participant 171 also had this experience:

> *"We are looking at ways we can consider things like makerspaces/hackspaces and make them really accessible across all ages/backgrounds/gender etc. Talking with others about this has made me realise that even something like makerspaces which seems quite different to 'formal' educational opportunities seems just as bound up in norms and rules. So it would be great if we can break that down too and come up with ways of using the bits that will bring people together but also offering time and space for other people to do the stuff they want to do."*

Vitruvian thinking has separated us out into identity groups; one only has to look at the feminist/trans debate to see how toxic this has become. Survey respondents - largely, but not overwhelmingly – white, seem not to buy into this. Participant 218 expresses the vibe of this well:

> *"Generous provision for people of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, sexualities, to work harmoniously and purposefully on a range of community-centred learning opportunities."*

A small minority of participants was eloquent, yet cynical. Participant 96:

> *"In an ideal world community education would bring us all together and unite as one. To ensure there is no difference in colour, creed, sexuality. Thoughts, beliefs, religion I could go on and on. However it's not an ideal world and I believe that community education would be a postcode lottery the less advantaged as usual losing out."*

Little was said in Take Two about the political landscape, so bewilderingly shifting by June 2020 that perhaps any comment might seem a hostage to fortune. The call for a "*whole new way of thinking and working*" (Participant 14a) was evident, as was the hope of many participants that it would be impossible to go back. Writing two months later, amidst the chaos of the English exam grades scandal, knowing that many learning providers are preparing for 'business as usual', I am refusing to believe this is a forlorn hope. Back in June, several participants were seeing Covid-19 as a leveller:

> *"It also has in some ways made us all equal we are all in the same position regardless of finances, social class or colour or creed and that is a huge lesson that we as a society needed to be forced to address as Brexit and even before it was fragmenting badly."*

> Participant 15a

The Imaginary needs to be written and it will be written, even on these shifting sands. Participant 29a provides a cue: by preparing learners "*for the future locally, nationally and internationally*" we find the answers ourselves *through* the process of community education. As Leigh Patel says (2013), if not us, who?

6.4.2 Rhizomes🌱

The figuration of the Rhizome 🌱 is used to describe the way in which the research process has been informed by - and, in turn, informed - the development of grassroots collaborations within English further education (not just community education), which may offer up some ideas for the Imaginary. It also refers to the research process itself

and its attempt to heterogenise the reach of the research tool, via rhizomatically-informed networks and 'constellations'.

6.4.2.1 Scotch Blue - Accountability and Governance
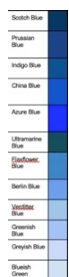
The notion of a national credit entitlement came up several times and plugging in the Rhizome🌱 we can see that Participant 326 took that a step further:

"*1 credit = 10 hours study and [adults could get] 10 hours each, I reckon. You don't have to use them all; however you are not allowed to carry them over to the following academic year. You may transfer them to someone else, friends family etc. If they are not used up they go into a pot that non-profits can use to deliver further community education projects (like Free Thinking ;-))*"

The project mentioned here, under informed consent, is The Northern College's Free Thinking Programme for survivors of what is currently termed 'modern slavery'. The project had excellent outcomes (Williamson, 2019 and 2019a), was featured in a Channel 4 programme during its lifetime and was picked up by another adult education provider, but when funding was discontinued by the Government, it folded. Participant 326's proposal to recycle unclaimed funding is rhizomatic in the sense of the funding ending up in a different place to how it was originally intended.

Participant 185 picked up on the dark side of the Rhizome🌱 Mackness, Bell and Funes (2016a), analysing the rhizomatic cMOOC[196] #Rhizo14, described the metaphor as 'problematic' for various technical reasons and also, ethically, because "*it is a difficult space for learners' becoming and...it increases the vulnerability of learners.*" (ibid., p.89). Their work drew on that of Gale (2010, p.307), who describes rhizomatic spaces as "*dynamic, volatile and potentially transgressive*", full of hope and also of risk (for educators, as well as students):

"*Teaching in this sense would be a lived practice of constant becoming, based upon risk taking and disidentification, offering disruption, challenges to the habitual, and invitations into the unknown.*"

In the organisation of potentially rhizomatic, community-owned spaces Participant 185 warns us against the territorialisation of the spaces by a chosen few, something which will resonate with any community worker.

Participant 15 called for governance training to be more widely available as part of a community education offer to all sectors of society. This was described as "*broader civic engagement";* potential for a rhizomatic governance movement reaching deep into communities*.*

Participant 300 was involved in a crowd-sourcing project,

"building common knowledge from my group of fellow patients…
(we do this together with a student from the Ubiqum Code Academy).
The reports are now based on personal material but will get extended with
group analysis and machine learning." (ibid.)

This has echoes of the Covid-19 Symptom Study mentioned above, the largest of its kind in the world which in its turn had to engage with the dominant discourse at the start of lockdown, winning over first the Welsh Parliament, then the Scottish Government before gaining the ear of Public Health England, and, ultimately, securing sponsorship with minimal strings from the Department of Health. Indeed, it made early appeals to any users of the app who might have influence to get them an entrée (Zoe, 2020). The Ubiqum Code Academy, based in Spain, offers a way for groups of people with a common research interest to learn up-to-the-minute digital coding skills, a far cry from the computer classes of many community learning centres.

6.4.2.2 Prussian Blue - Assessment
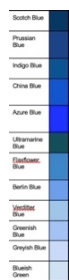
Plugging the Rhizome🌱 back in, I am searching the material for examples of where the "*community is the curriculum*" (Bali and Honeychurch, 2014). They are manifold. Mentions of co-construction sit alongside a strong call for deeply individualised methods and pathways. Several participants drew attention to the links between learning and mental health:

> "*Often people suffer mental health issues because of the pressure to fit in and pass certain exams. My vision of community education would do away with exams and people would be valued for what they can bring to the table rather than how many GCSEs or A Levels that could gain.*"

<div align="right">Participant 154</div>

Participant 246 goes further, suggesting that, "*the value of the education would be assessed by how it contributes to the health and wellbeing of both the 'student' and the community.*" That really would be putting wellbeing first; centring the human maybe even at the expense of the economy (but still centring the human or the community of humans over, for example, the environment).

The strongest call was for individualised pathways - crucially, designed and controlled by the individual. This opens up rhizomatic possibilities:

> *"It would be about the person coming in with their own goals and ways*
> *to develop through it both skills and knowledge-based and also become*
> *co-creators, offering workshops or skills to others doing the award or*
> *things like human libraries, and realising we all have some knowledge*
> *or something to give and that people with all sorts of educational*
> *experiences could participate."*

<div align="right">Participant 322</div>

That notion of "*we all have knowledge or something to give*" leads us towards a sense of community education being constructed in such a way that people are - if they want to be - teachers *and* learners. Plugging Vitruvian Man💪 back in here for a moment, it's hard to think of any epoch of education where this has been the case and certainly not in any state-controlled education service; though Price (2020) has plenty of recent examples in business. Teacher/student is perhaps the most stubborn binary of all. Participant 114 offered a joyful vision:

> "*A curriculum created by, with and for the people. Education for those who want to learn languages, dance or play the tuba, to have fun without the pressure and restriction accreditation brings, as equally valued as those who want or need basic skills, qualifications and progression.*"

There were other examples of community education being envisaged as the individual's path: "*so that people can pick up and collect pebbles of knowledge and things of interest to them, to have their eyes and ideas opened wider.*" (Participant 258). Participant 254 shared the futility of trying to teach people who don't want to learn: "*everybody deserves a chance but some students...need to be in the right place to take that chance.*" Here is the greatest issue and it has always been community education's issue, even before it was reduced to a "*narrowly utilitarian*" service which is so unappealing it is bound to fail (Blunkett and Tuckett, 2018).

6.4.2.3 Indigo Blue - Community
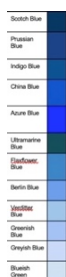
> "*We like herding or swarming rather than the root and branch model of coming together (which is even a misconception about trees) but anyway we aren't trees - we are mammals and if there have to be leaders or teachers - then they should be the people who are elders who are speaking from experience rather than people who have learnt the language of the dominant class in order to reproduce their values (either consciously or unconsciously).*"

<div align="right">Participant 13</div>

The Bowerbird found 42 excerpts in the 'rhizomatic' sub-theme. Not all used the word - though a pleasing minority did - but the sense of a learning experience which was continuing, varied and operated across physical and virtual platforms was strong. Participant 3:

> "*This would be a rhizomatic, grassroots movement to reinvigorate community education and adult education.*"

The word 'hub' came up a lot - not truly rhizomatic in that the rhizome has no centre, but as a pragmatic anchor for a self-personalised, unfolding, learning programme which - crucially - is not 'owned' by the hub. Participant 44 was one of many visualising a "*happy, friendly, collaborative hub full of learning.*"

Participant 187 suggested that provision should be "*networked through the country...to share ideas, resources, research, motivation, foster good relations and appreciate the incredible diversity we enjoy in this country.*" 190 said "*linked to other players, eg NHS*" as we have seen above. There's no way this could be tidy; the boxy neatness of the "*compliance and control*" model we currently have would bitterly resist:

> "*I would say it would look like a messy piece of art showing multiple colours, no boundaries, showing networks for connections which can be chaotic but underpinned by democratic learning and social learning creating a shift away from compliance and control.*"
>
> Participant 147

Plugging in the Rhizome🌱 is where the higher-level detailed visions of participants started to kick in:

> "*It wouldn't be dominated by big organisations, but by collectives and collaborations - small providers working for and with the communities they serve.*"
>
> Participant 138

Participant 33 wrote beautifully about 'traces':

> "*The dialogic of different communities, ebbing and flowing in a pattern which leaves the person with patterns in their sand, different ones each time. Confluences of different communities leave different patterns or traces. Over time, these can form geologic features in a person; change how they see the world, depending on for how long they are traced over by a community of which they are part.*"

This was an excerpt from a poetic piece which nonetheless drew a convincing picture of rhizomatic learning; how a chance encounter at a bus stop might have a longer-term impact on an individual's 'trace' than a year long course.

The affordances of digital to support rhizomatic learning was a regular refrain:

> "*What if you could fill in a form, offline or on, and get a breakdown of resources that might answer your question, courses maybe, people who have asked the same question, and a kind of Craig's list of offers on Art History or French translation etc., Imagine this was the first port of call if you want to learn crochet, or accounting, or how to paint, your skirtings or your loved ones, and it led you to people who were willing to share the knowledge or share the search.*"
>
> Participant 278

Several participants talked about project-based learning, where people would share skills, getting the experts in where necessary. The teacher's role here would be one of facilitator:

> "*I would like to see something in the style of Sugata Mitra's approach where groups of people work together to solve problems and along the way they learn the skills needed… so imagine a group working together, critiquing one another - almost like pair programming - and learning from what worked and what didn't.*"
>
> Participant 273

"*Self-organised groups,*" wrote Participant 242, "*supported by professionals with specialised training.*" Participant 222:

> "*Holistic learning where the wider benefits of mental and physical health, ability to build confidence and friendships are the most important outcome. The chance to become a supported but self-sustaining group where the provider sources suitable facilitators to meet your needs.*"

Participant 287 talked about "*the power of knowledge used for gains not control or restraint.*" This is *potentia* power, as opposed to the *potestas* power of the Vitruvian hierarchy. Taken in context, this respondent is referring to gains not only for the individual but for the wider community.

"*It would acknowledge the importance of fresh starts,*" wrote Participant 234, the fresh growth of the rhizome which dies back in one place, only to appear fresh and new elsewhere. Participant 201, familiar with Carl Rogers' "*person-centred way of being*" talked about decisions being made "*in community*". It would "*feel like an adventure,* said Participant 155.

Rhizomatic thinking picked up the pace in the Take Two responses, with some seeing colleges (or community education providers) as the hub of a community education web and others thinking differently, imagining the rhizome spreading out from household learning 'bubbles':

> "*This culture I would then imagine could grow due to the sharing of this practice between other bubbles (groups), families, friends and colleagues. Within this practice it would be great to then share with wider groups around the country to share different communities of practice, enabling a virus of community practice to flow around the country.*"
>
> Participant 31a

6.4.2.4 China Blue - Curriculum

Plugging in the Rhizome🌱 caused Cormier's definition of "*the community is the curriculum*" (Bali and Honeychurch, 2015) to emerge. Participant 65: "*A community-chosen curriculum! Inter-curriculum exploration and involvement.*"

Participant 62 talked about students being enabled to discover their "*calling"*, which perhaps means here what 'vocation' used to mean, rather in line with a personal passion than focused on perceived gaps in the job market (Sennett, 2013). Participant 62 draws on inter-generational traditions they have learned about from outside the Western canon:

"*It would be more like what we have seen on TV of peoples who are living outside the modern, western, industrial and capitalistic model (that we are all immersed in and so familiar with). The characteristics I see in those communities and that I think we could learn from are: all learning is relational, based in relationships both within the family and within the community; everyone's contributions are valued and respected.*"

Possibilities for co-curation featured strongly in Take Two and for some the community literally should be the curriculum, in the sense of content as well as process:

"*How we can prepare the learner for the future locally, nationally and internationally. The emphasis will be around how communities have strengthened during COVID, e.g. clapping for NHS, charity initiatives etc. The learners will have an understanding of what they require to become a great citizen within their community and further afield through social media, face to face conversation. We will enable our learners to have difficult conversations, debating skills to support the community moving forward regarding race, equality, diversity etc.*"

Participant 29a

6.4.2.5 Azure Blue - Funding

What happened when we plugged in the Rhizome 🌱? There were a few bold suggestions, centring on "*pay what you can afford"* with acknowledgement that this was culture changing and would operate better if scarcity was removed in the form of Universal Basic Income (Participant 64: "*that way it need not be free because free causes dependency, or for it not to be valued: pay what you can afford.*")

Participant 2 was poetic: "*tributaries add to rivers, smaller funds would add to the expanding blooms.*"

6.4.2.7 Flaxflower Blue - Leadership

Plugging the Rhizome 🌱 in brings back into focus distributed leadership or, as Wilson (2014) refers to it, anti-heroic leadership. Participant 101 describes this as:

"*More intelligent and distributive leadership of communities of learning.*"

Engaging the community in leadership isn't easy but for some respondents was a desirable aspiration:

*"People who have made amazing contributions to their community would
have the confidence and support to recognise their contributions and the role
they can play in leading and facilitating community education in their area."*

<div align="right">Participant 25</div>

In this way, community education offers something back as a crucible of new leadership. Flat models of leadership - co-operatives, collectives - were also popular, with some specific recommendations:

*"I was very taken with the idea of the ragged school of education and someone
I met at a conference last year[197] who was setting up open talks, where people
with long term experience of a trade or craft would have an opportunity to share.
I was particularly interested in the talk that had a retired policeman and retired
poacher as speakers."*

<div align="right">Participant 323</div>

Participant 247 had a vision of leadership which is, "*curated, shared and experienced by all members of a community*."

The COOCs[198] collaborative platform approach was suggested by a handful of people, negating the need for any 'leadership' in a formal sense, the community, once again, becoming the curriculum. See, for example, Participant 25:

*"Apps for local learning opportunities would be automatically installed
on new smartphones and just putting in your postcode would give you access
to all of the FREE courses going on near you and you'd be able to set up
your own course, sharing some of your skills with others."*

Leadership in the Take Two findings was a distributed model, with organisations mentioned by several as having - or having the capacity to develop - organisational reach. Third sector organisations were mentioned more frequently than colleges or other community education providers.

*"Post-pandemic [community education] will be online, university identities
will change and teacher/student identities will be mediated by 'tech as
platform for partnership' model."*

<div align="right">Participant 22a</div>

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[197] Alex Dunedin, of the Ragged University.
[198] Community Open Online Courses, an open source platform developed by Dr Peter Shukie of Blackburn College, where everyone is a teacher and everyone a learner.

6.4.2.8 Berlin Blue - Location
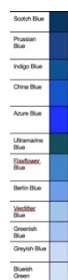
There was a resounding vote for taking learning into the outdoors, which surely must please the Rhizome🌱 "*A Forest School nirvana*" said Participant 317, writing of the Forest Schools movement. "*Theme parks and seafronts,*" writes Participant 10:

> "*The way people engaged in these spaces would be enriched by their awareness of developing social, cultural and emotional parts of themselves. I mention funfairs because they seem far away from education, but they are not - they are education as experience, as encounter, of strange and familiar in continual flux.*"

Participant 227 thought of events, prefiguring the Covid lockdown:

> "*First off, let's do something to strengthen and help bring together that community. Too often these days communities are fragmented, people staying indoors with the tv, or glued to (anti)social media, often without the basic spare cash to get out and participate in social activities, with no social activities even on offer. Events, please, to physically bring the community together.*"

For Participant 262, there was a real interest in the 'hidden curriculum'; those spaces which exist on the edge of the formal space, the real scholarship that takes place in dialogic conversations rather than the didacticism of the classroom or lecture hall:

> "*I often wonder what is it about attending university that engenders new ways of thinking and looking at the world afresh, that doesn't really happen in lecture theatres or when reading books about particular subject matter. I'd love to recreate that type of environment and community of scholarship outside of universities and in community settings where people can explore and discuss and learn.*"

Mechanics Institutes back in the day were reading rooms as well as places to go and hear a lecture, and even after the lecture there would be tea and discussions about the subject (Walker, 2017). Yet in community education there is often an assumption that everything that happens takes place in the classroom, where it can be controlled. "*Not classroom based!*" exclaims Participant 12. Participant 42 blew away the boundaries in our minds:

> "*The places and spaces of Community education would be outside, up mountains, under the sea, on rivers, in caves, under trees, up trees, under canvas, on the village green, down the high streets, under sail. We'd only be in buildings when it rained. Classrooms are basically boring as. The internet is everywhere, content can be in our hands anywhere.*"

Comments around digital were interesting - because there were so few of them, only 22 - and not all of them positive: "*Not all online. That'd be shit*" (Participant 22). When digital was mentioned, it was sometimes as a way of doing away with geographical boundaries, but, more

often, extending the local into digital spaces. And into people's homes, which also involves trust. Digital clearly offers opportunities for rhizomatic learning so it's curious that the rhizome is seen more materially by the survey's respondents - the first pre-lockdown tranche at least. Participant 306 was prescient:

> *"Depending on what is being learned, people would feed back in face-to-face meetings or to some online portal. It's possible that some people who couldn't be there in person (on holiday, disabled, waiting for a delivery, etc) would use IT to join in the session/day."*

Many learning providers are preparing for this for the new academic year. Presenteeism is huge in cultures where trust is low (Donovan, 2018). With just a few exceptions, talk of digital did not share the same expansive tone as much of the remaining evidence did. Participant 71 suggests:

> *"True education comes from discussion and reflection that involves emotion and reaction that isn't captured digitally yet."*

With a new focus on online education, there were still pockets of where physical education should be, in the Take Two findings. "*Isolation is anything but…*" writes Participant 10a:

> *"It is not just in a school, university, college or work environment with colleagues or peers, it is in our homes and gardens with our husband, wives, child or parents."*

<div align="right">

Participant 12a

</div>

Participant 13a, having committed to less digital time, asked: "*How do you stay out of the relentless digital time but still have an awareness of interesting events, topics and opportunities going on?*"

6.4.2.9 Verditter Blue - Pedagogy
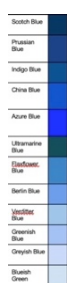
Plugging in the Rhizome🌱 was a satisfying experience because so much of the literature converges on opening up spaces for new ideas to flourish. Although this would be very much a step into the unknown. Participant 226 provided a reminder that we can work towards the answers:

> *"I would imagine a loose organisation responding to public demand in a much more flexible and sophisticated way. So not beginner, intermediate and advanced courses in xxx, but more specific subsets of xxx. A problem is the "learner's dilemma", where the learner doesn't understand quite what it is that they don't understand, but it would be better if work was put towards ways round this problem."*

Participant 144 acknowledged how different this new community education would look - and how challenging that might be:

> *"Its methodologies of participation and co-created knowledge would look familiar but its forms and, sometimes, asynchronous and digital nature would feel a bit odd at times."*

Naturally, the student-led rhizomatic pathways we've seen elsewhere in the material continued to feature strongly:

> *"People would work in a natural way... alone, with others, etc at their own choice. They might go off and buy things or use their phone to find things out."*

<div align="right">Participant 306</div>

In Take Two, pedagogy was very much less seen as being in the hands of the teacher. Joe Wicks got a few honourable mentions as participants talked about a much broader landscape for learning opportunities.

6.4.3 Constellations🪃

The figuration of constellations 🪃 is used to describe how community education might re-make itself structurally post-COVID and how its activists might wish to organise in order to achieve that aim.

6.4.3.1 Scotch Blue - Accountability and Governance
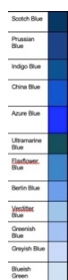
The close relationship between the Rhizome🌱 and Constellations🪃 meant that much of the material had overlapping relevance. The distinction is between a group of people participating as individuals in a rhizomatic learning experience and a group of people operating together in a constellation of practice towards a common, time-limited goal. In addition, the figuration of the Rhizome🌱 is not just about people participating in a learning experience, it could also be about funding is spread other reconfigurations of structures and systems.

Plugging the Constellations🪃 figure into the Scotch Blue material yielded little progress, leading to a sense, perhaps, that accountability and governance is about 'them' not about 'us', a sort of reverse Vitruvian Man💪 reminder that othering works both ways.

6.4.3.2 Prussian Blue - Assessment

If the Rhizome🌱 gives us clues to the path, Constellations🪃 do the work of keeping the path clear, opening up spaces and igniting activism by bringing people together who share energy around a shared plan or vision. If some (few) of the responses had a flavour of making great suggestions for others to pick up, many more wrote from within - 'we' can do this (or are doing

it). The numerous suggestions for co-construction fall into this camp. Processes are needed and outside of community education there are many youth, community and advocacy projects who work with co-constructive practices and could help design these.

"*Co-produced activity grown from structured conversations with participants. Mutually agreed intent, flexible and creative exploration as principle structure with summarised outcomes identified by participants personally.*"

Participant 299

The educator's role therefore becomes one of coach and curator; assembling opportunities and supporting the 'student' to identify their path and goals as part of - one hopes - an empowering process.

Take Two raised some interesting ideas, from Participants 26a and 36a in particular. Both were interested in co-production and in intergenerational learning. Participant 26a explored ideas around "*ultimate levels of choice*":

"Students earn credit for what they complete and are awarded a qualification at the end. No more linear exams! ...We keep it personal, we share feedback in voice notes. We set tasks by recording videos. We host live feedback sessions f2f or online. We don't chalk and talk, we wasted too much time on that before! We impart our knowledge and keep relationships connected by staying personal and use written typed words as our last resort after we have tried voice, video, f2f."

Participant 36a had seen children supporting parents in ESOL classes. "*Some see this as cheating,*" they mused. This opened up some thinking around how we define 'cheating' and if the Imaginary could offer something different.

6.4.3.3 Indigo Blue - Community

"The building of new rides would be that learning expanding outwards, from experiences, to design, to manufacture, to learning networks that string together for a particular purpose and pulse with energy for a time."

Participant 10

The idea of co-construction runs like a silver thread through the material. Teachers as students, students as teachers and numerous comments about members of the community sharing skills, knowledge and time; "*learning with not teaching to*" as Participant 42 puts it. For Participant 103 *"It would include sharing - a trait that is still so hard to engage institutions and professionals in."* Informal "*learning webs*" (Participant 105) were mentioned, though not explicated; others talked about "*coming together for a common purpose*" (e.g. Participant 186).

Partnerships were important too - a strong theme emerged around working with local businesses - particularly community and microbusinesses - and local charities. Employers have been so privileged in further education in recent years that they have come to believe training will be paid for (and Price, 2020, argues that 'staff training' in a conventional sense has outlived its usefulness) - respondents called for genuine partnerships which don't just set the agenda but shared the cost. Participant 267:

> "*There would be a closely woven eco-system between local and national government and the provision of community education, so opportunities (e.g. to take part in important social projects) could inform and be informed by education activities.*"

Were this infrastructure in place, one could not imagine the fiasco of the 'NHS Volunteers' call-out at the start of Covid lockdown being placed in the hands of a single agency whose website almost immediately crashed. Few volunteers were employed and a huge surge of community-enhancing goodwill undermined. "*Let's all work together*" wrote Participant 248, one of many to give their time to really thinking it through:

> "*You may ask yourself what would perhaps a general assistant on a shop floor at Tesco's get out of working with a student that is categorised as having Down syndrome, well my answer to that is tolerance and understanding and joy and many other things that come with working with people that see the world in a different way.*"

Intergenerational work got a frequent mention. Many respondents noted divisions in society which could be healed by mutual aid as a practical (and practice) value of community education:

> "*Community education affords the opportunity for intersectional encounter and exchange, particularly valuable in breaking down age, class and ethnic barriers and alleviating the extreme loneliness experienced by young and old in fractured, isolated communities.*"

Participant 114

"*A model similar to workers co-operatives,*" wrote Participant 45 and certainly the Co-operative Movement, establishing a Co-operative University concurrently with this research is something to draw on, its principles being enshrined at the heart of the Citizens' Curriculum in its birthplace, Rochdale (Benn, 2019). There is a Co-operative College, but it didn't get a mention in the findings, being either unknown or un-thought-of by respondents.

Plugging in Constellations🪃 means drawing on philosophical theory and constellations are not something in my own practice I have articulated well always, but many respondents just seemed to get it: "*The relationships created don't have to last for life,*" said Participant 21.

Many participants, presumably those in education, mentioned Communities of Practice. Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory considered communities which emerged from the grassroots, rather than imposed from above. Notably, in this context, communities of practice referred not only to education professionals but to student-educator groups, as one aspect of co-construction. Participant 42 talked about *"being able to sit with the feelings (sometimes uncomfortable) which arise when transformation is happening."* Take Two saw an even greater emphasis on inter-community, intergenerational learning ("*community learning will span the generations*" - Participant 11a) and on co-production: a breaking down of hierarchy between teacher and student and a new role for teachers and even community education itself:

> *"I think that CE could 'sell' more of its skills set and support those delivering learning."*
>
> Participant 22a

Take Two was circulated in June 2020, and participants were responding to it after two or three months of lockdown. Restrictions were only just being lifted and many reflected on the mutual aid initiatives which they'd witnessed locally:

> "*Localised and mutual. We've seen adults educate one another through mutual aid networks and skills sharing online and face to face (from a distance). People have willingly shared resources as for some the pandemic has allowed more time.*"
>
> Participant 28a

The sense that the pandemic allowed more time was threaded through the Take Two responses. Participants didn't talk about being driven together by fear - it would have been natural if they had - but because they had time to do so, released however temporarily from the velocity of life in advanced capitalism (see Virilio, 2002).

> *"Online social networks, or unaccustomed proximity and the luxury of 'spare time' in a 'quarantined' home have brought people together and given them space to be curious about the skills and knowledge that each person brings to the 'collective'."*
>
> Participant 10a

The same participant also imagined "*communities coming together to mentor one another*" and there were other explicit calls for co-constructed curricula as we shall see below.

6.4.3.4 China Blue - Curriculum

Plugging in Constellations 🪄 we see several examples in this theme of co-constructed curricula, where the role of the teacher and learner moves back and forth. More traditional subjects and approaches can still find a place in this new world for some respondents:

> *"It combines trad formal learning... accredited teachers teaching accredited*
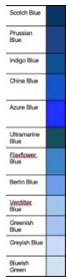
courses... with non formal and informal learning...Think, Illichean informal learning webs - selfmanaged, shifting - combined with formal disciplinary learning... Science, English literature, catering, beauty therapy…"

Participant 125

There was a shift which began in the first survey findings and accelerated through post-Covid Take Two, in the teachers' role. Participant 33a:

> *"While classroom teaching isn't replaceable, it's obvious now to even the most anxious users of ICT, that online platforms, particularly those with video capability, can get us 97% of the way there. Post pandemic I can see that a true blended approach is possible because of the experiences we've had over the last 12-16 weeks. The confidence that has been fostered in both learner and teacher can/should/must be built upon to enable a truly flexible community learning offer."*

The role of teacher as facilitator of online learning ("*helping teenagers to manage their time and be autonomous*" - Participant 9a) and of teacher and perhaps organisation as broker of learning, really shone through. Participant 37a talked about the importance of learning at her own pace as a parent working at home with kids:

> *"If I could learn on the go at my own speed at my own speed at my own pace day or night that would be well amazing."*

6.4.3.5 Azure Blue - Funding

A handful of participants picked up on the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility: businesses who offset charity work or community support against tax:

> *"I can't help myself from shouting 'free' first. So FREE. I'm thinking optional contributions from individuals but large org can pay their way if signposting employees to it."*

Participant 140

Bartering (a "time/skills bank arrangement") was suggested by Participant 47. Participant 25 was thinking about businesses allowing time off in lieu:

> *"Community educators would also be nurses, shopkeepers, taxi drivers, lawyers, gardeners, therapists, graphic designers, architects, bike mechanics, whose employers recognise their employees' role in contributing to society and allow them time off work to contribute to education and learning within their community."*

6.4.3.8 Berlin Blue - Location
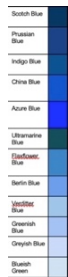
Plugging in the Constellations✎ figuration brought the focus back onto people doing things together, in a dialogic way, maybe focused on a practical task but discussing other matters; shared project work. This was very live in the locations theme; with an acknowledgement that municipal spaces were exclusionary for many in these "*anonymous halls for rent*" (Participant 296):

> *"We shouldn't construct buildings for this to happen. We should have open spaces for community learning. Times gone by these are libraries, tea shops pubs.... etc. Places where people come together and learn about the world together, without wondering about cost, course time or qualifications. Some of the most liberating learning is unstructured open and free."*
>
> Participant 105

Other people did feel there needed to be a 'hub', even if they reimagined it more broadly. See, for example, Participant 125:

> *"There is a centre - a learning hub, with classes, library areas, meeting rooms,*
> *a cafe, computer areas, technology and resources for community action...*
> *There are workshops, science labs, traditional classrooms, a lecture theatre,*
> *open spaces…"*

'Networked' (not necessarily digitally) spaces sounded the loudest note. We have heard the call for existing spaces, including outdoors, to be repurposed and there were many repetitions on a theme. With very few exceptions, the call was for people to learn in various places together, where the role of the organiser was just that: facilitating, organising and bringing in external experts to plug knowledge gaps. Participant 32 imagined how a library might be:

> *"Libraries, spaces to talk and meet in, make art in, sculpt and paint in,*
> *read in. Be warm in, be quiet in. Not modern European (very ugly generally)*
> *but more ancient Irish monastic. Not to be afraid of light or dark in, but safe,*
> *calm, gentle."*

Participant 232 imagined communities of interest:

> *"People having the time and the opportunity to share their interests and*
> *aspirations face to face and virtually and to form communities of interest*
> *with self-identified agreed aims eg: discovery, research, activism, cultural*
> *production."*

Participant 132 shared the UfA (University of the Third Age model):

"The model used by U3As online learning groups where a U3A member who is interested in a subject agrees to facilitate an online learning group e.g physics, Russian etc."

6.4.3.9 Verditter Blue - Pedagogy

As we plug in the Constellations🪝 co-production remains a big theme - even a commonsense theme[199]:

"The notion of teachers as some kind of professionalised and separated being, and students being sectioned off from a community as the ones learning, would be laughably stupid."

<div align="right">Participant 10</div>

Intergenerational work also remained strong:

"Opportunities for intercultural and intergenerational learning where different discourses meeting is frequent and normal rather than specially designed events."

<div align="right">Participant 259</div>

I found only one person looking back to the 'golden age' of community education (with its 'big white book'), though others looked further back into history, to pre-capitalism times; Irish monks and guilds and medieval villages:

"*A bit like the extended family in a medieval village with older siblings teaching younger ones about foraging and farming, and neighbours showing each other how to build structures, and toddlers showing things they discovered or have seen (like stones from a river bed or the stars) to older folk, talking together and trying to make sense of it all.*"

<div align="right">Participant 34</div>

And, visible in other themes, the social purpose agenda began to really shine through, in various ways, one which "*openly acknowledges difference and is confident about discomfort*" (Participant 19):

"*When no-one is an 'other', made-up divisions of colour, age, life, situation, are irrelevant. So, we individually understand and recognise that diverse peoples bring diversity of thought and unending future ways of being.*"

<div align="right">Participant 169</div>

---

[199] There were 84 excerpts coded to this sub-theme.

In this Imaginary, knowledge (content) is still important, however it takes its place amongst other priorities:

> "That doesn't mean it would be light on content, it would just be that
> goals and achievement would be learner driven and involve reflection
> in their own way, (audio, drawings, writing, photos etc), using prompts
> from the award, to allow them to evaluate their thoughts on the experience
> and their learning.

<div align="right">Participant 322</div>

Participant 128 shared what it was like for them to work in (local authority based) community education:

> "I*s what I frequently see at work are, departments that don't really tend
> to work together particularly well which we are currently working on using
> thinking spaces etc. There is a unity when it comes to discussions that affect
> all teachers, such as merger and observations, but in terms of learner
> education and the idea of value added, this is very lacking."*

Participant 62 pointed out that: "*all learning is relational, based in relationships both within the family and within the community; everyone's contributions are valued and respected.*" That respect is also present in self-agency. It was evident that most participants thought of community education being something they would get involved in as learners, even if they were clearly educators too:

> "So, community education is about, also, self-articulating our traced patterns
> and learning where and how they came from. Choosing, from a position of agency
> and self-empowerment which patterns we will choose and which we will change
> and how we will, or might, effect both."

<div align="right">Participant 33</div>

Participant 19 emphasised that, "*individuals understand their unique role in the community and beyond.*"

There were a number of votes for storytelling, art and crafting, particularly "*making together*" (Participant 32a). Storytellers were particularly erudite, as you may imagine: "*it would laugh, cry and sing our futures as we critically excavate our past*" (Participant 144). Here is Participant 227:

> "*Do you know what I love? The Moth Radio Hour, with it's warts and
> all human stories. How wonderfully empowering would it be to have a
> community event like that? Suddenly, Anne from number 3 wouldn't just
> be Anne from number 3, she might be Anne who drove ambulances in the

*war, and lost her first love. A local treasure, the foundation of a local human archive, is
entirely possible. Help empower people with the confidence to speak, write, express, tell.
Stories, written, oral, distant faces made human - questions, answers, a
book, an event. Community."*

In a context of 'mixing cultures', intergenerational work was often discussed, it's popularity,
perhaps, less discomfiting than talking about race:

> *"There needs to be more community learning that is intergenerational
> and brings all age groups together. I've seen how beneficial this has been
> recently and realised there is much to be gained by different age groups
> coming together and sharing knowledge; whilst breaking down stereotypical
> views on how they view different groups."*
>
> Participant 200

Not only was the smaller, second tranche of material collected post-Covid, it was collected after
the murder of George Floyd and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. It will be
interesting to see if this 'melting pot' approach shifts into a more intentional anti-racist stance
with the later evidence.

In Take Two, pedagogy focused on relationships, with several respondents using the phrase
"*make it more personal"* (eg Participant 26a). There was a clear call for reflective approaches,
with just one person writing that reflection needs to be face to face. Conversely, several others
felt that digital offered opportunities for reflection:

> *"Most importantly may be the forced application of a stop button through
> Covid 19 will allow us all the much needed space for reflection not only as
> teachers and professional reflection but also personal reflection as to who
> we really are what makes us content and can we for once move on after
> this making a firm resolution to never taking health nature family for granted
> and ensuring we support our community not just through our knowledge but
> also through time and personal support."*
>
> Participant 15a

Participant 15a's detailed response drew on Nan Shepherd's 'The Living Mountain' to imagine a
post-Covid future, where people thought critically about issues: "...*to hopefully not only see the
world and community/society as we see it but also as it sees us."*

Participant 18a called for "*connection to be at the heart of everything"* and was one of many
respondents to use value words - love, hope, joy, care - when reimagining the learning
experience. 'Reflection' also came to the fore in the Values wordcloud, below; along with digital
it was more prominent post-Covid.

6.4.3.11 Greyish Blue - Uniqueness
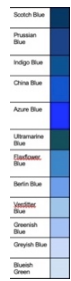
Esoteric in nature and very evocative, these excerpts are presented here without commentary.

"*I think I'm trying to write 'abundance' in lots of different ways, and I think that's a part of it – something that isn't narrow and isn't a channel and isn't tightly hemmed in.*"

<div align="right">Participant 157</div>

"*Communities education looks different according to the types of communities we might be involved with; and how far they ebb and flow and etch their patterns on our separate selves and sense of self-identity.*"

<div align="right">Participant 33</div>

"*It would be a joy.*"

<div align="right">Participant 27</div>

"*People speaking and laughing together, heads raised, shoulders back, moving around, listening to each other.*"

<div align="right">Participant 20</div>

"*Our common sense in this world would be that education is pretty much indistinguishable from our purpose for being, and as such it is what we continually spend our time doing.*"

<div align="right">Participant 10</div>

6.5 Bluish Green - Community Education Values

"*A meadow, changing a little each year, colourful, fully inclusive habitat to insects and mammals and birds who all use it differently to meet, to eat to live.*"

<div align="right">Participant 183</div>

Since values were threaded through nearly 400 narratives, selecting even the brightest blue shiny things did not do them justice. I returned to the raw material, exporting it from both surveys into a word document.

The more frequent the word, the larger the font. Interestingly 'digital', 'reflective' 'intergenerational' and 'joyful' all took a huge leap when the post-Covid lockdown tranche of material was added. The first three I believe genuinely reflect experiences of lockdown; the

latter my immediate networks after the birth of #JoyFE💛 the activist project inspired by this dissertation and influencing of it.

It was impossible to find a single excerpt which encapsulated that list of values. Keeping it simple, Participant 270 came close:

> *"A common place, real or virtual, where individuals come to share ideas, objects, skills and services. Somewhere where everyone teaches one something. An informal social gathering. A place where you know you will be supported, accompanied and enlightened."*
>
> Participant 27

Summary

This chapter presents the material from participants after its initial thematic cut, through the lens of each of the three figurations: Vitruvian Mannery💪 Rhizomes🌱 and Constellations🪄 It includes, for illustration, many verbatim quotes from participants.

In the next chapter, the cartography, ethics and participant material are brought together, to discover 'crossing places'.

Chapter 7: Discussion - The Crossing Places

"People would laugh
People would connect with play
People would stick around and continue to make connections which
endured beyond the place of community education.
People would learn about themselves as learners as well as the topics
they were choosing to gain education and skills.
People would be passionate about finding new things and having new thoughts."

Participant 42

There is no doubt that the findings of the mass observation survey are wildly at odds with either what community education is now, or what the sector's leaders - such as there are - are advocating for. The majority of survey respondents have their eyes firmly fixed on the future, as they were asked to do. Sector leaders are focused on surviving now, a world where 'employability' is the name of the game and community education offers FE for the most marginalised and disowned, to help them become economically active and therefore not a 'drain' on the nation's purse (Pember, 2019). Community education's defenders, many of whom have spent their careers in its service, are sometimes anchored to a 'golden age' hauntology (Page, 2011). They would have immense solidarity with the values expressed by respondents, but their delivery mechanisms would not always be tilted to the future. The challenge for the Imaginary is in attempting to smooth out densely territorialised 'space[200]' enough to be able to do any activist work.

As I close this dissertation, fittingly, it is the first week of the new academic year, following the first Covid-lockdown. It's clear from my networks that there is no consensus around how to play this 'new normal'. HOLEX are silent, at least publicly. Community education was included in the DfE's guidance on 29th August around resuming provision[201]; some centres seem to be following 'business as usual', while other staff have been told they will be working from home until January. This uncertain space – with Covid far from over and local lockdowns on the rise[202] – is ripe for smoothing out into an opportunity for manoeuvre and that activist work has already begun, is unfolding during the lifetime of this research and is partially driven by it. The Imaginary will explore the crossing places of the cartography - Amsler's 'Front', "[mapping] *co-ordinates of hope on otherwise 'flat' surfaces of possibility*" (2015, p.53) and will provide a model and process around which to gather fresh thinking. At this stage, no single pathway has emerged and such is the nature of complexity that it will not.

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[200] Including, of course, a temporal element: how busy neoliberalism keeps us.
[201] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision/what-fe-colleges-and-providers-will-need-to-do-from-the-start-of-the-2020-autumn-term
[202] https://www.newscientist.com/article/2237475-covid-19-news-steroid-drugs-save-lives-in-severe-coronavirus-patients/

The research material provided in response to the mass observation question was initially sifted by the Bowerbird into 12 broad themes, or 'shiny blue things'. The three remaining figurations were then plugged into each of the themes, with the exception of the 'values' theme, which had previously been analysed separately into a word cloud (Appendix D). This exercise generated approximately 25,000 words of participant quotations, plus a descriptive narrative framework, which has been edited down as the 'crossing places' emerge. In qualitative social research of any kind, verbatim quotations have a role to play in how evidence and therefore conclusions are derived (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006 p.1) and they can help to clarify links between recommendations and the underpinning literature. No individual quote approximates 'truth', as 'truth' is not being sought (Somerville, 2016). It was important to include as diverse a range of voices as possible - hence the methodology - and then to hear them, without messing around with their words. At the same time, the tempting lyricism of many contributions to the mass observation question means it is important to guard against over-claiming: there are persuasive words amongst those 25k. Participant words are therefore presented as a guide and an illustration. The conclusions, anchored in the cartography of six years reading, material analysis and activism, are mine.

One persistent sounding in the material was difficult to code. It echoed in the word 'we' and phrases like 'the people', 'what the people want'. Who are 'the people'? It was 'the will of the people' that formed a popular resistance to the powerfully articulate anti-Brexit movement in the three years preceding withdrawal; sparking myriad ethical dilemmas (see Paulo and Bublitz, 2019 for discussion around one of the more extreme). Who are 'we'? Braidotti's now familiar formula proposes 'transversal alliances' (see, for example, 2020, 2020a) and this theme will be picked up below.

In seeking transversal alliances there is work to be done in how we view 'community education' and in repairing crossing points between related 'disciplines'. Participant 16 reminded us of '...*the old story. A jellyfish swims past two fish and says, "lovely water today!" One fish turns to another and says, "What's water?*" The point made by many respondents even before the Covid-19 lockdown and subsequent explosion in publicly available online learning is that education is all around us, it's one person teaching another to knit in the kitchen, or an information leaflet in the doctor's surgery. Instead of this, we use 'education' to mean something which is state-sponsored (and therefore controlled). Could a line of flight from this research be to challenge the very word, 'education'?

There is absolutely no doubt that, while respondents to the mass observation survey - both pre- and during-Covid - were remarkably united in what they imagined community education could be, the dominant ideology in England over the last two decades - and the Government in power over the past decade - would be unlikely to support or even hear these alternatives. Hope lies in the third - and fourth - sectors, in regional devolution and in the far horizon possibility of adults being mobilised alongside community educators to re-claim community education for themselves.

Jackson and Mazzei (2013, p.263) remind us that research material is "*partial, incomplete and always being retold and remembered.*" This chapter is *a* threshold between the cartography and

the Imaginary; other analysts might map differently. On a different day, it might tell another story but as a front of hope (Amsler, 2015) it is presented here as one gateway to an activist Imaginary.

7.1 A Lexicon of Values

The language used around and within community education is one of the most powerful *documents* that holds up the crumbling *monument*. Interestingly, I only heard rare echoes of it in the material. Contributions to the mass observation question were genuinely couched in the language of values, of everyday life. Conversely, just a few years ago during the CLMH research it was impossible to find evidence that was not couched in 'FE Speak', despite a clear steer towards narrative, storytelling language (Mycroft, 2019a). I tentatively suggest that this shift reflects both the increasing political and social turbulence of life in the UK and elsewhere, allied to the nature of the mass observation question, which emerged from an affirmative ethics.

For someone approaching FE/community education from the outside, the lexicon is bewildering. Ofsted set the tone and each policy change unleashes a new vocabulary which is filtered down from senior leadership - not always effectively - to staff and students. The portmanteau lexicon of posthuman thinking is, of course, no less mystifying. In 'education-speak' acronyms are rife and terms are unexpectedly capitalised to denote dominance. Husband, 2017, p.101-2:

> *"More has become less in the language of FE, and as a sector FE is the poorer for it. Abstruse language, however, is itself not the most troubling factor. Most troubling are the underlying beliefs and related actions this this new form of language is trying to express: performativity in accountability, quantification as a driver for pedagogy, and the narrowing of what constitutes education."*

This *document* of language needs tearing up and rewriting in a new lexicon, or values-led work will continue to come up against risk-averse obstacles. A complicating factor is that neo-liberalism, described by Shaw (2020) as "*the manifestation of social Darwinism"* has successfully co-opted the language of values. This ensures terms laden with ideology, which are difficult to argue with. Who would not wish a strategy to be 'robust', unless that word was used publicly and repeatedly by the education secretary to describe the 2020 English exams fiasco, which was evidently not in the least robust at all?

We have already encountered the term 'deliver'; so ubiquitous in education that it is difficult to think of a substitute in many situations. Every time that word is used, the brain recognises the metaphor and makes it just a little more resistant, a little more counter-cultural, to teach in a way that does not post information into an empty vessel. The cognitive scientist Boroditsky researches the way in which the language we use shapes the way we think:

> *"The past decade has seen a host of ingenious demonstrations establishing that language indeed plays a causal role in shaping cognition. Studies have*

shown that changing how people talk changes how they think."

(Boroditsky, 2011, p.65)

Elements of Boroditsky's work have been challenged by linguistic scholars who have failed to replicate her early research, particularly around Mandarin Chinese (see for example, January and Kako, 2006). It is beyond my academic knowledge and scope to verify either side of this argument, which might possibly be a 'fetish of assertion' (Williams, 2002 cited in Sennett, 2013, p.18) on both sides in response to the split in the discipline of linguistics around the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of a century ago (Kay and Kempton, 1984), establishing if nothing else that the 'linguistic wars' rage on. Boroditsky's latest work (Lupyan, Rahman, Boroditsky and Clark, 2020) considers the relationship between language and 'perceptual memory'; a fascinating connection which needs further exploring but provides some electro-neuroscientific evidence for the observations presented here.

A further, timely, example of how language could have an impact on the way we think lies in the prevalent usage in FE and community education of the acronym BAME[203], formerly 'BME' until around a decade ago. In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, when British teachers were rushing (with genuine hearts) to educate themselves on how to be anti-racist in practice, the acronym came quite rightly under fire for its othering nature - essentially meaning 'not white'. Dunna (2020, p.1) describes it as "*flattening the depths of our lives*". Yet, like 'delivery', BAME is hard to replace and many people of colour within education also use it to describe themselves, their organisations and networks (even if they don't personally identify with it). I have tied myself in knots here, in other writing and on social media, in trying not to be exclusionary. In some senses, this convoluted and far from concluded debate reflect Fraser's 'politics of representation', where the representational unit gets narrower and narrower in scope. A challenge for a reimagined community education (which probably in this case cannot be detached from its sister service FE), is to find a language which challenges the monument, yet is healing amongst identity groups and uniquely 'dividuated' individuals (Ott, 2019, after Deleuze). Dividuation is the belief that identities are so complex and diverse and our engagement with technology so intensely personalised that it becomes impossible to identify with others, leading to alienation. Advanced capitalism has encouraged this and driven social media with its memes and personality quizzes. Subverting the individualising capacity of technology by connecting people via social networks and physical events into transversal alliances, or 'constellations' is one way in which community education can alternatively organise itself across a multiplicity of identity groups.

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[203] Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Finally, an illustration of how remote "FE speak" has become from the vernacular, alienating both students and educators. This photograph represents a response to a question posted recently to heads of 'Quality': what are the big issues in quality right now? It is unintelligible to the uninitiated, as well as expressing the "*underlying beliefs and unintended actions"* Husband wrote about (2017, p.102), namely that, ignoring the complexity of the human learning experience, never mind the outside world, everything

Quality Assurance	Quality Improvement
Learning Visits	LTA Action Plans
LTO Observations	LTA Action Plans
Performance Review Boards	PRB Actions
Position Statements/SARs	QIPs
QDP Surveys	QDP Action Plans
Curriculum Reviews	CR Actions
Notice to Improve	N2I Actions
Informal Intervention and Support	Informal I&S Action Plans
Formal Intervention and Support	Formal I&S Action Plans

can be planned for, measured and pinned down. The messiness, unexpectedness, uncertainty of real life is not welcome within this language of performativity. As McCormack writes (2016, p.11), referring to the importance of an affirmative 'posthuman' ethics, "*We do not know what will happen or how we will respond."* Over to the echo of Spinoza, centuries ago: "*Nature does not work with an end in view."* (ibid., p.30, citing Spinoza, 1957, p.79).

The Imaginary picks up on the language used by research participants: a lexicon of values. Drawing once again on the work of innovative organisations showcased by Lakhiani (2020) and Price (2020), it takes a values rather than outcomes led approach, in order to incrementally territorialise spaces made available in these uncertain times.

7.1.1 Living a Practice of Values

The practice of values is what Spinoza intended when he set out his ethics of immanence. It's a proposal which, 250 years later, might just have found its time. The body of work around values-led[204] education is established and growing, although Carolissen, Bozalek, Nicholls, Leibowitz, Rohleder and Swartz (2011, henceforth Carolissen et al), writing from a South African context, caution against using values terms, particularly the powerful 'hope', without digging into their theoretical roots:

> "*Few representations of hope engage with the historical and theoretical roots of this notion."*

> (ibid., p.157)

Fortunately, the deeper theoretical roots of values-led work, spanning two centuries are converging in various genealogies of recent times: Spinoza, Bloch, Arendt are all drawn upon here by various thinkers. Carolissen *et al* use bell hooks' Freirean practice as a frame with which to explore new "*pedagogies of hope"* at Stellenbosch University's CSI Project, which brings students at two socially very different university together in critical practice.

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[204] I choose this term rather than the less powerful 'values-based' education, which is displayed as empty words on banners and mission statements up and down the country (Husband and Mycroft, 2019).

Being asked what our values are is not a question often encountered in public service, though Price (2020) claims this is changing. He presents case studies based on schools and businesses internationally, which build from the values up. For example, Gwyn ap Harri from XP School, when asked for a core value says simply, "*Above all, compassion.*" (ibid., loc. 3749) We are, however, surrounded by and asked to conform to, the values of others (Deleuze's 'morality') – workplace mission statements (Husband and Mycroft, 2019), 'family values', our friendship group, social club, trade union or place of worship. Conformity is implicit; sometimes we're just guessing and it's easy to transgress. Over recent years, state-funded community education has been gradually brought into line by the 'practice values' – compliance, 'accountability' – of its sister FE.

Developing and imposing universal values on community education would be contrary to the ethics of the research. Having a starting point, however, could be helpful: to offer a process, rather than a solution. Colectiva Sembrar's (2020 p.263) graceful epilogue to Pandemic Solidarity captures the spirit of this offer:

> "*In our many different ways, we are already participatingin a tapestry of care and mutual aid that spans across the globe. So, we end this book with an invitation to reflect on, amplify and join together in this work.*"

I am proposing that the *monument* of community education becomes infused over time by an activism which develops a collective *smorgasbord* of values; each of the *documents* which upholds it - training, curricula, pedagogy, structures, systems, processes, resources etc - employing values-led design purposes and with each human involved being committed to enacting their own daily ethics as a formative process: walking their boundaries, as I and others have learned to do. I imagine this affirmative practice dissolving, rather than dismantling, the monument.

7.1.2 Moving to a Practice of Values

> "*...it is key to remember here that we do not translate words. We translate ideas. And because ideas and praxes of resistance are translatable, we blandish the sword, as imperfect as our world, to cut through and reach out to those who are already building now, in their dearest tongues, a more liveable world, the future we seek to imagine: precisely for that reason, their words are our words.*"
>
> (Sitrin and Colectiva Sembrar, 2020 p.xxiii)

There is no existing project around developing a lexicon of values in community education, so this section draws on the research material and on the experiences of mutual aid campaigners to imagine how it might be constructed as a campaign.

Mutual aid is a founding concept of anarchism which goes back to the work of Kropotkin in the early 20th century. Suissa (2019, p.20) argues that principles of anarchist education have much

to offer today, and that the contemporary misunderstanding of 'anarchy' has led to an under-theorisation and under-utilisation of the principles of anarchism as useful educational concepts:

> "*Yet if an important part of anarchism is the ability to understand and criticize the forms of domination present in current social relations, and to imagine a different future, then anarchists should perhaps look to forms of education that, whether within or outside the state system, not only emphasize personal freedom and creativity, but encourage an active questioning of current political arrangements, and an attempt to imagine alternatives.*"

The ingenuity of schools such as the Summerhill schools (Suissa, 2019), High Tech High and (the state-funded) XP (Price, 2020) do not translate directly to English community education but they provide examples of hope. There is work to be done mapping all examples of what Amsler calls "*radical democracy*" (2015, p.199) whilst transgressing the boundaries enforced by funding and policy; sailing beyond the frontiers of the known map. Crowd sourcing examples into networks of mutual aid is one approach.

Mutual aid has found its moment during the Covid-19 pandemic. To committed community organisers, this came as no surprise and there is a healthy sense of praxis convergence. Informed by an entirely separate genealogy, Purcell (2020) found broad support for "*professional love*" amongst radical community workers; he draws on traditions from social pedagogy and early years education[205] (ibid., p.12), specifically the work of Page (2011). Hegarty (e.g. 2016) and Feeley (e.g. 2014) research pedagogies of love and care. Their Irish colleagues Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon (2007) offer a corresponding analysis of the limitations of Cartesian/Enlightenment dominance in their work around love, care and solidarity. Duckworth and Smith (e.g. 2019) draw, like Amsler (2015), on Ernst Bloch to identify practices of hope and care in adult literacy work. Within each of our disciplinary, setting and context silos, there are fellow travellers in values-based practice, who could form a critical mass.

In an article published by the Times Educational Supplement in early lockdown, Shaw (2020) describes mutual aid as "*absolutely crucial*" for further, adult and community education. Describing what was happening on the ground in FE:

> "*…quick and effective communications; the sharing of resources, from lesson plans to catering supplies, and decisions being made on the ground locally on the best course of action in lieu of state decisions.*"

Astonishing agility was reportedly present in the NHS in the early days of Covid (Willmore, 2020 is just one example of blogs and articles by clinicians during this time) and in other public

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[205] Note that both social pedagogy and early years education, as well as radical community work, youth work and social work have much in common with community education as it is defined here. As I draw to a close with this research, it feels like an increasing nonsense that we are kept apart from one another by invisible borders of funding and policy.

services, not noted for being fleet. The difficulty, as Solnit (2020, p.xiv) notes, is "*in how to stay awake when the ordinary returns.*" She continues (ibid, p.xv):

> "*So what is described in this book is both practical work to meet the needs of the present and something more: the templates and maps for the future, if we are passionately committed to this vision of who else we are, if we stay awake and remember who we were at the worst of times.*"

How might a campaign around the language of education transgress socially constructed borders, to form a critical mass? Chapman (2013) explores how reflection on language might be employed as an ethical leadership action. After Harrison (2009), she differentiates between *compliance* with ethical action and *commitment* to ethical action which is grounded in values-led reason (ibid., p.117). Concluding from her research that ethical leadership rests on mutual respect and that respect in turn requires a relationship of equals[206], she further explores how language can build such relationships:

> "*Practitioners who can articulate their respect for each other in conversations about ethics, for example, know what the words mean as they become a part of organisational culture.*"

(ibid., p.120)

Chapman acknowledges the small-scale nature of her research and the need to test its findings out on a broader demographic[207], however she tentatively concludes that there is a link between mutual respect, shared values and language, and that dialogue which explicates the reasoning behind language choices (rather than condemnation for being 'politically incorrect') can have culture changing potential.

Given this, it seems possible that a constellation of values-led educators (leaders, students, researchers) could take advantage of freely available social media and their own spheres of influence to mount a tight, focused campaign to raise awareness of values-based language and values-based practices. Taking a rhizomatic approach would make it very different from, for example, previous glossaries/dictionaries of 'acceptable' language or initiatives such as the Plain English campaign[208], which relied on individuals who were motivated enough to access their (excellent) resources. Most people who use performative (or excluding) language don't reflect on why, it's simply the language of the 'club' and they want to fit in.

Using spheres of influence and relationships with other constellations to open up dialogical spaces (Sennett, 2013) which are safe enough to question language choices, allied to an eye-

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[206] This is reflected in the practice of a Thinking Environment, where participants are 'equal as thinkers' (Kline, 2009).
[207] She continued with this as her PhD research, publication forthcoming.
[208] http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/

catching, intriguing social media campaign, all of which is based on culture change moving towards a values-led community – at least - education, would be a tempting pitch.

7.2 The Crossing Places

The cartography brought together a genealogy of posthuman thinking with a literature of community education and exploration around an affirmative ethics overlaid both. Finally, the findings from the mass observation question (The Bowerbird's Bower) were placed on top. As with the maps of Stratford before and after the Olympic Park, this discussion will look for the crossing places: this time, unapologetically, it's the Director's Cut[209].

The Cartography
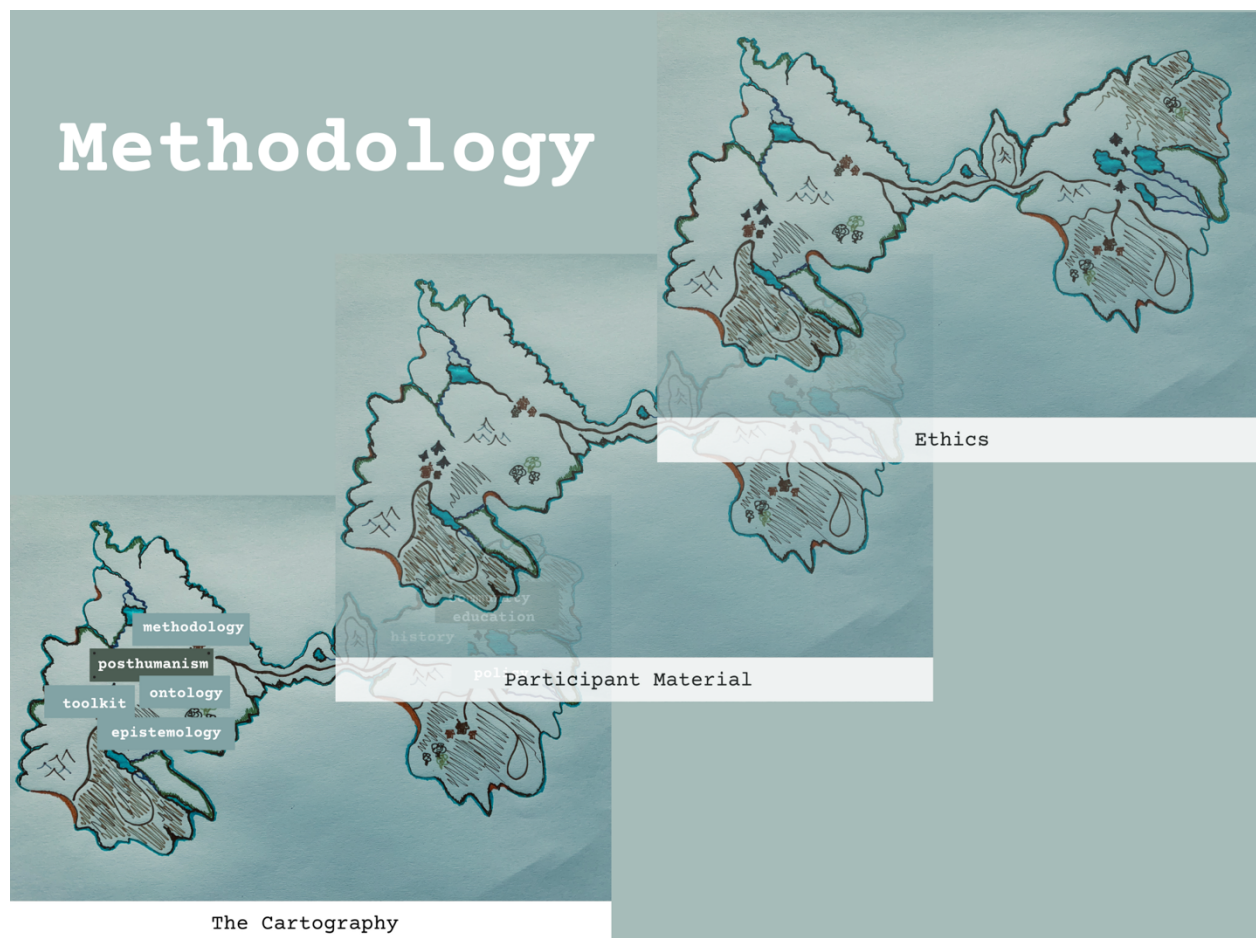
7.2.1 Crossing Place 1 – Design Principles

The material gave a lot in terms of values, was sketchier on the practical details though, to be fair, the mass observation question did ask 'what' and not 'how'. That need not be an issue because the question frames the only beginning of a process which pauses with the Imaginary and will be continued via future activist work. 'Design' in the community education Imaginary

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[209] Director's Cut: often longer and less commercial; the best ones have cult status. I'm taking this privilege to do the best possible justice to the research findings in the Imaginary.

means not only pedagogy and the broader discipline of 'curriculum' (how pedagogy is structured and enacted), but also how the organisation operates in leadership and management terms.

With the experience activists have gained of explaining complexities in productive terms, the three figurations of Vitruian Man💪, Rhizomes🌱 and Constellations🌙 can remain active in designing new approaches to education, as can associated conceptual personae such as the Bowerbird🌳, *potestas/potentia* and the re-territorialisation/de-territorialisation of spaces. However, the great revelation of this is research for me is that community education itself doesn't have to be explicitly posthuman. The posthuman 'toolkit' provided both a lens and a series of motifs to construct a methodology and then analyse it into a posthuman confection: an Imaginary which is both utopian and also offers praxis suggestions which can be envisaged[210] and enacted.

Braidotti's posthumanism is a critical practice for Anthropocene times. She rejects utopianism. In one of her most detailed calls to action, she responds to Laura Regan (Braidotti and Regan, 2017, p.191):

> "*We have to keep in mind that, as academics, we are civil servants balancing*
> *potestas—managing what we have—with potentia—inspiring*
> *what's possible. That's the balance everyone has to find for themselves,*
> *rather than sink into a listless depression. There is a job to be done here*
> *to inject a visionary, imaginative but not utopian energy into the world*
> *with words, texts, concepts, festivals and public engagements.*
> *We need to send out counter-codes.*"

These 'counter codes' relate to the call for a new lexicon for community education, above. Others believe that utopianism is essential because it brings with it hope. Tett (2010, p.97) writing about social movements:

> "*In this sense, utopia's proper role is to stir the imagination and challenge*
> *comfortable habits – a place to be desired rather than a place that does not*
> *exist – leading to a vision of a much better world.*"

Hence the Imaginary: sketching out a vision beyond the borders of the current cartography; a visionary catalyst, rather than a road map. For this vision to be shared, questions need to be asked about its implementation. What does a values-led pedagogy look like? A values-led structure for community education? Values-led leadership? As this research comes to an end, the Imaginary takes up the work of changing the identity of the discourse around community education, to identify measures to these ends.

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[210] On the night I created the values wordcloud out of the material, I posted it on Twitter. An (influential, affirmative) supporter of community - or at least adult - education immediately replied: "I can envisage it now".

7.2.2 Crossing Place 2 – Transversal Alliances

Another powerful crossing place was around what Braidotti refers to as "*transversal alliances",* a concept which has appeared frequently in this dissertation. She partially defined this in her most recent work as "*different ways of caring*" (2020a, p.3) by encountering one another beyond the limitations of exhaustion:

> "*What is inexhaustible is our capacity, our power even, to differ within ourselves, as well as between us. We can extract ourselves from this sad state of affairs, working through the multiple layers of our exhaustion, and co-construct different platforms of becoming. This transformative praxis can only be enacted collectively, together, as transversal subjects of posthuman times. Shared exhaustion actually unfolds upon a deeper wisdom about what it is that one knows, when one is facing momentous changes in unfamiliar territories. One knows that Life lives on regardless of human pretentions and expectations. "We" can only intervene in this as transversal ensembles, acting collectively: "We"-who-are-not-one-and-the-same-but-are-all-in-this-convergence-together."*

(ibid., p.5)

Braidotti has defined this with increasing clarity – and urgency – down the years. Whether it's an assemblage, an encounter, an alliance or an ensemble matters little to activism, what she is referring to here is what her friend and posthuman colleague, the artist Maria Hlavajova (Braidotti and Hlavajova, 2018), refers to as 'constellations of practice'. Constellations was, of course, one of the figurations used in the analysis of this research. The Imaginary takes the concept into several realms:

7.2.2.1 Constellations of Influence

'Political influence' in community education terms, involves a formal hierarchical process whereby principals/heads of service lobby sector bodies (for community education, HOLEX), sector bodies lobby civil servants at the DfE and civil servants lobby a revolving door of ministers and junior ministers. The portfolio for FE beyond the narrow remit of 'skills' is often a minor briefing matter for ministers; Anne Milton, Skills Minister in 2018 claimed that she could not speak up for FE, as FE didn't speak up for itself (Husband and Mycroft, 2019 – hotly refuted, either she wasn't listening or the lines of influence were broken). Occasionally a minister takes a personal interest in community education and some money gets shifted that way, though the vision doesn't necessarily change: John Denham oversaw the 2009-10 Transformation Fund and Vince Cable was personally responsible for the Community Learning Mental Health Research Project (CLMH) 2015-17, which saw two *purdahs* and a change of administration, before being quietly mothballed.

Social media has changed the face of influence so that it should now, in theory, be possible to lobby sector bodies directly, a conduit which occasionally catches the listening ear of David Hughes, Chief Executive of the college-representative body Association of Colleges; but falls on

more stubborn ground with the less media-active Susan Pember of HOLEX. Youth and community work-focused 'community education', of course, will attempt to lobby a different portfolio altogether.

Regional devolution, creeping through England, offers a new opportunity, though there is danger that regions might keep disciplinary boundaries in place. HOLEX's 2017 paper 'Adult and Community Learning Services: Governance Review' finds community education providers ill-prepared for influencing devolved authorities. It makes a number of recommendations to the Department for Education, none of which have been acted upon. Another approach is necessary.

Now is the opportunity to create transversal alliances which draw upon the evidence of initiatives such as the Wigan Deal (Kings Fund, 2019) and CLMH (2017) to prove the financial and health efficacy of community education. It's a first step which might mean survival and it needn't be the only work; the same alliances can also work on future visions and processes for community education which draw on other traditions: of youth and community work, of adult education in further and workplace education settings, of adult ('mature') students at university, e.g. nursing students.

Someone has to pay and our material offered very little steer, except in a few cases to say it should be funded by the state. In the current ideological climate, this seems unlikely to happen and those waiting on the National Education Service proposed by the losing side in the 2019 election will have to be very patient indeed. As well as exploring possibilities to influence the devolved authorities of England, the Imaginary will broadly suggest ways of operating on margins which are not in the gift of the state.

7.2.2.2 Constellations of Governance

Governance was a recurring theme in the respondent material. Participant 37 equated governance with a community wide programme of critical awareness raising which is a clear recommendation for the Imaginary. There are many governance programmes, often focused on schools; I could find no contemporary research on governance in community education, which is often situated in the political environment of a local authority and thus subject to a different construct of scrutiny. Community education providers are not required to have a governing body, unlike schools and FE colleges; however, Ofsted inspect on governance and this has caused problems for many community education services, as a report by HOLEX (2016) revealed. HOLEX recommended that governance training designed specifically for community education providers be offered by the report's funders, The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) (who hold the DfE budget for post-16 professional development). ETF's website states a promising vision[211], however both their governance training and governor recruitment programmes specifically exclude community education (unless wrapped up in the latter's

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[211] "By 2020 we want to create outstanding leaders and managers and governors, to inspire excellent learning and make a positive contribution to a thriving economy and society." https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/about-us/our-priorities/leadership-management-governance/

mention of other 'providers'). The research material suggests a more expansive approach which will be picked up in the Imaginary.

7.2.2.3 Constellations of Practice

Constellations of practice is a more established principle in community education and FE more broadly, due to the pioneering work of the #APConnect programme for Advanced Practitioners since 2018; educators who have an additional responsibility to contribute to the improvement of education by coaching and training their peers[212]. Building on the genealogy of this research, in 2018 I theorised this practice with Kay Sidebottom, and the shift from 'communities' to 'constellations' of practice arose directly from this research project and from our previous work together at Northern College (Mycroft, 2016). This is the messiest entanglement of the Imaginary; guided by The Bowerbird's affirmative ethical praxis and my stated positionality, my judgement is that it would be remiss to gloss over this, as it makes a significant contribution to smoothing out an activist space.

#APConnect is currently recruiting to its third year and the language of 'constellations' has replaced that of 'communities of practice' – or 'CoP' in its orbit. Although operating across all settings and contexts of FE – not just community education - this (possibly final) year pushes the project still further into the domain of the Imaginary. Of the three constellations which make up the 'community of practice' strand of #APConnect – called, for historical reasons, B, C and C+ - both C and C+ will operate in the public domain, forming transversal alliances with other constellations (#FEResearch, #JoyFE, #APNetwork, #PDNorth) and thus transcending the boundaries of the ETF-funded 'project'. In this way, we hope to build capacity for action, which can engage the other constellation domains of influence and governance.

Constellations of Practice offer a number of opportunities to the Imaginary, if those which are active can join into a critical mass. Price (2020) believes such a critical mass is possible; Braidotti (2020, 2020a) exhorts it: neither provides a road map and here we have a sense of the Imaginary transgressing the borders of the cartography and heading into the territory of dragons. A recent report by Deepwell, Hawksey and Proctor-Legge (2020), funded by the Ufi Trust, an educational charity, identifies communities of practice across broader FE, including those mentioned above. It includes many more which have a 'top-down' genesis (stimulated by, for example, The Society for Education and Training – an arm of ETF[213] - and the government-funded digital infrastructure body JISC) but which could potentially be galvanised by a new lexicon of values (and could quite as easily begin to re-territorialise hard-won ground). It is a critical moment, which is why is so essential not to pause the activist work, even at the cost of compromising this research.

Constellations of practice are currently operating to amplify 'quality improvement' work in wider FE, including community education, and as rhizomatic structures of support. For example, a

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[212] Full disclosure: I have led this drive as part of the #APConnect team, as part of my paid work over the last two years, and will be working on the contract for a further year.
[213] FE is metaphorically incestuous, with community education on the margins of this. The sense of many people knowing one another could be exploited through a new lexicon of values.

call-out on Twitter to suggest effective ways to communicate quality improvement initiatives across a distributed workforce was quickly shared across a number of active constellations earlier today, bringing forth a number of affirmative suggestions. This did not happen as part of the #APConnect project, and would not have happened so effectively and rapidly, had #APConnect not broken up the ground. At some point in the future, the intelligence gathered by a single tweet might be amplified still further, via the #JoyFE💛 monthly magazine, perhaps[214] or the #FEResearch podcast, two lockdown initiatives which are growing in popularity. Or, supported by professional writers employed by the #APConnect, the initial tweeter might be encouraged to write her own article for the widely read sector journal, TES FE.

The threat of re-territorialisation is always present, and not always a negative threat; Deleuze and Guattari, remember, did not see the tree and the rhizome as oppositional to one another and re-territorialisation often leads to opening up new spaces on a further frontier (Amsler, 2015). To close this section with philosopher of hope, Rebecca Solnit:

> "*The stars we are given. The constellations we make. That is to say, stars exist in the cosmos, but constellations are the imaginary lines we draw between them, the readings we give the sky, the stories we tell.*"
>
> (Solnit, 2009 p.XX)

7.2.3 Crossing Place 3 – Pedagogies of Care

We have already encountered research around pedagogies of care and love. Hegarty (2016), offers practical pedagogies based around photography and 'photo-voice' to engage in dialogue around masculinity with Irish fathers who have found themselves to be stay-at-home parents. Feeley's (2014) work with survivors of the Irish 'laundries' (for unmarried mothers) also enacts dialogical approaches. In earlier work cited by both Hegarty and Feeley; Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon (2007, p.5) make a case for pedagogies of care based on a rejection of Cartesian rationalism familiar to the genealogy of this research:

> "*Neoliberalism has deepened the disrespect for the relationally engaged, caring citizen that it has inherited from classical liberalism, not only by devaluing the emotional work that has to be done to care, but by validating consumption and possessive individualism as defining features of human identity.*"

They recognise the "*repeated referencing of 'leading male thinkers' in sociological scholarship in education*" (ibid., p.7) mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation and, whilst they do not recommend specific practical pedagogies, they advise on curriculum grounded in feminist principles of relationality:

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[214] Established April 2020; downloads are roughly doubling in number each month.

> "*A carer citizen would not just learn about the care of self, intimate
> others or colleagues but also about the unknown, universal other to
> whom one is relationally defined in the global economic and social system.*"

<div align="right">(ibid., p.15)</div>

Purcell, focusing on radical community work, makes a case for a "*hopeful pedagogy of love*", grounded in the pedagogies of Freire and hooks. Both hooks and Freire adopted dialogic pedagogies; hooks's 'engaged pedagogy' (1994), also described by her as a 'pedagogy of hope' (2003), has much in common with both the genealogy of this research and the many calls from research participants for approaches which engage the individual human in the context of their lived experience and the diversity of the world around them. For illustration, here again is Participant 33:

> "*So, community education is about, also, self-articulating our traced patterns
> and learning where and how they came from. Choosing, from a position of agency
> and self-empowerment which patterns we will choose and which we will change
> and how we will, or might, effect both.*"

hooks has been much criticised; her radical openness and vulnerability (see, for example, her book All About Love, 1999) is her method of enacting "*professional love*" and her engaging writing style has been described as lacking 'rigour', a claim explored and refuted by Jackson, 2010; who claims that the patriarchal structures of academia are complicit in this attack. hooks refuses to provide a 'toolkit' for engaged pedagogy, on the grounds that context is important; she proposes a reflective and co-creative process for teacher and students (2004). Freire's approach to the pedagogies of literacy are more practically presented and have been contextualised in various ways, see for example Kirkwood and Kirkwood (1989) on the streets of Edinburgh.

Sennett's 2013 book, Together, is dedicated to the affirmative impact of dialogic processes in a dialectical world. He explores the affordances of dialogic practice in pedagogy and beyond, specifically referencing 'intermissions', or safe spaces (p.249):

> "*These intermissions in retrospect seemed enormously important,
> since the experiences planted the seed for the kind of behaviour,
> open rather than defensive, which had served people to make their
> way outside the community.*"

Thinking Environment (Kline, 2009; Mycroft, 2019, Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2018a) has been mentioned several times throughout this dissertation as a pro-social pedagogy which focuses on creating space for the development of critical thinking. It is outlined in Appendix A and is central to many of the recommendations of the Imaginary. It is fundamentally an anti-competitive pedagogy, with potential for building constellations of supportive practice which, it is hoped, will challenge the competitive structures of education in today's UK.

7.2.4 Crossing Place 4 – Community Research

Although the word 'research' did not feature heavily in participants' words, the act of research is fundamentally present in the numerous explicit and implicit references to co-production and in material which stressed the importance of knowledge content being aligned to communities' wishes and needs. Someone needs to find out this information and the Imaginary identifies the development of the flourishing grassroots #FEResearch movement as being a prime opportunity for co-creative work, where 'teachers' work alongside 'students'/community members as co-researchers. This brings us back to the domain of community development work, as it was defined by the Community Development Foundation and others in the 2000s, where community research programmes were at the heart of 'needs analysis'; often designated 'participatory action research' (see, for example, Gilchrist, 2019).

A thorough exploration of participatory action research is outside the scope of this dissertation, but there are several models which may prove helpful to future activism; for example the collaborative stories spiral of Gilchrist, Holmes, Lee, Moore and Ravenscroft (2015) and the ABCD community development model, which has an established, evidence-based literature (see, for example, Mathie, Cameron and Gibson (2017)). The Imaginary draws upon the work of Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014, p.5) to establish a case for participatory action research:

> *"Others may also research social and educational life, but participants have special access to how social and educational life and work are conducted in local sites by virtue of being 'insiders'. Some in the research literature think that being an insider involves a penalty—not being able to see things in a disinterested or 'objective' way. By contrast, we believe that insiders have special advantages when it comes to doing research in their own sites and to investigating practices that hold their work and lives together in those sites—the practices that are enmeshed with those sites."*

Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon identify "*five things only participatory action research can do*" (ibid., p.4) including, crucially, providing a critical lens on the limitations and mis-steps of professional practice. This feedback loop suggests the "*rebirth in organised reciprocity*" called for by Participant 169 and included in the introduction to the imaginary.

Extending into participatory action research would demand a shift in emphasis for the #FEResearch 'movement', where research *with*, rather than *on*, students is still the exception, not the rule: it would involve crossing the invisible border between 'student' and 'non-student' in communities and there is no current state funding which would enable this. But there may be other actors in communities who are doing participatory action research and this could be the starting point for a new constellation.

7.2.5 Crossing Place 5 – Professional Learning

Respondents' push towards a re-imagining of the teacher's role was significant. Even in the initial survey, there was a blurring of lines; community education was envisaged by many as being spaces (physical, virtual) where people passed their skills and knowledge on to one another. This is very different not only from the traditionally viewed 'sage on a stage' drawn from the archetypes of Greek philosophers and from educators down the ages - whether religious, school or university-based, or the home-schooling governess - who had power (over children, at least). In the last century, the genealogy of independent working-class education lost much ground to what Apple (1979) referred to as "*the best liberal traditions of 'helping people'*". Laudable, in some cases, but not what the survey respondents were referring to. Even the Freirean 'culture circles' (Kirkwood and Kirkwood, 1979) and the encounter groups which were dotted about community education during the latter half of the twentieth century still had a 'teacher' at their helm and one who was increasingly 'professionalised' and inducted into compliancy culture. With an increasingly bureaucratised workload and digital thrown into the mix, particularly during Covid lockdown, even the latter day, neuro-science led 'new traditionalists' have faced new challenges. What is the teacher's role in a re-imagined community education and what is the professional standing of that role?

Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon (2007, p.14) consider the educator's role as "*an affectively engaged caring person*", a notion which was threaded through the material, even though many respondents were not community educators themselves. Paradoxically, the teacher's caring role was both acknowledged and dismissed: "*...the teacher is largely seen as a midwife for delivering student performance*" (ibid.), judged directly on that performance and sometimes on recruitment too. The limits on educators' nurturing capital[215] caused by the increasing bureaucratisation of the role was also seen in the CLMH (community) Educators' Survey (Mycroft, 2017), where participants described how they found capacity for administrative tasks at the expense of pedagogy and pastoral care. To do anything differently would be to risk censure and even disciplinary procedure.

Apple (2013, p.22) talks about the risks educators take when they attempt to engage in "*significant political/educational action in and through schools and other educational institutions";* a stance echoed by Hughes (2015, p.58), in her exploration of digital pedagogy: *"frivolity as resistance".* According to Apple (2019) there are two threats - the threat of believing you are right - which I have witnessed often in progressive, left-leaning educators, particularly in my former workplace with its tradition of Labour and trade union education. The second is the threat to those who hold power within the organisation or service. He also warns of the dangers of "*rhetorical politics",* stirring up others who have less privilege or capacity to safely enact what they have learned. Apple strongly contends that educators and researchers should never simply "*academize the political*" but also be engaged in activist work of some kind (ibid., p.27).

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[215] Lynch and Cantillon make the following distinction between emotional and nurturing capital: "*While emotional capital (and the associated emotional work involved in love labouring and caring that produces it) is integral to nurturing capital, not all nurturing involves emotional work…[it] can involve the enactment of practical tasks with limited emotional engagement at a given moment."* (2007, p.16).

Activist educators Paulo Freire and bell hooks each wrote about the dangers of activist education. Apple on his friend Freire:

> "*...he had himself engaged in the hard and disciplined (and sometimes dangerous) work of putting theory and practice together.*"

<div align="right">(2013, p.27)</div>

Freire's practice was situated in a culture and society very different from England in 2020 and he has been subject to many revisions not least by himself of his earlier work[216]. Yet his wisdom persists in all pedagogies which intend to be empowering. As Amsler writes (2010, p.1): "*...there is something that draws me back to Pedagogy[217]. I think it is the radical hope.*" In this journalistic piece (ibid.), Amsler describes how Freire, anchored to his own time and place, is also relevant for now:

> "*As British education careers literally into a banking model, it is bizarrely contemporary.*"

Apple's call for "*decentred unities*" (2013, p.14), collaborative spaces of shared leadership, finds resonance with both Freire and participant material which made many calls for co-constructed spaces, to share knowledge, skills and experience. Given that community education will have to push hard if it is to actively practice equality in an unequal society, teachers and students will come together and mix as an 'undercommons' (Moten and Harney, 2013), across all their intersections of identity. Apple doesn't use that term, favouring Fraser's accommodation with Marxism in a "*combined politics of redistribution and recognition*" (1997): social class and the need to redistribute economic wealth takes its place alongside the struggles of identity-based activism for equality. Neither is Apple uncritical of postcolonialism, suspecting - probably rightly - its use as a buzzword in academic circles, without an activist practice to back up the fine words. He offers Young's definition:

> "*Postcolonialism...is a general name for those insurgent knowledges that come from the subaltern, the dispossessed, and seek to change the terms under which we all live.*"

<div align="right">(Young, 2003, p.20)</div>

The Imaginary therefore takes a line of flight which not only blends the teacher-student relationship but also reaches out into communities where the 'preferably unheard[218]' voices of

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[216] His respectful take-down by bell hooks (1994, p.47) around race and gender is powerful and graceful; taking place in a dialogic encounter between hooks (her writing voice) and Gloria Watkins (herself) ("*It is feminist thinking that allows me to engage in a constructive critique of Freire's work.*") Such 'blind spots', hooks concludes, should not cause one to overlook his insight.

[217] Freire's 1972 book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', ironically referred to as canonical. Amsler (2010, p.1) again: "*But canons are closures, in the Freirean spirit. Better to read it and decide.*"

[218] Arundhati Roy's term echoes throughout this research.

the dispossessed can be found and heard, through participatory research, in turn engaging diversity into communities of practice. Burawoy (2005, p.13), drawing on Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual":

> "...[they work] *in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counter-public.*"

Encouragingly, Apple follows Freire and Raymond Williams in seeing revolution as a slow and incremental process, widening out the sphere of influence and accepting it will inevitably be colonised (re-territorialised) by the powers of neo-liberalism throwing a bone - but ground has been won and the work can continue elsewhere. He also affirms that,

> "*...dominant groups would not be so angry at schools and other educational institutions if we were doing what they wanted.*"
>
> (2013, p.166)

If we answer the call from respondents to blur the lines between who teaches and who learns, who then teaches the teacher? And what needs to be taught? Although various 'subjects' – ranging from literacy and numeracy skills to 'leisure' pursuits – were mentioned in the participant material, there was an equal and urgent call to ask communities, first, what they wanted to learn.

Freire, writing in 1996, describes a trajectory we recognise clearly in 2020:

> "*The dominant class, deaf to the need for a critical reading of the world, insists on the purely technical training of the working class, training with which that class should reproduce itself as such. Progressive ideology, however, cannot separate technical training from political preparation, just as it cannot separate the practice of reading the world from reading discourse.*"
>
> (Freire, 1996 p.88)

There has been no dedicated training for community educators, beyond occasional subversive curricula and some role-specific training (such as the WEA's social purpose online programme for new tutors). Community development training, which may have provided useful skills, was never recognised for use in a formal community education environment and in any case mostly folded in England with the demise of the Community Development Foundation in 2016[219]. Who trains the educators - and in what, if educator, student and not-yet student are to work together as equals - is a significant line of flight for the Imaginary. It has quite a job to do:

> "*How do we interrupt common sense? How do we create pedagogies that are*

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[219] Ironically, its demise began with the huge injection of 'community regeneration' funds from Europe in the early 2000s. Freirean inspired 'community development' and economically-driven 'community regeneration' were not believed to be coterminous.

deeply connected to the daily realities of people's lives and to struggles to overcome exploitation at a time when the right has already understood how such connections might be creatively (albeit manipulatively) made? Who is this 'we' in the first place?"

<div align="right">(Apple, 2013, p.30)</div>

A suggestion in the participant material that existing community education providers might shift their provision to offer training *in* community education, provided a helpful line of flight for the Imaginary. This would fundamentally shift current educators into a meta-analytical role, which might not suit the skillset or desires of all. As Lunenberg, Korthagen and Swennen (2007, p.598) evidence, modelling teaching practice as a teacher educator requires a vulnerability that subject teaching does not.

Referring specifically to the need to engage 'missing voices' into the transversal assembly of education, Apple (2013, p.75) summarises the challenges of co-productive education and warns against trying to do too much at once. Happily, the Imaginary positions itself as a starting point only:

"*I cannot do everything, nor can I know everything no matter how hard I continue to try. This is a collective task of restoring collective memories and histories of struggles, of co-teaching one another about these histories of struggles, of co-teaching one another about these histories and their current iterations of finding spaces where these struggles have intersected and can intersect today and in the future, and of forming the decentred unities that are dialectically related to collectively learning from one to another."*

Summary

This chapter brings together participant material with perspectives gleaned from the cartography and highlights five crossing places where perspectives converge. These will be taken forward in the next chapter, to the Imaginary.

Chapter 8 - The Imaginary

I am a mansion with many rooms. Or am I a room with many
mansions contained within me?
I am the rebirth of organised reciprocity.
I am intergenerational: all ages together learning from each
other supporting each other.
In my world, nobody is living with illiteracy:
We see, we feel, we think, we smell, we taste and we touch.

I am enabling, inequality dissolving.
I am the driver of systemic change by not tweaking the edges
of causation, impact and outcomes.
I am capability building through understanding context and
how that has a different meaning and implications to us as
individuals, individually.

(but, what might that look like in a country where reading the
wrong type of books means you have to flee? Where your
safety and livelihood is not guaranteed? Where exercising
freedom of speech means you lose your freedom?)

Thinks:
When no-one is an 'other', made-up divisions of colour, age,
life, situation, are irrelevant.

So, we individually understand and recognise that diverse
peoples bring diversity of thought and unending future ways
of being.

Thinks:
We do not go back to old systems of thought restricting how
that can look, how that can be. But the realities are we'd need
to strip back the system and start afresh.

So, in my world, everyone has a part to play. We get lost too.
Deliberately. And then we dance.

Education

Is it how to we learn?
Is it by example?
Is it from printed works?
Is it from online forces?
Is it by understanding we won't be able to know everything?
Realising the known knowns, but owning the known unknowns?

It is: fun. Less fear of others. Rejoicing in successes.
It is: promoting people and community over things
It is: less of a reliance on things, but meanwhile understanding
that things can promote understanding and learning if we can
use them smartly.

Thinks:
We should have a better understanding of the role of money
and power and how that has shaped our thought in the western
world and contributed to world inequality. Meanwhile understanding
that finance is needed in some shape or form to build infrastructures
of thought and community structures. Finance as we know it, or not
yet as we may dream it?

What those structures might look like can be as yet undetermined ...

But it is not: patriarchal systems where someone has to lead and
give direction:it is not full of shoulds or shouldn'ts that don't convince
anybody.

We recognise and rejoice in the dark sides of human beings to
throw up the light. We do not condemn when things go wrong as
it's a part of learning - not labelling it as failure. We offer balancing
ideas. Stories. Not pity. We use sensing and presencing as support
mechanisms.

Yet, by,
Understanding that we are nature, not apart from nature ...
Understanding balance and appropriateness of taking time ...
Understanding and celebrating pride in 'our' cultures yet
understanding country barriers are fictions ...
Understanding what has gone before and developing narratives
based on hope of change and growth ...
Understanding that not everyone thinks the way you do.

We, are,
Thinking about how it could be different. Daring to try another way.
Building up community and education and not pulling it down.
Hoping. Trying. Sharing, Making. Doing. Caring.

We, are, Listening.

Are you?

Participant 169

"Community education would be an act of courage. A leap of faith.
A reimagining of ourselves and each other."

<div align="right">Participant 42</div>

The Imaginary presented below is a starting point, a distillation of a cartography developed over six years, in collaboration with critical friends and the generous voices of nearly 400 participants. It offers a final 'agential cut' (Somerville, 2016), this time slicing together the cartography's 'crossing places', with current activist projects in community education and FE more broadly, imbued with the values which emerged from the research.

It deliberately resists the 'good practice' case study approach of respected material from many of the thinkers drawn upon above: Price (2020), Sennett (2013), Sitrin and Colectiva Sembrar (2020), Amsler (2015) and others, since that is not what an Imaginary is. An Imaginary "*maps co-ordinates of hope on otherwise 'flat' surfaces of possibility"*: Amsler's definition of Bloch's frontiers – not limitations – of hope (2015, p.1). The surface is flat because it has been the work of this research to briefly de- territorialise a space where new thinking can take shape; once it is written it becomes immediately old and subject to re-territorialisation again; the inevitable flamenco between rhizome and tree. By this time, the Imaginary will have been mapped onto a public space – the Padlet, above – and subjected to shifting new 'transversal constellations' it will be taking on new forms, in new space.

The Imaginary is deliberately brief, because it can't be the work – or the vision - of one person. No attempt is made to do more than sketch out possibilities. It will be the work of active and emerging constellations to take forward the work, seeking out those voices which are still unheard and enduring the onslaught of life in the Anthropocene. This will include making alliances with individuals, organisations and other entities whose existing work can help keep the 'weak light' of hope alive. The reader is respectfully requested to read the Imaginary as a brief flicker, which may yet in its uncertainty offer more life to come than the confident, ignored certainties of policy briefing reports.

8.1 The Practice of Values

The crossing place of values was the most powerful triangulation point of the cartography. The material was sifted for values-words, which were drawn into a word-cloud (Appendix F). Reading through the cartographical overlays with an interpretive eye (this *is* the Director's Cut)

helped distil those hundreds of words into ten working practices for the purposes of this initial Imaginary.

This Imaginary reviews each value and presents the practice of these ten values against each of the Crossing Places explored in Section 8, giving examples of current activism where these exist. This is not an attempt to impose any morality of values on the Imaginary; it is simply a starting point. One recommendation of the Imaginary is that educators, students, leaders, governors and others in communities (who may, of course, all be one and the same), be supported to develop values practice around their own personal ethic.

Community Education Practice Values

care

hope

place

solidarity

joy

difference

equality

openness

love

trust

8.1.1 The Practice of Care

The Practice of Care puts wellbeing at the heart of community education. Lynch, Lyons and Cantillon (2007) and Feeley (2014) explore this practice in community literacy teaching; Kaur (2020) expands on the theme of 'collective care'. This would be a non-infantilising practice which extends to all the *documents* of a reconfigured community education: including pedagogy, structures and employment practices. The 'pop-up bank holidays' introduced by Simon Blake at Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England (Blake, 2020) are collective care days which embrace the wellbeing of non-humans and the environment. Crucially, the business also shuts down so there is less temptation to 'check in'.

Like all the practices of the Imaginary, the Practice of Care both changes culture and requires a changed culture to thrive.

8.1.2 The Practice of Diversity

Kline (2009, p.52) defines diversity as 'being fully present as yourself' and as bringing in absent identities, Braidotti's "*missing voices*" (2013), which includes the 'voices' of non-human actors. Despite the UK Government's panicked attempt to stop the tide (Trilling, 2020) the decolonisation project needs to happen, with white people playing their part, as do other equalities campaigns, for example around neurodiversity (Armstrong, 2011). Forming transversal alliances is the first step.

A re-imagined community education needs to go beyond the tick boxes of the Equality Act 2010 (with its own missing voices) to provide spaces where people can be comfortable in *all* their identities, without having to be the representative voice of a single one of them. This can be practised through pro-social facilitation; not just of 'classroom' practice but of every engagement where diverse opinions are welcomed and listened to, formed as they are from diverse life experiences. The work of peace activists has much to teach the recalibrated community education about diversity, if this standpoint is taken. There are many processes, such as Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication (2003), which slow down the hurly-burly of 'normal' conversation, recognising that it is not 'normal' at all, but the harried busyness of neoliberal life.

8.1.3 The Practice of Equality

The practice of equality in a re-imagined community education goes beyond basic legal requirements for which campaigners fought hard, but which can only be a starting point. The Thinking Environment principle of 'equal as thinkers' (Kline, 2009) is enacted by staying inside simple and rigorous rules of communication, such as no interrupting. In her latest book, (2020[242]) Kline focuses on the power of this simple rule to reconnect atomised lives:

> *"Polarisation is not a result of disagreement. It is a result of disconnection. When we disconnect from each other, when we see each other no longer as human beings but as threats, we polarise. And the first, most forceful disconnector is interruption."*

> (Kline, 2020a, np)

It seems simplistic to write that equality can be practised through a rule of no-interruption. My experience of the Thinking Environment, most recently in the #JoyFE💛 Ideas Rooms described below, bears witness to this, as just one practice of equality.

8.1.4 The Practice of Hope

There are many theorists of hope in dark times. Amsler (2015), as I have shown, draws on Ernst Bloch and Hannah Arendt. Henry Giroux writes widely on hope as a practice of constructing a language which allows for possibilities (2002). For Giroux, hope is at the heart of reconstructing a new political agency. Theirs is a powerful, radical and affirmative hope, not the meme-ification of the word, which can potentially weaponise or individualise possibilities (Bulatovic, 2019).

False hope leads to bitterness, so as a practice it needs to be backed up with action. If Donovan's conditions for trust (see below, 2019[220]) were on a virtual spiral, the practice of hope would lead to further transformation, collectively. Rebecca Solnit's work on radical hope has illuminated the process of this research throughout. Solnit describes it as an activist practice which takes effort:

> "*Hope is not a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky.*
> *It is an axe you break down doors with in an emergency. Hope should shove*
> *you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from*
> *endless war, from the annihilation of the earth's treasures and the grinding down of the*
> *poor and marginal...to hope is to give yourself to the*
> *future - and that commitment to the future is what makes the present inhabitable.*"

(Solnit, 2005 p.xii)

8.1.5 The Practice of Joy

As I close this dissertation, the word 'joy' is everywhere in popular culture. From Marie Kondo's joyful tidying-up routines (2020) to foot-high decorative letters, it seems to be having a moment. The problem with all the joy-related 'self-help' practices is that they are individualistic, further atomising us and fixing us in our uniqueness.

Here re-enters Spinoza's notion of joy as a relational practice. Joy was Spinoza's immanent 'god in all of us', found in the *zoë*-sharing connections between us. As a practice, joy is an ethics in the affirmative posthuman sense explored in this research. A consistently affirmative stance which is critical but not cynical and which allows for possibilities of radical hope. The practice of joy in rebuilding an enhanced community education would be in bringing people together to focus on those possibilities.

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[220] See below: **Transformation→ Unity→ Thriving→ Optimism**

8.1.6 The Practice of Love

Love made a late entry to the values lexicon because it couldn't *not* be there. Despite a career-long reading of hooks (1999), this most powerful of words had lost meaning through ubiquity. Purcell's (2020) work evidences the thirst social workers had for the concept, in his research, and reminded me of its centrality. As community education is re-imagined, so might the word love be likewise reclaimed, in a collective sense: the Greek *agape* or love for others.

"*We would all love better*," writes hooks, "*if we used it as a verb*" (1999, loc216). The re-imagining of community education could begin with hooks's advice to develop a shared definition of love.

8.1.7 The Practice of Openness

Openness is sometimes taken to mean truthfulness but a re-imagined community education would have a broader conceptualisation. David Price's book 'Open' (2013) explores the concept of 'commons' as a social movement, a culture and behaviour shift.

> "*On one level, Open is about changing national values and corporate priorities. On another level, it's deeply personal. For this book, and this social movement, is about the story we choose to tell ourselves.*"

> (Price, 2013 loc. 2781)

Openness is easily definable as a practice and counter-cultural to the competitive nature of education in a marketized landscape. Developing anti-competitive practices would be fundamental to a re-imagined community education.

8.1.8 The Practice of Place

Kline's (2009) claim that place matters is echoed by Rebecca Solnit (2007, p.9):

> "*Places matter. Their rules, their scale, their design include or exclude civil society, pedestrianism, equality, diversity (economic and otherwise), understanding of where water comes from and garbage goes, consumption or conservation. They map our lives.*"

Place matters to the research participants. Digital has its place, but community still means physical to many people, despite – or perhaps because of – the restrictions of COVID-19. Rather than the "*warm glow*" notion of community warned against by Mackness, Bell and Funes (2016 p.16), place in the Imaginary is where humans and non-humans most powerfully encounter one another. There were few calls for new buildings. The participants' call was to use what we have - and use it better.

'Place' has powerful gatekeepers, physically, emotionally and culturally. There is more work to be done, for example, about diversity in rural places (Defra, 2019). This research has overwhelmingly shown that place-based research – and the reclaiming of place – is a place to start.

8.1.9 The Practice of Trust

Christina Donovan, whose work on trust (2019) infuses this research, identifies a sequence of four conditions for trust, each building upon the last, which offers a framework for the intentional growth of trust within community education:

Transformation→ Unity→ Thriving→ Optimism

'Transformation' is an end-product word in community education and it generally refers to an individual's transformation, from deficit to (socially acceptable) achievement. By putting transformation at the start, Donovan signals that significant change needs to happen, for people to believe that trust could be refreshed. The reconfiguring of a more expansive community education could signal this. In Donovan's model, people gather around this change and begin to thrive in the new unity. This engenders optimism which she defines as 'hope'.

In a podcast dialogue towards the end of this research Donovan and I share a moment of mutual realisation when we realise the full convergence of our work, despite its differing genealogies (FEResearch Podcast, 2020). At this point using Donovan's trust framework to guide community education's work towards a far horizon began to emerge.

8.1.10 The Practice of Solidarity

This word was so nearly 'togetherness', inspired by Sennett's (2012) work on co-operation and dialogic practices. Then 'unity' seemed more powerful, because the first challenge of the Imaginary is to bring together the disparate strands of a community education that has never been 'together'. Sennett uses unity in a negative sense, when contrasting a 'top-down' version of solidarity with an inclusive, grassroots approach (p.39). In fact, at the latest possible stage, 'solidarity' found its place in this lexicon.

It is undeniable that 'solidarity' is smeared in popular consciousness, along with socialism, but that's no reason not to reclaim the word. Hunter and Oduor (2020) define solidarity as both identifying with and making cause with (in their case) an identity group. The practice of solidarity for this Imaginary means identifying with and making cause with *all* those involved in community education, its 'undercommons'.

8.2 The Lines of Flight

The Imaginary processes the values and crossing places into five lines of flight, which are presented here in narrative form, and via a live Padlet, which enables co-productive activism. The Lines of Flight are essentially the 'headlines' of this research: where it can go next. They are the crossing places imbued with the values of the piece.

8.2.1 Design and the Practices of Place and Values

Care, Diversity, Equality, Hope, Joy, Love, Openness, Place, Trust, Unity

Design principles are fundamental to any project or initiative; essentially its metaphorical DNA. Yet the design of community education – of all education – has not revisited first principles since the Industrial Revolution (the August 'summer' (=harvest) holiday being just one example, as Ken Robinson famously claimed in his popular animated talk). Another is the question posed by Cormier (Bali and Honeychurch, 2015) during the cMOOC #Rhizo14: in an ethical community education, where 'knowledge' is no longer just the preserve of the educator, is cheating possible? A posthuman rethink focuses on process, not outcome and so the process by which community education is stripped back is key.

Example

The Ideas Room (Mycroft 2020) is an adaptation of Kline's Thinking Environment which is growing in popularity across all settings and contexts of FE[221]. Here, participants gather to share

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[221] And beyond. Ann Hegarty and Maggie Feeley, cited in this research, are regular attenders, recognising in its practice a pedagogy of care.

ideas at a vulnerable stage; or to offer the gift of uninterrupted listening. As with all the applications of a Thinking Environment, the facilitators hold ten components in place (see Appendix A): the central 'morality' of the process, which nevertheless retains much to offer when ranged against conventional meeting formats.

As the academic year 2020-21 begins, several community and broader FE providers are being introduced to the Ideas Room process in their own settings; and it forms part of the offer for the #APConnect constellations of practice this year. In these online spaces, participants are required to be 'equal as thinkers', leaving role, rank and ego at the door. As a consequence, power is enacted differently, opening up possibilities for change.

Does it matter that the community education practices identified here are not coterminous with the ethical heart of the Thinking Environment? Not at all, since the Imaginary has no intention of being neat. What is more important – and relies on time and goodwill, rather than funding – is that Ideas Room practice spreads its rhizomatic offer throughout existing community education: and beyond, into further reaches of adult education and community 'development'.

8.2.2 Pedagogies of Care and the Practice of Values

Care, Diversity, Equality, Joy, Openness, Trust, Unity

Pedagogies of care, based on pro-social dialogic processes, are emerging from #JoyFE Ideas Rooms, which have been running at least twice every week since the early days of lockdown (Mycroft, 2020) and which are outlined in Design Principles, above. There is no doubt that there are growing numbers of pedagogies of care, derived from different genealogies, across all settings and contexts of community education, which are both pro-social (community building) and dialogic.

Example

#FEForestSchool[222] is an emerging constellation of educators who are interested in bringing the practice of Forest Schools (currently 'a child-centred inspirational learning process[245]) to community education, and FE more broadly, with a particular focus on working with ESOL (English as a second or other language) learners, many of whom are refugees. The constellation was established during COVID-19 lockdown and practices will continue to emerge, and develop, into the new academic year. The desire for education outdoors emerged as a strong theme in the participant material and, with its focus on bringing together the human and non-human 'worlds', this is a way in which the post-anthropocentric element of posthumanism can be brought into an embodied reality.

The time has come to gather together these pedagogies of care, diversity, equality, joy, openness, trust and unity. Self-publishing, or publishing through ethical, online publishers (such as Thread (Price, 2020) is now possible, without funding. Co-writing processes are now made possible through sharing platforms such as Google. There is no reason why co-writing should not take place as a learning activity, between 'educators', 'students' and others.

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[222] https://www.forestschoolassociation.org/

8.2.3 Transversal Alliances and the Practice of Values

Care, Diversity, Equality, Joy, Openness, Trust, Unity

This is a practice that is already underway, is spreading and is in danger of becoming incorporated (or re-territorialised). There are many existing constellations of practice in FE, some of which have reach into community education. The time has come to join them together, not into a single constellation but into a coalition of constellations in pursuit of influencing power. #AdultConversations is an alliance already tentatively in the planning stage and which, influenced by this research and discussions in the Ideas Room (see above), is already widening its remit towards 'community development' and vocational higher education courses, especially those which attract adult ('mature') learners such as nursing.

The first step, via a series of online and physical events, is to rhizomatically begin the development of a new lexicon, with the practice values identified here as its starting point (it doesn't matter where it ends). The second step is to map a strategy for influence, which, with regional devolution, will necessarily rely on local constellations to further. This will include a strategy for funding, which is anti-competitive and sustainable, and the potential de-territorialisation of existing and limiting *potestas* spaces.

Example

JoyFE began as a conversation at the start of lockdown; a broadcast which became a constellation of practice. Joyful is defined as 'critical not cynical' (after Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015). It is now a loose constellation of around 30 educators from all settings and contexts of FE, including community education, progressively rotating facilitation of the Ideas Rooms, as capacity grows. It exists as a WhatsApp group, a hashtag, a monthly magazine and a broadcast. A five month track record does not change a sector, but it models a way of working which has been far-reaching and effective despite every one of those involved - other than myself - having a full-time job. #JoyFE💛 practice is working its way deeply and intentionally into organisations and could possibly suggest a way in which lines of flight and lines of consistency might find an ease with one another. This is possibly temporary, but maybe will be in time for lasting tributaries of change. A notable feature of #JoyFE is that we intentionally work alongside other FE constellations in a spirit of mutual aid, which is anti-competitive. Employing Thinking Environment practices make it possible to have difficult conversations around territory and to support one another without the expectation of credit.

At all stages, it is important to resist incorporation into a formal group, or clique. Constellations are not only time-boundaried, they have permeable borders, enabling some to leave and others to join from the periphery. And at all times, transversal alliances should practice a relational ethics of joy. This is work that needs no funding, as long as capacity can continue to grow.

8.2.4 Community Research and the Practice of Values

Care, Diversity, Equality, Joy, Openness, Trust, Unity

Community research as an inclusive, participatory, co-constructed practice, has a detailed and honourable history, which has much to offer. Research, constructed in this manner, is the way

into communities – geographical or otherwise – and has much to offer the transversal constellation, such as the establishment of 'legitimate knowledges' (Apple, 2013) and the inclusion of unheard voices.

Example

The #FEResearch movement, now comprising a regular series of FE Research Meets, alongside a podcast and video library ('BrewEdFE') is an established and thriving confederation of constellations, with key players operating across several projects. Extending its reach further into community education will take some focused work, as will the development of sharing practices and participatory research approaches, plus furthering emerging work around building alliances of FE (research with) and HE (research on) community education. Capacity is needed; and funding which falls outside that already provided by the state, in the guise of The Education and Training Foundation. The establishment of research cultures within organisations has the potential to contribute sustainable energy back to the constellations.

Thinking has already begun around the sharing of open resources, ethical processes and learning material; and how to develop a cycle of data which is ethical, available and usable for all. A shift from 'project' to 'research' is already underway in many parts of FE, with ambassadors well placed to take this learning, with a renewed focus on co-construction, deeper into community education, and into communities across all aspects of diversity including inter-generationally. The potential of this line of flight of the Imaginary is limitless.

8.2.5 Professional Learning and the Practice of Values

Care, Diversity, Equality, Joy, Openness, Trust. Unity

This strand of the Imaginary is invested in *potestas*, which will limit its potential without huge leaps of *potentia* imagination. It will require investment by the constellations engaged in transversal alliances and in community research, to create a critical, influential mass – or to move community education out of the remit of organisations all together.

Example

Apple's deconstruction of the work of the critical activist (2013, pp. 42-3) may be useful here:

1. Bear witness to negativity;
2. Point to contradictions and spaces of possible activism;
3. Broaden 'research' - listen to the unheard voices;
4. Reconstruct 'elite knowledge' (Gramsci) to make it purposeful for all;
5. Keep multiple traditions of radical and progressive work alive - keep the hopes and dreams; 6. Criticise those traditions and refresh them in different lexicons, without dumbing down;
7. Act in concert with others (not 'unattached intelligentsia');
8. Act as a deeply committed mentor;
9. Use your privilege/influence.

This research has identified areas for development in the professional learning of 'educators', 'students', 'leaders' and 'communities' (all socially constructed). It proposes a shift in thinking around leadership, along the lines of Price's (2020) notion of leaders as 'lead learners'; and

maybe even a shift in the lexicon, from 'teacher' and 'student' to 'producer' and 'user', which Price views as being on a distributed continuum, rather than in an arboreal hierarchy.

Based on suggestions from the participant material, the Imaginary also proposes a community governance programme, drawing in people who have done 'good things' in their community, of any age, to be trained in the practice and principles of ethical governance. This strand of the Imaginary requires a total rethink of how community educators are trained, to reflect their roles as 'knotworkers' (Yasukawa and Osmond, 2019), educator trainers and influencers, rather than 'subject experts', more useful to a community education which is focused on the co-production of learning experiences. Learning around distributed leadership could be an element of any infrastructure training programme: governance, 'community education' etc.

All five lines of flight of this Imaginary are ambitious; where they require *potestas* influence they are the most challenging to achieve. Yet the Imaginary is not a wish list. The incremental process of designing from the values up, will start to move even this line of flight in the direction of change.

Chapter 9 – Conclusions

The challenge of this concluding chapter is to express the complexity of the past six years into something that can be understood and put into action. My dissertation is an activist piece of work; it's also been a life-changing experience in using the brain I was born with.

I wanted to re-imagine community education. I didn't want that vision clouded by what went before, or what people assumed community education was. There was so much noise and clutter, that I couldn't see the wood for the trees, nor could anyone. What I needed to do was clear out everything that was obscuring my vision.

I needed to make the visible, invisible.

Often, in social justice research, what we are trying to do is make the invisible visible. We try to hear the voices that others don't hear - and amplify them - there's nothing wrong with that, except that they still need to be heard over the noise. And they may be limited by the stuff that we all assume, the untrue limiting assumptions we live as though they are true.

If I just amplified the unheard voices, it wouldn't be enough. There's too much debris to see clearly. Too many memories, words, assumptions, ideologies, books, siloes, structures, processes, organisations, systems, hierarchies, biases. I needed to make them invisible just long enough to see what might happen, if they weren't there.

I chose a new set of lenses – a posthuman toolkit. I used the lenses – or figurations - to cut through the material, like cutting a sapphire...until new lines of flight were revealed. Emerging from a posthuman process ontology – a belief that everything on earth is interconnected – I learned a different way of seeing life.

Posthumanism is both post-Vitruvian and post-anthropocentric. Vitruvian Man is what we think of as human. He was the poster boy of Enlightenment thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries, those West European philosophers who began the process of dividing the world up into taxonomies of birds, insects, animals...and humans. Colonisation accelerated here, with a centuries-long deepening of language and society which split us off from one another. Rene Descartes started the fashion for binaries - mind/body, nature/culture, man/woman. And, as I've learned recently from Emma Dabiri, 'white' was intentionally invented as a term to break the natural solidarity between black- and white-skinned workers in the plantations of America, in 1661. It's a social construct.

Enlightenment thinkers believed, to be fair, that anyone could elevate themselves socially through education, but that didn't explain how to become more male, more able-bodied, more neurotypical, more white. Vitruvian Man became fixed in our global human consciousness as the uber-human, the ideal. And those of us who were different in any way were 'other', and - over time - increasingly less than. The Australian philosopher Simone Bignall writes that the furthest away we are from the Vitruvian ideal, the more precarious our lives are.

I wanted to make the Vitruvian 'ideal' invisible, so that I could see past structures and oppressions to the full extent of all human potential, without denying that those structures and oppressions exist.

Secondly, post-anthropocentric means looking beyond the human's foundational belief that he has mastery over the earth. Luckily, there was a second Enlightenment tradition, one that was much less popular at the time or famous since, probably because it didn't serve the colonialist purpose. That second tradition comes from the work of Baruch Spinoza, a contemporary of the other Enlightenment thinkers. His 'God' was a life energy that we all share - that humans share with animals, plants, stars, soil, insects, seas, earth. This life energy is pretty much what the quantum school of physics started talking about in the late 20th century. Gilles Deleuze got hold of this idea, secularised Spinoza's god to 'joy' and brought him back into public view.

I wanted to bring Spinoza's joy into my research, by being playful and joyful, and by making human dominance invisible...at exactly the same time as the world locked down, skies cleared and fish swam again in Venice's canals.

I then spent two years thinking of a question to ask people. I knew I wanted to ask a single question of a lot of people, in the style of a mass observation survey. Mass observation started in the 1930s and continued during the Second World War when 'ordinary people' were invited via newspapers such as the Daily Express to send in diaries of the war years.

Two years is a long time but I was entangled in all the visible clutter and struggling to make it invisible. For example, for ages I'd caught the notion of class up in my question. Well class is real and has a real impact, but it's a social construct and for this work I needed to make it invisible...in the end I got there and my survey went out on social media in June and July 2019. I got a magnificent 360 responses. The question was,

What if you forgot all you know about community education, and imagined it for <u>now.</u> What would it look like?

I wanted to reach as broad a demographic as I could. I wasn't interested in just hearing from community educators, who would be as fettered as I was with the visible clutter. I wanted to hear from *everyone* - from Slimming World members in my hometown, to loved ones, to my son's friends, to people from my previous careers in health and community work. I most wanted to hear from people whose life experiences had been different to my own, with whom I did *not* share identity characteristics. I had limited but reasonable success with this...I'm very aware that the word cloud generated by the demographic statements looks very much like me.

By now we'd reached 2019 and my final visit to Utrecht. I'd had a small stroke six months earlier and I needed to slow myself down, so I travelled by overnight ferry and spent my days on the deck of a houseboat, writing and thinking. I couldn't take in any more information. I had to let it all compost in the back of my mind before I started writing up. Here I discovered the 'slow ontology' of Jasmine Ulmer, the intentional pausing of Leigh Patel and was reminded of the waves and pauses of Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment, my practice of 25 years. And how glad I am that I did, because amongst all the turbulence of the world we moved into a pandemic and the need to make the visible invisible *in order to think the unthought* became even more pressing. In July 2020 I released the question again and 'Take Two' provided a valuable post-lockdown counterpoint, with a further 40 replies.

This research is fuelled by an affirmative ethics. Here is where the Bowerbird came in. He fulfilled two purposes in the research, along with becoming my companion species over six years.

I took me **years** to realise that I didn't have to have off-the-peg, I could construct my own couture methodology on posthuman lines. Jasmine Ulmer helped immeasurably with this, but it took a lot of time. Same with the ethics of the piece, they couldn't be a ticky box or the whole endeavour would be wasted. My ethics are nomadic, and affirmative by choice. Four years ago, when I left the college I worked for, I left behind adherence to anyone else's rules for life and work. My life's work is equality and becoming freelance - a nomad - meant that my guiding values had to come from within, in pursuit of that. That's how I have chosen to live and work and the Bowerbird, if you like, became a metaphor for my conscience; he sits just in front of me here, a constant reminder to work on my self-awareness and check my actions - my work choices, my practice, my relations with others – and ask myself, will this further equality in all its forms?

Choosing an affirmative ethics comes directly from Spinoza's joy and helps me reject cynicism - I'm still critical of the structures, processes and hierarchies that create inequality, that's why I've worked so hard to make them invisible. But critique - which is everywhere around us - is always against the status quo and often doesn't move us on. I wanted this to be activist research, which reaches beyond the confines of the academic process.

By last summer, I had all the material and I began to work with the Bowerbird to cut it. Again, this was not a bespoke process. I had 45,000 participant words and I wanted to do them justice. In the real world, the blue satin Bowerbird finds his mate in South Australia by creating a gorgeous bower at mating time, not to live in, just for fancy, and he decorates it with all the blue shiny things he can find - the detritus of human life such as straws and bottle tops. I used his bird's eye view to pick out all the 'blue shiny things' of the research material in this initial cut, the visions for community education of all those 400 participants who, by the way, didn't seem to have the same problems as me with making the visible, invisible. The question had worked! The ideas were magnificent.

A little aside about my blue friend here. It's the male, of course, with the magnificent plumage but the female has the last word. She views all the bowers while the males are prancing about, chooses the one she wants and kicks over all the rest. And whilst the younger females go for the nicest bower, the older females choose the best dancer. There's a metaphor for life right there…

Back to the material. I was now down to 25,000 words which seemed more manageable. I had to do some work on fading out the visible once more. I did four further cuts - one for values words, which I made into a word cloud and kept by my side. For the final three I applied my posthuman lens. The Bowerbird's cut had provided me with twelve themes - things like, leadership, accountability, community, place - I colour-coded these (in blue, of course) and looked at each of them with a different posthuman lens.

Firstly, Vitruvian Man. This cut was about identifying where in the material power and inequality crept in. Sometimes it was overt, but more often it was contained in language that betrayed some kind of inner hierarchy of people. There's no judgement attached to this - it's how we are conditioned. So I looked for words - the 'my learners' that is so well-meaning but betrays paternalism, 'hard-to-reach' people is another one (it's the services that are hard to reach), the word 'parents' and that special inflexion which makes it clear that it doesn't mean 'parents-like-us' but a particular kind of parent, usually one living in poverty. In fact, thinking about who 'we' are is a posthuman sort of thing - all sorts of assumptions wrapped up in that one.

Secondly, I took another posthuman concept - rhizomes. A rhizome operates differently to a tree. The tree is the traditional hierarchy and we tend to think of it as a metaphor for life as well as work - the tree of life, roots and branches etc. The rhizome is different. Bluebells and other rhizomes operate from a tuber, which spreads underground. It's persistent, subversive - sometimes invasive. The original tuber can die or be dug up but patches of bluebells still appear - under the fence and in the neighbour's garden. They are there all the time, even when you can't see them. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney refer to this as the 'undercommons' - we are all already here, but the visibleness of all the other stuff means we are unseen and - deliberately - as Adrundhati Roy would say, 'preferably' - unheard. This cut looked for evidence of rhizomes in practice, ways in which ideas were communicated and repurposed and the potential for doing more of this.

The third and final cut was the figuration of 'constellations'. The wonderful Rebecca Solnit writes that, 'The stars we are given, the constellations we make.' Here I looked for the ways in which we meet up with one another through the rhizome and across those siloed boundaries that I was trying to make invisible, sharing our joyful energies and giving one another strength to keep doing the work. One of the challenges of writing up this research to meet academic conventions is that practice was emerging even as I was writing. The #JoyFE💛 collective is one example of this, another is #APConnect, which brings educators together outside of their organisations in different ways, not just on projects but on social media around an idea, at events sharing each other's work. Hashtag activism and so much more. This made the writing up messy, and I was blessed to have examiners who understood my research as an activist project.

I set out to create a community education Imaginary - a joyful remaking of community education in England. I learned that the power of collective thinking is capable of seeing right past all that visible clutter, given the right question and a space to think. Less than 1% of respondents - three people - didn't see past what we have now. I lived with these words for months. Participants imagined a community education lived both in community places - often outdoors - and online. One which was co-produced, where teachers and students learned from one another. Where families got involved - and companion species - in initiatives which are democratically run and where the rhizome can flourish. Which makes the most of what communities already have and embraces a social purpose notion of civic usefulness which is not at odds with people needing to work as well as live.

We've done nothing to make the visible clutter go away - it's still all there and worse than ever. But that wasn't the intention. The intention was to glimpse the far horizon as something real, not merely aspirational. This is not a utopian project, though it is one full of hope and we need hope before action, or else we've just given up.

I didn't know what the Imaginary would look like, when I started. I probably imagined some sort of action plan, because I too was caught up in the structures, processes and hierarchies that weigh down our thinking, every single day. But it took two rather beautiful forms.

Firstly, an expression of community education values. There are values written into every organisation's mission statement and many of them are completely worthless - the rhetoric gap would be laughable if it wasn't so tragic. These are different firstly because they emerge from a robust piece of research and secondly because they are designed to be lived. Think back to when I talked about an affirmative ethics and the presence of the Bowerbird which ensures

these are a daily practice. Through the rhizomatic activist projects which this research has sparked in its lifetime these values will be intentionally enacted. Just not necessarily by me.

The values emerged from the material and from the reading and research underpinning the Imaginary. They are not strictly the 'top ten' we see in the word cloud, part of my prerogative, within the ethics of the piece, is to select. 'Love' emerges from my supervisor Martin Purcell's work around professional love and it's inscribed too, in the way participants wrote about their community education vision. 'Solidarity' was 'Unity' right up to nearly the end. It was a relief to go with my ethics on this one and reclaim the word for what what's actually happening, standing shoulder to shoulder in our activist constellations.

Secondly, five lines of flight emerged. There were never going to be any easy answers in this Imaginary but we need directions of travel. These are presented as a Padlet, ready for collaborative work. You see how the values link in? How they will each be enacted along this line of flight. There's the potential for several lifetimes' work here.

Line of Flight 1 - Design and the Practice of Values
Briefly, and most urgently, how do we make the noise and clutter go away? Not just invisible, but disappeared. It's important we keep doing the work, but systemic change is needed to really shift things. There's some powerful (and challenging) political work to do in joining people across the 'lines' and localism could be really valuable here but all these spaces have their own 'noise'. Absolutely no easy answers and much more research to do.

Line of Flight 2 - Pedagogies of Care and the Practice of Values
Here, there is some progress. Educators do - still, just - have influence in how they teach and there is a rising tide of interest in pro-social, community and trust building pedagogies of care - plus a body of research, from colleagues in Ireland and beyond, including work by indigenous educators across the world. Here too, there is work to be done around co-production and learning from each other.

Line of Flight 3 - Transversal Alliances and the Practice of Values
This feels increasingly like **my** work in the coming months and years. Bringing people together in spaces designed to make things happen - activist thinking spaces. Hashtag communities such as the #JoyFE💛 collective, the 2021 #AdultConversations campaign I'm involved in with Jo Fletcher-Saxon and Mel Lenehan and the Working Class Academics conference, plus more formal spaces like Leeds Beckett University's CollectivEd coaching and mentoring hub are getting there, bringing together educators from early years onwards. That's not really happened before. The challenge now is to reach even further across the silos that deliberately divide us - into youth and community work, third sector, social enterprise and public health, for example.

Line of Flight 4 - Community Research and the Practice of Values
The message from participants was clear. Communities wanted to set their own agenda, develop their own curricula and programmes of learning. The potential for community research is huge, particularly given the grassroots research drive in further education over the past few years - there is so much expertise to take out beyond the invisible wall. Unlike education policy makers, respondents had absolutely no problem with understanding that civic skills can also mean skills for work, holistically and meaningfully: social purpose 'employability'.

Line of Flight 5 - Professional Learning and the Practice of Values

This is where my work is right now and it's so rich. There's a whole other PhD in how further educators - by themselves - have turned professional learning on its head this year. No more drive-by CPD. Colleagues have been opening up spaces, dropping in, forming constellations.

Before I close, I'd like to say a little bit about my 'literature review', presented here as a cartography. Rosi Braidotti asks all her summer school students to read one book or article a week. I tried to do that - though my 'reading' was a broad church and often included podcasts and journalism, as well as more academic texts. I got adept at taking what I needed and developed a real love for chapters in edited editions. My dissertation presents a conventional reference list but I described it as a cartography - a map of my reading which implies an understanding of its genealogy - how ideas change and are developed over time. I've been developing that concept further into a 'Praxis Cartography' - big hitters like Deleuze sitting alongside my friend Kay as an equal thinker. He's just a bit more famous than she is yet. Politics and ethics are important here too.

We live in complex times and the old structures no longer serve us - whatever your perspective the party political mess this country's in must convince us all of that. To thrive we must be anti-fragile: flourishing despite the turbulence of life, not despite it. This research hopefully suggests a direction of travel which contains the possibility of hope.

Presention to The Gramsci Society UK, 28.4.21

Chapter 10 – Epilogue

"What was, in the end, remarkable to me was not that ordinary people took care of others, but two things. One was that they knew how to self-organize and that horizontal democratic means were what worked, over and over, in place after place. The other was the joy they seemed to find, even in the worst circumstances, in finding the agency to act, and the communion of acting together and finding a connection that can be hard to find and feel and have recognized by others in ordinary times."

(Solnit, writing about the destruction of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina, 2020, p.xiii)

Conclusion here

Appendix A - The Thinking Environment

> *'The thinking environment is a set of applications of ten values, or components: ease, attention, encouragement, diversity, feelings, place, equality, information, appreciation and incisive questions. When all ten are in place, the thinking environment is held: whether that's in group facilitation, coaching, mentoring, meetings, tutorials or any other application. It's quietly revolutionary if practised with discipline and not, as its detractors claim, woolly; rather it is boundaried and very precise, a simple and rigorous set of rules which compel people to think for themselves and think better together.'*

(Mycroft, 2019)

Throughout the dissertation I refer to the practice of the Thinking Environment, a practice and set of processes developed by Kline (2009). It is a sidestep from the main body of the research, incidental to it, but as it has been the foundation of my activist (also my professional and pedagogical) practice for 25 years it would have been disingenuous to have excluded it from these pages.

At the same time, I recognise the danger of introducing here what is essentially a commercially licensed framework (although I sidestep that too). Its inclusion could also be seen as self-promoting; me pitching for work. It would have been easier to leave it out and I considered. I decided to keep it in, not only because some participants mentioned it but because in the activist work that accompanies this research, it is proving to be a powerful vehicle for change.

My supervisors have rightly asked if I intend to problematise the Thinking Environment. There I am stuck; although I am willing to have the impact of my practice critiqued it has not been subject to any research which would fulfil the requirements of the academy. There are publications about the process, written by practitioners like myself, but they are working papers in which the problematisation is about the nuts and bolts of the process. The 'neuroscience' behind the Thinking Environment is also emerging (the effect on thinking in the presence of appreciation, for example (Brown, Swart and Meyler, 2009)) but that is a PhD[223] in itself and I would be reaching beyond my own capacity and knowledge to try and stretch to that.

As the focus on values emerged from participant material, and the Thinking Environment itself began to ripple out across community education (and FE more broadly) via rhizomatic networks during Covid-lockdown, I made the judgement that it earned its place here, because it is values-led. In any Thinking Environment space, the ten components (or values) of place, appreciation, attention, encouragement, feelings, diversity, information, equality, ease and questions are held

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[223] I have spoken with Damien Page about the possibility of establishing (or even endowing, via Nancy Kline's Time to Think organisation) a PhD in the Thinking Environment at Leeds Beckett University.

in place by the facilitator and role and rank (consequently some measure of ego) are left at the door. Online, during lockdown, Thinking Environments have been a revelation and the application of the Ideas Room emerged, which is mentioned above. Above all, the Thinking Environment is anti-competitive by design, which has much to offer to any post-capitalist thinking. For more about the Thinking Environment, please see Mycroft and Sidebottom (2018) and Mycroft (2019).

Appendix B - Relevant Publications

Sidenote: PhD by Publication

Two-thirds of the way through the research process, I explored the possibility of constructing this dissertation as a PhD by publication. To be completely fair, I initially misunderstood what this might mean, glimpsing an interesting structure in the weaving together of articles and book chapters I'd published along the journey: all connected more or less peripherally with my lines of flight. I took the decision not to do this because it seemed messy and out of my control, especially as my work became more radical and the publishing world did not; it also involved buying into what was considered REFable - not a game I wish or need to play as an independent scholar not currently seeking a career in the academy. The decision was made on discovering that the University route to this took one year, essentially a shortcut which I concluded would not do justice to all writing, thinking, studying and life-changing I have done in the past six years. Indeed, the very opposite of a slow ontology (Ulmer, 2017).

However, I still wish to incorporate the publications (REFable or not) into this research as they have been pause points along the way; a manifestation of that slow ontology (ibid.) as I stepped aside from the direct path of this research from time to time, to focus on connected activist endeavours. The tangential focus helped me return refreshed to the main task and the sidestep was always diffractive: conversations I had around the publications (many of which were co-written) informed my own thinking in turn.

PIECE	JUSTIFICATION
Spaces to Dance (Mycroft and Weatherby, 2015)	Focus on community education and early forays into building digital community. At this point I had encountered the 'rhizome' not-metaphor (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) via the cMOOC (community massive open online course) #Rhizo14 (Mackness, Bell and Funes, 2016) but had not considered problematising the concept or read the source material. Although not explicated, this chapter begins to draw connections between the Dancing Princesses finding 'spaces to dance' and Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization/reterritorialization: the Dancing Princesses as nomad war machines. The book spawned an early rhizomatic movement of #DancingPrincesses which led to numerous live event and thinking collaborations, including two further volumes.
Posthuman Teacher Ed (Mycroft, 2016b)	This was my attempt at articulating posthuman pedagogy. It is densely theorised, in an attempt to honour Braidotti's notion of cartography: *"...a theoretically-based and politically-informed account of the present that aims at tracking the production of knowledge and subjectivity"* (Braidotti, 1994, 2011a, 2011b) and to expose power both as entrapment (*potestas*) and as empowerment (*potentia*)." (Braidotti, 2018 p3). Now, I think it's unreadable, but it later provided an important opportunity which was a milestone in this research - I pasted it into a word document and spent a day unpacking it.

Philosophers of Praxis (Mycroft, 2016b)	A valediction to my work within the institution and the students who engaged in digital (and other) community building, as we explored rhizomatic working together. Mostly we are still in touch, engaged in various constellations of practice.
Social Purpose Leadership (Mycroft and Weatherby, 2017)	An explication of anti-heroic leadership focused around social purpose values, theorising the ways in which community educators can start to shape their own professional practice.
Unwritten (Mycroft, 2018)	A first attempt at an Imaginary, a whimsical thinkpiece which already seems dated, written during a time when hope was hard to find and my professional direction seemed uncertain. Now revisited as part of a campaign (as yet un-named) to rethink 'lifelong learning', which emerged from a #JoyFE💛 Ideas Room in 2020.
Constellations of Practice (Mycroft and Sidebottom, 2018)	The most directly influenced by this research, an exploration of rhizomatic community/pedagogy and a presentation of the concept of constellations of practice. Although at the time we did not imagine how ground-breaking our approach was, now we realise that no-one else is writing about this, not that we just hadn't found them. It became a springboard for future thinking.
A World in Miniature (Mycroft, 2019)	This directly explores the community education landscape as it revealed itself through the various 'shiny blue things' of the CLMH Research project (DfE, 2018) and introduces the Bowerbird Methodology.
Freedom Needs Boundaries (Mycroft, 2019)	This chapter in a behaviour management book, focusing on the learning from the Community Learning Mental Health Research 2015-17 (CLMH), so community education is part of the landscape. Heavily influenced by Thinking Environment processes with connections for mental health and wellbeing.
The Cost of Everything and the Value of Nothing (Husband and Mycroft, 2019)	Returns to the work of Jack Mezirow to problematise the notion of 'transformational education' as a) an individual activity and b) in the gift of the teacher and challenges the phrase 'post-compulsory education' as nonsensical in the current landscape. Throws down a challenge to policy makers to leave FE alone to do its own experimentation.
Teaching the Thinking Environment 2019	Personal reflection about teaching the Thinking Environment which is probably out of date now after an intensive period of teaching Thinking Environments online and learning so much about the process when I might have thought I knew it all.

'Power and its role in the life of teachers' (Mycroft, 2020)	I won't list all my journalism here but this is significant because it brought Spinozean/Deleuzean theory into the FE mainstream - and has by far been the most popular of all my journalism in TES.
Anger is an Energy (Mycroft, Shukie and Sidebottom, 2020, forthcoming)	A brief channelling of Spinoza's joy as affirmative politics, as a way to channel anger in challenging times which is critical but not cynical. First academic mention of #JoyFE 💛 as well as the contribution of 'joy work' to UCU Nottingham College's successful campaign in the Summer of 2019.
Joyful Encounters: Caliban Reimagines FE (Dennis and Mycroft, 2020, forthcoming).	The final chapter of Caliban's Dance: FE after the Tempest, co-written with Carol Azumah Dennis. We position the character of Caliban in Shakespeare's Tempest as a nomadic subject, a figuration with which to re-imagine a decolonised, reimagine FE. Having seen off the coloniser Prospero, Caliban takes joyful possession his beloved island and his 'othered' voice is finally heard.

Appendix C - Co-ordinates[224]

I am a white, adopted, woman, raised in the late twentieth century in a working class family in the former South Yorkshire coalfield. I benefited from 'free' comprehensive school education and a financial grant for a well-respected (subsequently designated 'Russell Group') university where I was socially and practically an outsider (though I had a great time). I barely travelled outside Yorkshire and the East Midlands until I was in my twenties. I grew up in a political place, at a political time (the 1970s and miners' strike of 1984-85, followed by an immersion in rave culture during its demonisation), where politics were binary left/right and – across my demographic - utterly white. Although the class element of my personal 'field' (Bourdieu, 1993) changed rapidly when I went to university ('regressing' when I failed my honours degree), no other intersectional demographic did and only many years later, through later intentional work to burst out of a social media 'filter bubble' and the discovery of my birth family in South London, did the narrowness of my encounters start to shift. I spent many years trying to make ends meet, in my twenties and later as a single parent on a public sector 'professional' career trajectory, and those experiences of relative poverty also make a difference to how I materially encounter the world. I now work nomadically, guided by an ethics and politics of affirmation, of which more later.

All this, the unseen scars and joys of my life's experience, neural complexities and genetic traits, have driven me to work in the way that I do, think in the way that I do and - ultimately - research in the way that I do, including a commitment to diffractive practice which led me to the ebb and flow of diffractive practice across constellations (see below). It is a practice I have come to think of as being 'on the move', an outsider of organisations (though not of people) and a consequence of trying to channel an unruly and iconoclastic mindset. Jasmine Ulmer invokes the weather, nature and the urban environment as ways of disrupting the temporality of academic endeavour and this also resonates with me: the practice of walking infused this research from the start and much of this dissertation has been written on the move.

From 'Thinking Environment' (Kline, 2009) walks in the Northern College gardens (my workplace at the start of the research), through using a 'pomodoro' technique (academic activity interspersed with head-clearing walks round the block) at writing bootcamps, to leading a 'dérive' - the Situationist practice of 'drift' (Rubin, 2012) - at The Sociological Review's 'Thinking on the Move' conference in 2019, I have situated writing in carefully chosen material landscapes and it has been accompanied by the physical practice of walking, alone or with others, or otherwise travelling – large tranches of the writing were completed on ferries to and from Utrecht in the Netherlands, an international centre for posthuman thinking.

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[224] After Patel, 2016 and mindful of Apple's warning (Peters, 2017 p.109) that "*too many of those autobiographical tendencies reflect [an] infinite need for self display.*"

Appendix D – Participants' Values

Community Education Practices

care
hope
place
unity
joy
diversity
equality
openness
love
trust

responsive community-led on-demand democratic free transdisciplinary interdependent collective local intergenerational optional family-friendly values-based inclusive vocational academic ipsative rhizomatic open modern connecting informal democratic bottom-up non-hierarchical inclusive comfortable political equal ethical moral ecological global discomfiting unique difference free curious fun unified open high-esteem inspiring empowering local open stimulating demanding generous imaginative inclusive amusing enjoyable passionate constructive effective accessible ubiquitous challenging sociable congenial liberating passionate mutual joy safe calm gentle utopian subversive digital physical proper welcoming inclusive accessible adaptable intergenerational free shared enriching joyful cohesive engaging activist questioning challenging stimulating innovative creative responsive free inclusive helpful positive natural collaborative holistic responsive empowering happy friendly collaborative local digital growth enriching participative meaningful utopian curious inquiring principled socially-just welcoming comforting natural

idyllic insightful collaborative peaceful productive unity encouraging curious creative collaborative expressive beautiful truthful trusting loving caring artistic innovative enriching natural social supportive relevant natural free accessible lifelong hands-on healthy social socially-just empowering helpful endless dynamic local flexible fun free collegiate happy joyful holistic harmonious relational engaging active holistic harmonious lifelong joyful flexible adaptive exploratory social expert free inclusive accessible open free encouraging collegiate free integral fun healthy togetherness collective joyful digital relational reflective ageless boundaryless multicultural experiential diverse lifelong inclusive natural social local flexible critical inclusive colourful comfortable engaging inclusive worthwhile sustainable global local social limitless collaborative equal affordable diverse accessible accessible diverse critical power-sharing visible ecological dialogic emergent stronger intuitive collaborative diverse thriving global political lifelong creative innovative therapeutic life-enhancing social joyful pleasurable diverse interesting flexible life-enhancing exciting accessible affordable curious well-resourced informal lifelong collegiate rhizomatic distributive free fair accessible joyful diverse reflective empowering accepting inclusive creative free curious well-resourced skilful co-operative reflective enabling social loving inspiring affirming disciplined responsive available innovative confident digital listening sensitive dialogic celebratory valued life-enhancing public-good essential democratic informed healthy confident respectful intergenerational self-resourcing caring open accessible free lifelong liberating joyful diverse open free flexible meaningful peer-led fun social exciting happy lifelong togetherness diverse powerful socially-just curious intergenerational celebratory free intersectional valued collaborative intergenerational positive engaging accessible healthy social accessible inclusive joyful collaborative lifelong health sharing free inclusive lifelong soul-nurturing diverse exciting collaborative moving supportive unity collaborative lifelong empowering healing togetherness affordable participatory co-produced lifelong socially-just diverse holistic natural informal supportive relaxing comfortable flexible accessible intergenerational diverse discomfiting varied messy chaotic collective relational critical political local global interconnected kind strong collective sustainable social environmental socially-just co-produced digital collective relational co-created valued collective student-centred inspiring joyful celebratory unexpected inclusive progressive global co-produced rhizomatic grassroots rhizomatic socially-just exciting healthy co-productive salvationary inspiration positivity intellectual accredited creative simple fun real honest fair understanding adventurous challenging supportive non-judgmental local ergonomic creative co-produced intergenerational healthy happy intergenerational wise creative collaborative co-produced joyful diverse social intellectual local global sharing expert local joyful balancing local nature passionate empowering creative imaginative local diverse patient generous trusting relevant fun open effective inspiring inclusive free broad structured well-funded well-promoted quality-controlled local patient agential empathic empowering diverse global socially-just ethical holistic accessible welcoming dialogic socratic intra-active kind compassionate critical affirmative lively nuanced passionate democratic co-produced approachable informal non-accredited rhizomatic challenging welcoming local equal diverse activist enabling political virtual physical virtual joyful enabling connecting reflective restorative developmental flexible mindful democratic equal all-encompassing affordable digital international humble natural ecological hopeful activist collective caring joyful relaxed diverse digital physical digital collective co-produced local healing intergenerational encouraging digital co-produced digital local joyful healthy material simple digital socially-just creative intergenerational reflective immersive kind healthy critical joyful co-produced vibrant diverse well-funded humane digital connective physical reflective reflective critical reflective digital equal socially-just respectful social digital co-produced inclusive compassionate kind loving healthy holistic trusting flexible autonomous empowering hopeful empathic intergenerational blended blended creative co-produced digital personalised comfortable healthy trusting intergenerational digital safe trusting co-produced democratic joyful trusting joyful trusting blended blended positive liberating intergenerational local physical

Appendix E – the Dancing Princesses

The Dancing Princesses were the original figuration; the first to be thought of in fact, probably two years before the final writing of this dissertation. Much has changed in that time and they didn't stay the course. This is a brief reflective analysis of why that might be.

When the original book in the trilogy was published, in 2015 (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) it was on the back of Ewart Keep's 2014 position paper for the Association of Colleges, provocatively entitled 'What does skills policy look like when the money has run out?' Essentially, Keep envisaged the end of FE as we know it. Irritated by the persistent Cinderella metaphor which has haunted FE since its inception - the poor relation - Daley, Orr and Petrie turned it on its head with the collectivist story of the Dancing Princesses and invited HE and FE 'fellow travellers' to extend the metaphor.

As a collection of essays it was influential in starting to break up some ground and reposition FE (including community education) lecturers as thinkers - academics, researchers, intellectuals. The book itself is variable in quality; my own contribution (with Jane Weatherby) naive in some ways when I read it back now, though it's very honest. But the book as a whole - and, perhaps more compellingly, its message - had a *potentia* energy which got people moving; it brought hope. The Dancing Princesses motif became a visible symbol of this on social media and the briefly flourishing Tutor Voices movement, whilst achieving precisely nothing, was a symbol of resistance for a time.

In Deleuze and Guattarian terms, the Dancing Princesses concept started to smooth out some space in FE news media, on social media and in individual organisations for a growing self confidence. Within two years a second volume - The Principal (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2017) - had been published and a nascent FE Research culture had begun to grow, around Sam Jones of Bedford College and Jo Fletcher-Saxon of Ashton Sixth Form (Crowson, Fletcher-Saxon, Jones and Woodrow, 2020). Several chapter authors shifted into positions of relative influence. The ReImagineFE conference, hosted at Birmingham City University by Matt O'Leary and Rob Smith (both now Professors) began in 2016 amongst great excitement. By 2017 it felt like FE's transformational moment had come. Indeed, I took to the stage with Andrew Harden of UCU to say so, a moment of *hubris*.

The summer holiday energy dip followed and the *monument* didn't shift. By September it was clear that the political situation was becoming increasingly volatile and FE endured crisis after crisis, with community education becoming even less visible. Forced college mergers dominated the public agenda leading to bitter industrial relations and policy and funding changes were swift and brutal. Campaigning unions were fully absorbed with the day-to-day work of supporting members. Tutor Voices disappeared and it seemed that traditional campaigning organisations had had their day.

And yet...the rhizome continued to grow. #FEResearch went from strength to strength. FE practitioners, frustrated within the organisation found each other on social media and collaborated at regional events, such as the #PDNorth professional exchange network. The national Advanced Practitioners Development programme #APConnect began in 2018 and its communities of practice strand, designed as a rhizomatic intervention, tilled the ground even further. In 2017 the then-skills minister Anne Milton, said in a private meeting that she couldn't speak up for FE because FE "didn't speak up for itself." Today, amidst the ravages of Covid-19, FE is speaking from the rooftops. Communities of practice, the theory of which has been around since Lave and Wenger's text in 1981, are now so popular in FE that research has been funded to capture them (Deepwell, Hawksey and Proctor-Legge, 2020) and they are featuring heavily in future Government funded professional development strategies. Covid's strangeness meant that, unusually, the rhizome continued to flourish over the summer of 2020, with podcasts, Ideas Rooms and online events continuing to happen. As I cut the threads of this dissertation, the stage is set for another push.

The problems of FE are far from being solved and community education is a million miles away from the values and practice expressed in the Imaginary. We will never know how much the Dancing Princesses catalysed that by their reclaiming of space and voice. The third volume is due out as this dissertation draws to a close and it will be interesting to see if it can make a contribution, particularly with its themes of 'othering' and exclusion. But the Dancing Princesses as a motif seem to be retiring their dancing shoes and, beyond this valediction, it is maybe time to wish them farewell.

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