Crafting Resilience: Cultural Heritage and Community Engagement in Post-Industrial Textile Communities.

Thesis

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Crafting Resilience:  
Cultural heritage and community engagement in post-industrial textile communities.

Claire Wellesley-Smith

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,  
The Open University  
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Abstract

This thesis discusses how engagements with cultural heritage through slow, localised craft practices construct and articulate collective identity and build resilience. Based in former areas of industrial textile production, it is a multi-site ethnographic study of two community-based long-term arts and heritage projects in Church, near Accrington, East Lancashire and Bradford, West Yorkshire. The projects explored specific aspects of textile heritage: printing and dyeing, and recycling and repair practices. The longitudinal nature of the research into processes including growing, making, unmaking, and remaking allows for consideration of how outcomes are embedded in projects like this. The locations of projects offer opportunities to consider the present lived experiences of post-industrial textile communities through their multi-layered heritage. The final fieldwork for the project was completed during the first UK Covid lockdown and offers valuable insight into the spatiality of projects like these and what happens when site-specific context is taken away. It is written through the lens of a practitioner-researcher whose many years of practice is based in the development and delivery of socially engaged arts projects.

Multiple methods were employed over a period of years including participant observation during textile making and gardening workshops, semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups, photography and a reflective daily stitching ‘thinking through making’ (Ingold, 2011; Ravetz, 2013) practice of the researcher. This thesis argues that socially engaged arts practices used in heritage engagements can transform participants’ lives in a number of ways. These include allowing them to participate meaningfully in the co-production of knowledge through slow craft making and storytelling and the revoicing and ownership of personal and community heritage narratives. It offers insights into the challenges and multiplicities of researcher-practitioner experience, the value of projects that take place over considerable periods of time and that use dialogic approaches to heritage and site (Harrison, 2013).
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My working life is a long and often meandering thread: each engagement, conversation, connection and learning over twenty years adding something to my understanding of the field of creative practice. I am hugely grateful to the communities, participants, and volunteers who I worked with on these projects, some of whom I have known for many years. Special thanks go to the contributors, collaborators, participants, volunteers on the Worn Stories project and Local Colour residency. Their huge generosity in speaking about and showing me their experience of the work made this research possible. These contributions were far more than time spent on the project, they included letters, emails, textiles, other conversations and observations. The organisations I worked with on this project were also supportive of this research and conversations with staff and funders were also helpful in framing the direction it took. Particular thanks to Joy Hart, Simon Allan and Jane MacDonald at Hive, Bradford; Jenny Rutter and Laurie Peake at The Super Slow Way; Deborah and Craig Clark, Maggie Moody and Leane Riley at Community Solutions North West; Jane Lees, Nabila Mahmood, Rehana Akhter and Zafar Kayani at CommunityWorks; Shamim Akhtar at the Roshni Ghar project, Keighley; Sarah Hinton, Sam Thirkill and Steven Woodrow at SHINE; Liz Ellis and Helen Peacock at National Lottery Heritage Fund.

My return to education in 2013, twenty years after I completed my undergraduate studies would not have been possible without the support of the academics at Bradford School of Art, particularly Robert Galeta, Simon Ford, and the late Jill Good. They encouraged me to see my practice as a whole - to include my making, archive research, community-based practice and my writing. The work I did during this part-time MA course gave me the confidence to tentatively explore the idea of a PhD. George Revill who became my main supervisor supported my application, spoke with me in detail about my ideas, was a huge supporter in helping me find funding well before I became a student at The Open University. Kevin Hetherington (now at Staffordshire University) and Steve Pile were also a great support throughout my PhD. All three are intellectually generous, offering structure and encouragement at every stage. Within the OU Department of Geography, I have also been grateful for the input received from Nick Bingham, Kim Kullman, Shonil Bhagwat, Jan van Duppen and Phillip O’Sullivan. The team at the OOC DTP and staff in OU FASS were particularly helpful with the huge changes the Covid pandemic brought to postgraduate researchers and assisted me with additional support. Outside the OU, conversations with other academics and professionals including Roberta Burchardt, Clare Danék, Liza Griffin, June Hill, Hannah Lamb, Angela Maddock, Isabella Rosner, Ruth Singer and Carol Tulloch brought new perspectives to my work.

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Introduction

Figure 1: Madder dyed silk over time, *Local Colour* residency
7th December 2016. Outside the makeshift studio provided for the Local Colour residency – the upper floor of a Victorian former stable block at the back of Elmfield Hall - I tied a small piece of bright red madder dyed silk through a hook by the door dyed during an early R&D session with a community group (figure 1). The silk had been prepared using a traditional mordanting recipe with alum, to enhance brightness, before immersing in a dye bath made with ground madder root, a traditional natural red colourant, the roots saved from another community textile garden project I had developed in Bradford, West Yorkshire. This dye was the main ingredient in the creation of Turkey red, a print and dye process significant to this part of East Lancashire in the 18th and 19th centuries. I had just received a year-long commission as Artist in Residence at a community organisation based around the textile heritage connected to this site. It coincided with my part-time registration as a postgraduate researcher where I aimed to consider my working life through an ethnographic study where my role was practitioner-researcher. My contract was initially for 30 days’ work over the following year but eventually lasted nearly 5 years. Over the duration of the residency, I returned to photograph the silk, tied through the hook in the wall. The bright colour faded quite dramatically over the first year, the silk began to fray, and by the end of the project little was left and what was had acquired a green cast from other material growth in the fibres, the red almost completely gone. Silk fabric over time can be described as ‘shattering’ the material subject to breakage with light and age, in this case also weathered over three Lancashire winters. This now much altered, storied scrap of fabric told of another process, that of slow time, alongside the active making and remaking of the residency through a growing project. Over this five-year period my working life had embraced the vagaries of this textile growing project alongside another project that explored the end stages of textile use - recycling, rags, and repair. Growing, making, unmaking, remaking. The material qualities – used in the language of the projects, in the making of textile artefacts in community workshop sessions and in the exploration and handling of archive collections connected to this heritage and informed the work.

In the above vignette the story of a small scrap of fabric speaks to the themes of this thesis, based in material practices, working in community organisations in locations with a specific link to industrial textile production. I am an artist, researcher and writer experienced in creating collaborative and site-specific projects with communities over almost twenty years. My specialism is in socially engaged textile-based projects that explore community development and issues around heritage, sustainability, and wellbeing. I am an experienced facilitator and use craft practices to untangle, connect, explore, imagine, and
reimagine places and personal narratives with participants (figure 2). The linking of heritage-based and arts-based projects involves distinct ways of working with communities: engagement with a particular heritage alongside hands-on creative crafts practice. Within heritage projects there is a need for rigour in researching the history of specific industries and communities. This involves engagement with primary research, archives, and museum collections to use in community-based workshops and sessions. The research work is often carried out alongside volunteers from the community (Graham and Vergunst, 2019). In socially engaged arts projects methods of working are more fluid and organic with a generative, improvisational relationship to site (Kester, 2011, p. 145). This is particularly the case when working outside the confines of traditional art environments, for example galleries and museums. My projects are based in the public realm of the non-art community: community centres, church halls, and voluntary sector venues. I am motivated by what Donna Haraway describes, using textile as metaphor, as the imperfections ‘always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another’ (1988, p. 586).

Figure 2: Textile dyeing workshop, Cultureghem Brussels, Jardinsanté project, November 2019

Research is an important part of the development of any community project, the central questions in the early bid-writing stages should ask why the project is needed, why now and by whom. In the case of projects based around heritage (in situ or narrative), research into that heritage and the potential ways a community might approach, engage, and become involved with it are also essential. Partly due to immersing myself in archives, local libraries, and collections for work, in 2013, twenty years after graduating with an undergraduate degree in Politics I returned to my studies, working part-time on a practice-based MA in visual arts alongside my project commitments. When I began the MA I had been
working as an artist in community settings for over ten years. My practice used craft to introduce ideas around health and wellbeing, community cohesion and latterly heritage. Alongside this I taught and wrote about creative textiles and produced my own textile work. I was looking for an academic framework to make sense of my own practice, having come to working with arts and creativity from another academic discipline. During the two years of the masters I found multiple frameworks, structures, scaffolding to work with and around when looking at community-based socially engaged arts practices. However, I also found that the reality of research and practice in the field were very different things. I found tensions between the language of research and the language of practice and how they translated and interacted. I found the timeframes engaged with in community engagement had different dynamics to academic research projects based within community settings. I saw an opportunity to look at heritage in a multi-layered context – particularly when real-life research is involved. I wanted to follow the trajectory when the story of the heritage of a dyestuff used in a local textile mill led to an animated conversation about relationships between neighbours in a new build block of flats. I wanted to be part of a fluid process that worked with the reality of the moment, in an ‘ongoing present’ (Brookfield et al., 2019, p. 151), where multiple accounts can emerge, and contexts shift and blend.

Completing my master’s offered more questions than answers to these themes and so I began my PhD research, part-time, studying alongside my work commitments. I wanted better, more granular insight into the processes that occur in long-term community projects and the ways that creative practices could work alongside heritage. Johnston et al. (2017) describe the ways these practices can work, emotionally and directly, and how they ‘can make us think deeper about the stories that we tell about the past’ (2019, p. 816). Using an ethnographic approach has allowed me to work with the multiplicities inherent in my practice, Crang and Cook write of the ‘messiness’ of the discipline in ‘Doing Ethnographies’ (2007, p. 14). It has also offered me better insight into how people engage in arts and heritage projects and how they feel about the processes they make with and that evolve during the work.

**Researcher-Practitioner**

The projects were the focus of my working life between 2017-2020 and as such my approach was as practitioner-researcher. This role is described by Robson as ‘... someone who holds down a job in some particular area and at the same time carries out...inquiry which is of relevance to their job’ (Robson, 1993, p. 446). Stanley and Wise’s description of reflexive research is also important here, ‘The researcher’s own
experiences are an integral part of the research and should therefore be described as such. The kind of person that we are, and how we experience the research, all have a crucial impact on what we see, what we do, and how we interpret and construct what is going on’ (1993, p. 60). The reality of this practitioner-researcher role for me has often involved working on multiple projects at the same time, based at several different community settings around the region. I research, write, and co-write funding bids, deliver and sometimes evaluate projects, mentor other organisations and individuals through their project ideas, work in collaboration with other artists and organisations and engage in continuous critical reflection of my practice. I sometimes report to multiple funders sometimes in the same project where a patchwork of resources is brought together to sustain the work. This precarity has an impact on the sustainability of projects and resilience of practitioners. I drive from venue to venue with a car boot full of materials and equipment and use the bag of textile scraps that I carry around to my projects, its multiple pieces, its messiness, the timeframes, and global trade covered in the materials themselves and the nature of discarded stuff as a ‘way-in’ to describe my practice. This materials-based metaphor describes the many roles I take on within any one project, a process I have described as ‘making and unmaking’ (fieldnotes book 5, p. 47) and what Billet describes as ‘an openness to the unanticipated outcomes for research’ (2018, p. 119).

When considering my choice of projects to investigate I was keen to show the reality of the multiplicities of roles projects like this entail, the sometimes messiness of working simultaneously on several at once and the ‘research assemblage’ (Woodward, 2020, p. 132) this entails. The projects, due to their duration, meant that I collected a large amount of data over time. This included my own notes and reflections on 116 community workshop sessions collected in 14 notebooks, audio of 27 semi-structured interviews with participants and 20 semi-structured group conversations, 750 documentary photographs and video clips, work made during the projects of textile, paper and other, ephemera collected alongside the work and given to me by participants, and section of my own textile-based reflective practice, hand stitches on linen cloth (Appendix 7 and 8). These publicly funded projects also produced outputs of their own including project publications that included participant responses, both creative and narrative-based, written up accounts from archive and other research, a series of blogposts for each project and examples of creative work made for exhibitions. As a writer I also used some examples from the Bradford-based project in the second of a series of practical textile books for the craft publisher Batsford (Wellesley-Smith, 2015, 2021). This series provides inspiration for textile practitioners and others who work with communities and include practical exercises and work by other artists.
Projects are therefore documented in different ways and for different audiences. This involves a process as Adrienne Rich describes, of ‘Looking back and seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction’ (1972, p. 18). Strohmayer (2021) in her writing about a digitally augmented textile quilt made in collaboration with a group based at a charity describes this as another example of Geertz’ ‘thick description’ and is ‘more than an analytical consideration of content but is rather an articulation of how we see and understand’ (2021, p. 51). The multiplicities are therefore evident in the outcomes of this kind of work as well as in the process of them and different networks develop through this making process. The multiple approaches I have had to use and the relationships in the, and through the, making are shown through these different outputs.

Alongside my longstanding community-based engagement practice I bring knowledge gathered from my personal studio practice over many years, and my development of processes for exhibition and installation work. This is largely textile based with a focus on dye and print techniques with found and grown colour (from dye plants) used on reclaimed materials that are then hand constructed using stitch. Over the years this process of ‘following the materials’ and seeing their ongoing movement ‘itinerant, improvisatory and rhythmic’ (Ingold, 2009, p. 99) has meant that my studio and community practices have fed each other. I follow a thread that can be traced through community engagement, studio practice, fieldwork, collecting and the taxonomies that emerge through my making process. My personal work also begins in archives and collections, a story from the local textile heritage and a line of music found in a dyer’s notebook from 1821 (figure 3) are examples of starting points for long term projects and exhibition work. Projects have also created archives of their own, combinations of community responses, physical objects, both found and made, writing and photographs (Dyer’s Field 2014-15, Resist, 2017) and some collected and organised using archival systems (Lasting Impressions with Hannah Lamb, 2016-18; Commonplace 2020 - ongoing). My practice notes and sketches, project notes and fieldnotes are collected in the same small brown paper notebooks, a format I have used for the last twelve years. Alongside using these for a more conventional writing and sometimes drawing practice I have, for the last nine years, had an (almost) daily stitching practice, my Stitch Journal, a long length of linen cloth that I use as a method of personal reflection on my work and everyday life. I have applied aspects of the material practices of my textile work to my research (figure 4). I systematise and arrange my findings using colours and labels and there is a material quality to the way that I gather and construct knowledge around my subjects.
Figure 3: ‘Book 41’, David Smith, Dyer, Halifax, Society of Dyers and Colourists

Figure 4: *Stitch Journal* (2013 – ongoing)
The projects

This research project is based in two post-industrial textile communities: Bradford, West Yorkshire, and Church, near Accrington, East Lancashire. I used the socially engaged arts and heritage projects I coordinated between 2017-20 in these locations as the central part of my field work. Working on two projects allowed me different contexts in which to consider how the parameters of a discourse around heritage might be challenged through an interweaving of history and the present. I wanted to see how the politics of the collective was represented within this discourse. Both projects involved regular sessions working with local people based at community venues and explored different aspects of textile heritage using hands-on engagement with textile crafts. These processes were used to investigate the rhythms of places that grew around hugely successful industries and full employment, and the rhythms of the post-industrial today. The research proposes to problematise the term ‘heritage’ with the work I do in these communities. In academic frameworks heritage has been understood in several ways: as a resource for building ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1983); as a tool for increasing social capital by enhancing a sense of place within a locality (Graham, Mason, and Newman, 2009). Harrison (2013) and Smith (2006, 2009) write of an integrated way of understanding heritage, through an ‘entanglement’ of materiality and human engagement that when combined ‘create’ heritage and are part of a process of production of the past in the present.

• Worn Stories: Material and Memory in Bradford 1880-2015

The Bradford-based project was Worn Stories: Material and Memory in Bradford 1880-2015 (figure 5). It was funded by Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) (known as National Lottery Heritage Fund since January 2019) and delivered with community arts organisation Hive. The themes for this project emerged during a previous HLF funded project I had co-written and managed based at Hive, The Fabric of Bradford which explored the textile dyeing heritage of the city through a community engagement programme between 2012-2015. During this work, in conversation with participants we talked about the underside of the textile industry in Bradford and a perception that the focus was on the great successes of the industry, the finest quality cloth produced in the most architecturally significant (and surviving) buildings. There emerged an interest in the messier side of the work, and the multiple types of textile related production going alongside the large, successful vertical mills. A two-year project, Worn Stories explored the heritage of second-hand textiles, rag sorting and textile reuse in the city. This was achieved through creative
activities and community-based research about businesses and workers in the industry. Working at existing projects based in community venues across the city, the practical activities include textile craft sessions where participants learned traditional techniques that encouraged textile reuse, recycling, and repair. These activities were chosen due to their resonance with the themes of the project. They afforded an opportunity for conversations-through-making where the heritage of the process and the industrial heritage of the city could be discussed. Participants in these sessions came from a broad base of groups in the local community. These included those working with older people, young people and families, community mental health organisations, South Asian and East European heritage community groups and organisations working with refugee and asylum seekers. The community researchers learned skills around primary research and oral history recording skills. They were also involved in organising, curating and making exhibits for a project exhibition at Bradford Industrial Museum between November 2018 and April 2019. As part of this role, they engaged in textile-making activities to interpret and produce strong visualisations of their research findings. The Worn Stories project investigated an under-explored aspect of the textile heritage of the city, where stories from the wool textile industry have been foregrounded in many local heritage projects since the 1980s.

Figure 5: Worn Stories exhibition banner, 2018
Local Colour

The Church project, Local Colour was an artist residency commissioned by The Super Slow Way (SSW) as part of the Arts Council England funded Creative People and Places funding stream (figure 6). Based in East Lancashire between Pendle and Blackburn and focusing on the stories of the communities and industries that grew up around the Leeds Liverpool Canal, SSW supports organisations to host residencies and deliver community commissions. Local Colour was hosted by Community Solutions North West (Community Solutions), a social enterprise working with people in the local area who are experiencing poor wellbeing and social isolation. The organisation offers tailored support, befriending activities, social groups, training, and volunteering opportunities and has a café on site. Since 2014 it has been based at Elmfield Hall in Gatty Park (a public park). The building was a Community Asset Transfer from Hyndburn Borough Council when it was in a poor state of repair, and it is being gradually restored to full community use. Elmfield Hall was built in 1853 as the family home of Frederick Albert Gatty (1819–1888), an economic migrant to Lancashire from France. He was a textile industrialist, chemical manufacturer and specialist in Turkey red dyeing and calico printing processes (Hogg, 1970) and later the inventor of a successful mineral khaki dye patented in 1884 (Freemantle, 2011). A small, detached building, Gatty’s personal dye house, or experiment laboratory is on site. This has remained largely untouched since the 1880s and is now a building at risk. The residency worked with a group from the local community and explored the varied and layered histories of the area and the people connected to it. This was achieved through a combination of creative activity, including the creation of a textile garden. The group also engaged in community-based research using local archives and libraries. Though initially envisaged as a one-year project, extensions to the funding meant that between January 2017 and March 2020, I delivered a regular workshop session on site. Between March and June 2020 (the end of the residency) I continued working with a group of participants in online sessions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These sessions, delivered in a very different way, offered another way of considering the project particularly in the context of messiness (Law, 2004).
Research questions

The research questions emerge from the varied community contexts the projects worked in, the response of participants and a recognition of the unusual longevity of the projects and research period (particularly the *Local Colour* residency). This longevity allows insight in a way that I have not found in other social practice heritage projects and the processes they use. The questions also speak to a dialogue between my practice and how I think through my practice.

My main question asks:

*In what ways and to what extent do engagements with cultural heritage through slow, localised craft practices construct and articulate collective identity and build resilience?*

This research looks at the detail of community-based projects that engage with heritage through hands on making activities. In interrogating this question, I hope to come to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the idea of socially engaged practice and how Kester describes it as a discursive place in-between discourses and its relevance for practitioners and academics working in this area (2004). The projects are situated in a very specific context – communities that are based in areas of former industrial textile production. The engagements described all took place in places that now experience high levels of deprivation. I want to go beyond the usual evaluation expectations of publicly funded projects to investigate if and how this way of working has an impact on the collective identity and resilience of participants.
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Resilience has been increasingly used as a concept in the context of communities and in a wider political and economic sense over the few decades. In practice-based work and in academia it has been employed as a way of exploring how communities and individuals can cope with change and uncertainty (Pendall et al., 2010; Grove, 2018; Revell and Dinnie, 2020). The prevalence of use of the concept has increased alongside the polycrisis of climate change, unsustainable development and more recently the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is also a contested concept (Leach, 2008; Shaw, 2012; Porter and Davoudi, 2012). Asking ‘resilience from whose point of view and resilience for what purpose? (Leach, 2008, p. 13)’ acknowledges its challenges, from power relations, neo-liberal assumptions around individual over collective responsibility, and in the UK, the context of the fiscal austerity policy of the Conservative coalition government from 2010. Shaw and Maythorne (2012) voice concern that higher levels of social capital and resilience in communities can be used by governments to ‘step back and leave [them] to tackle problems on their own (2012, p.14).’

Links between community resilience building and arts-based engagement have been foregrounded in research in the last two decades. In the context of this thesis, I acknowledge the difficulties in defining community resilience (Patel et al., 2017; Kay, 2000) instead looking at core elements. These include connectiveness and cohesion, hope and adaptability (2017, p.16). These in turn can stimulate new community interests and drive collective and individual action (Anwar McHenry, 2011; Derrett, 2008; Larsen et al., 2004). van der Vaart et al. (2017) describe this as helping people to ‘explore their sense of identity and belonging, create awareness, and stimulate action’ (2017, p. 17). The connections that can be made between participants in arts-based engagements, their wider community and the places they are situated are demonstrated in the projects foregrounded in this thesis and the potentialities for resilience building drawn on in my conclusions.
Working in these specific contexts has meant that the many impacts of deindustrialisation is impossible to ignore. The landscapes of the industrial past are the lived environment of these communities, in both tangible and intangible ways. This context and working with materials with connection to the industrial past leads to the first sub question:

*In what ways can the multi-layered heritage of Bradford, West Yorkshire and Church, East Lancashire present opportunities to explore the present lived experience in post-industrial textile communities?*

I develop my approach to these questions through use of a dialogic view of heritage as described by Harrison (2013) and Smith (2009) for community engagement in post-industrial communities. This approach offers me the opportunity to employ multi-vocal methodologies while being sensitive to the idea of engagement of participants. However, I understand, partly through my long experience of working in this field, all heritage is of a contested nature particularly when dealing with the shifting identities of de-industrialised places (Frisch, 1998; Smith and Waterton, 2009; Strangleman, 2017). Any heritage project, artefact, and location will have multiple meanings and values and some of these will exist in conflict. Using the ethnographic idea of the ‘contact zone’ (Clifford, 2000) I explore a dialogic approach between heritage projects and socially engaged arts practice: one, a theory driven literature-based academic practice and one arts-based, experiential, more fluid (Hope, 2017). It is these arts-based approaches rooted in the materials significant to the heritage that leads to the second sub-question which looks at the processes engaged with during the projects asking:

*To what extent do processes in community settings that take place over time such as growing, making, unmaking, and remaking embed outcomes?*

The longitudinal nature of this study means that there is an opportunity for an expansion and deepening of our knowledge about the processes and interpersonal dynamics of creative community engagement with heritage. The materials-based processes in the projects responded to the specific industrial textile heritages of both Church and Bradford. There was a desire to explore these in detail and to see how they work over time. During the Local Colour residency this process of exploration saw participants grow, nurture, and process their own colour using common dye plants used in the Turkey red dyeing and printing industry. In the Worn Stories project the lifecycles of textiles and garments were interrogated, from their making, everyday use and repair to eventual unmaking and remaking. These processes
delivered over time, allowed the participants to experience whole processes: from seed to fabric (*Local Colour*) and from fabric to fertiliser (*Worn Stories*). These temporalities allowed for conversations through the processes, a deeper and more critical understanding of how they work. In turn this allowed space for reflection and adjustment.

An ethnographic approach is used to explore these questions through multiple methods. Crang and Cook highlight the way that ethnography can engage with real world ‘messiness’ seeing this as its foremost ‘valuable contribution’ (2007, p. 14). My methods included observations of and *data gathered during* creative sessions including gardening and textile making in community buildings and zoom rooms, the ‘affective spaces’ (Raw, 2014, p. 18) of this research; semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups; photography documenting the sessions; my own reflective stitching. In the context of multiple venues, many participants, organisations and funders it has allowed me to find ways of understanding the detail of these projects, through multiple kinds of data generated with participants.

This thesis speaks to a body of cultural geography research that addresses how contemporary art/craft practice can be engaged in expanding and representing geographical knowledge (Hawkins, 2017; Hawkins and Price, 2018; DeSilvey, 2010). It will also draw on the ‘ethnographic turn’ in contemporary art and craft practice (Foster, 1995; Lippard, 1997; Bourriard, 1998; Kwon, 2002; Kester, 2004; Schneider and Wright, 2010, 2013; Helguera, 2011) and critical thinking around the uses of heritage in community engagement projects. It contributes to the understanding of how contemporary art/craft practices can expand, represent, and research creative community heritage engagements. Drawing on social practice models of heritage as described by Smith (2006, 2009) Harrison (2013) and Graham and Vergunst (2019), the use of archive materials, creative engagement with the local landscape, and the everyday lived experiences of participants aims to build up a discourse around intangible heritage.

**2020: All change**

The processes I will describe around ordinary making activity as the starting point for long-term heritage projects, the spaces these projects inhabit, and the durational aspect of the work were given new resonance when in my final phase of *Local Colour* fieldwork, the first lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic began in March 2020. My many years of experience in social-practice arts projects and the methods I developed over this period were challenged by a new set of rapidly changing circumstances.
The amateur and shifting workspaces (Knott, 2015, p. 66) of groups that I normally work in were closed, the improvised activity and conversations that take place through making changed through the need to use online interfaces (figure 7). There was concern for some of the more vulnerable group members and in some cases issues around digital inclusion that meant participants struggled to continue to engage with the project at all. From the perspective of ‘traditional’ fieldwork, multi-sited, in person, working with people face to face, these things became impossible. Günel et al. (blog post, 2020) describe a new conceptualisation of methodological and theoretical approaches to fieldwork as ‘patchwork ethnography’ drawing on the necessity of ‘recombinations of ‘home and field’” that were necessitated by the pandemic lockdowns and need for social distancing. In my case my caring responsibilities as a single parent were also multiplied as all four of my daughters were at home during the initial lockdown necessitating a substantial shift in the temporalities of my work and studying patterns. My experience of this change, no longer being part of a physical project, gathering differently, and the challenges of fieldwork analysis and writing up during a pandemic, threads through this thesis with a brief ethnography of pandemic delivery as a coda to conclude it.

Figure 7: Online ‘object handling at a distance’ session, April 2020, Local Colour project

The thesis is structured as follows:
Chapter 2: Making practices and socially engaged art
Beginning with a short overview of the history of community arts in a UK context and the changes in this approach during the 1990s the chapter introduces socially engaged arts practice and its frameworks. I look at the descriptors and literature around socially engaged practice, community engagement, spaces and places of engagement and creative processes.

Chapter 3: Heritage and engagement debates
Discusses the heritage frameworks that the creative engagement practices I describe situate themselves in. It includes heritage debates and an overview of the current field, an introduction to the socio-economic background of Bradford and Church and a discussion of industrialisation and deindustrialisation in textile communities in West Yorkshire and East Lancashire.

Chapter 4: Methods
Describes and reflects on the research process in detail and the research methods that were applied. These include multiple sources from multiple engagements with groups including doing ethnographies, photography, participant observation, vignettes, fieldwork notebooks and my daily stitching practice as a material working document.

Photo essay A: Slow Craft
Explores the materialities of the projects through the craft practices used, and offers a sense of the slow processes of these engagements.

Chapter 5: Crafting Community – working with local groups
Focusses on the Worn Stories project and addresses the research sub question: In what ways can the multi-layered heritage of Bradford, West Yorkshire and Church, East Lancashire present opportunities to explore the present lived experience in post-industrial textile communities?
I describe the uses of a community scrap bag, an Economy Quilt made of scraps generated by community textile sessions, and shared histories in a women’s group. Through these engagements

Photo essay B: People and place
Shows the spaces and places the projects took place in, from poly tunnels to zoom screens.

Chapter 6: Engaging histories – heritage and identity
Addressing the second sub question: To what extent do processes in community settings that take place over time such as growing, making, unmaking, and remaking embed outcomes? This chapter focusses on the Local Colour residency and includes a discussion of the development of a community textile garden and use of the dyeplants it produced and the creation and use of a printing press made from a locally produced laundry mangle.
Photo essay C: Multi-layered heritage

Makes connections between tangible and intangible heritage in the projects and shows their mutual dependence. It looks at how those connections are fostered and facilitated through creative and exploratory practices.

Chapter 7: Craft practice, memory and resilience

The final chapter looks at conclusions offered by the discussions of the projects. It considers the wider use of the thesis and identifies possible future research. The thesis concludes with a coda - an ethnography produced in the final stage of fieldwork during the first Covid-19 lockdown.
Chapter 2: Making practices, places and socially engaged projects

Figure 8: Stitch journal: Early project planning through stitching, large circles indicating different themes and fieldwork plans

Chapter overview

The last half-century has seen a growth in the type of arts and creative practice that has a focus on participation and works toward achieving transformation and social change through process-based activity (Bishop et al., 2006; Jefferies et al. 2017). Murray et al. note that ‘Socially engaged arts practices have long been a part of urban development and are considered a means of gaining cultural participation and community development’ (2019, p. 61). Hope (2017) describes this process as ‘artist-led, non-object-based encounters, performances, and collaborations with others’ (2017, p. 203). To this I would add object-based encounters which often involves work with collections, both personal and ‘heritage’ and collaborative work around objects, some made by participants.

In this chapter I will discuss some of the key literature that seeks to understand socially engaged arts practices. I use the first part of the chapter to outline a brief timeline of this kind of work in the UK context and its development and crossovers with the community arts movement. I then consider the wider theory around these practices. I use a vignette to describe the beginnings, dialogue, making that
takes place in the two projects and the ordinary activity and observation that can go into the making of a project and the ‘ordinary spaces of care’ (Munro and Morse, 2018) where they happen.

Writing on community arts in the UK

Matarasso (2013) observes that despite there being over fifty years of context in the UK there are few books tracing the history of the community arts movement. Sophie Hope describes these histories as complex, but that this is where the ‘tangled roots of socially engaged practice’ can be found (Hope, 2017, p. 203). There is a consensus that these kinds of practice began in the countercultural community arts movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s and in the social, political and artistic experimentation of that time. The work generally began outside institutions, delivering very locally (Kelly, 1984) and sought to empower people by making art and creative activity accessible to people who might not otherwise have had such opportunities. Crehan describes these practices as, ‘[offering] new possibilities of more democratic forms of art and new ways for art to act as a catalyst for social change’ (2011, p. 11). A 1974 Arts Council of Great Britain report, Community Arts in Great Britain concluded that community arts should be recognised and supported with its own funding stream (Arts Council of GB, 1974, p. 7). However, this was contingent on local authorities and Regional Arts Associations also funding the work. The central question was whether community art was about social change, social justice, and inequality or whether it was about art for art’s sake and projects were funded on that basis (Jeffers, 2017, p. 14).

The additional public funding made available to community-based arts organisations during the 1970s and 1980s is seen by Kelly in Community Art and the State: Storming the Citadels (1984) as both essential and problematic and resulting in huge compromises, including what he describes as ‘grant addiction’ (1984, p. 49) in the motivations of artists and organisations. Funders had the expectation of structure within these small, sometimes grassroots organisations who became companies limited by guarantee and this brought many of them into the voluntary or third sector when they applied for charitable status. For some, this top-down approach, Kelly notes, ‘state funding [has] rendered the field politically neutral’ (1984, p. 37). During the early part of the laissez faire economic liberalism of the Thatcher administration the specific Arts Council funding stream for community arts was removed amongst a range of cuts to arts funding and an expectation that arts organisations would find commercial income streams. For community arts organisations revenue raising was problematic in many ways, with no box office receipts or saleable products to enhance their income (Jeffers, 2017, p. 41). The change to the way community
arts organisations were supported to deliver their work is highlighted as part of the reason for the fragmentation of community arts practices after the mid-1980s, Hope describing, ‘What had been a fairly coherent, if disparate, body of practice in the 1970s started to become much more diverse in terms of the numbers of projects and range of interests of the artists working in the area, the groups with whom they worked and the techniques available to artists’ (2017, p. 204).

Su Braden’s influential writing from the perspective of practitioner/researcher for The Gulbenkian Foundation in the late 1970s and early 1980s charts the impact of these changes in the funding of community-based arts activities. Her report compared the work of professional artists funded to work with communities with that of artists who set up their own projects often within their own communities. Her practitioner perspective informs her opinion that the commissioning of community arts work was becoming increasingly short-term, project-based and that this ran the risk of formulaic projects, ‘reduced to a set of components’ (Braden, 1978, p. 123) that failed to engage with the causes of systemic deprivation in the areas where they worked. She advocated proposals that came from the communities themselves and that were supported with, ‘a long-term commitment from them as administrators and that this commitment necessitates patient year-by-year programming in which communities and artists can grow together’ (1978, p. 124). This becomes a recurrent theme when looking at the sector over the next forty years. For example, the Creative People and Places funding stream through Arts Council England (and funder behind the Local Colour residency) was set up in 2014 specifically with this hyperlocal approach in mind.

From the late 1990s the use of ‘community arts’ became less popular in the UK with ‘socially engaged art’ used more frequently. At the same time the change in government to New Labour saw revived agendas around social inclusion and participatory democracy. Belfiore describes this ‘renewed focus from policy-makers on the societal benefits of active participation and the hope that they might support wider strategies of social cohesion and inclusion’ (2021, p. 63). The modelling around socially engaged art commissions increasingly became that of a fee-based economy where the artist includes costings in a proposal or in some cases tender document and this is considered by the commissioning body. By this period arts-based engagements were being used to address or, as Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) describe service the issues created by an increasingly unequal society. Matarasso writing about the depoliticisation of community art in Britain and the complex, contested and precarious work that replaced it writes of the period, ‘Now funded more by public welfare agencies than through dedicated arts resources, artists
working with people had less and less time to think beyond the immediate problems of their ‘clients’ or, in the new current climate, of how to finance their work. Community art, always more interested in causes, was not required’ Matarasso (2013, p. 235).

The structure of the projects described in this thesis demonstrate this heritage of community arts/socially engaged practice in the kinds of organisations worked in and with, and the funding structures that supported the work. Hive (Worn Stories), a community arts organisation since the early 1980s has had a permanent base and received larger and longer-term lottery grants (this includes money from Arts Council England) from the late 1990s onwards, making up the rest of their portfolio of funding through a patchwork of smaller shorter-term grants from charitable trusts plus income generating work such as full-cost recovery model workshops and short courses for adult learners delivered in partnership with other education providers, such as the Workers’ Educational Association. As a commissioning body The Super Slow Way (Local Colour) is part of the Creative People and Places Arts Council England portfolio. These bodies were set up specifically to work in areas seen as having low participation in arts and cultural activities. This is examined in more detail in Chapter 4.

**Understanding socially engaged practices**

The increased professionalism of community arts/socially engaged practices as described through the brief (UK based) timeline above has also led writing that seeks to understand these practices. Hope sees the approaches as building up over time, describing them as ‘sediments of experience’ (2017, p. 205). This is an observation that resonates with my many years of work in the field. Modelling the working practices and types of organisations developing that work is not straightforward. Several descriptors are used for these types of participatory arts-based work, often interchangeably. The projects I work on variously describe themselves as socially engaged, social practice, relational art (derived from the work of Nicolas Bourriaud, 2002), dialogic art or method-work (Kester, 2004, 2011), public art, community arts and participatory practices (Matarasso, 2019). In the field these are sometimes used interchangeably.

When exploring the literature, I have also looked at research that uses craft as a socially engaged practice. This body of work has mainly focussed on contemporary projects exploring themes of wellbeing (Kenning, 2015; Diamond and Gordon, 2015; Burt and Atkinson, 2012; Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011; Pollanen, 2015; Hackney, 2013) and sustainability (Ferraro and Reid, 2013). I have been unable to find research that connects projects like these with heritage and place in post-industrial textile communities.
Artist Suzanne Lacy in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1995) offers a useful definition, describing participatory practice as: ‘Visual art that uses both traditional and non-traditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives [and] is based on engagement’ (1995, p. 22). In this definition I would include craft-based practice under the banner of ‘visual art’. Lacy is writing about a relatively recent formulation of art practices that largely work with people, situated in ‘ethical sites of enquiry’ (1995, p. 33). Claire Bishop in *Artificial Hells* (2012) describes the progression of practices during the twentieth century that demonstrate the field’s diverse history. She describes participatory practices as working to change a publics’ engagement with art and art institutions. In differing ways participation with the public was seen as a way of challenging the contextual hegemonies of the art world. Bishop defines key debates about contemporary participatory practice as situated in the ‘tensions between quality and equality, singular and collective authorship, and the ongoing struggle to find artistic equivalents for political positions’ (Bishop, 2012, p. 3). Much has been made of a dialogue between Bishop and Grant Kester concerning forms of participatory art that often emphasise ‘process over a definitive image, concept or object’, preferring ‘to value what is invisible: a group dynamic, a social situation, a change of energy, a raised consciousness’ (2012, p. 6). Despite this she argues that socially engaged practice requires interdisciplinary methods, ‘new ways of analysing art that are no longer linked solely to visuality’ but is clear that the ‘aesthetics of form’ and ‘reflections on quality’ must not be subjugated by policy-driven, outcome-based, positivist approaches (2012, p. 7).

The idea of an ‘ethnographic turn’ in contemporary art practices was first mooted in Hal Foster’s critical essay *The Artist as Ethnographer* (1995). He describes ethnography as having become the ‘dominant methodological model in the academy…promoting the development of new historicism, cultural studies and ‘quasi-anthropological’ art projects’ (1995, p. 302). Since the early nineteen-nineties, multiple art projects, exhibitions and installations have shown remarkable similarities to anthropological and ethnographic practice. This ethnographic turn has been written about extensively (Lippard, 1997; Bourriard, 2002; Kwon, 2002; Kester, 2004, 2011; Schneider and Wright, 2010 and 2013). Miwon Kwon writing in *Site-specificity: The Ethnographic Turn* (2000) quotes James Clifford’s definition of ethnography as, ‘…diverse ways of thinking and writing about culture from a standpoint of participant observation’ (Cole et al., 2000, p. 74). Schrag (2015 and 2018), Helguero (2011) Kester (2004, 2011, 2013), Finkelpearl (2013), Kwon (2004), Bishop (2006 and 2012) and Tiller (2017) have also contributed to an understanding of socially engaged art. They understand it as drawing from multiple vocabularies, those of ethnography,
anthropology, pedagogy, theatre, and communication (Schrag, 2015, p. 18). As an artist working alongside communities as part of long-term socially engaged projects I am interested in potential methodologies, but also in critically appraising the tension that exists within the relationships in these kinds of project.

The practices and vocabularies referred to above are only part of what Helguero in *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* refers to as ‘the complexities of the field’ (2011, p. xiv). He recognises the other skills required in this practice, the artist needing to ‘moderat[e] a conversation, negotiate among interests in a group, assess the complexities of a given social situation’ (2011, p. 4), to support the practical logistics of engagement activities. He also asks whether these types of activity belong in the field of art at all. In this sometimes uncomfortable fit, working between and across disciplines, would it be easier to lose the art altogether? As part of this research, I am asking the question of how socially engaged art sits with heritage projects. As an artist working in and with communities, I have had to defend my position, and have been asked am I: a historian /sociologist / support worker / mental health practitioner / wellbeing professional? At various times I may have drawn from all these disciplines and have received specific accredited mental health training for some of my work.

**Outside or alongside: Questioning the position of the artist**

Pritchard writes of the danger of privileged artists doing ‘social work’ describing potential categories of ‘mercenaries, mediators and mobilisers’ (blog post, 2018). Socially engaged art is guilty of instrumental activism, he sees the only beneficiaries as creative entrepreneurs working alongside capital, rather than those taking part in projects. Socially engaged practice as the in-between space that Helguero alludes to is described, very well I think, as one that works by attaching itself to subjects and problems that normally belong to other disciplines, moving them temporarily into a space of ambiguity (2011, p. 8). By engaging with ‘critically self-reflexive dialogue’ (2011, p. 62) I must ask myself what I am doing here. Kester’s 2004 book *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* articulates this through his text, asking if the artist is there to speak for, through, about, or with the communities they work with. This concern echoes Braden’s (1978) when she describes the temporary nature of artist commissions and her preference for projects that work with artists already living within that community.
As part of these ways of working I have also had to address that there is a tension in how I navigate my multiple researcher/practitioner positionalities. I am not from the specific areas I mostly work in though I was born and have lived in post-industrial Northern cities my whole life. Grant Kester in his book *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2004) expands this point. The apparent side-by-side nature of working with communities does not take away the privilege the position of ‘artist’ infers when working with communities other than their own (2004, p. 124 – 151). In particular, the question often asked of artists working in this way - “Why are you here?” (2004, p. 124). Lucy Lippard problematises this further in her essay *Farther afield* saying, ‘Is the artist wanted there and by whom? Every artist (and anthropologist) should be required to ask this question in depth before launching what threatens to be intrusive or invasive projects (often called ‘interventions’)’ (2010, p. 32). Brynmolson, writing about US based projects including the *Project Row* houses in Houston developed with artist Rick Lowe from the mid-1990s as an arts and cultural community from a then derelict neighbourhood asks the question ‘who benefits from these types of projects?’ (2021, p. 73). She suggests that critiques of socially engaged art should ask ‘...more nuanced questions about participants, sites and resources.’ I am conscious that an artist will always have a partial view of the community that they work with, however deeply they embed themselves in the narratives, landscape and heritage of that site. I hope that my interest in exploring a place in detail gives my work ‘authenticity’. My position as an artist-researcher, my social capital, the privilege of academic language and interpretation is reflected on in this thesis as is the less privileged precarities of project-based work in the arts sector.

Elaine Speight writing about *Palimpsest* (2013) her socially engaged art project for Longhouse Action Research and Multistory, an arts organisation based in West Bromwich uses the term ‘place listening’ as an approach. *Palimpsest* addressed issues around regeneration in a former industrial area attempting to ‘locate some of the narratives of place that tend to be overlooked by place-making and related critical art practices’ (2013, p. 30). Speight’s methodology was informed by Doreen Massey’s *Global Sense of Place* where a sense of place is produced through the ‘meeting and weaving together’ of different social relations (Massey, 1994, pp. 146 – 56). This contrasts with a reliance on finding aspects of ‘local distinctiveness’. Speight writes that ‘the idea of ‘place listening’ offers a way to uncover and acknowledge some of the experiences of place that are overlooked or suppressed by place making schemes... It seeks to discover more nuanced and empowered responses to globalisation that can challenge and allay the fear of homogenisation’ (Speight, 2013, p. 28). Speight engaged her participants in activities that include walking as a creative practice, something that I used frequently in my own projects. She suggests that this
method offers an opportunity for an ‘embodied and open-ended investigation’ (2013, p. 30). Looking at my own reflective notes for the initial engagement sessions for *Local Colour* I wrote, ‘Walking and talking – starting with a plan, or no plan. Offering an invitation.’

Speight also acknowledges the conflict for the practitioner I have alluded to. The position of the privileged outsider. However, she goes further referring to the specific circumstances of work in post-industrial community settings. She quotes David Harvey who is critical of the motives of some commissioned projects, seeing them as a reactionary response to the perceived vulnerability of place in the contemporary capitalist world. This is achieved through attempting to ‘imbue places with meaning.’ (Harvey, 1996, p. 296). He cautions that socially engaged practices can become a purely economic activity. This can then attract institutional investment in a place through an exploitation of the uniqueness of that place. In practical terms, and in some of my own experience as an artist, this can also be characterised by a culture that is evaluation-based and looks at results instrumentally rather than at participant experience. Brynholson (2021) echoes this caution asking if projects are ‘...producing material transformations of urban space or have they merely adopted the fashionable rhetoric of social practice? In terms of projects that are attempting to create local economic changes, there are important questions to ask related to gentrification and creative capital as well. Are these projects capable of creating social change if they are not working ‘in advance of capitalism’?’ (2021, p. 73).

Anthropologist James Clifford cautions that any ‘exploration of ethnographic activity’ must be set in ‘specific and historical circumstances’ (2000, p. 59). He proposes the idea of a ‘contact-zone’ when engaging with site-specific projects, a place that is constantly mobile. This acknowledges the contested nature of this type of work, seeing it as a ‘space in-between’. Clifford uses heritage and museum-based project work as examples as he feels that this ‘contact-zone’ can open them up to collaborative activity. This particularly resonates with my current thoughts about process and practice, in the context of the *Local Colour* residency. I was keen to explore the possibility of using the residency as fieldwork for this research project exploring embodied and durational approaches as ways of looking at place. Continuing this theme of ‘in-between spaces’, Grant Kester (2004, 2011) describes socially engaged practice as ‘the space where certain questions can be asked.’ (2004, p. 68). Describing ‘dialogical aesthetics’ (2004, p. 84) as participatory practice that is collaborative and co-produced, premised on process and mutual exchange. Dialogic art as associated with Kester concentrates on working practices that are concerned with art works framed as exchange and conversation or communicative experiences. Crucially the
definition of public as ‘audience’ is changed to ‘collaborator’. He describes socially engaged practice as a place between discourses, with a blurred relationship to the contemporary art world. A practice in which a ‘plethora of outputs’ (2004, p. 6) can contribute, from workshops and walks to discussion groups and performances, and he sees these taking place between institutions, for example the gallery and the community centre. This is contrasted with the more traditional and conservative approach to participation in the arts, a visitor experience where the participants have usually engaged with museum and gallery settings before. This traditional approach is described well by Nina Simon (2008) in her work on participatory museums where she explores the process of participatory change inside the heritage institution.

**A relational approach to community arts practice**

Most of my work over nearly twenty years has been based in post-industrial communities in West Yorkshire, Humberside and Pennine Lancashire. Site-specific projects have explored the textile heritage of these areas through hands-on making activities and community-based research and reminiscing sessions. This work is grounded in the idea of artistic identity based, in part, on the capacity to listen, openly and actively. I am interested in organising projects that maximise a collective potential in a site-specific way. I am keen that my community practice, particularly when working on heritage projects, is unsentimental, not nostalgic, but this sometimes becomes problematic. *This is a relational approach to practice, the conversations, collaboration, social encounters – the process, are the ‘work’. The art practices are active processes where,*

‘... meaningful boundaries are set up in the ‘interrelations, interactions and dialogues and in the development of social identities Inclusion and exclusion are strongly related in community art practices. They are therefore connected with equality and equal opportunities for processes of identity formation and appropriation. As meaningful individual and collective learning processes, community art practices involve ambivalence, conflict and dissent.’ (Verschelden et al., 2012, p. 280).

The multiplicities involved – of people, groups, organisations, activities, funders – does not make this a straightforward process. There is a messiness implied in these multiplicities. Law (2004) refers to multiplicity through the ‘craftwork implied in practice’ (2004, p. 59). As Strohmayer (2021) points out, this
is not referring to craftwork as one might in the sense of a textile project. However, she acknowledges that this approach to mess in social science research, particularly her own context of working with charities on textile projects around social justice, makes this a useful metaphor, ‘... if I am interested in notions of multiplicity in the description of research processes... I have to relate to the craftwork implied in the practice of making it’ (2021, p. 55). Law also uses the idea of gathering, in his description of method-assemblage. This is to ‘bring ‘to-gether’. To relate. To pick (as with a bunch of flowers). To meet together. To flow together ... to build up or add to (as with a gathering storm, or gathering darkness, or a gathering boil)’ (2004, p. 145). This process then is an active one, even if it is not coherent. Describing how this might happen he suggests that the list is ‘endless’ (2004, p. 117). In the practice of the projects I describe in this thesis this ‘endless’ list begins with making activities and the many things that can be unpicked through this process.

**Everyday making**

I always start with making: In the language of funded projects this is sometimes ‘pilot work’, ‘R and D’, ‘a taster session’. I once heard a community worker describe it a ‘crafty icebreaker’. The making offers something to do, a background to an introduction to and hopefully a conversation that develops about the potential project, what it’s aims are, how it might work, how a collaborative relationship might work (Kwon, 2002, Kester 2004). The projects I devise and deliver include the challenge of understanding everyday experience. It is therefore important to frame the projects both in terms of the language of social practice arts engagement, but also to describe the places and the geographies where this kind of work unfolds. The following vignette describes this beginning through making and the many things that emerge from what can appear to be simple processes:
The making has to be well judged – not too complicated but not so simple as to be seen as patronising. It should involve choices: colours, patterns, textures. It should be something portable and ready to take home that day. Generous, a gift to share, to talk about at home, an object that might intrigue and encourage someone to come back, to find out more, to bring a friend along too. An instant book constructed from a sheet of A4 paper including a print made using easy materials inspired by a walk around the building. A quick collection – a leaf from a shrub growing in the car park, a colour swatch made with a blue crayon matching the sky outside the building that day to add to the small pages. A flower brooch or lavender bag made from discarded knitwear (figure 9). A pincushion, quickly made, a whole jar of buttons poured into a tea tray in the centre of the table to choose from to finish off the construction (figure 10). Then maybe a conversation that develops through this making. C describing at the Local Colour project something he has been making at home: a rug made by finger knitting – and describing and demonstrating through hand gestures the looping of scrap wool (given by his mum) over each finger in repetition then pulled over to make a row. How the small number of stitches make a tube-like structure that grows and is eventually stitched together in a circle to make small, knitted rugs. Distraction from anxiety, pain relief from arthritis, something that grows. He asks if we want to see it and next week brings it to show the group (figure 11) and makes everyone laugh describing a bathmat that due to the too-tight tension used when stitching it together ‘turned into a fruit bowl’. At another (Worn Stories) project K, describes a YouTube tutorial she saw where the tines of a fork were used to make tiny pompoms with scraps of yarn and then demonstrates with one found in the community centre kitchen drawer. We all have to try, and we go home with pompoms hanging from our key rings. W talks about the sand pictures he makes at home – colours, textures of different sands collected over time, in different locations, layered together to make landscapes. He then brings some to show us and gives one as a gift to another participant who was so interested in the process. Crochet hats, toy mice with hand stitched removable garments, reusable shopping bags for friends and neighbours. Hawkins and Price describe making as ‘the promise and process of what can become as much as the product that is made’ (2020, p. 232). In the case of the projects described here the ‘what can become’ can be far away from any product made, but a construction of personal narratives, community storytelling connected to heritage made visible in many ways including, but not always, making (fieldnotes, 05.04.19).
Figure 9: Making a lavender bag from hand dyed silk, *Local Colour*

Figure 10: Constructing pincushions, *Worn Stories*
The everyday sort of making described in the vignette above and the experiences that are then shared may seem to have little to do with the processes of engagement with ‘art’ or heritage, which in both projects was central to the outcomes. However, in the context of my working life, ordinary making is the beginning of every project for me. I have a framework, a relational approach to everyday making, of how a project might work written into the funding bid or commissioning contract. HLF projects require a detailed project plan to be submitted at the application stage that identifies an indicative timetable of activities and locations. However, this can never identify the feeling, thinking, and understanding that begins when a making activity happens with a group. The conversations that start through making create the space to begin. I can observe the group, the dynamics in the room, the space we are working in. Hawkins and Price describe making as transforming geographies, ‘...it recasts connections between humans and non-humans, reimagines new relations between work and leisure, it creates places and communities and attunes our material lives within the vibrancy and needs of our environments’ (2018, p. 231). In some projects I may have worked with the organisation hosting the session before, in the same building, with familiar staff, even some of the participants. However, it is through making sessions I begin to see the edges, thresholds, and boundaries of a project. There is an elasticity in these edges, and an understanding that things will shift, change and move during the course of a project. Stephen Knott describes this ‘elastic relationship’ (2015, p. 83) in amateur craft spaces which as a practitioner I read as a kind of reflexivity. Over years of practice, I have learned to include sessions like these in all project plans and to also intersperse the body of the work with quiet making sessions. Making is also what we come
back to as the projects progress. Sessions that can act as a pause between activity, planning for events, what’s next on the list of things to find out. It also allows for a silence in my research with my multiple methods of collecting data (Kara, 2020). Glenn Adamson writing on the appeal of craft describes its connections ‘to the rhythms and realities of what has been called ‘the everyday.’ We might first associate this term with anthropology which (unlike most kind types of history) studies not the exceptional and the historically significant, but rather the tacit, typical and quotidian’ (Adamson, 2010, p. 45).

**Making in places of care**

In my arts-based engagements I am also drawn to a description of what Hawkins and Price, considering geographies of making, describe as ‘care-full making’ and care ‘cultivated through making’. They include, ‘Materials, things, objects, people, places and environments’ (2018, p. 238). This, when layered together with the site the engagement takes place at, the participants and their specific needs, the desire to use the heritage stories as central to the enquiry and activity, the working practices of a number of organisations, funder, commissioner, host, the spatial differences and facilities of each space creates a palimpsest of activity. The titles of the projects I write and co-write are quite expansive, *Local Colour*, *Material and Memory*. But they all begin in multi-purpose community spaces around a table with a cup of tea and a simple hands-on activity. At this stage everything else is possible but not explicitly planned. In the *Worn Stories* project, training in research skills using Creed Registers at the local library (figure 12) led to independent work by volunteers who found the names of women rag workers; ideas were developed in community sessions about interpreting research visually; community groups decided to hand stitch over ten metres of these names onto recycled wool fabric. In the *Local Colour* residency, a derelict industrial building was explored, reimagined and used as a site for a timed light and sound installation where the visitors wore hard hats during their visits (figure 13) and a limited-edition print run of botanical images using a printing press converted from a laundry mangle was produced. These outcomes came much later, the work that got us to this point is where these ideas became emergent, was the practice. The layers of connection to subject, heritage, place and other members of the group, as I will evidence in this thesis, were also made alongside the making.
The projects I describe mainly take place in ordinary urban locations. They are in community organisations squeezed between commercial buildings in town centres; former office buildings - large open rooms with makeshift dividers breaking up the space so multiple groups can meet at the same time; converted textile mills where metal column supports span the ceiling and break up the space at regular intervals; basements of Victorian board schools converted into craft centres; crypts of Victorian churches where it is advisable to arrive at least an hour before the session begins to turn the fan heaters on. They are in ‘training rooms’ and ‘meeting rooms’ with carpets where we must be extra careful if we’re doing messy work; community spaces with sprung wooden floors in once grand villas built for local industrialists. Portacabin classrooms in Children’s Centres (figure 14); makeshift summer workshop
spaces made in poly tunnels and allotment sheds. (figure 15). They require greater or lesser interventions when setting up spaces. I learn many different folding table mechanisms, the maximum number of chairs that can be stacked and restacked, the room layout required for the session that comes after mine and the time needed to set that up. Basu and Fielder, describe the overlapping uses of spaces like these but acknowledge that they are not ‘necessarily planned rational spaces.’ They reference Sennett (2013) on disorder in city life who describes the “disorderly”, chaotic, and intermittent nature of such kind of spaces, as a way of producing the kind of “common” places where multiple/alternative publics are comfortable to congregate’ (2017, p. 27-28).

Stephen Knott, writing in Amateur Craft (2015, p. 83) describes ‘The ‘resourcefulness, the ability to experiment, management and delegation, the separation of tasks’ that ‘are all rehearsed in amateur space. The physical environment the work happens in is important: the artistic and cultural production in these urban spaces help generate socially produced space as Lefebvre would argue. These social spaces are produced by the forms human production and their relationships including ‘everything that is produced by nature or by society…. living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols.’ (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 101). Arts and cultural activities can be included in this, and in these settings evidence ways of working and of knowing others, the ‘sharing of materialities, expertise and skills’ described by Price and Hawkins (2018, p. 15). These projects may have attracted those who were already hobbyists who used craft and art in their lives, but often Hackney’s description of ‘communities of interest [brought] together reflectively and reflexively through a shared love of ‘making’ and in the context of everyday life’ (2013, p. 187) is less applicable. There were many other motivations for attending, the most prominent of which include for social contact and an interest in local history, as will be described through this thesis.
The organisations I worked with during these projects classify themselves in different ways but exist because of a need for their services, often not met by the public sector or private organisations. They are all charities, some constituted as social enterprises or Community Interest Companies, some attached to churches and other religious buildings, but not faith-based in their community work, some set up for communities with specific cultural and language needs, some based around physical health and mental health outcomes delivering multi-agency engagements. Others provide a variety of community services: from social isolation reduction to debt counselling, services for elderly people, foodbank provision. All offer the use of their rooms for groups to hire. Many have ongoing relationships with adult education.
providers including local FE colleges and the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) who deliver courses including settlement services such as English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Life in the UK citizenship preparation training, plus childcare, first aid, health and beauty and volunteering qualifications. They run timetables of sessional activities that can include IT training courses, Zumba classes, cook and eat programmes, general drop-in advice sessions, after school clubs and playschemes.

Strohmayer, writing about the third sector and community organisations who work towards ‘better worlds’ (2021, p. 46) draws on work around the ‘praxis of hope’ described by Haran (2010, p. 393) and ecologies of care and support. This idea works strongly with ideas of connectedness in post-industrial communities that have experienced such loss and disadvantage over generations.

Returning to Hawkins’ descriptor of ‘care-full making’ is the intrinsic connection to the participants in these projects and their needs. C, whose finger knitting and his description of its uses for him echo the findings of Corkhill et al. (2014), ‘knitting creates strong, resilient, flexible fabric. Therapeutic knitting seeks to create strong, resilient, flexible minds in the process.’ (2014, p. 39) and the observation that ‘knitting makes contributions both big and small to our daily wellbeing.’ (2014, p. 54). Many of the participants in the groups I describe in this project arrived at them as a result of experiencing low wellbeing for many different reasons. The organisations I worked with on the projects described in this thesis are open to all but also have projects and support-offers that specifically address issues around social isolation and loneliness and living with mild to moderate mental and/or physical illness. But the participants in these projects don’t fit neatly into a category. For example, these were not, like some arts and health engagements I have recently seen advertised, a ten week block of ‘activity x’ for participants with ‘health condition y’. So, while some participants may have attended sessions with the motivation of improving their wellbeing or on the recommendation of, for example, a GP or Support Worker, some come for completely different reasons, or a mixture of motivations.

These community spaces could also be classified as places of care. There is an increasing body of literature that focusses on these ‘ordinary places of care’ (Morse and Munro, 2018, p. 4). Conradson describes places that ‘show how care is woven into the fabric of particular social spaces and communities, at times supporting individuals and facilitating their well-being’ although he concludes that despite significant amounts of effort this care can, ‘at times break down leaving significant gaps’ (2003, p. 451). These places might include drop-in centres (Conradson, 2003; Darling, 2011), parks, community gardens and allotments (Milligan et al. 2004; Parr, 2007, van Duppen, 2017) and arts spaces (Crouch, 2009). I am
interested, from my perspective as an artist who over the years has worked in all these types of spaces, in how Jacques Rancière questions places asking, ‘What are these places? How do they function? Why are they there? Who can occupy them? .... It is always a matter of knowing who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done with it’ (Rancière, 2003, p. 201). In addition, the heritage projects I describe may be based in these everyday spaces, but also cross over into museums, galleries, archives, where far less research has been done in terms of them as spaces of care. Links to health and wellbeing in this part of the heritage sector have begun to be explored, notably by Chatterjee and Noble (2013) and by Camic and Chatterjee (2013) who explore the cultural and heritage sector as sites for public health interventions.

‘Treading a fine line’

My accountability is, in the case of both the projects I describe here, is connected to institutions, funders and commissioners as well as to the participants. A commissioner on one of the projects described my position as ‘having to tread a fine line’ in the context of a conversation about the many partners involved in that project and their expectations. The beginning of any project is characterised by shifting ideas and trying to approach the work with an openness. It is also, on a logistical level, predicated on managing multiple relationships: with the commissioning body, the host organisation, potential participants, who all require different and changing approaches. Eleonora Belfiore, writing about the often-precarious working lives of freelance artists describes this as an example of the additional (often unpaid) work managing these relationships can add to projects. She echoes Kester (2004) in describing the ‘imbalance of power between funders and the artists whose livelihoods depend on project-based employment and continued support from funding agencies.’ (Belfiore, 2021, p. 62). The context of additional precarities in the sector and how these have been amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic are also commented on by Jones (2021) and Szreda (2021). My long experience in managing these relationships undoubtedly helped me navigate these situations and both projects were medium to long-term allowing time to build in exit strategies, signposting and writing funding bids for new or related projects. However, the Local Colour residency had the added challenge of working with a host organisation that had no previous experience of socially engaged art projects (and then the later challenge of working during a pandemic). This required the need for constant reflection and reporting back to commissioner and host on process and progress. It required an embedding and immersion in the place and project and needed additional time to slowly develop. At times I was minded of Foster’s observation ‘[the artist] may seek to work with sited communities with the
best motives of political engagement and institutional transgression, only in part to have this work recoded by its sponsors as social outreach, economic development, public relations...’ (1995, p. 303).

**Summary**

This chapter has looked at the complex field of socially engaged arts practice and its origins in the community arts movement (in the context of the UK). It has explored literatures that understand socially engaged practice and that draw on its different practices and vocabularies. It pays attention to the messiness and multiplicities within frameworks for projects and the changes that arrive through participation. It acknowledges Hope’s observation of the difficulties of working in a fluid, improvisational way alongside the timeframes and outcomes set by funders (2017, p. 204). The position of the artist working alongside a community is critiqued. In describing the beginnings and kinds of settings the projects engaged with, it connects theory to practice offering a relational approach for the research questions.

In the next chapter I look at Bradford and Church and the contexts of the projects in more detail. I pay particular attention to the impacts of deindustrialisation on these places. I then consider social practice from the perspective of heritage engagements and an overview of the literature.
Chapter 3: Heritage and engagement debates

Figure 16: Stitch Journal: Multiple stitches in many directions, making sense of the literature and how it overlaps.

Chapter overview

This chapter situates the projects as creative engagements with textile heritage. As highlighted in a recent report by the Heritage Alliance (2020) there is a unique role for heritage in engaging with and promoting societal and individual wellbeing. It can offer ‘... a sense of rootedness and identity, of place and understanding’ (2020, p. 4). Heritage is central to both projects, but this was focussed in different ways, in part due to funding structures (to be described in Chapter 4). Both projects involved regular community-based sessions working with local people and exploring textile heritage using hands-on engagement with textile crafts. The chapter begins with some background information about my previous community-based textile heritage projects and how these developed into the two projects discussed in this thesis. It goes on to discuss the two project sites, Bradford and Church in the context of their past industrial textile production and the impact of the decline in this production on both areas. An overview of the literature around deindustrialisation follows and leads to the heritage response to this and the development of Heritage Studies and Critical Heritage Studies. A discussion of heritage as a social practice concludes the chapter with attention to how this works in textile heritage projects.
Textile heritage: an ongoing personal practice

I have written, co-written and delivered publicly funded community projects that explore specific textile heritages using creative methods since 2012. Projects have developed that aim to allow distinct community voices to be heard and to create social spaces for participants, volunteers, artists and researchers to interact. Heritage could be described as a tool in my socially engaged arts practice, or a way in, allowing people’s lived experiences, and connections to the places they live or have lived in and the buildings that surround them to be amplified. The ‘ways of knowing’ that community heritage research can offer, described by Graham and Vergunst (2019), ‘can go beyond forms of engagement’ (2019, p. 4-6) where a heritage expert seeks to engage a community in a project. Rather they are more often based in the use of materials, skill sharing, and a collective understanding of place. Heritage offers an opportunity for dialogue, almost always starting with current experiences, that often leads to discussion about the past, personal and collective experience. When asked ‘Would you do another madder [textile dye] project’ by a Local Colour participant I knew that if I did it would have a totally different outcome, contingent on location and the contributions of those taking part. The people I work with form the outcomes. Heritage provides a reference point, a place of memory, a place that offers connection.

Examples include projects focussed on specific places and practices: Dyer’s Field, 2012-15; an exploration of the site of a former dyeworks (figure 17); By a Thread, 2015-16; a curatorial residency focussing on emotional practices around textile mending and repair (figure 18); Lasting Impressions (with Hannah Lamb); the creation of a new archive of visitors clothing at a performance in a former textile mill 2016-18 (figure 19); Resist, 2017; re-walking then stitching the route of a 1917 peace march by 3000 women textile workers (figure 20). My community practice was tied strongly to projects already working around themes of health and wellbeing using art/craft practice and were based in community settings. Out There (2009-13), funded through an Ecominds grant for the community arts charity Hive (BIG Lottery Fund/ Mind) used research around green spaces and wellbeing mainly with community mental health charities (Bragg et al., 2013). It worked with groups in community gardens and allotments creating textile dye gardens, making colour using plants and exploring working across a whole process, from seed to fabric (figure 21). Participants, who mainly self-referred to the projects, had experience of living with mild to moderate mental health illness. Sessions used a framework of actions devised by the New Economics Foundation, Five Ways to Wellbeing, and used the definition of wellbeing as ‘feeling good and functioning
This set of five actions, take notice, connect, give, keep learning, be active (Aked et al. 2008) was embedded in the sessions. Over the three years I co-ordinated the project I saw the potential of expanding the projects to include connections to local textile heritage and to broaden the access to the work for the wider community.

Figure 17: Dyer’s Field, 2013-15. Ripleyville South Bradford

Figure 18: By a Thread, Gawthorpe Textiles Collection, 2016
Figure 19: *Lasting Impressions*, Salts Mill, Bradford. 2016

Figure 20: *Resist* former Textile Hall, now pound shop, Westgate, Bradford. 2017

Figure 21: Community textile garden made in brownfield site, 2012-16, Shipley, Bradford
Standing at a community allotment project on the outskirts of Bradford during the Out There project, the geography of the textile industry was visible - chimneys, repurposed mills. I wanted to make the connections to this heritage more visible in project work. The multiple stories of community, arrival, belonging in the city over the previous 150 years often came from connections to this industry. It felt negligent to ignore this significant past in the conversations, growing, making, that went on in these projects.

Projects followed that addressed the specific heritage of the textile dyeing industry in Bradford and later East Lancashire. A natural departure from growing and working with traditional dye plants seemed to be the researching of their use in the industry and the stories of the workers in that industry. The Fabric of Bradford (2012-14) supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund considered this, focussing on the period 1800-1913, the use of dyes in the industry through engagement with local archives, the stories of migration and immigration and communities that grew up around specific parts of the city who worked in the industry. A concurrent project investigated an area in South Bradford around the former Bowling Dye Works site and Ripleyville, the industrial model village built for its workers. I had an interest in the provenance and history of textile dyeing and the temporalities that affect this as a craft practice. The temporalities of the craft and industry had changed dramatically after 1856 with the invention by William Perkin of the first synthetic dye ‘Mauveine’ (Beer, 1959, Garfield, 2000).

**Post-industrial textile communities**

Both fieldwork projects explored the heritage of former industries in their areas and the research questions ask how this can impact on the present lived experiences of participants. Bradford and Church were formerly known for their production and processing of textiles, wool in the case of the former and cotton the latter. The Industrial Revolution, it can be argued, was, ‘a textiles revolution: the cotton textiles industry the primary engine of growth’ (Dicken, 1992, p. 233). Both locations have struggled to recover from the gradual and then rapid decline of industry that began at the start of the twentieth century and was followed by the dramatic change in the British economy in the 1980s and 1990s. Baker (1995) refers to the particular circumstances of the textiles sector where rapid deindustrialisation and loss of employment had additional impact, ‘the rate of loss in the textiles sector was more rapid than the general loss of employment in manufacturing in the UK’ (1995, p. 21). The contraction of traditional industries is discussed by Turner (2003) as the most salient, and as having had the most direct impact on
individuals, communities, and on the physical environment (2003, p. 238). Taylor (2020) in an ethnographic study of the impact on a town of the closure of a carpet mill and its eventually demolition describes the ‘almost total decline of a community’ (2020, p. 46). She describes the difficulty, post-industry, that ex-workers and new residents found in generating new communal ties (2020, p. 49). Conversations about the loss of industry, including the changing physical geography of the places, working lives and connections within the community became part of the work of both projects.

• Bradford

Bradford, West Yorkshire, variously known as Worstedopolis, Woolopolis and Wool City (Keighley, 2007) during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, had the fastest expansion of population in an English city during the industrial revolution with growth in the population of 90,000 between the 1801 and 1851 census’ due to the rapid growth of the wool textile industry (Hall, 2013, p. 57). During the period from 1850 until the outbreak of the First World War, the city was associated with great wealth derived from its textile industry and trade (2013, p. 79). The city was seen as being at the heart of the UK wool textile industry in the field of worsted production and ‘pre-eminent a textiles town’ (Briggs, 1963, p. 150).

Gunn (2010) explains that although there were losses in productive capacity and employment between the wars ‘wool textiles remained the centrepiece of the local economy in the three decades after 1945’ (2010, p. 852). Forty percent of the working population worked in the industry in 1948 with allied textile engineering, mainly in the production of machinery the next biggest employer. In the immediate, but temporary, post-war boom period demand for labour in the mills was high, partly due to the reluctance of demobilised troops and women workers to go back into the industry. The textile labour force had, from the nineteenth century, provided work for a substantial number of migrant workers. The European Voluntary Workers Scheme (EVW) recruited significant numbers of displaced people from Ukraine, Poland, Yugoslavia and Hungary, later this extended to southern Europe. During the early 1950s young men from the ‘New Commonwealth’, particularly Pakistan, were encouraged to come to work in the textile industry as economic migrants, the largest proportion from the Mirpur District of southern Azad Kashmir. Trade connections had been established as a result of centuries of colonial trade and the population of Mirpur had been displaced by the construction of the Mangla Dam meaning thousands were looking for work and a life elsewhere. The composition of the textile labour force rapidly transformed with women replaced by Pakistani men who provided cheap, unskilled labour (Jackson, 1992, p. 190).
The decline of UK textile production throughout the twentieth century accelerated towards the end of the century, leaving the city with significant problems. Textile employment followed a pattern of national decline and between 1998 and 2002 nearly 11,000 textile jobs were lost in Bradford and district (Keighley, p. 256) and no main type of employment has taken the place of the industry. Reliance on a single industry, relatively small companies that worked with outdated machinery and diversification that came too late were all contributing factors (Hall, 2013, p. 171). Textile production and associated businesses still operating in the area are mostly those that understood, described by Keighley, ‘...that the British wool-textile industry’s future lies in what is popularly known as “niche production” and not in bulk production’ (2007, p. 256). An industry partner in the Worn Stories project was Hield Brothers Ltd., a weaving mill established in 1922, now specialising in high end production of cloth for suits and expensive upholstery fabrics. When we visited Brigella Mills a clipping from a Forbes Magazine article (dated just before the financial crash of 2008) was on the wall, ‘The best way to blow your bonus’ included purchasing seven Hield Bros suits for $21,000.

Gunn (2010) writing about the failed attempt at modernisation in the city centre from the early 1960s onwards describes the landscape left by industry as being ‘of the industrial revolution, the legacy of which seemed to permeate the stone-and-brick world even after decades of corrosive deindustrialisation.’ (2010, p. 850). The most recent English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019) ranks Bradford as the 5th most income deprived area in England and as the 6th most employment deprived local authority in England (Bradford MDC, 2020). The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) uses thirty-nine separate indicators, grouped into seven domains of deprivation: income, employment, education, skills and training, health and disability, barriers to housing and services, crime and living environment. The seven domains are subsequently combined, using appropriate weighting to provide an overall measure of multiple deprivations experienced by people living in an area. There are variations around the district with 27% of the district’s population classed as living in the 10% most deprived areas in England (2020, p. 5). Child poverty is recorded at 31.8% across the district, in some areas this is as high as 47% (Bradford MDC, 2020, p. 5).

- Church

Church, a village now adjoining Accrington in East Lancashire is at the mid-point of the Leeds Liverpool canal. Lancashire was a centre for the cotton weaving and printing industries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with towns specialising in different aspects of the industry. By the end of the
nineteenth century 500,000 (of a population of 4 million) people were employed in the cotton industry with Manchester, known as ‘Cottonopolis’, at the centre recognised as the first fully industrial city (Phelps et al., 2016). The area around Church was well known for calico printing and dyeing and associated chemical manufacture and engineering works related to textile production. Innovations in the printing and dyeing processes developed from the late eighteenth century onwards (Hogg, 1971, p. 30). These included the work of Robert ‘Parsley’ Peel who established his own printworks in Church in 1764 developing copper engraved roller printing systems. Broad Oak printworks in Accrington, established in 1792, continued to innovate throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the first completely synthetic fabric, Terylene, invented at Broad Oak Printworks in 1943 (Brunnschweiler et al., 1993). A Turkey red industry developed in the area through the work of Huguenot printer and dyer Frederick Steiner (1789-1869) who later invited his compatriot Frederick Albert Gatty (1819-1888) to work with him in the 1840s. The successful work of companies developed by these men during the 19th century was central to the Local Colour residency.

The cotton industry was the UKs leading exporter until 1938 but had been in rapid decline from the 1920s onwards due to a fall in exports, the development of production systems and markets elsewhere, particularly India and China, and an increase in trade tariffs to the Americas (Beckert, 2014). More generally, and despite a brief period of upturn around the Second World War, the decline of the UK textile industry as a whole was rapid from the 1950s onward. I found a copy of Industry and Prudence: A Plan for Accrington published in 1950, online and it arrived in the post - a handsome hardback written by the borough post-war planning committee. Full of well-designed maps of an imagined vision of ‘modernity’ for the town (figure 22). There was a recognition of the precarious state of industrial towns and the need for development and change in an area where the majority of citizens were employed in one declining industry (Allen and Mattocks, 1950, p. 1). ‘Much of the wealth created in the factories was applied to overseas investment. Some of it was spent by industrial leaders in the other and pleasanter places to which they retired. An inadequate amount remained in the towns wherein it had been created.’ It was a plea to use the ‘Victorian spirit of enterprise’ and a ‘social tradition and habit of collective thinking which a town cannot acquire except by years of communal experience’ (1950, p. 157). Tucked in the end paper was a printed addendum written in 1976 by D. Sutcliffe, Borough Planning Officer for the new Borough of Hyndburn (after Local Government Reorganisation in 1974). He describes the plan and its ‘visionary speculation’ as prime interest as a ‘historical record, not only of the area but of Planning
methodology... Hence 26 years later, we find that little of the Plan is now a reality and most is a sad, lost opportunity.’

Figure 22: Accrington reimagined (Allen and Mattocks, 1950, p.130)

Hyndburn is now in the 10% most deprived authority areas in the country (Lancashire County Council, 2019). The area experiences significant health deprivation and disability in its population and is ranked seventh most deprived in the country in the indices that measure disability and health deprivation. Child poverty is above national average at 24% and life expectancy is in the lowest 10% nationally.

Deindustrialisation in textile communities

The experience of Bradford and Church is part of a wider story of economic decline and its impacts on communities. The two projects engaged with this history, partly through their research activities and partly through the conversations that happened through making during group sessions. Project beginnings included research into the aspects of the local industrial past and as the projects progressed the desire to talk about the impact of industrial decline increased. These themes resonated at a time when the post Brexit referendum negotiations were ongoing and unresolved, loss of industry clearly seen as a motivation in these areas for the strong leave vote (JRF, 2016; Beatty and Fothergill, 2020). All 14
Lancashire districts voted leave with 66.2% in Hyndburn, in Bradford the leave proportion was smaller at 54%. During project sessions I found that discussions often began during my ‘check-in’ with the groups (see Methods chapter for more detail). Observations brought up by participants began to include the latest Brexit news and would be illustrated with comments about job losses, unskilled work and ‘schemes for supermarket managers.’ A participant in the Local Colour project described the changes he saw,

‘Well, it’s looking at the past isn’t it, getting an insight into the heritage and like I’ve already said to you, the soul’s gone out of the town and to a certain extent the soul’s gone out of the community because ... we’re living in a post-industrial society. In my era everybody was working, everybody had jobs. But it’s a total turn around you’ve a lot of people, social and economic victims, social and economic changes and a lot of people who genuinely feel isolated.’
(conversation with W, 15.11.19)

Comments like this address my first sub-question and the group conversations that developed from them offer insight into the multiple layers of heritage and present lived-experiences former industrial textile areas. They speak to themes addressed by Cowie and Heathcote (2003) in their work where they ask us to ‘... rethink the chronology, memory, spatial relations, culture and politics’ of deindustrialisation (2003, p. 1-2).

Strangleman (2017) writes that ‘the only way to understand contemporary industrial loss is through a historically informed sociology wherein a richer account of deindustrialisation recognises historically mediated structures, action and experience’ (2017, p. 467). Drawing on the earlier twentieth century writing on industrial change by E.P Thompson and Raymond Williams he looks at dominant, residual and emergent responses to deindustrialisation arguing that headline figures around the immediate loss of industry and jobs in a community (Fine, 2004; O’Hara, 2011; Sidorick, 2009) must also engage with the social consequences of industrial change. Describing the need for researchers to engage in ‘social industrial archaeology’ (2017, p. 479) he also cites the work of Sherry Lee Linkon who explores the ‘half-life of deindustrialisation’ (2013) through creative writing styles that emerged after industrial loss. For Linkon the impact of deindustrialisation is felt long after the industry is gone and not only for those who directly experienced industrial culture. The impact is also felt for later generations growing up in a newly post-industrial community. ‘People and communities are shaped by their histories – by experience, by memory, and by the way the economic and social practices of the past frame the structures, ideas, and
values that influence our lives long after those practices have ceased to be effective’ (2013, p. 1). Linkon’s earlier work with John Russo, Steeltown USA (2002), is an examination of Youngstown, Ohio, a former steel town. It looks at the importance of memory when communities struggle to reconcile an industrial past with a ‘socially-excluded present and an uncertain future’ (2002, p. 249).

Deindustrialisation as a research area is commented on by Cowie and Heathcott (2003), as it ‘turned out to be a more socially complicated, historically deep, geographically diverse and politically perplexing phenomenon than previously thought’ (2003, p. 2). Offering a way to explore the industrial heritage of an area through socially engaged art projects attempts to ask questions about how people remember both industrial work and its loss. The ‘unofficial knowledges’ (Samuel, 1994, p. 3) of memory and place were discussed in both projects and focussed on history researched and envisioned by the participants, a collaborative enterprise. A participant on the Local Colour project explained this well: ‘Talking about history makes me think about the relevance to today. It’s our experience. We all have a connection to this. It’s the industrial heritage. That’s the common thing’ (S, Fieldnote book 4, 2018). Another ‘To collect memories and have personal experiences recorded is a great thing to build on. I know we can’t live in the past and we can’t bring the past back but the information we can gather... [pause]... What can we do now? That’s a big question mark. It hangs over all Church and all the district. What can we do now? And nobody really has come up with a solution’ (K, fieldnotes book 8, 2020). Strangleman et al. discuss the articulation of loss and the use of visual materials ‘marking and recording change’ in (2013, p. 15). This is a method that was used during both projects, but it was often the participants volunteering these images, of their own, from saved newspaper articles, from things they found in the local library, using personal objects for storytelling. This offered an opportunity to explore the research questions as they relate to the multi-layered heritage of Bradford and Church and explore whether they do enhance connection to community heritage narratives.

The industrial jobs described by some of the participants in the projects, and the job losses in these industries now happened over a generation ago. Considering this timespan Beattie and Fothergill (2020) talk about the assumption that the economic problems caused by deindustrialisation have now disappeared as redundant workers reach pension age or die. Using official unemployment data this could appear to be the case. However, in the older industrial towns in England, with industrial history going back to the nineteenth century, they identify that currently (and including the period of crisis caused by Covid-19) finding ‘good’ jobs – with acceptable pay and conditions is the difficulty. Claims for incapacity
related welfare benefits are also higher in these areas. They also question if describing these areas as ‘post-industrial’ is correct as these places remain the ‘heartland of British manufacturing’ [on a much-reduced scale] (2020, p. 7).

The cultural ties that bind industrial communities have been well documented and bodies of work around deindustrialisation and the community experience of this are often focussed on different industrial examples. There have been many studies of former mining communities, where work and settlement have been widely viewed as homogenous, Strangleman talks of these features in terms of isolation, boundedness, and mono-industrial character (2001, p. 253). Studies of these areas explore diverse themes: physical and emotional health and wellbeing (Roberts, J. 2009; Rind and Jones, 2015) place, identity and reorientating the past (Roberts, B, 1994; Dicks, 2000, Strangleman, 2001; Stephenson and Wray, 2005; Hoskins and Whitehead, 2013), aspiration and regeneration, (Bright, 2011) and creative economic responses post-industry (Breitbart, 2013).

In contrast to the example of coal mining there is less research done in the former occupational textile communities of Northern England. Taylor’s (2020) work about a former carpet manufacturing area of West Yorkshire is important to this study. She uses Strangleman’s description of ‘disembedded’ (2017, p. 476) de-industrial society to delineate the altered social and cultural norms of industrial life (2020, p. 50). The affective relationships in a small town and the spatial changes following demolition and loss of industrial architecture were also discussed in both projects. Other research has tended to focus on the impact of deindustrialisation on South Asian communities from these areas, many of whose ancestors came to work in the textile industries from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh from the 1950s onwards (Wallace and Cornelius, 2010; Qureshi et al., 2014; Swift, 2021) and the community cohesion impacts. This again is salient for this study as both Bradford and Church have large South Asian communities who first came to work in the textile industry in the post-war period. Another device in addition to academic research projects have been long-running oral history recording projects such as Bradford Heritage Recording Unit (BHHRU) and North West Sound Archive both begun in the nineteen eighties that attempted to capture and preserve the lived experiences of those working in the textile industries during the economic decline of the late twentieth century. Transcripts and recordings from these projects were used in both the Local Colour and Worn Stories projects.
Community projects engaging with this aspect of the heritage included *The Shalwar Kameez Heritage Project* (2012) based in Bradford and accessioning oral history accounts of South Asian women’s experiences of their working lives in the city through sewing. A more recent example from 2020 also began to capture the experience of South Asian textile workers in Bolton (Bolton Solidarity Community Association, Bolton Octagon Theatre). The Local Colour residency led to a successful National Lottery Heritage Fund bid, *Gatty’s Gift: A Centenary of Colour and Community* that included creative responses and the collection of audio reminiscences in the local community to mark the 100th anniversary of Elmfield Hall and the land surrounding it being given to Church Urban District Council in 1920 (figure 23).

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 23: Fabric madder plant, Gatty’s Gift exhibition**

**The heritage response**

The period of deindustrialisation in industries like textile production led to heritage becoming part of a social response to the economic consequences of the shift in manufacturing and industry in the late modern period. Prior to this period of decline industrial sites were largely unacknowledged. Hewison (1987) argued that the ‘heritage solution’ had been increasingly applied to ease the emotional losses of deindustrialisation (1987, p. 95). He talks of the widespread ‘heritagisation’ of many new categories of place including industrial ruins. This is presented as a pragmatic response to these superfluous sites and to the material excess left after industry has ended (see also Edensor, 2005; Kirshenblatt-Gimlett, 1998). The late twentieth century period of industrial decline introduced new emphases around ideas of heritage. These definitions of heritage have shifted from a process of the production of a public sphere in the eighteenth century to one of nation building in the nineteenth, to become concerned with the
management of redundancy and waste in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The collection and preservation of now useless machinery and objects, buildings that no longer have purpose, redundant landscapes and an accelerated sense of vulnerability and risk (see also Hetherington, 2004; Edensor, 2005; Harrison, 2013; DeSilvey, 2017) is a relatively recent phenomenon (Harrison, 2013, p. 81).

In an exploration of Britain’s Edgelands, poets Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts described these newly disregarded landscapes saying, ‘Nobody has figured out a way of remembering any of this yet’ (2011, p. 139). More recently Smith and Campbell have described the move of industry into a new identity as ‘heritage’ as ‘complex, difficult and underpinned by loss and grief – emotions all too easily dismissed and misunderstood as simply ‘nostalgia’. They make a distinction between ‘reactionary’ and ‘progressive’ nostalgia and argue that engagement with this often-difficult heritage can be used to discuss and commit to issues around social justice (2017, p. 612).

The wider field of Heritage Studies research also emerged around this time, a now well-developed and evolving multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary field. Varied methodologies bring together approaches and perspectives from many fields including geography, the arts, archaeology and anthropology. It is concerned with the politics of historical, contemporary, and future heritage-making and practices. This would include the shaping of decisions about how we express care for things, and how values get attributed to places, people and processes (Ashton, 2021). In the nineteen eighties, authors like David Lowenthal, Robert Hewison, and Raphael Samuel challenged what they saw as a pervasive nostalgia in the institutionalisation of heritage (Lowenthal, 1985, Hewison, 1987). Samuel talked of ‘turning fragments into a meaningful whole’ and ‘the aestheticizing hand of heritage management’ (1994, p. 303). Hewison describes, in a climate of decline, ‘manufacturing heritage, a commodity which nobody seems able to define, but which everybody is eager to sell’ (1987, p. 9). The beginnings of Heritage Studies as a discipline sought to recognise this as a largely sanitized and instrumental version of heritage as then purveyed and commodified by the National Trust and English Heritage. The histories they explored were increasingly detached from the industrial heritage of and multi-cultural communities living in the UK.

Today the growing field of Heritage Studies encompasses diverse disciplines and acknowledges the complexity of the globalised world, and the role heritage can play in human development. Albert et al. (2013) emphasise the need for inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches in order to understand heritage processes. Meskell (2015) goes further saying that heritage scholarship divorced from any archaeological, ethnographic of other disciplinary grounding runs the risk of being seen as
‘intellectually thin’ (2015, p. 3). She sees Heritage Studies as a much needed and growing area but one that needs time to develop as a cohesive discipline. The ‘slipperiness’ of heritage as a discipline is also explored by Uzell (2009). He describes it as ‘the lovechild of a multitude of relationships between academics in many disciplines, and then nurtured by practitioners and institutions.’ (2009, p. 326) These writers all acknowledge the need for a dialogue between academic and non-academic stakeholders with regard to the identification and communication of heritage.

**Intangible Heritage**

Heritage about people, community values and the experience of industrial work, as well as these altered geographical spaces were all discussed in the Church and Bradford projects and as such this can be seen as contributing to the UNESCO definition of intangible cultural heritage (2003). Identity and continuity, fundamental to societies can be seen as being created through social and cultural practices and living traditions. The UNESCO process is described here by Harrison et al. (2020) *The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2002) asserts that cultural heritage is the common heritage of humanity, enshrining difference as something that is both vulnerable to threats posed by modernity and globalisation, and also something intrinsic to social cohesion and global peace (UNESCO 2002). The subsequent 2003 *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* and 2005 *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* each connect cultural diversity to human rights, thus making cultural diversity a unified project vital for the building of a sustainable future’ (2020, p. 59). While calling on ‘communities’ to be the curators of their traditions, in identifying examples of this UNESCO has been subject to criticism for its own Western hegemonic gaze. Critical approaches to this include Smith (2006) and Meskell (2015) who suggest it reinforces narrow identities of nationhood and Taussig (1992) who describes the ‘thingification’ of culture and heritage.

Whereas the UNESCO conventions around intangible cultural heritage were built around the preservation and safeguarding of practices, the *FARO Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (2005) had a starting point that is people and community focussed. The FARO convention is a ‘framework convention’ meaning that it suggests rather than imposes actions for signatories. It positions ‘people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage’ (University of York, 2020) recognising the right of individuals to engage with the cultural heritage they choose. It emphasises the need for involvement of individuals and communities at every stage of defining and managing cultural heritage. The ideas behind this more inclusive model have been influential in the UK
(though not ratified by UK government) and has led to developments in the funding structures that surround heritage in the UK at the present. For example, the changes to the National Lottery Heritage Fund framework in 2019 which included the outcome of wellbeing for the first time. This, along with an ongoing central outcome that ‘a wider range of people will be involved in heritage’ (NLHF, 2021) offers an opportunity for more community-centred heritage practices and this includes work around personal heritage narratives and everyday experience.

**Critical Heritage Studies**

During the first decade of the twenty first century, as described above, the heritage definitions, paradigms and policies were changing, towards a more people and society-oriented dealing with heritage. This was also connected to sustainable development. At the same time the interest in ‘critical heritage studies’ grew and is used to describe different ways of thinking about and doing heritage (Graham and Howard, 2008). It challenges: asking difficult questions, dealing with contested histories and includes underserved and excluded communities in its discourse. Content is explored in more diverse ways moving away from the more traditional focus of heritage studies, on management and technical issues of heritage practice, to one that Gentry and Smith describe as ‘emphasising cultural heritage as a political, cultural and social phenomenon’ (2019, p. 1148). Harrison, in Heritage: Critical Approaches (2013), addresses heritage in an explicitly interdisciplinary fashion, treating it as a broad social and material phenomenon rather than addressing particular ‘types’ of heritage (2013, xiii). He uses the idea of ‘rebalancing’ interests where groups come together allowing minorities to be better represented and allowed a space for new forms of knowledge to emerge and contribute to academic or institutional knowledge (Callon et al., 2011), see also Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) and Smith et al. (2009). This process was also facilitated by the development of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies in 2012 and ‘‘ruthless criticism’ of the assumptions and ideas about the nature of heritage and the practices that surround the use of the past in the present (Campbell and Smith, 2011).

The approach advocated by critical heritage studies speaks to the community practices I describe in this thesis where the discursive is foregrounded (Smith, 2006, p.13) and there is an explicit acknowledgement of multiplicity. Graham and Vergunst ask the question ‘What happens when communities, or collectives of people interested in exploring their own pasts or those of the places around them, actively create their own heritage that links between past and present?’ (2019, p. 3). The ‘ways of knowing’ they describe in
answering this work to actively notice, create and enact different kinds of knowledge through doing heritage. Similarly, Ashton (2021) speaks about heritage as ‘generated, renewed, reproduced by people through space and time’ (2021, 6:41-6:45) The practices, conversations through making and knowledges created through the Worn Stories and Local Colour projects engage with these questions.

**Community-based approaches**

Both projects engaged with heritage at a community level. The Your Heritage HLF funding stream which supported the Worn Stories project in its description of ‘the many different things from the past that we value and want to pass on to future generations’ (2017, p. 4) lists potential examples framing them as ‘projects that will make a lasting difference to communities’ and includes intangible heritage - people’s memories, and the histories of communities in its guidance notes. My Local Colour contract with SSW was specific about community engagement and included the phrase ‘Working authentically in collaboration with communities is fundamental to the success of SSW and our community commissions are a key part of this. We support people to host residencies and offer artists the opportunity and time to build relationships in a process that is truly collaborative and meaningful.’ As Berger et al. (2020) note, ‘heritage tends to take place within highly specific locations, be they streets, suburbs, villages, landscapes, regions or nations’ (2020, p. 325).

The idea of heritage as a social practice to encourage community participation has been explored in literature investigating the role of community groups in heritage management, interpretation, and conservation work. Newman and McLean (1998) explore heritage as tool to reduce social exclusion in communities, Hayden (1997) uses heritage and place as a method of constructing community memory. Smith and Waterton (2009) work from the premise that all heritage is intangible (see also Kirschenblatt-Kimblett, 2004) and quote Munjeri who says, ‘The tangible can only be understood and interpreted through the intangible’ (2004, p. 13). Graham and Vergunst explore the co-production legacies that projects using heritage for community research can offer (2019). All argue that the creation of a dichotomy between different ‘types’ of heritage is exclusive in its own way. ‘Heritage cannot be defined by its materiality or non-materiality but rather by what is done with it’ (Smith and Waterton, 2010, p. 292). Industrial sites, archaeological finds, folk songs, oral histories – all are the same things in this context as they involve ‘the performance and negotiation of identity, values and a sense of place’ (2009, p. 292).
Smith and Campbell (2011) discuss a community-based heritage project based in Castleford, a post-industrial former mining community, in West Yorkshire (Smith and Campbell, 2011). The intangibility of much of the heritage explored is used to, ‘redefine community and re-knit and strengthen community ties and to transmit certain social and cultural values.’ (2011, p. 100). The experiences identified in this study are useful to this study as they investigated if the project was able to help make, negotiate and transmit memories and social values thus creating a form of ‘self-recognition’. It recognised that the definition of intangible heritage as outlined by UNESCO is applicable to this community project. However, Smith and Campbell see the most significant part of the process for the participants engaged in the projects not being intangible heritage or the conservation of objects from the past. ‘Rather it is an active process of making, negotiating and transmitting memories and social values for and in terms of present needs and aspirations. It is about generating pride and self-respect in the face of historical trauma and economic and political change.’ (2011, p. 29) The authors were keen to point out that this was not a nostalgic attempt to save or preserve the past but were focussed on the present and the future, a way of refocussing history (2011, p. 3).

**Dialogic models of heritage**

The processes of making, negotiating and refocussing heritage are tied into dialogic models of heritage as identified by Smith (2006), Silberman (2012) and Harrison (2013). Smith, in *Uses of Heritage* (2006), describes heritage as an act of communication and meaning making, as something that is experiential. ‘Heritage is not so much a ‘thing’ but a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present’ (2006, p. 2). She sees heritage as a discourse but is highly critical of what she names Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) one that speaks of Western dominance and elite class experience. She believes this reinforces the ‘innate cultural value tied to time depth, monumentality, expert knowledge and aesthetics.’ (2006, p. 299) and believes that there is a particular issue in the UK of heritage institutions not engaging with intangible heritage as it is not seen as the dominant discourse.

Smith proposes another discourse, a form of social practice where social meanings, different forms of knowledge and expertise, power relations and ideologies are embedded and reproduced via language. This discourse acknowledges and celebrates differing community experiences and sees heritage as an active process. It offers ways of understanding heritage through practice and practical processes. In the
context of intangible and tangible heritage it also offers ways of identifying the ways people find to link historical events with personal and community identity (2006, p. 300). Harrison also proposes a dialogical model of heritage in *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (2013). Considering the challenges of the late modern period raises he suggests that it offers a way of using heritage in more creative and transformative ways in the future. Harrison draws on actor-network theory, assemblage theory, symmetrical archaeology and a notion of heritage as an apparatus or dispositif to argue a case for a material, semiotic approach to heritage to bridge these two critical approaches. Harrison concentrates on three interlinked themes, connection, materiality and dialogue as ways of thinking about heritage and how it works in contemporary global societies (2013, p. 227). The relationships between people, objects, places and practices is where heritage emerges. The ways that humans and non-humans are linked, ‘by chains of connectivity and work together to keep the past alive in the present and for the future’ (2013, p. 229).

Silberman (2012) sees cultural heritage as ‘a dialogic medium for promoting discussions about social justice and cultural creativity in the present’ (2012, p. 7). Adding to the observation about the current breadth and discipline of Heritage Studies by Meskell, Silberman acknowledges that a considerable body of theoretical work on the interrelationship between human rights and cultural heritage has yet to be integrated into either the practice or the scholarship of heritage management. Consequently, issues around human rights need to become a greater part of the dialogue around heritage. (Silberman 2012 p. 2-3).

Smith’s idea of heritage as a social practice, one that embraces differences in expertise and power relations is appealing to me. It relates to my position as practitioner and connects to the relationships that develop over time in my projects. It acknowledges that there are multiple hierarchies within community-based projects, and that these projects with multiple stakeholders require a deep understanding of the motivation and needs of all those involved. The ‘ways of knowing’ I am exploring whether socially engaged arts practices can be used as a device that can increase resilience and help to prevent the ‘homogenising’ of the local community when engaged in a heritage project (Frisch, 1998; Pritchard, 2017). Speight (2013) writing about a socially-engaged project based in West Bromwich uses the idea of ‘place listening’ as informed by Massey (1994) as a way to uncover and acknowledge some of the experiences of place that are overlooked or suppressed by ‘place making’ schemes. In doing this she seeks to ameliorate the fear of homogenisation and elicit a more nuanced and empowered response to issues of locality and globalisation (2013, p. 28).
Christens and Speer (2006) in their work on participatory development discuss, ‘Socially engaged arts projects [that] are not a disembodiment of artistic practice, but a process of social interaction mediated by a physical and cognitive co-labouring.’ They see site specificity as the generative locus of individual and collective identities, actions, and histories and that this in itself can be transformative. However, they caution that dialogical practice can be open to the romanticizing of ‘local knowledge as an almost mystical, uniform, good’ (2006, p. 39). Little (2016) describing the work of socially engaged artist Deirdre Nelson on a creative commoning project based in Glasgow Made in Easterhouse (2016) that explored local heritage and local stories through collaborative textile projects says of the artist,

‘[she]... maps a thriving ecology of making, a constantly shifting and growing constellation of imaginative and transformative acts undertaken not within the art or other commercial market but in domestic spaces, and for their own sake or for the sake of others. Making in this sense creates both things and time. It’s repetition and attentive process requires embodied relationships with materials and resources, as well as the development of skill through repetition and familiarity’ (blog post, 2016).

I am aware that the embodied and open-ended creative approaches employed in the projects described can be at risk of a lack of rigour in the way the heritage is described and explained. This issue was raised during the Local Colour residency. Participants brought to the group stories they found about the local area, sometimes informed by historical research, sometimes through word of mouth and the use of local history Facebook groups including ‘50 Shades of Old Accy’. Developing a materials-based heritage trail with the participants in 2017 brought with it conversations about the differences that exist between the historical record and storytelling. As Kara (2020), writing in a blog post about creative methods says, ‘research is all about stories’ (2020). As a group we navigated this issue through a narrative based performative delivery of the findings of the project where visitors were able to walk the route, engage with the textiles produced and hear stories, some real, some imagined, as delivered by the participants. However, later work with the group revealed an enthusiasm for local ownership of stories but some resistance to working with the historical record if it failed to supply the ‘right’ kind of evidence. A much-repeated belief that the madder plants used for industrial scale local Turkey red printing and dyeing originated from a local wood, Madder Mill Wood proved almost impossible to disabuse, ‘But what if Steiner and Gatty did plant madder in the woods?’ The above examples from the Local Colour project
demonstrate the dialogic approach as it works between a heritage project and a socially engaged art project. In reviewing the literature, the absence of research around materials-based practice and the role it can have in community-based cultural heritage projects became clear. Exploring ideas around community resilience through materials-based participation during long-term engagement projects offered an opportunity to explore the research questions using a variety of creative methods. However, at times this became problematic, as described above, when no empirical evidence to support local narratives existed. Smith describing industrial heritage exhibits writes of the ‘...focus is moved to remembering and commemorating – a process that may be triggered by landscapes, artefacts or buildings – but which is fundamental to many people’s sense of ‘heritage’ (Smith, 2006, p. 13). The processual nature of the work allowed time for traditional research, but also for false interpretations to flourish.

Rana et al. (2017) consider the sensitivities in the dynamics of participatory projects that engage with heritage, writing about a project based in Amsterdam delivered with an arts organisation Imagine IC. This project engaged with the difficult heritage around Zwarte (black) Piet, a character that appears in community tableaux with a (white) St Nicholas in the annual Sinterklaas festival in the Low Countries. Using a methodology of ‘emotion networking’ a process of ‘active, continuous and multi-perspective invitation’ (2017, p. 977) to discuss meaning, they consider the work of all participants and practitioners involved as part of an irregular network of emotions, rather than simply as a ‘collective’ response. They consider the role of the heritage professional in community projects, saying ‘they cannot operate without a profound understanding of the dynamic character of the ... interplay of forces concerning interests and emotions, and the context-bound nature (time, place, group) of the result’ (2017, p. 978). They consider the active quest for difference to be heard in projects, in the type of participants and the dialogues encouraged through group work that understands the desire for ‘collectivity and continuity.’ Intangible heritage discourses in this context are not neutral, they describe the process as a struggle and refer to Ashworth and Tunbridge’s work Dissonant Heritage (1996), ‘All heritage is someone’s heritage and therefore logically not someone else’s: [it] implies the existence of disinheritance and by extension any creation of heritage from the past disinherits someone completely or partially, actively or potentially’ (1996, p. 21).
Thinking through textile heritage

The dialogic models described above resonate and provide a key area of study for me as they acknowledge that heritage, particularly when explored in community settings, has to be understood through conversation and negotiation. As Harrison and Rose (2010) posit,

‘A dialogical concept of heritage suggests that heritage making is interactive – meaningfulness arises out of encounter and dialogue among multiple subjects, some of whom are human. Place (construed interactively) may also be a subject in its own right’ (2010, p. 264-5).

As a practitioner working with textiles on projects that use practical engagement with materials as well as research and dialogue I also return to what Anni Albers describes as ‘The sense of directness and adventure of being close to the stuff the world is made of... Going back to the material itself, to its original state, and from there on partake in its stages of change’ (1938 (1944), p. 51). I am interested in the particularities of textile projects, the tactility of the materials, what happens when the making with them is an explicit part of the process of exploration. This to me feels far away from the rather derogatory portrayal of living history museums’ education programme ‘activity’ sessions described by Raphael Samuel that feature ‘Stitching, quilting or bobbin knittings’ for exploring the ‘make do and mend of the household economy’ while listening to the ‘noise and clatter’ of recordings of power looms. (1994, p. 230, 282). A project I worked on for the 2012 Cultural Olympiad (Golden Threads, Bradford MDC) working with young people who designed and wove a new ‘Bradford cloth’ on looms at the local industrial museum gave them the experience of a whole manufacturing process, the practicalities of design and interpretation for exhibition and discussions of the links to their own heritage as the third generation of their families to live in the city. This process-based textile heritage engagement model can be seen elsewhere in a long-term collaboration between Staffordshire Records Office and artist Ruth Singer, Criminal Quilts (2010-2022), which uses an archive of photographs of women prisoners from the 1870s for community engagement and textile making projects. Rose Sinclair has used her research into the culture of nineteenth century philanthropic Dorcas Societies, and how they arrived in the Caribbean, returned to the UK with the Windrush generation and continue into the present day. Her community-based ‘front room installations’ and ‘make and talk’ sessions use and make material items to inspire conversation to ‘...incorporate new forms and meanings while also changing and reshaping traditional conventions’ (Cox, 2015, blog post). While not addressing industrial textile heritage explicitly these projects use textile history to create networks and conversations with and between communities. In
practice, through complex histories and through their familiar materiality they are part of a process of creating dialogue.

Summary

This chapter has positioned both Church and Bradford as former sites of industrial textile production and has discussed the impacts of deindustrialisation on that sector as a whole and those places specifically. It has looked at the developments leading to research into and definitions of heritage as a social practice, one working across an expanded field of multiplicity. This looks at ways of processing the kinds of change that communities in this situation live with every day. The field, as described by Harrison et al. in *Heritage Futures* (2020) ‘includes a more blended, complicated definition of natural/cultural and tangible/intangible heritage’ (2020, p. 5). Managing the uncertainty and change that the conditions of deindustrialisation bring can link to the description by DeSilvey et al. of landscapes of change that created ‘openings for dialogue and deliberation; history frayed and had to be woven back together. A lively dialogue about the past in place was generated out of disruption and erosion of evidence’ (2020, p. 452). These ways of approaching the work of both projects in the dialogic potential of the projects and the collaborative nature of them. She argues that heritage practices like these are working with change and looking at opportunities for ‘engagement and (re)connection’ (2020, p. 453). The *growing, making, unmaking and remaking* described in my second sub question is alluded to here in the processual nature of the work. In addition, the generative aspects offer great potential alongside socially engaged arts projects and their active ways of thinking through change. Next, Chapter 4 will consider the multiple methods and methodology engaged with in this research.
Chapter 4: Methods

Figure 24: *Stitch Journal*: Hexagonal blocks of fabric appliquéd to the surface - information gathered through individual and group interviews, developing my understanding

Chapter overview

This chapter provides an overview of my research methods which as I will describe evolved through my practice as research. It includes a discussion of the ethical, practical, and conceptual challenges I found during this process. I begin with an outline of the ethics and recruitment to the projects including the changes required by the first Covid-19 lockdown. I continue with a discussion of ownership in the context of socially engaged projects identifying frameworks of collaboration, co-production and bricolage. I then describe each project in detail, the demographics of the settings engaged with and broader background of the participants, and the basic format of the sessions. The sessional work is then described in more detail with a focus on the practitioner-researcher role and views the participants had about that role. A description of the methods engaged follows. These include: observation while making with others, fieldnotes, photography and visual ethnography and my use of photo essays in the thesis, audio recordings of semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups and my use of a *Stitch Journal* as a method of embodied personal reflection.
As previously introduced this project involves multi-site, multi-method ethnographic research working alongside participants who were engaged in two projects, *Local Colour* in Church near Accrington and *Worn Stories* in Bradford. The projects were chosen as they both explored a particular aspect of textile heritage related to the places they were delivered in. In the case of *Local Colour* this was the dyeing and printing industry connected to the Lancashire Cotton industry, in *Worn Stories*, the heritage of textile recycling, reuse and repair in the woollen industry in the city of Bradford and district. The community workshop sessions I delivered as part of these projects involved multiple encounters with participants over time. During the early stages of my research (as a part-time student 2016-2019) the two projects ran concurrently. While this is not a comparative study and the funders, outcomes and structure of the projects were different – a strong thread pulls the projects together, that of exploring an aspect of industrial textile heritage through craft and materials-based engagements delivered over a significant length of time. My decision to use both projects offered an opportunity to explore the specific context and a richer more layered observation of my practice. It allowed me to ask how my projects work in different contexts and how the heritage engaged with allowed consideration of growing, making, unmaking and remaking practices.

In the short-term, the projects aimed to have a positive impact on the participants and communities involved. Groups were also invited to participate in exhibitions of project outcomes including the artefacts and interpretation they designed and made and installations and documentary photography, thus engaging a wider community, and sometimes a national audience. However, this study is not focussed on these outward facing outcomes which were subject to other evaluation methods. The host organisations benefitted through their involvement in innovative new forms of creative engagement and will be able to access these research outcomes. All funders, commissioners and community organisations involved with *Local Colour* and *Worn Stories* gave their permission to use the work as part of my research project.

**Recruitment and ethics**

My research involved working with people. As the work projects I used as my fieldwork were ‘live’ and already working with participants, I applied for the Human Research Ethics full review in the early part of my studies. I received a favourable opinion memo from The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee in November 2017 (HREC reference 2608/Wellesley-Smith) [Appendix 1]. This process also
involved writing accessible information sheets for prospective participants in both projects. [Appendix 2 and 3]. The research project was explained to participants when they decided to take part in the projects, but they were reassured that they could still attend the groups and not be part of the research. A number of participants attending the Local Colour project decided not to take part and their details and contributions have not been included in this study. All Worn Stories participants agreed to be included. Pink observes that ethics ‘...involves going beyond the simple process of having a form signed off’ and may also need additional explanation and conversation and sometimes negotiation (2013, p. 62). This echoes my experience when working with the projects, where explicit concerns included being filmed, photographed, and the use of social media (a condition of the project funding to show the progress of the project, not part of the research project). The consent forms included details about the research topic, the aims and potential benefits of taking part, the details of the University department and my lead supervisor. The form participants completed explained that they could withdraw their consent up to the beginning of January 2021. It also explained that their contribution would be anonymised if written into the thesis. When engaging participants in any audio recording, individual interviews or group conversations, they were reminded of the purpose of the recording.

The final fieldwork sessions of the Local Colour project took place during the first UK Covid-19 lockdown working from April – June 2020. Delivery of the work was briefly paused while new arrangements were made. The delivery took place in accordance with The Open University’s Human Research Ethic Committee (HREC) updated guidance (02.04.20) for researchers and adapted the work to online delivery. This took place weekly, at the same time as the usual face-to-face sessions, on zoom which was the preferred format of myself as researcher, due to its flexibility and content sharing options. Permission to record these sessions was given by the participants and The Super Slow Way as commissioner. Recordings were saved to an external hard drive and deleted after transcription and screen shots were taken.

Confidentiality, anonymity, ethics of visibility/images

To ensure anonymity of all participants, throughout this thesis I have used pseudonyms. All the one-to-one interviews were recorded using a Zoom H-5 voice recorder with back up through the Apple iPhone voice memo application (in case of failure of either). Following the sessions audio files were stored on a password protected external hard drive with the date of the interaction and pseudonym used. The original data was then deleted from recording devices. Images, when used in presentations, publications
and exhibitions were discussed with the participants.

My projects work with the general public and so I have had to consider the broad range of needs that my groups might have. These can be related to physical access to the project venues, the cost of transport to the venue, additional language needs, support worker involvement, often for those with additional mental health needs. I am also aware of the sensitivities of working alongside groups. ‘Is the artist wanted there and by whom?’ is a question asked by Lucy Lippard, problematising participatory practices (1997, p. 32). Kester in his critical framework for dialogical arts practice is balder in his assessment of these projects asking if artists have an ‘ethical mandate’ to work with specific communities (2004, p. 130). I am conscious that an artist will always have a partial view of the community that they work with, however deeply they embed themselves in the narratives, landscape and heritage of that site. I can hope that my interest in exploring a place in detail gives my work ‘authenticity’ but, as an artist often with no integral connection to the areas my projects are based in, the issue of representation remains a tension for me. This is something I explored through my writing and in conversations with the groups.

Ownership

In terms of how these projects were described, the project work belongs to the groups involved co-authored with me and in the case of the *Worn Stories* publication work, Jennie Kiff, who was employed as a historical consultant on the project. I do not (apart from in a connected project that was funded and delivered slightly differently, *Mr Gatty’s Experiment Shed*, Arts Council England, October 2019) describe the work as by Claire Wellesley-Smith. This does differ to the approach of some socially engaged practitioners, particularly when working on commissioned projects where the name of the artist is foregrounded. François Matarasso describes participatory arts practice as ‘a restless art’ tense with ‘conceptual, methodological and ethical ambiguities’ (2019, foreword). I am mindful of the power relationships at play and how authorship is important in how it enables co-creation. Paulo Freire describes the ‘false generosity’ of art or research lays claim to collective production (1970, p. 21) and this is expanded on by Kester (2004) and others. These projects were what Chrissie Tiller in *Power Up* (2017) describes as ‘invited spaces’ where the organisations and participants taking part in the projects had some agency over the way they developed. They offered an opportunity for groups to be ‘involved in all aspects of the programme, from arranging trips and visits...assisting artists, curating and producing...taking photographs’ (2017, p. 21). However, she also observes that the financial control of projects is a
real source of power and this is not something that extended to the groups involved other than in ‘in
kind’ arrangements. Despite the phrase ‘Work in collaboration with participants as co-producers during
the residency’ being included in my contract with SSW for example, requests for equipment, materials,
visits still came through myself and had to be rationalised and presented for decision making through the
commissioning body or justified as part of grant expenditure. In both projects budget was available for
volunteer expenses including travel costs, but not for participation in the projects.

The role of the practitioner-researcher

As previously noted in Chapter 2, in looking at the multiple perspectives on participation and collective
work I am reflecting on my positionality. Long-standing working relationships and knowledge of
organisations and networks are key elements of my practice. As part of this process I can also see the
benefit that insider knowledge and prior experience can bring to the research. Letherby et al. see this
position as requiring ‘...the constant critical interrogation of our personhood – both intellectual and
personal – within the production process’ (2013, p. 80). During my long professional experience of
working on projects with communities I am engaged in constant reflection and interrogation of my
previous personal and professional experience as a part of my practice. I engage in written reflection of
every community-based session I deliver and these fieldnotes constitute part of this research project and
in some cases I have developed these into longer vignettes. Alongside this method of observation of
workshop environments where groups engage in conversations through making, I used photography of
the sessions in progress, my own archive research connected to the textile industry and the sourcing of
textiles and tools related to the industries (some of these were later used in object elicitation sessions
with groups), and semi-structured individual and group interviews which were then transcribed. In
addition to this I developed my own material-based reflection tool alongside my research and community
engagement practice. This involves daily hand stitching and is a use of embodied practice as a mode of
reflection and is described later in this thesis.

The practitioner-researcher is just one of the roles that I inhabit with these projects. I was employed as
Project Co-ordinator on the Worn Stories project, a role that had included the ideas for, background
research and co-writing of the HLF funding bid then the development and delivery of the project. In the
Local Colour project, I was commissioned as artist-in-residence based on a proposal I was invited to write
for the work after a period of research and development on site. Reflections by participants in the
projects about my role/s emerged in both group discussions and through the semi-structured interviews I conducted. They describe me as a ‘teacher’ but were keen to clarify what kind of teaching this is:

‘Sometimes you get teachers and they’re just doing it off cuff, ABCD tell them this. If you get the right person it can inspire and get people’s juices flowing if you will, to do their own thing and that’s happened [in the project]. With various people in the group they’ve done research, looked into things, brought their past knowledge of who they worked for. I think it’s been a good thing. As regards the subject matter. It’s covered a lot of areas and I think also the teacher if you like, has listened to the group, has listened to individuals and asked their opinions and what they would like to to... I don’t know what it is really...’ (M, Semi-structured interview, 06.07.18)

A year later the same participant reflected again on my role in the project in conversation with me, and we considered the processes involved,

‘Another thing as well, thinking about you [pause] Using the way you work on this project, you could be using us as an experiment [pause] I get it. Building your career, your outlook, your skills, in doing something like this. Not, what I mean to say is you’re doing it, but not selfishly, you’re doing it to improve ... whatever, you’re doing it to build your skills, and by doing that you can do it bigger and better somewhere else and with other people.

CWS ...I’m interested in how participants and me – how we build a project together. I’d be interested to hear what you think of that because...I could come with a plan and say we’re going to do this, and this, and this and this, and deliver it like a teacher might. But a lot of the stuff we do comes out of our conversation. Do you feel that?

It’s a strange one that really. Ok, so everyone relies on you to lead, and you can lead and you do lead and you’ve got a very skilful way of doing it and you wouldn’t be able to do all that if you weren’t what I call a ‘people person’ a person who just makes a list and goes through, well they’re not really people person are they? But you’re quite open to take leads from other people and suggestions from other people and to put them into your programme. You can’t beat that really. Because not only does it help you understand what other people are trying to get out of it, but it
helps the people who are bringing the information forward or the ideas forward, that they feel there are contributing as well. So it’s a two way thing.

**CWS** Well it’s nice to hear that. This idea that we have shared ownership in some ways, because the format isn’t an adult education class.

*And it isn’t a school room class either. I don’t know what you’d call it really. [laughs]*

**CWS** Well [laughs] you could call it a participatory art project’ (W, Semi-structured interview, 19.07.19).

In another interview a participant was very clear about how she saw my role in the project when I commented that I saw myself as working alongside the group rather than leading it:

‘You’re a tutor! You’re part of the group but you lead that group. We wouldn’t be here if you weren’t. You’ve started something... It’s the first time I’ve been to anything like this. The only classes I’ve been to in the past have been one’s where there is a tutor, I mean to me you are a tutor however you want to look at it. You’ve got the plan...[laughs]’ (S, Semi-structured interview, 29.06.18)

In a group discussion with *Worn Stories* participants also described the process of learning and sharing in the group:

‘Having a class where somebody has put all the effort into a two-year framework and different sections and different practical textiles methods within that it means you are learning. Even if it is something you’d heard of you’re still learning new things and new ways to apply them and that also gives you a whole discussion with other people. I’ve linked to other people and heard what goes on in other [community based] groups.’ (group conversation, 26.11.18)

I am aware that the role of practitioner-researcher has received criticism as the researcher’s self-identity can be seen to influence the outcomes. This sometimes-blurred ground between insider and outsider connect it back to earlier chapter is examined in an ethnographic account of a heritage location by Dydia
DeLyser (2001). She draws on work by Kitchin and Tate (2000) who say, ‘You may fail to notice pertinent questions or issues because of the inability to step back from a situation and fully assess the circumstances’ (2000, p. 29). My own familiarity with the communities in question is something that I am aware of and addressed critically throughout the work. In the case of the Worn Stories project, this was because of my long-standing working relationship with some of the organisations and participants who had taken part in previous projects. In the case of the Local Colour residency the work, in an organisation that was new to me, was initially planned to last one year. However, this was extended to nearly four meaning that some participants became very familiar to me. Kantonen (2008) reflects on the researcher-practitioner role and its ‘asymmetry’ noting that, ‘The artists shares the authorship with the community, but only the artist is rewarded and recognised by the art community’ (Kantonen, 2008, p. 184).

**Multiple sites, multiple sources**

As described in my introduction my role in the projects was one of practitioner-researcher. One outcome of this, and the duration of the projects meant that I collected a large amount of data over time. This includes my own notes and reflections on 116 community workshop sessions collected in 14 notebooks, audio of 27 semi-structured interviews with participants, 20 unstructured group conversations, 750 documentary photographs and video clips, work made during the projects, ephemera, textile, paper and other, collected alongside the work and given to me by participants, written outputs including blog posts, journalism, project publications and evaluation reports and a long section (5 metres) of my own cloth stitch-based reflective practice (see Appendix 7 and 8 for a full audit for each project). I decided not to use a digital data management system such as NVivo early in my study. I used multiple creative methods in multiple sites to gather rich data, as described below. While I recognise that data management systems can organise the data, they do not do the analysis for you. In choosing and naming categories for the qualitative data I was concerned about how detail, nuance and variation may be lost. The physical outputs from these sessions, while recorded digitally using audio recording and photography, were also material based, textile and paper and ephemera connected to craft processes. Helen Kara, writing about creative research methods, describes the ‘intimate personal knowledge of the context in which the data was gathered’ (2020, p. 152) referring to ethnographic projects.

Considering this large quantity of diverse material gathered during the projects I am drawn to the idea of bricolage. Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss talked of the adaptive qualities needed by the bricoleur,
them needing to make do with ‘whatever is at hand’ (1962, p. 11). The growing, making, unmaking and remaking engaged with during the projects, as highlighted in my second sub-question speak to this idea. The material-based thinking and making undertaken were situated in these ways of working through the projects. A patchwork of shared skills and experiences were part of the dialogue whilst making. They can also describe the experience of the researcher-practitioner. Denzin and Lincoln describe the researcher-as-bricoleur as ‘…between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms. The bricoleur understands process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting … The product of the bricoleur’s labour is a bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings and interpretations of the world...’ (1994, p. 3).

I recognise the influence of my own aesthetic and sensibility around materials and my knowledge of their qualities and craft of use on these projects. On a practical level this includes my experience of management and manageability of ideas generated in group discussions. Sanscartier proposes that the skills of a bricoleur might include ‘… using methods innovatively, tailoring methods to suit specific contexts, the ability to see emergent patterns and differences, and openness to unfamiliar situations’ (2020, p. 50). In this quote we see that there is an implicit connection between the work that a crafts person does and the making and unmaking described in the projects. For example, in a workshop setting: Is it possible to make [this thing] in the time we have with the materials and equipment available to us, the studio time available to us, the season we are working in, for example when using dye plants produced by a project?

I have to acknowledge that sometimes what is suggested is not possible due to these restrictions and try to find, through conversation, suggestions and images, other ways of accomplishing and executing the ideas. This is part of what Helguera (2011) describes as a framework of collaboration acknowledging that it can be a difficult task as ‘… to enter a collaborative process with a community requires a reflection on the terms under which the artist and group will interact …. and it tends to generate anxiety for the artist, who is under pressure to provide a strong framework for interaction while making a work that is conceptually original, provocative and distinctive. Both goals are hard to accomplish by themselves, and the complication escalates once we bring more people into the picture, with their own ideas and interests.’ (2011, p. 54). As mentioned previously this was described to me by one of my commissioners (unrecorded conversation) as ‘treading a fine line’ as we acknowledged the possibility of the artist
becoming what Helguera describes as a ‘service agent’, Schrag (2018) the artist as ‘social worker vs social wanker’, and Pritchard (2018) ‘caught doing social work’ rather than creative a ‘meaningful framework to generate new insights around a particular issue.’ (Helguera, 2011, p. 55). The same conversation also foregrounded the multiple other agents at play in this meaningful framework, including funders, host organisations, evaluators, and exhibition venues.

In choosing the multiple methods I identify in this chapter, I have selected and enacted ways to research the sometimes-messy practices, dialogues, structures and settings of the projects I work on. John Law in *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* describes trying to ‘open space for the indefinite.’ (1994, p. 6) rather than look for definitive and repeatable answers. In unmaking the assumption that we can find certainty through research, Law asks us to think again about traditional methodological habits. He advocates a more generous version of method, one that speaks to me as a practitioner based in settings where fluidity and reflexiveness are central to my work. In these projects there is no sense that the outcomes are repeatable or that this would be a beneficial thing. The multi-layered heritage and materials-based practices of my working life have allowed me to look afresh and in greater depth through my choice of dialogue, image, and material practice-based methods. The next section in this chapter looks in more detail at the two projects and their delivery.

*Local Colour*

- **Participants**

Adults participating in sessions developed as part of the *Local Colour* residency commissioned by Creative People and Places funded organisation SSW and based at community engagement organisation Community Solutions North West, Church, Lancashire were invited to take part in the research. The participants lived in the local area and the project was advertised locally. In addition, I attended several other community projects based at Community Solutions (men’s, women’s, befriending, gardening and knitting groups) and introduced the project at the initial stage inviting people to get involved. The number of participants in the group was twenty with ten attending most sessions (see Appendix 6) and many more accessing the project through events and exhibitions. Elmfield Hall, base of Community Solutions is in the Hyndburn Borough Council area of East Lancashire. The 2019 Indices of Deprivation show that Hyndburn was the 18th most deprived area out of 317 districts and unitary authorities in England, by the rank of average rank measure. In total. 27% of the lower super output areas in the authority were in the
10% most deprived in the country. The community around Elmfield hall has a minority ethnic community of around 12%, the majority describing themselves as Asian/ British Asian with Pakistani the main ethnicity within that group. However, Community Solutions user base is largely White British heritage and the Local Colour group reflected this as most participants who attended came through the organisation. The organisation is a community resource that works to improve the health, economic status and wellbeing of those it works with. The participants had come to the organisation for a variety of reasons, but many in the group lived with long-term health issues including terminal cancer diagnoses and mental health illness. The self-selection meant that over the duration of the project over 75% of the participants were men, in my practitioner experience less common in a textile focussed project. This is something I discuss in more detail in Chapter 6.

- **Data Collection/gathering/construction**
  Workshops at the venue were audio-recorded, photographed and, sometimes video-recorded if consent was given (and if the videoing did not turn out to be intrusive, an obstacle to dialogue or interrupt the flow of activity). I considered the issues related to the dual roles of being both practitioner and researcher and the potential incompatibilities this could bring. Video was by far the most problematic aspect of data collection with several participants refusing to take part in activities unless they were reassured that the video would only be of an activity, not of discussion. For this reason I have used little of this footage in my analysis, and what I did use was mostly process based (for example a printing activity) and not dialogue focussed.

- **Workshops**
  The sessions were two hours long and were delivered in an informal community-based setting on a weekly basis. They began with a catch-up and chat about what the group had been doing since last meeting up. This included things they had seen, made, research they might have been doing in their own time. A recap of the previous session followed. I supplied an object, image from a book or archive, text or a newspaper article, or textile that was used to introduce the next part of the session when an aspect of the heritage will be explored using a material resource. These were related to the practical craft-based activity the group is focussing on at the time. The group then began or continued with the craft-based activity they are working on. These included process-based work: working in the textile dye plant garden, general maintenance, weeding, watering, harvesting of plants, working with natural dyes made from the traditional dye plants including madder, indigo and weld (formerly used in the Turkey red dyeing and
printing industries), engagement with archive materials and visits to local museums and archives to explore the connections these making activities had to the heritage of the area. Conversations about the making experience and the heritage were encouraged during this part of the session. The session ended with informal feedback and an overview/suggestions about what might happen next time.

**Worn Stories**

- **Participants** (See Appendix x)

Adult members of community groups in Bradford, West Yorkshire, engaged in the *Worn Stories: Material and Memory in Bradford 1880-2015* project funded by HLF. Participants attended sessions at Hive, a community arts centre who had receipt of the funding. The sessions were also advertised through a network of voluntary sector organisations including ethnic minority community development organisations, wellbeing and mental health groups and also through local public libraries and West Yorkshire Archive Service. The number of participants taking part in these sessions was twenty with fifteen attending consistently. Bradford is an ethnically diverse area which includes the largest population of people of Pakistani ethnic origin in the UK with over 25% of people living in the district describing themselves as Asian or of Asian British ethnic origin. The participants in the project reflected the diversity of the city, partly due to some of the work taking place community settings around the district, some of whom work with specific communities. 60 participants took part over duration of the project (see appendix 5) with many more engaging with the project work through events and exhibitions. The community groups were:

- **Sukoon E Dil** at the Roshni Ghar project in Keighley, which works with women from the South Asian community the majority of whom are of Pakistani ethnic origin but also Bangladeshi, Afghan and Indian ethnic origin. The average number of participants in the group was 15.
- **The New Start group** at CommunityWorks in Undercliffe, for new arrivals to the UK through the asylum and refugee system who live in the local community. The ethnic origin of the group was diverse with participants from Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, DRC, Eritrea, Hungary, Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan. The average number of participants in the group was 10.
- **The Women’s group** at CommunityWorks in Undercliffe. A multi-generational social group for local women. 15-20 participants from the White British and Polish community and with Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian ethnic origin.
• Creative Threads project at SHINE in West Bowling a long-established craft group of mainly older women from the local community, mainly from the White British and black community with West Indian heritage.

• The Hive ‘Talking Textiles’ group who participated for the duration of the Worn Stories group with a session every week were based in the Hive building and were mainly women aged over 50 identifying as being from the White British community. Many participants joined through their involvement in mental health and wellbeing projects based at Hive and in the wider community.

• Data Collection
Workshops in community-based settings were audio-recorded, photographed and, if possible, video-recorded if consent was given (and if the videoing does not turn out to be intrusive, an obstacle to dialogue or interrupt the flow of activity). Semi-structured interviews were offered to participants. I considered the issues related to the dual roles of being both researcher-practitioner and the potential incompatibilities this could bring.

• Workshops
The sessions were two hours long and were delivered in informal community-based settings. They began with a catch-up and chat about what the group had been doing since last meeting up. This might include things they have seen, made, research they might have been doing in their own time. A recap of the previous session followed. I supplied an object, image from a book or archive, text or a newspaper article, or textile that was used to introduce the next part of the session when an aspect of the heritage will be explored using a material resource. This will be related to the practical craft-based activity the group is focussing on at the time. The workshops engaged participants in textile craft activities using recycled fabric donated from local industry and the community, engagement with local archive materials to explore the connections these making activities have with the heritage of the area and presented textiles and garments from their own lives to the group. The groups then began or continued with the craft-based activity they were working on. The activities included traditional patchwork and quilting, scrap yarn making for weaving and rag rugging, and textile mending and repair skills. Conversations about the making experience and the heritage were encouraged during this part of the session. Sessions ended with informal feedback and an overview/suggestions about the next session.
Methods in practice

The two-hour session format in both projects took place either as a morning (10am - 12pm) or an afternoon (1 - 3pm) group. There were occasional ‘one-offs’ that sat outside this format, for example, visits, open days and other community events. These morning / afternoon timings are common in community settings as they allow for participants with childcare responsibilities to drop-off and pick-up children at school and also mean that if using public transport, the cost is off-peak. The start times were fixed, part of the ground rules drawn up in introductory sessions, although there was an understanding that sometimes circumstances would mean that people were late. A more common scenario was that participants arrived early. In the case of the Local Colour sessions they sometimes brought their breakfast and arrived an hour early at the same time as me. As the project developed, I became aware that for some participants this was a valuable opportunity to sometimes say a little more about how their week had been and how they were feeling that day. I observe in one notebook that this ‘gathering time’ gave me an ‘early sense of something of how the session will go’ (June 2018). I was clear, however, about the session start time and participants were aware that my job beforehand was to make sure that everything was ready for that. Room layout, enough chairs, milk for tea and coffee, catching up with centre staff, paperwork in place, equipment and materials set out. Conversations took place alongside this preparation. In the case of the Worn Stories groups where most sessions took place during the afternoon, participants sometimes met beforehand to eat lunch and chat together in the workshop space.

The session format began with a check-in or go-round as described by Duffy (1994), Clemans, (2011) with the whole group, often based around a simple prompt. Duffy describes this as a response to a particular stimulus and could also be known as a round-robin or ice-breaker (Duffy, 1994, p. 163). In the Local Colour project I noted down this collection of responses and it became part of my fieldnotes for the project and the prompt was usually ‘tell us about something you have seen this week’. In the Worn Stories project the groups were often too large for this type of check-in and the prompt was usually a more conversational ‘how have you all been’. The ‘check-in’ is described as ‘taking the pulse’ of the group (Duffy, 1994, p. 164) it draws on the humanistic values of group work and that ‘people have the right to take part and to be heard.’ (Glassman, 2009, p. 23) This is a dialogical process where attention is paid to every participant in the room, it represents a culture where an artist can engage with a community in a productive, collaborative capacity (Freire and Horton, 1990, p. 128). I also recognised that not everyone, on every occasion, wanted to share like this and so there was an opportunity to listen rather than
contribute verbally. I found that from this introductory 15-20 minutes, I was able to gauge the mood in the room, the possible additional needs in that session of individual participants, or if an external issue had had an impact that needed discussing. These projects took place at a time of considerable political and economic uncertainty with big personal impacts for some participants as the ongoing effects of austerity continued to be felt and the divisions exposed by the Brexit vote had continual repercussions. As the sessions developed the desire to discuss local issues, often involving the local council, expanded to the national and international.

The sessions progressed with a recap of the previous week’s session. This was useful as it re-established the aims of the project, but also helped those who for whatever reason, had not attended, reassuring them that they would be able to engage fully as we continued. The group or myself then shared stories of textile objects, found at home or borrowed from elsewhere, these were often garments, sometimes accompanied with a photograph, piece material with a memory attached, a textile tool or a quotation found in library or archive research. These objects, connected to the heritage, reminded us of our starting point for the project, with the aim of continuing to make connections between materials and processes. As the projects developed, this object elicitation method meant that participants were able to talk more about the connections they made personally, and they brought items in from home to talk about. I was inspired by a quote by Esther Leslie writing about Walter Benjamin’s archive who says that ‘Collections unlock themselves once a single piece is brought to voice’ (Leslie, 2007, p. 7) and Bal ‘Collecting is a story and everyone needs to tell it’ (1994, p. 103). In the context of this group work, informal collections were created between the participants and myself and they grew as the projects developed. These object assemblages were later included in exhibition work for both projects and included a collection of darning and mending tools and repaired textiles in the Worn Stories project. In the Local Colour project items that connected the history of calico dyeing and printing with the other industrial heritage of Church including a converted Ewbank mangle printing press, a ‘NORI’ brick produced in the area and an illustrated history of the invention of Terylene from the 1950s. These objects were assembled alongside photocopies of local buildings, and a reproduction image of a fictionalised section of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Accrington painted by LS Lowry, 1939, all supplied by participants. The final fieldwork sessions of the Local Colour project, conducted online due to the Covid-19 crisis, created a Museum of our Homes pulling together the communication and description skills in part learnt during the project, so that participants could still engage in object handling from a distance. Early online sessions, begun in the immediate period after the first national lockdown in the UK, looked at the role of material objects in people’s biographies.
(Hoskins, 1988; Miller, 2009) with participants gradually connecting their own lived experience with local stories around the heritage of the area.

The different projects had breaks during the sessions in different ways. For example, the Local Colour project would usually visit and work in the poly tunnel dye garden for half an hour to forty minutes and then return for a tea break to the community room and continue with a craft activity afterwards. The Worn Stories participants, a bigger group, tended to work on their craft projects with a cup of tea while I moved around the room to see how they were getting on individually. These participants, perhaps because the main group had developed from an existing textile craft project, were more self-motivated and independent in their making. For example, a banner making project for an exhibition at the local industrial museum was largely designed and visualised by them with very little contribution from myself. A project making ‘MORS’ bags (reusable fabric shopping bags from a free pattern available online) was devised as a production line process organised by two participants but involving others in the group. During the final fifteen minutes I would gather the group back together for an informal look at what had been achieved that day and for a brief chat about the following session. At this stage in the meeting people would often drift off, to get a bus or lift, for other meetings and responsibilities. However, there were always those who stayed longer, to help with washing up, rearranging the furniture for the next group engagement in the room and sometimes to chat with one another.

Figure 25: Creative workshop, Worn Stories project, CommunityWorks New Start group.
Observation of collective making

During both projects I focussed my research on observing activity that took place in the workshop environment and recording, in a variety of ways identified below, these encounters. The emphasis on the process of making whilst engaging in heritage related creative activities draws on David Gauntlett’s creative research methods. These are described in ‘Creative Explorations’ (2007) and ‘Making is Connecting’ (2011, 2018) and are built around artistic practice, visual sociology and visual methods. Gauntlett describes these methods as activity-based ethnography (2007, p. 96) ‘...in which people express themselves in non-traditional (non-verbal) ways, through making ... a physical thing’ (2007, p. 25). He continues, ‘Making things is about transforming materials into something new, but it is also about transforming one’s own sense of self.’ This is important for participatory textile-based research as it emphasises the value of hands-on activity. His projects have also used making activities as a method of investigation for questions outside of the making process itself. As a practitioner this method offers the potential for meaningful conversation into participants lived experiences in a post-industrial community through engagement with creative activity (figure 25). Drawing on Gauntlett’s work, Larmour describes a process of ‘craft elicitation’ – connecting and finding meaning through craft ‘[perceiving] craft as a form of applied creativity, whereby the crafting process transformed an idea into something tangible – an artefact – that could be shared with others.’ Using the definition of elicitation as described by Gubrium and Holstein (2001) ‘... the act of drawing out or bringing forth emotions, opinions and information’ when used as exploratory research, she found that it allowed her to collect rich data focussed on the lived experience of participants (Larmour and Hayes, blog, 2021).

Shercliff and Twigger Holroyd (2016, 2020) draw on creative research methods in their discussion of participatory textile making workshops and through their research network Stitching Together. They see these participatory creative research methods as having a number of strengths. Firstly, that making activities can support open and constructive conversations. Secondly, that they offer a way of gathering data during a creative activity rather than retrospectively in interview settings. This can record first-hand experience and an opportunity to draw out experiences and connections between making and thinking at the same time. Finally, this type of observation can provide an opportunity to discover changes in perception that occur during a process, over several sessions or during a single workshop engagement (2016, p. 13). They describe
'[the] Core of this strategy was the activity of making together and capturing the rich conversation that spontaneously emerged from this process. By working in this way, I was able to gather rich qualitative research data. The group not only talked about the tasks in hand but also contextualised the new experiences they were having, relating them to memories from the past and hopes for the future’ (2016, p. 7).

In the context of long-term projects their final insight is particularly valuable as it speaks to the changes that happen over time. Socially engaged photographer Juan Orrantia responds to this temporal process of engaging circumstances, not just individuals, seeing this as allowing projects and participants in creative sessions to ‘speak through and along the texture, moments, and even notions of time’ (Schneider and Wright, 2013, p. 37). Given (2008) describes a process where, ‘Participants engage in craft while discussion takes place, a process that may be captured through audio recordings and observations recorded as field notes or post-activity reflections.’ Emphasising that the object created through craft can become, ‘data itself, through the discussion and questions that we pose’ (2008, p. 23).

I am also interested in the vocabulary used around methods, the practicalities vs ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) and how this can be used to describe participatory projects. ‘The conversations are the work’ was a phrase I heard used to discuss participatory textile projects by artists Kate Genever and Katie Smith (Textile and Place conference, MMU, 2018), bringing to mind the conversations through making that occur during sessions and that sometimes the experience of time is more important than the end results (see also Knott on amateur craft, 2015, p. 27). Fletcher, Klepp et al. writing about creative methods using the wardrobe as a starting point, ‘...situate creative practice as a rich methodology within the recent creative methodological turn in human geography. It also brings creative, ‘hands-on’ practice to bear on a sustainability focussed enquiry, which is a rarely encountered combination’ (2017, p. 116). I was also mindful of the working spaces involved and my position as practitioner in how the participants engaged with their physical environment. Clausen (2020) reflecting on a workshop space for community engagement with experimental weaving activities talks of a space ‘authored and regulated by myself [and that] could appear statically territorial and thus limited in its potential for exposure to the yet-unknown’ (2020, p. 119). The multiple uses of community spaces, co-authored through a series of different activities groups and encounters, from ‘Cook and Eat’, to Zumba, to craft mean that there are many layers
of conversation in the spatial elements of projects. This spatial aspect of community-based practice was shown in a new light when Covid-19 lockdown meant that activities could no longer happen face to face.

Decision making around what we made, was sometimes based on skills learned in the sessions. Sometimes this was at the suggestion of the participants, sometimes led by me. The emphasis of this changed over the duration of the projects as people gained skills and confidence and developed their own ideas about what they would like to make and how. There was also an appreciation of the skills the group brought themselves and opportunities for these to be shared and explored. An initial grounding in a particular craft activity during workshop sessions would lead to work developed from these initial instructions. For example, in the *Local Colour* project creating a textile dye from plant materials made a connection with the use of these dyes in industrial production in the area in the Turkey red dyeing and printing industry. We could not replicate this process, but we could create a red dye from the plants we grew and apply them successfully to fabric. A simplified but successful version, a way of observing how a process works, even in the most rudimentary way. Added into this was the development of ideas around the skill - what if I tried it like this? What if we used a different concentration of dye, a different fabric? This is the process of hands-on experimentation and playing with materials and how it offers an opportunity for questioning. How does this connect back to the objects used as talking points in the early part of the session? How do these objects speak to the craft processes? Strohmayer, describing a quilt made with people with experience of trauma describes the different ways of working within a project but that have ‘... connected aims: to learn together and develop ways of tackling experiences’ (2021, p. 57).

An interview from the *Worn Stories* project is an exemplar of this,

’After 25 years in Bradford and living with very high anxiety this year I finally used public transport to visit Leeds Industrial Museum and Leeds City Museum for events. I also visited a local Antiquarian Society open day and learned of projects they’ve investigated. It has helped cut my current isolation, build confidence, and get to know people in my community’ (O, semi-structured Interview, 17.03.18).

The work made by the *Local Colour* group, together and in some cases developed by individuals in their own time, included textile prints assembled into wall hangings and framed work, a screen-printed bag produced using designs made by the group, video using archive photographs and contemporary images of the project and an installation with audio and visuals reimagining a disused dye house (figure 26). In
the *Worn Stories* project objects made included individually made stitched and appliquéd personal reflections on textile reuse using recycled and donated materials, collaboratively stitched 160 names of women rag workers whose names were found in a local Creed Register on recycled wool from local mills (figure 27), and an industrial ballad written about one of these workers, Ellen Tring (Williams, 2019, p. 32). These outcomes reference back to Kara’s description of data construction, or projects that are ‘generative of data’ (Kara, 2020, p. 187) and that making can be a way of constructing.

Figure 26: Projection of dye garden plants made in photoshop by a participant then mocked-up on dye house wall, *Local Colour* project

Figure 27: ‘Tattered Lives’ stitched names of rag workers
During the *Worn Stories* project the group walked near the nineteenth century industrial buildings connected to textile recycling in Bradford, and a modern warehouse that recycles clothing, re-selling and exporting it all over the world. How does this connect to a bin bag full of selvedge ends from a local woollen mill shared in the middle of a table in a craft centre? What can we do with this waste material? Participants used needle weaving for lettering on a banner announcing the name of the project and later displayed in exhibition. They couched [a laid work embroidery stitch] it down with other recycled wool to follow the curves and anatomy of the letter they were working on. Fibres were separated by colour and shared by a group to make thread suitable for embroidery. The initial idea was demonstrated by me or another participant. In a group conversation a *Worn Stories* participant reflected on this process, ‘I know what I know, but I also know what I don’t know. Somebody comes and shows us how to make things, but then someone else will come to embellish on that. And then there are things where you think, well maybe I could lead on that bit. It’s involvement, sharing skills, ideas and knowledge and learning and creating’ (P, semi-structured interview, 26.11.18) An idea is taken, manipulated, reinvented, shared, a process of becoming something connected, something new, something other.

**Fieldnotes**

![Figure 28: Annotated and colour coded fieldnote books](image)

I recorded the development of the projects in different ways from their beginning (*Local Colour* residency in November 2016, *Worn Stories* project in January 2017) but my recording of participant experience that
is shared in this thesis began in November 2017 when I received ethics approval. Recording methods included more conventional ethnographic methods for example a series of fieldnote notebooks (figure 28) for each project where I reflected on the engagement sessions as they happened and immediately afterward, collected ‘snapshot’ comments from participants and planned the next face-to-face engagements and how they would work. These notebooks provide a practical chronology of the projects but also capture finer detail about participant responses to sessions and my own reflections. They also record the everyday reality of delivering community-based work, for example, reminders written to myself to buy more biscuits feature more than once. I am mindful of Riley’s discussion of ordinary rituals not being taken for granted, as they can, ‘develop reflexive awareness of the mundane aspects of practice’ (2008, p. 66). I recorded practicalities and sometimes snags, things that could be looked at, improved on, questions asked by participants and requests made by the group for the next time they met, sometimes for an activity, at other times for a resource.

As practitioner-researcher the ability to write expansive notes whilst delivering an engagement session is often not practicable or appropriate. The difficulty in remembering every detail and ‘write all down just as it was’ (Taussig, 2011, p.13) is compounded when having to recall these details based on a few words collected on a post-it note in mid-conversation or group discussion. Twigger Holroyd and Shercliff (2016) describe this challenge well in the context of participatory textile research and the multiple roles taken on by the facilitator-researcher. The ‘feeling through’ (2016, p. 11) these multiple demands require using past experience and specialist knowledge whilst recognising their different position through the context of this experience. In the difficulties presented by stopping then reflecting on some minutiae in some sessions the details were fleshed out by linking up notebook text and audio or video clips collected during sessions a combination of the raw data of the conversation with written detail allowing me to consider the ‘feeling’ of my experience of the session. Delyser also reflects on the difficulty of gaining perspective on something you’re ‘in the middle of’ (2001, p. 442).

I aimed to write more detailed reflections on the sessions immediately after they took place, mindful of the need to not postpone this, as Blommaert and Jie write ‘… your memory of faces, voices and particular events will fade quickly’ (2010, p. 36). They were still often messy sometimes snatched, written up sitting in my car, drawn in boxes of text and sketches, snapshots (sometimes literally, as latterly I added pocket printer images as visual prompts for myself), bracketed, post-it noted, layered (figure 29). They are messy and interactive, some later drawn over with white pen to link up ideas, details, and points. Shercliff and
Twigger Holroyd acknowledge that, ‘Reflexive note-making after the action helps to turn it into words, although some of the spontaneity of sensation with tools and materials is lost’ (2016, p. 10). My reflexive journals created a system and an environment to deposit the details of engagements and responses both positive and negative. Sometimes only consisting of a few scribbled words they still record and document my practice-based response to each scenario.

Figure 29: Local Colour fieldnote book with pocket printer images (November 2019)

Amongst the handwritten notes and stored between pages in the notebooks are other materials. Blommaert and Jie (2010) write (using a derogatory descriptor) of the ‘collection of rubbish’ during fieldwork. They are referring to ‘objects, texts, newspaper clippings, audio and video tapes, books and booklets, flyers, announcements, advertisements...name it’ (Blommaert and Jie, 2010, p. 58). In these projects I would add to this list photocopies from libraries collected by participants, postcards and images advertising sessions, scraps of fabric and yarn, flyers from museum and archive visits, sometimes these items containing small notes from participants who supplied them (Figure 30). Again, these help with the chronology of the project and contribute to the process of reflection at a later date having created an archive of doing research (2010, p. 60). This ‘archive’ contributes to written vignettes (Kara, 2020, p. 115) based around some of the encounters I experienced during project work and that became part of my process. As I have alluded to, it was not always possible to write detailed observation during sessions, however, fieldnotes written up into describing details from sessions, the materialities and the comments from participants were in some cases written up as vignettes to form part of the thesis text providing invaluable detail about the minutiæ of the sessions.
Photography plays a fundamental role in my ethnography and I have used photographs in different ways and in connection with other materials generated during the projects. Hodgetts et al. describe this process, ‘photographs are things that people work with, use to explain and to show. Photographs provide a vehicle for invoking and considering situations, events and issues. The meaning of a photograph is thus more fluid and variable in response to the changing circumstances of the photographer, the viewers, and what is being done in the interaction between them (Hodgetts et al. 2007, p. 266-7). It is important to differentiate between the functions of photography methodologically in my work. During
the delivery of the projects photography is required as documentary: for outputs like publications, project blogs and social media, for funders, for exhibition. I also used photography as a key part of my research analysis, returning to the many photographs taken during project sessions, of locations, of things made and being made. The ways I returned to and reviewed photographs taken during these longitudinal projects changed over time which why I have included three photo essays within the thesis. The themes of the projects and the research speak through the photography in different ways. The processual and generative nature of the projects interrogated by my second sub question and the growing, making, unmaking and remaking involved material transformations. Photographs of these processes allowed later reflection and analysis.

- **Photography during sessions**

Alongside note-taking and collecting, I used digital photography during sessions (occasionally a photographer was supplied by the project funders, but these images were mainly collected to evidence the project for evaluation and publicity). This recording method raised questions as practitioner-researcher, again due to the additional role I was taking on during the sessions. However, I am also aware that the presence of another person (a photographer) could mean a change of dynamic in the ‘workshop ecology’ (Raw, 2014) and could be seen as intrusive or distracting (Shercliff and Twigger Holroyd 2016, p. 13). I used a combination of more professional equipment (Canon 6D DSLR) and snapshots using my iPhone finding the latter easier to manage amongst everything else going on in the room but still providing high quality images and a less formal method of recording, one similar to the ways that participants sometimes chose to record their own experience (figure 31). Photograph served the purpose of documenting the chronology of the work done by groups, week by week, and the encounters that took place during the sessions. In both projects the spatial considerations of the space sessions inhabited are made clearer in photographs of how the settings were arranged, tables, chairs, proximity of participants to one another and to materials. Woodward, describing the nature of research that happens in everyday places describes, ‘Taking photographs of spaces and the things in them makes the phase of analysis easier as you are able to think about which things are placed together, as well as to try to engage with the material details of things’ (Woodward, 2020, p. 24). In the case of the Local Colour project where engagement with a garden space was central, it showed the seasonal nature of the work, the growth of the dye plants, the gardening activity and nuture of the plants and the processing of them for dye-based activities. These images of material transformations and
collaborative work in a workshop environment were taken alongside others that documented the environs of the project. In the *Local Colour* project photographs include detailed images of the now semi-derelict dye house built for F.A. Gatty, site of an installation ‘Mr Gatty’s Experiment Shed’ in 2019 and occasional spill-over workshop space using a converted mangle printing press (see Chapter 6). In the *Worn Stories* project it included the streets around a contemporary textile recycling plant in Bradford in an area of the city with a long history of that kind of industry where a group went walking. DeSilvey (2013) describes documentary photography in a disused cobbler’s workshop that captures the space with details of ‘accidental collages and telling fragments’ (2013, p. 248). In Gatty Park my macro lens picked up the dust on the surfaces and the rusted gas lamp fittings in the small laboratory shed, alongside the active engagement the group was having in the space. I wanted to capture the minutiae of the context where the work happened, seeing the detail of the space as integral to the responses of the participants.

I am conscious that my photography practice during projects was informed by my own particular analytical angle described by Woodward (2020) as framing how objects are depicted in a ‘telling’ image (2020, p. 157). My unique perspective as participant researcher on the projects allowed me to capture fine detail and examination of the hands-on nature of the work. My tacit knowledge of textile-making and the workshop processes the groups were engaging with also influenced my framing of the images. Some project participants also took their own photographs during the sessions and these were shared with myself and with the groups. These offered different perspectives on the work in progress and in the case of *Local Colour* were developed by one participant into film and video work. The accessibility of the format meant that images were often shared as part of sessions, another way of actively participating in the chronology of the project. They also show me at work, another way of seeing my practice (figure 32) within different settings.

![Participant image, working around the madder bed, Local Colour](image-url)
Pink, writing on visual ethnography, reminds researchers to ‘consider the personal, social and political implications ... for their subjects’ when taking photographs (2013, p. 166). Ethical permission was required for all project participants involved, a process that sometimes interrupted the spontaneous recording of information. Additional concerns were also raised over the social media profile of the projects and the reach of images taken. Not all groups are happy to be identifiable in photographs for a variety of personal and cultural reasons and therefore the device of photographing hands at work or views of the space featuring the backs of people was sometimes used. Finally, the tendency to take multiple images of the same activity or session can lead to an overload of information, Banks and Morphy (1997, p. 11) discuss this problem through the experience of anthropologist Margaret Mead who found no time to analyse the volume of images she had collected. Woodward cautions about feeling overwhelmed with excessive data, but that it can offer rich potential for researchers (2020, p. 26).

I also must acknowledge the multiple ways I use photography in my practice. I am not simply evidencing the work and process. This is in part due to the multiple roles that photography plays in projects like this. Occasionally during both projects there was an opportunity for an external photographer to document a session, but often this was also my role. As both projects involved elements of exhibition, I was aware that the photographs may be needed for multiple uses (alongside evidencing my research for this study). This could include them being enlarged and printed in physical exhibitions, used online in project blogs and social media, reproduced in project publications, given to the participants and organisations as postcards celebrating their contribution to the work at the end of projects. As a mostly freelance artist images from my projects fulfil another purpose: I use some on my personal website, a way of marketing and publicising my practice and ultimately getting more work. This means that good photography is essential. Photographs tell a story of my practice and how it develops. I acknowledge that I consider the aesthetics of my photography as well as the practical ways of evidencing aspects of the work. I know that I frame and consider shots even when taking them on a mobile phone often taking multiples of the same image and then editing for future use.

- **The photo-essays**

The three photo-essays within this thesis are designed to give additional visual insight into the projects. I have described the use of photography through the projects, and the multiple ways in which the images produced were used. The images show the chronology of the projects, they are illustrative, but I hope they do more than add a pretty picture alongside my words. My hope is that as Woodward (2020)
describes, the ‘photos are informed by ethnographic observations and are an integral part of observations as how people engage with photo-objects can be the basis for observations’ (2020, p. 135, her emphasis). Discussing the making of photo-essays Gillian Rose (2016, pp. 340-343) acknowledges the richness photographs can offer research data and talks about the evocative and analytical in the genre and suggests that researchers should consider which or both they are tending to engage with. Banks (2007) acknowledges that a strength of the format is that it offers a sense of the social situation. From a large collection of photographs taken to document the projects and my research activities, I selected a series to enrich this text. I used printed copies of photographs and spread them out on the floor. I interrogated them asking how images spoke to each other. This was sometimes through the physical sites, tabletops, community rooms and sometimes through the actions and use of hands. Through my selection I want to give visual insight into the projects focussing on slow craft processes, people and places and layered heritage.

- **Audio: Semi-structured interviews and group conversations**

![Figure 33: Interview location, Local Colour project.](image)

For both projects, in receipt of public funding, there was an expectation of regular evaluations with participants that could be fed back to organisations, commissioners and funders at various points during the project. This information was collected in variety of ways and formats and was always designed with the needs of the participants in mind. Formats included questionnaires (paper based) and group discussions. Additional questions from host organisations were also sometimes included, these included
ones connected to their wellbeing frameworks. Questions asked by funders included, for the HLF, those around engagement with heritage and responses to heritage. Creative People and Places projects are concerned with engagement with arts and cultural activities and required less regular recording of data apart from a brief weekly attendance sheet.

In this context of this research, I felt it important that question-based formats were kept to a minimum and that rather a semi-structured approach was used. Brinkmann (2018, p. 579) compares this approach with the completely unstructured where there is less say in focussing the conversation on what is important to the research project. A more precise definition of the semi-structured research interview is ‘... an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015, p. 6). I was also concerned that this kind of data collection can be very time consuming and can therefore take away from the time available to actually work together in the group. I sometimes used volunteer support to keep a session running so I could interview a participant in another space in the building. In addition, two incidents, one in each project confirmed that there was a danger of participants feeling overfaced by direct questioning about their experience. In one a participant said ‘I’m sick of all these funders thinking we’re all broken and helpless’ (Worn Stories fieldnote book 5, 2017) and in another a participant described feeling like he was ‘in a goldfish bowl’ after funder, commissioner, and a ‘critical friend’ observing commissioned projects came to visit the project on three consecutive weeks (Local Colour, fieldnotes book 4, 2018). I was also concerned that interviews and surveys can produce what Bourdieu describes as ‘declarations of principle that correspond to no real practice.’ (1979, p. 318-9). The data in these interviews that is quoted in the text identifies the respondent by a randomised initial for anonymity purposes.

Opportunities were offered for a longer chat with participants though and the majority took part. I devised a framework (see appendix) for these conversations and used them with both projects. These recorded then transcribed conversations took place in various places around the project locations including in a poly tunnel, an exhibition space and a woodwork room in a craft centre. These ordinary locations, very familiar to the participants allowed for easy discussion that meandered around the themes of the project rather than that asked explicit questions. The shorter more focussed question can be seen as closing off the responses (Blommaert and Jie, 2010, p. 48). Sometimes items used or made by the project were in the space which allowed participants to gesture to them or describe them as part of a description of an activity (figure 33). The discussions fed into later project work in some cases, in another
the participant turned the questions on myself and interrogated my reasons for developing the project. This example offered me another way of critically appraising my role as an outsider/insider in these kinds of project (Pink, 2009, p. 23).

A few interviews and conversations involved walking around sites whilst engaging in informal conversations. ‘Go-alongs’, an example of a mobile method, can produce what Murray (2010) describes as ‘a space that would not emerge from a static interview but is the product of mobile methods adopted’ (2010, p. 15). These offered a different stimulus for the conversation, those developed through a journey, of looking at and noticing the environment natural and built. However, building it in to the projects for all participants was difficult to manage as it was time consuming when fitting it in with the logistics of the projects and the access needs of participants differed. However, during the Worn Stories project three visits were done around the lower Leeds Road area, once the centre of the textile recycling industry.

Participants involved in the research aspects of the project had uncovered information about some of the buildings and their former use. We walked and they showed me their findings as we observed some of the buildings and textile businesses today. (Image) In the Local Colour project Elmfield Hall and Gatty Park and its environs – the public footpath ‘Owd Tom’s’ adjoining a development site (about to become a Costa Coffee Drive-through) where Gatty’s factory had been (figure 34) and the streets opposite named for the relatives, business associates and export countries of Steiner and Co. were used for several walks with individuals and groups. Kusenbach describes conducting go-alongs where ‘fieldworkers accompany individual informants on their “natural” outings, and – through asking questions, listening and observing – actively explore their subjects’ stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with, their physical and social environment’ (Kusenbach 2003, p. 463). A conversation recording while walking shows this well,

J ‘We went for a walk through the park. We looked at the dyehouse. We’ve looked at it internally and externally [the building and what happens in it]. What’s so interesting about it. The way it’s developed today from what it was. The advantages today. And the way things have changed, the house and the hospital.

M, It was a farm pasture originally. I reimagined it as a farm.’ (my notes 23.03.18).
I could see that my experience of these walking and talking experiences were different in each project. In Church, a place where I have no personal connections, I was ‘shown around’ by the individuals and groups I walked with. All lived locally, some for their whole lives. I was also given an impromptu tour on a minibus journey to The People’s History Museum in Manchester. The drive took us through Church and Accrington and its outer environs, past the cemetery and the Turkey Red Industrial Estate with plenty of scope for description of the area and other observations. ‘We’re your tour guide Claire’ [laughter]. Through Clayton le Moors and a reference to rioting in Accrington in 1826, ‘It’s a shortcut up The Coppice on your bike then you can freewheel back down.’ To the Holland Pies factory, pigeon lofts, ‘Our Mark’s dad is the chairman of the pigeon association.’ Then back to politics again with Brexit, a melting ice-sculpture replacing Boris Johnson on a Channel 4 Climate debate and Nigel Farage deliberately misnamed as Nigel Ferret. Lisa Taylor, describing an ethnographic project in a post-industrial West Yorkshire ‘Carpettown’ uses mobile methodologies in her work and describes the embodied experience of journeys around the area with participants (2020, p. 5). She describes this as a ‘crucial method’ and asked her participants to lead her, rather than designing a route.

Figure 34: Former Hagg Works Factory site in development taken from ‘Owd’ Tom’s’ footpath

In Bradford, the city where I have been based for almost 20 years, there was a different sense, that the participants and myself were uncovering the area we walked through together. We were all Bradfordians, adopted or otherwise, but none of the participants who took part in these visits lived or had lived in that area of the inner city, though I knew the area to some extent due to a couple of community venues I had worked at on other projects. There was no sense of being led by the participants, we had maps from 1908
and a contemporary A-Z with us and our notebooks with business details and street names found during archive visits. ‘Look that’s the building, that was William Baxter and Co.’ commented one of the participants. Its proximity to Randisi Ltd, project partner and contemporary recycling business was noted. The participant noted the loss of a floor reducing it from three to two stories after a fire in the early twentieth century, discovered during her research. She later went back to talk to the engineering company based there today. Connections were made and descriptions were given through knowledge gained because of the project, not from embodied local understanding of the place. Speight describes employing a variety of methods of walking with groups and individuals during her project *Palimpsest*, ‘By engaging people within an embodied and open-ended investigation, I sought to create a space in which various experiences and senses of place could be articulated and explored (2004, p. 30).

- **Stitch Journal**

Alongside my community and studio-based practice I have continued working with my own example of ‘reflexive research’ (Kara, 2020, p. 103) an (almost) daily *Stitch Journal*, tying it in to my research project. I began using this method in 2013 to explore textile as a personal daily practice. I was inspired by a daily piece of work made over three years by a Canadian textile artist, Judy Martin. Titled *Not to know but to go on* (2013) she describes her thinking around ‘time as a material’ (Wellesley-Smith, 2015, p. 94). Writing about it at the time on a now archived personal blog I described ‘No rules, no projected outcome. A record of days, but not a daily record’ (Wellesley-Smith, 2013). I also wrote about my *Stitch Journal* and Martin’s work in my first textile craft book describing my methods and elaborated on this in my second (2021). The use of textile as a creative recording method alongside my PhD felt appropriate when I thought of the entanglements of theory and practice around my projects, particularly as I began my fieldwork. Anthropologist Janet Hoskins describes fieldwork as creating ‘disparate, messy fragments of daily experience … a coherent narrative constructs a unified image of the self’ (2013, p. 5). The ‘journal’ itself is a long length of linen cloth, pieces added in sections, now almost 5 metres long. It is covered in rhythmic, improvised, hand stitches, many using the most basic plain sewing technique, running stitch. Shercliff (2015) describes hand stitching as a ‘… slow and rhythmic craft that describes both functional and symbolic dimensions of joining and being attached’ (Shercliff, 2015, p. 188). For me this solitary activity in a working life that is often surrounded by others has been a material-based method of carving out a different sort of thinking space. It has acted as a counter to the busyness of community spaces, the constant reflexivity required as practitioner- researcher, offering a stillness and quieter contemplation.
At the start of 2017 I began to use it alongside my research inspired partly by reading Miwon Kwon on socially engaged and embodied art practices (2013). This resonated with my stitching practice, and I saw it as another way of managing a way through often messy real-world multi-site research (Law, 2004) but also as a mirror of it. Amanda Ravetz writes that “[t]he language of craft is enriched by articulating ideas and processes in different ways (2013, p. 13). She also talks about the process of thinking through making. The Stitch Journal offers a way of thinking, remembering and processing the different aspects of my textile practice. Anthropologist Tim Ingold talks of the thought processes of makers and the materials they use seeing them in a continuous process of correspondence and becoming through one another. This is another way, as he describes, of ‘following the materials’ (Ingold, 2009, p. 99). I do not stitch text but rather blocks and circles of running stitch, sometimes overlapping, sometimes using different thicknesses of threads. The threads I use connect community and studio practice to the cloth, often dyed with plant materials from specific places. In managing two projects simultaneously I was unable to engage in much studio practice, so it also offered me a space for hands-on engagement with this aspect of my work. I keep no regular written record alongside the stitching but occasionally write reflections on my process, seeing the writing and textile aspects of this practice as in correspondence with one another. This is a process of ‘becoming with’ an ethnography of my own thinking practices as Donna Haraway says, responding to the ethnographic thinking of Marilyn Strathern, ‘it matters what ideas we use to think ideas (with)’ (Haraway, 2016, p. 12).

![Figure 35: Stitch Journal: dividing space as research questions, 2017](image)
I can see how my stitching process has changed as my research has progressed. Early in my first year of study I ambitiously stitched five large black open circles along the length of the cloth (figure 35), visualising them as my main research questions and thinking that I would stitch around this framework. Of course, research questions change, projects develop, participation involves adaptation and Covid then intervened. The circles remain, covered with blocks of colour, like a kind of asemic writing, long threads left rather than finished neatly but occasionally couched [to couch is to lay a thread to a surface and attach it with small stitches of the same or different thread] down to the surface in circles when I feel I have resolved some idea in my head. Turning the cloth over and examining the back, a mess of stitches, knots, joins and tangled threads I sometimes feel this is a more realistic depiction of the research journey. I occasionally add small significant pieces of fabric to the cloth, recalling the person who offered them or place they came from, and dip edges in textile dyes when at community workshops. I pay particular attention to joining sections: edges and thresholds holding additional meaning to me, like blank pages pieced together. I am not studying myself but finding a way through my studies using textile.

As I write more of my thesis, I see the journal as a visual companion to my (previously described here) notebooks with their scraps of reflection, messy and very small handwriting, sketches, post-its, things overwritten in white pen. My margin notes in my thesis drafts suggest that I ‘unpick this a bit’, I look for threads in my explanations and how I try to connect questions to practice. Katie Collins writing in a blog post about material metaphors in academic writing argues that the language of textiles should be considered rather than the persistent use of building metaphors. ‘Theories have frameworks and foundations and they need support. Arguments can be constructed, shored up by facts and buttressed with a solid line of reasoning. Sometimes they can be shaky and even fall down.’ (2016, her emphasis). She suggests a more creative and generative alternative, the stitching and piecing together of ideas, academic writing as decentred and accommodating multiple sources and the more feminine voice. My written scrawl is indecipherable at times, like my stitches although in terms of mapping and precision these are often more deliberate than my pen strokes. They evidence non-linear thinking, interruptions, repetitions, glitches in projects and in everyday life. The textile is like a large unedited document where I have crafted words as stitches in and out of the (fabric) body of work.

Slotnick and Janesick (2011) describe the use of journals for research in ways that include reflecting on their own thinking patterns, and on their participants responses. Sarah Scott Shields writing about her practice of keeping a visual journal throughout her research, comments on the ability this process has to
‘dialogue, question, and creatively engage my immediate observations and field notes’ (2016, p. 16) and I recognise this in my own process though mine is less directly illustrative and pictorial in execution. She also describes how writing and making pull together ‘in a rhythmic pulsating motion propelling me outward’ (2016, p. 2). I have used my Stitch Journal in textile teaching during the period of my research and have found it a good way to explain my research, taking it further away from its use as internal dialogue.

Doing edits I make small needle-woven shapes using scraps of leftover thread (figure 36). I have begun to see them as interruptions, small but significant. Completing fieldwork and writing up through a pandemic has interrupted my life and my every day in a legion of ways, my thinking practices seem altered, scattered. I always seem to be picking things up and putting them down again. I am reminded of a quote I have used in teaching over many years by Lucy Lippard, writing about quilts as art in the 1980s, that women’s time ‘comes in small squares’ (1983, p. 33). My notes – language, ‘scaffolding’, intense focus on my document, the writing, editing, rewriting, doing and undoing of texts, thoughts, moments. The textile as document again. Highlights added to the text for correction/ clarification. Coloured page marker stickers doing the seemingly endless editing, refining. How was this like the precision of my needle puncturing the cloth? When looking at it again from the back it became clear. Mess, improvisation, becoming, undone (figure 37). My notes, September 2021

Figure 36: Stitch Journal - stitching as editing
Working with the data

As previously explained, I decided not to use a data management system to analyse the rich and varied data gathered during both projects. This was not considered useful as it failed to deal with the materiality, visuality and affect of the situated data that I gathered. Rather, the hands-on practices of my working life have been central to the process of analysis, as described above and including my own stitching practice and the inclusion of items made or collected during project sessions. My analysis involved a process of physically sifting, piecing and gathering the different outcomes and making connections between them. This process was often done using a tabletop where I spread printed photographs, project notebooks, objects created during a particular project session and materials connected to them. An example of this process includes my work with madder at the Local Colour residency (see Chapter 6). In this case my collection included a piece of dried madder root grown in the community poly tunnel (strongly reminding me of the temporalities of a growing project) and fabrics and threads dyed and printed with it; a guide to a collection of dye plants grown at a National Trust property in Cheshire given to me by a participant; photographs taken by another participant of the group cultivating the plants and the snapshot post-it note comments taken during sessions.
Looking closely at and handling this combination of materials created a renewed sense of the experiences had during these sessions and allowed me to contextualise the information whilst considering my research questions. It also reminded of the flows and entanglements of materials as described by Ingold (2013). This visual and physical reminder of project process and material outcomes alongside text from interviews began my process of assembling my thinking through the data. This in turn speaks to Pink’s description of words and images contextualising each other, ‘forming not a complete record of the research but a set of different representations and strands of it (Pink, 2001, p.96).’ The materials and how they were used added to the words and images collected during project sessions and gave me a heightened understanding of the work when reflecting back on it at a later time. Thus, the materials and making were foregrounded again in the process of writing and collating the data.

Summary

In this chapter I have described the following methods: Observation of making with others, fieldnotes, photography, photo-essays, semi-structured interviews and group conversations and a Stitch Journal. My early material encounters within the projects allowed me to search for and select them. They generated a diverse collection of data from the material, including paper-based ephemera, writing and textiles themselves to the visual, including documentary photography. Kara uses ‘gathering’ (2020, p. 101) as a descriptor for the use of multiple methods including create ones. This speaks to my research as I am interrogating the ways in which the research outputs speak to each other. This offers unexpected insights within the two projects as we see different local contexts and descriptors applied to the project themes. We notice that the materials-based observations develop their own narrative as they change over the course of the projects through the processes outlined in sub question 2, growing, making, unmaking and remaking.

Adopting multiple methods has offered me a great range of positive and accessible ways to engage with research while delivering project work as practitioner-researcher. They have also offered an opportunity to unpick the challenges around participation, ownership, consent, working with large numbers of participants in different settings and the volume of data this has produced. In answering my research questions my combination of methods offers a rich ethnography of the projects. In the following chapters I explore in detail the Local Colour and Worn Stories projects through this detailed and diverse data, in photo essays and analytical writing. These chapters will show how I wove the different data together and
give insight into how the research methods were used. I begin with my first of three photo essays, Slow Craft.
Photo Essay A:  
Slow Craft

Photography, as described in my Chapter 4, is used in various ways in my projects. Hodgetts et al. describe this process,

‘...photographs are things that people work with, use to explain and to show. Photographs provide a vehicle for invoking and considering situations, events and issues. The meaning of a photograph is thus more fluid and variable in response to the changing circumstances of the photographer, the viewers, and what is being done in the interaction between them’ (Hodgetts et al., 2007, p. 266-7).

This photo essay focusses on engagement with materials and processes during the projects and amplifies the hands-on nature of the craft processes involved. The slowness of method during longitudinal engagement is described in my two analytical chapters but it is important to note the life cycles of materials described through the image. For example, in the Local Colour residency we see hands stitching the word ‘madder’ onto a communal piece of locally woven cotton. The red thread was dyed with madder plants grown during the project; another process engaged with by participants. In the Worn Stories project material excess is sorted, worked with and remade. Many of the processes shown in this photo essay actively consider time as a material and these conversations were had during the project. My photographs show a variety of activities which took place during both projects. The growing, making, unmaking and remaking explored in my second sub-question that happened during the projects is evident. Some of those material processes required a period of growth before they could be used. Images taken in the Local Colour dye garden show the raw materials being used in textile dyeing workshops. ‘I never knew a plant could do that’ as a participant commented.
Seed saving: *Local Colour*

Pricking out the yellow bed: *Local Colour*
Yellow, blue, red dye plant beds: *Local Colour*

Madder root: *Local Colour*
Plant material, bundle dyeing: *Local Colour*

Madder root dye bath: *Local Colour*
Mordant printing with plants from the dye garden on local cotton: Local Colour
Stitching using madder dyed thread, community stitching drop-in, Burnley: *Local Colour*
Scrap fabric sorting: *Worn Stories*

Scrap patchwork workshop, New Start, CommunityWorks: *Worn Stories*
Unmaking/remaking, paper piecing scrap fabric: Worn Stories
Banner construction reusing materials from the textile recycling hub: Worn Stories

Banner text from recycled clothing, New Start group: Worn Stories
Fabric heart, hand-stitched scraps from textiles dyed with dye garden plants: *Local Colour*
Herbs from Gatty Park, soft print base, mangle press: *Local Colour*

Printing with yarrow from the dye garden on cotton, mangle. press: *Local Colour*
Chapter 5

Worn Stories Engaging histories - heritage and identity

Chapter overview

This first analytical chapter uses three community engagements that took place as part of the Worn Stories: Material and Memory in Bradford 1880-2015 project delivered by community arts charity Hive in Bradford and District between 2017 and 2019. Key to the enquiry were sessions that used stories from the heritage of textile recycling, reuse and repair in the city and the development of conversations about this that took place through making. The processes involved also included unmaking - the deconstruction and reuse of textile waste, and remaking - items that were adapted and modified for continued use. Interpretative creative work developed through the community sessions were shown as part of an exhibition Bradford Industrial Museum at the end of the project. The locations of the sessions were chosen due to my own and Hive’s existing relationships with community organisations and their proximity to former or current geographic locations in the textile recycling trade. A research training project with volunteers worked with historian/archivist Jennie Kiff and this ran alongside the creative sessions. Their research identified some of the detail of the industry through the use of local archives, collections and libraries.
This chapter addresses my first sub-question – *In what ways can the multi-layered heritage of Bradford, West Yorkshire and Church, East Lancashire present opportunities to explore the present lived experience in post-industrial textile communities?* Rather than detailing individual sessions I intend to highlight how multiform heritages allow us to think about the present and how this can happen through material engagements. I use these material engagements as an anchor through my writing, sometimes referring to one specific session, at other times my observations and collection of data over several years. This acknowledges the development of the work in a durational sense and the changes that occurred as the project became established at different community settings. Harrison’s triadic view of heritage as connectivity, materiality and dialogue (2013) is shown through these examples, and crucially is also shown through practice. Bishop (2012, p. 6) describes the ‘full unfolding’ that may only occur in a socially engaged project when the artist and participants witness it. The material engagements described include the use of a scrap bag of pieces of material from a variety of sources that I have used in my practice in different settings over many years; the making of an *Economy Quilt* from the textile debris left over after practical creative community sessions; and the creation of a textile banner made to celebrate the centenary anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918. Through these detailed examples of practice, multi-layered heritage is explored and drawn out and helps us to understand the present.

**Hive, background**

Hive (formerly Kirkgate Studios and Workshops) has been based on the ground floor of a Victorian Board School, St Paul’s (1858) since 1982. The upper floor is now a community centre, a separate organisation. Initially set up as an unemployment project which included a car mechanics workshop, in the late 1980s it had become more focussed on creative activity around the time of major changes in the treatment of people experiencing mental ill health and the move away from institutional care. Since 2012 it has been known as Hive. It is a membership organisation open to all (a nominal fee allowed members to access courses, drop-in facilities, equipment) and has facilities in the building, a pottery, woodwork, studio facilities for many other art and craft activities from stained glass to life drawing and textiles. Some adult education classes are delivered through the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) others developed and delivered through Hive. It also has a well-developed a programme of long-term projects, some delivered in the building, some in the wider Bradford Metropolitan District area as outreach, these are funded in a variety of ways. The outreach programme is delivered mainly in the most underserved wards.
in the city. These programmes focus on mental health and wellbeing, community cohesion and the heritage of the city and communities that live there.

I have had a long working relationship with the organisation beginning in 2006 as a freelancer, mainly on outreach programmes. One parent/child project redesigned a shipping container into a play space at a primary school in Keighley, another was a libraries and schools-based residency for a Family Learning Festival across the district. Alongside these short-term projects I taught creative textiles as tutor for the WEA at an evening class there for 7 years. From February 2010 until July 2019, I worked as a Project Coordinator three days a week developing and writing bids and delivering long term projects with Hive members and in outreach settings. These were mainly funded through larger Lottery grants, Big Lottery and Heritage Lottery Fund (now National Lottery Community Fund and National Lottery Heritage Fund). They explored creative green spaces as places for wellbeing and better mental health, and the heritage of the textile dyeing and recycling industries in the city. Programmes were developed with a wide range of community organisations, specific charities working in community mental health, hospital outpatient departments and GP surgeries, development organisations working with ethnic minority communities, refugee and asylum seeker groups, Sure Start, Children’s centres and more. Larger audiences for these projects were found at city-based festivals, exhibitions in public and pop-up spaces and libraries and had an improvisatory approach to communication and display practices. As described in Chapter 2 projects funded by lottery heritage funding had been part of Hive’s output since 2012.

The following three material engagements are based at Hive, and at community organisations worked with during the project. I begin with the work of a scrap bag of materials that moves around the project. Through its many fabrics, stories and complexities we see multiple layers of heritage and ways of engaging with them. We see how discarded fabric is used in the projects, pieced together to create new surfaces and thus able to offer new narratives.
The Scrap Bag

The contents of the bag tipped out into the centre of the table looks messy, it is messy (figure 39). A jumble, a mixture of the discarded and the gifted, things of different age and quality. Participants pull out fabrics from the pile, looking for a particular colour. Hands pull at and stretch the fabric judging its practicality for the planned project, items are swapped and shared. These actions can inspire dialogue, verbal and non-verbal, over these choices. Scissors from the pile of equipment at one end of the table are passed around while I remind people to cut fabric from one end of a piece, not the middle, so that it goes further. Sometimes a particular detail from a garment is required. Plackets cut from shirts, buttons and buttonholes still visible are being saved for use as an alternative bias binding for the quilt being made for Refugee week in June (figure 40). A whole shirt pocket with the back intact cut from a man’s shirt is stitched to the front of a cheap fabric shopping bag to make extra carrying space. Someone always asks if they can take some extra fabric home for another project. I feel that it’s important to try to remember where the various fabrics have come from and share stories of the donations as asides during sessions if we’ve time. My knowledge of these materials and that of the participants is shared. Where things come from, what they are made from, but also how they can be used – the best kind of sewing machine needle when sewing a fabric with stretch, the easiest way to unpick an overlocked seam. Reflection, CommunityWorks New Start group for refugee and asylum seeker families, 14.03.18
My outreach project tool kit includes a scrap bag: a jute sack stencilled ‘Java Coffee Brazil’ (figure 41). It is full of textile scraps, collected over years of community-based projects and teaching. Remnants, discarded clothing, donations from local markets and fent shops, leftovers from previous collaborative textile projects, waste and seconds from local mills. The contents of the bag undergo occasional edits, mostly due to it becoming too unwieldy and heavy when carrying it from car to venue and back again. When editing the contents, I tend to reduce bulk by cutting up larger pieces of fabric, so the materials remain unaltered other than in the size of the cloth. It is not ordered in any way but as one of the tools of
my trade I differentiate, categorise and remember as I sift through. The scrap bag has multiple pieces, it is messy, it covers different timeframes and stories of global trade are imbued in the materials themselves. It presents questions about the nature of discarded and gifted stuff. Peter Stallybrass describes various elements within a cloth economy, as ‘richly absorbent of symbolic meaning’ in multiple ways (Jones and Stallybrass, 2000, p. 8).

I draw a large handful of cloth, unseen, from the bag and lay it on my studio table (figure 42), 03.12.17

- **Shirt sleeve**: 100% cotton, white background, blue and green pinstripes. A donation from K who works in a local charity shop and brings me donated unsaleable garments that might be useful in projects before the ragman comes to the shop to buy up excess.
- **Silky synthetic black machine-embroidered edge strip from a shalwar kameez.** Arrived in a bin liner full of similar edges/hems donated by a dress maker from the local Bangladeshi community.
- **Red gingham polycotton, overlocked edges, from a summer school uniform dress.**
- **White cotton sari, woven brown border.** Soft through washing and use.
- **Fine cotton lawn square with rabbit and foliage print, Liberty of London,** donated by a participant on a textile workshop.
- **Mustard-coloured polycotton.** Part of a large collection of fents (remnants). L, a participant from a South Asian women’s project went around local market stalls asking for donations for a community quilting project.
- **Skirt and dress lining, label intact, ‘Brown, Muff & Co.’** (Bradford department store 1814-1977, known locally as The Harrods of the North).
Figure 42: Sampling from the scrap bag.

The many communities, organisations and individuals who have participated in my projects and teaching over the years and my own collections of studio waste fabric and past-use family clothing have informally curated the contents of the scrap bag. It contains a mixture of old and new fabrics, textile debris of sorts. Much of it is used clothing ready to repurpose, some arrived via a local charity shop unsuitable for selling on. Gregson and Crewe (2003) describe second-hand goods as ‘…imbued with a history and a geography and, theoretically, all the things of material culture have the potential to become meaningful, even when they have been effectively withdrawn and deactivated as commodities through, for example, disposal, damage, or decay’ (2003, p. 145-6). To the imaginative potential of the former life of these materials is added the generative possibilities of them: as reinvented ‘new’ materials for use in craft-based processes both practical and creative. Larger sized men’s shirts are always useful, as unpicked they offer a large surface area of fabric for reworking. Flimsy polyester women’s tops are less useful but can be torn into strips for creating flower corsages using a rag-rugging technique. Slightly felted woollen jumpers are prized as they can be cut up with no hemming required. I often use these for simple taster activities in early sessions with new groups (figure 43). Occasionally I suggest to a volunteer looking for something to do that they can strip out zips and cut off buttons from these garments. These are then stored separately for reuse in other projects, decorative details, practical fastenings, even incorporated an outdoor mosaic, or passed on to tutors who teach dressmaking courses.

Figure 43: Repurposing woollen jumpers to make felted flowers
The scrap bag travelled with me to community organisations taking part in the *Worn Stories* project. It also made an occasional appearance at the *Local Colour* project for making sessions when we required extra materials, pieces of fabric dyed with madder plants grown as part of that project also ending up in the bag along with calico woven at Queen St Mill, near Burnley. As well as using the main Hive building, the areas of Bradford the project worked in were some of the most diverse in the city and include two of the most diverse wards in West Yorkshire, West Bowling (BD5) and Barkerend and Undercliffe (BD3) (ONS, 2011 census). The groups engaging with the project included women’s organisations working in the communities with South Asian, African and Roma heritage, asylum seeker and refugee groups and groups for older people that work to promote health and wellbeing and explore local heritage.

Working in different locations and settings around the city was an important part of the engagement aspect of this project and one expected by the funder. Early research and development for the project revealed sites of activity in the recycling trade in the 1880s around Leeds Road in what is now BD3, just east of the city centre, and in BD5 to the south. By the turn of the twentieth century textile manufacture in Bradford was a mixed economy with multiple processes taking place in the mills with associated recycling and reuse activity (Keighley, 2007, p. 7). Volunteer researchers, after a number of training sessions, focused their archive and library research on these areas. They uncovered businesses including a ‘Waste (Scrap) Dealer, Rag Merchant, Wool Extractor and Shoddy Manufacturer’ active for nearly 60 years, from about 1860 to 1918. William Baxter & Company operated out of Raglan Mills, Gibson Street just off Leeds Road (Perry, 2019, p. 36).

Today the same streets around Leeds Road revealed several businesses still working in textile recycling including Randisi Textile Recycling Ltd. where I met their managing director Giuseppe who gave me a tour of the warehouse. A company since 1940 that moved to Bradford from Sicily in the 1990s, at the time of my visit they employed 45 staff working as pickers and sorters for the 700 kg of locally collected textiles they processed weekly. The site was not suitable for group visits so I took photographs of baled mainly synthetic fabric on its way to be shredded for ‘flock’ (figure 44). This was too poor quality for selling on as garments but destined for wall insulation, car interiors or industrial wipers. The workers in the warehouse picked over piles of woollens, gauging the quality by hand, scanning the garment looking for flaws, pilling, small holes or stains, then throwing the item into a cage depending on the different market it was destined for: Eastern Europe, Pakistan, West Africa, or the industrial shredding machine (figure 45). Shell
(2014) writing about the Shoddy trade in the Heavy Woollen Districts of Batley and Dewsbury in the nineteenth century describes the very ‘human kind of job’ of sorting, ‘The goal was to, in as short order as possible, place them into ‘grades’ by color, fabric quality, state of disrepair and so on. Touch, smell, actions such as rubbing a cloth against itself by pinching between thumb and forefinger – these were all the kinds of gestures that helped the sorter work efficiently, and the shoddy industry to maximize its potential’ (Shell, 2014, p. 279). The workers’ booths at Randisi’s were illuminated by strip lighting in the dark warehouse. The photographs I took were used in photo elicitation sessions with groups, alongside my scrap bag, and an account of working in a local charity shop provided by a project volunteer and her observation, due to the volume of unsuitable donations, that ‘the rag man is never going to go away with an empty van’ (Etherington, 2019, p. 50). She also provided a handwritten list of flaws to look out for when sorting donations (figure 46).

Figure 44: Baled and destined for ‘flock’ Randisi Textile Recycling Ltd.
In the car park outside the Randisi warehouse were cages of newly delivered stock, collected from charity clothing banks around the city (Figure 47). Their sharp metal corners were protected, wrapped with strips of t-shirt fabric, burst bags of clothing visible within, a bright red sleeve hanging out of one (Figure 48). Gillian Whitely (2010) describes the material environment of cities using Doreen Massey’s ‘mixity’ descriptor of lived practices and the criss-crossing of multiple allegiances, the urban environment as ‘a bricolage of heterogeneity, an array of objects and textures, social and cultural tensions, physical matter
and architectural structures. The city itself is like a gigantic assemblage of junk continually being remade and reinscribed...a layering of ethnicities and migrating cultures’ (Whitely, 2010, p. 3). These huge piles of discarded textiles gathered from locations around the city can be seen as a material reminder of its diversity and multi-layered heritage.

![Figure 47: Charity clothing collection bin, Leeds Road](image)

As I left Mr Randisi asked if I needed anything for the project and I left with a bag of woollen blankets, something he told me he could sell on for about ten pence each. One was later used as the backing for an exhibition banner made by one of the Worn Stories groups, each letter made using a different creative textile recycling technique (Figure 49).
Another of the donated Randisi blankets was cut into squares for participants to use as a background for their own textile reflecting on the learning they experienced during the project (figure 50). These personal textiles, accompanied by short pieces of writing offered another way of considering the impact of the project for participants, both through material and text. One example made, by Z, on a square of blue blanket was stitched with the words ‘Blessed are the worn, torn and cracked, for they shall let in the light’ and was handed in with a letter. Her writing pulled together her learning about the difficult lives of female ragsorters in the city in the late nineteenth century during the project comparing them with the ‘worn, torn and cracked’ people [her description] she met as a patient in the local mental health system. The project had explored a process known as ‘carbonising’ (Jenkins and Ponting, 1982, p. 301) a treatment using sulphuric acid on mixed fibre cloth to destroy the cotton component leaving the wool intact. Respun and then woven with new wool it created the lowest quality shoddy cloth, sometimes known as union cloth and often used in workhouse and prison uniforms (Wellesley-Smith, 2019, p. 35). The lives of the female rag workers uncovered by the project research had included periods where they...
were resident in these institutions, an irony that did not go unnoticed when discussed in the project sessions.

The position of the female ragsorters and their status in the hierarchies of the textile industry was something Z responded to, ‘As I worked on my piece of blue blanket [the work] came from a feeling I had about how some sections of society are perceived. I thought about the years I had spent in the mental health system, and the stigma I had often felt from those outside of it.’ She considered the gains in confidence that being involved in the project had given her, and how she also perceived this in other members of the group, ‘...it was moving to hear what a positive difference to their wellbeing it had made. Combined with the textile tasks, we had felt listened to, and accepted in a unique way. The experience has given us a stronger sense of self. The two hours we spent together each week radiated out much further into my life, I felt part of something in my community, and therefore part of my community’ (letter to CWS, 23.07.19).

![Figure 50: Personal work on recycled blanket pieces, Bradford Industrial Museum exhibition](image)

During project sessions we spent some time discussing the historical significance of rag bags, using the scrap bag as a prop and looking at drawings of rag pickers and more recent photographs of rag and bone collectors from the local area. With one group the local rag and bone man, in a moment of excellent (but unplanned) timing, went past the venue with his horse and cart a participant shouting ‘We are history
today!’ Different names in the trade were read out, ‘rag and bone man, rag picker, chiffonier, bone picker, bone grubber, marine store dealer, tot picker...’ (Kiff, 2017). I read an extract from Henry Mayhew’s London Labour and the London Poor (1851) where he describes a rag picker, ‘...[he] has generally a bag on his back, and a stick in his hand. With this stick he turns over the different heaps of ashes or dust that are thrown out of the houses, and rakes among the dustbins to see if they contain anything that is saleable to the rag and bone shop, or marine-store dealer. The articles for which he chiefly searches are rags and bones - rags he prefers...’ (1851, p. 202). The role of the ragpicker was highlighted by some Victorian writers as a key worker in the building of modern civilisation. One anonymous letter writer in 1860 remarked that ‘rags can aptly only be compared to manure. Both exist everywhere [sic] and under similar circumstances but only the desperately poor were reduced to collecting them’ (A Free Trader, 1860, p. 9).

The Worn Stories project focused on the period 1880-2015 so for context sessions looked at the heritage of the recycling of cloth in the mid-Victorian period and the big push for domestic collection because paper manufacturers could not source enough for their needs. This was something of a paradox in a period when British cloth was made in such huge quantity. This shortage, exacerbated by the import duty imposed on rags, led popular author Harriet Martineau to highlight the issue in one of her ‘Household Words’ articles (1854) ‘Let the maids know that rags now fetch a pretty penny; and let them have a rag-bag as a regular part of the kitchen establishment’ (quoted in Wynne, 2015, p. 36). A Worn Stories participant went on to make a rag bag complete with boxer shorts repurposed as dusters for the end of project exhibition.

A discussion about rag and bone men. Images of rag and bone men, chiffoniers, horse and cart, nineteenth century onwards, as a prompt for conversation/reminiscence.

Patchwork activity using things from the scrap bag and other donated textiles at the venue.

Animated conversation in the group alongside stitching the patchwork, lots of reminiscing about rag and bone men and their horses, still a common sight in some areas of Bradford, and:

- Charity bags don’t get put through letterboxes around here because if you leave them out for collection they get stolen.
• The venue we meet at has a Clothes Bank for children. Anything not suitable for passing on is sold to a local ragman for cash and the money is used to buy new underwear and socks to be distributed to those in need.

• You can get some good prices at the ‘Cash for Clothes’ shop in town.

• A skirt is pulled out of the scrap bag. Why would someone throw that out? What’s wrong with it?

As the session draws to a close I suggest that I bring some resources related to mending and repairing textiles to the next session. I share some quotations from Bradford Heritage Recording Unit transcripts to get this new session theme started:

‘You had to make your clothes last as long as you could. And of course they used to have patches. I mean where we went to school we had patches you didn’t have a lot of clothes, you probably had school clothes, and Sunday clothes, your Sunday best, and your school clothes they got a fair amount of hammer, so you had patches, and everybody went to school with patches on their backside and on their elbows. And I mean, your jerseys...’ganzies’ they were always patched at the elbows or where there was a hole. I mean it wasn’t thrown away because you clicked it on something, it was a darn.’ (BHRU, A0183 M b.1910)

‘We always had a new tab rug at Christmas Time and we used to save our bits and pieces for that, same as bits of sheeting for babies...we used shirt tails and pieces of bedding for nappies. Oh Mrs so and so’s having a baby, save that bit of sheeting. But sometimes them sheeting had more patches than enough!’ (BHRU, A0181 F b.1921)

I show the group a visible repair on the elbow of the black cardigan that I’m wearing, a patch made of a bright cotton print. A participant says, ‘But you don’t need to do that do you?’ It’s not rudely put but she means that I can afford not to. During the session an occasional project participant who is currently experiencing housing insecurity works quietly on her own personal project, a cotton cellular baby blanket that she is using as the base for a rag rug. The rags are cut from her daughter’s old baby clothes. (Figure 51)
Privilege (underlined) I feel upset about the information I’ve been given about the level of need in this community. This project is different in every postcode I visit. Clothes, textiles, sustainability?? Class]

Worn Stories session notes: West Bowling, Creative Threads group (26.10.17)

Figure 51: Baby blanket rag rug, Creative Threads

The West Bowling group was based at a community centre in the grounds of a large Victorian church, St Stephen’s. West Bowling had been the centre of Bradford’s textile dyeing industry and the biggest piece dyeworks in Europe, Edward Ripley and Son, in 1898 one of the twenty companies making up Bradford Dyer’s Association. Ripleyville, a model village built by Henry Ripley in the 1860s for his workers (long demolished) was situated just around the corner from the church. I had worked with the organisation on previous projects but was unaware of the Clothes Bank and how it would connect and offer dialogue with the use of scrap materials in the project generally. The project is based in the fourth poorest ward in Bradford (Bowling and Barkerend) and is classed as being in the 10% most deprived areas in England (City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2020, p. 1). The Creative Threads group was made up of older women who had lived in the community for a long time, younger unemployed women, some unable to work for health reasons, and women from the refugee and asylum seeker community who have been recently housed in the area. My notes recorded at the session (above) communicate some of my periodic crises of confidence in my working methods. I am not from this community: in talking about creative
reuse and recycling I run the risk of appearing patronising or seen as preaching about consumer choices in an area where very little choice exists. The scrap bag with its broken oddments and its potential as a communication tool felt pretty redundant in circumstances like this.

This experience occurred at a fairly early point in the project (this session was the fourth time the group met) the dialogic potential of the work we are doing was just beginning. Kettle, Ravetz and Felcey link this dialogic aspect to the making process, ‘We consider collaboration through craft is to recognise that making involves dialogues’ (2013, p. 8). The group asks if we can have a tour of the Clothes Bank attached to the church and there is a suggestion that we might make a cash donation for some less suitable garments given to the bank and then reuse them in our textile projects. Ownership of the project began through engagement with and use of materials, and of the themes and histories we are trying to explore. A later session produced some ‘West Bowling Cloth’, squares of fabric recycled from unwanted contemporary Clothes Bank garments reassembled on a backing cloth into a useable patchwork fabric, ‘It creates a different sort of fabric’, suggests a participant, ‘our historical fabric’ (figure 52). This was later cut out into birds for an appliqué wall hanging (figure 53). Using the materials specific to and cultural politics of this location seems to be a positive way of thinking about the project as it developed. Whitely (2010), again echoing Massey talks of ‘Seek[ing] to understand the use of particular materials at a series of key moments and locations’ (2010, p. 9). Helguera writing in Education for Socially Engaged Art (2011), suggests that to engage with individuals, communities, cultures and places, the artist needs more than predisposition. An art practice centred around the involvement of others requires different approaches to art-making than one developed around and for a single author (2011, p. 16).
Collating materials together, as described in the vignette above and in Massey’s evocation of materials and their use, piecing, patching, reconstructing into a new whole, has a heritage that goes back centuries. Patchwork, and specifically paper piecing (sometimes known as English Paper Piecing) is a technique that I have used in many community-based projects over the years. It involves the stitching together of materials using simple geometric shapes cut into paper templates. These can be done in multiple combinations of colour, shape and pattern. It is a generative process, growing slowly when stitched by hand and with the potential for many people to work on independent pieces that will fit together, the
borders of the cloth reinforced. A method that is less precise (and less traditional) but one I used in some of the Worn Stories projects used small pieces of fabric attached to a backing cloth using a heat-fusible interfacing to create a patchwork effect. In Piecing and Writing (1985) literary critic Elaine Showalter looks at the practice of patching and piecing fabric to understand the writing of American women. Three phases of work are identified: firstly, sewing fragments of fabric together, or piecing, secondly collating these pieced fragments, and finally quilting this assemblage to its backing, stabilising the construction. Writing about Showalter’s work in her paper Writing Textile, Making Text: Cloth and Stitch as Agency for Disorderly Text (2014), Catherine Dormor considers the ways and means that knowledge gained through textile practice and material-conceptual knowledge, can be expressed through textile processes and technologies derived from that practice itself.

Busy session, Bengali, Urdu and Punjabi translation, stop-start delivery with multiple languages and materials spilling out of bin bags scattered around the room (figure 54). Everything is a bit messy. The call for fabric donations [the previous week] has been very successful (too successful?). Throughout the session there are knocks on the door and daughters, grandsons and nephews arrive dropping off heavy bin bags full of large pieces of fabric and smaller scraps. Stretch velvet; bits of shalwar kameez suits; a striking piece of synthetic fabric with a leopard skin and gold chain print. These are added to a collection of cotton fabric squares that I’ve contributed, another donation, a never-made quilt project perhaps? Fabric dating from 1960s to 1980s plus scraps from the scrap bag.

Activity involving scraps – piecing small squares onto heat activated interfacing to create ‘new’ fabric (figure 55), discussion about ‘zero waste’ projects. Most popular fabrics – printed cottons. We go through the scrap bag: identifying partial sections of outfits ‘this is a border’ ‘part of the headscarf, they never fit properly!’ Conversations about the to-and-fro of fabrics bought in the UK – different categories – ready-made, part-sewn, uncut. Sent out to Pakistan and Bangladesh to be made up by tailors - £3-5 for an outfit. I ask, ‘Why not buy the fabric out there too?’ ‘Better quality here.’ The participants: making personal choices (colour, pattern), but advised by my practical suggestions (for example, siting a lightweight fabric next to a heavier weight one increases the chance that the construction will tear).

Session notes: Roshni Ghar (South Asian women’s organisation, Keighley) Suhoon E-dil Group 10.12.17.
As a technique piecing offers the potential for a continuous reworking of cloth. Anthropologist Lucy Norris describes patchwork and quilting using recycled clothing as techniques that ‘involve the destruction of objects which hold within them emotional attachments to specific people, places and moments in time, and stitching them into newly arranged wholes, preserving certain memories while radically
recontextualizing them’ (Norris, 2015, p. 12). Nineteenth century examples I have collected include portions of quilts with patchwork tops. I have unpicked the layers out of curiosity, as many as seventeen in one case: including other older quilts, darned and finally discarded clothing, threadbare scraps, all combined to make a warm layer between top and bottom. In community settings, piecing techniques presented an open-ended way of working, reworking, adding to and taking away. They involved both unmaking and making, stitching and unpicking, they also offered a potential in this process for movement and repositioning. During a reminiscing session at the Roshni Ghar project, a participant described her experience as a child watching her mother ‘...laying layers of old cloth, five maybe, on the floor and smoothing them out for stitching sheets, quilts, wrappings. Stitching the pattern, the colours and the stitches. Reminding me of things from a long time ago. Back in Pakistan. Yes, happy memories, bedsheets, pillows’ (fieldnotes, 25.11.17). She is describing another piecing technique (*kantha*, originating in West Bengal) but one that again relies on rebuilding, repetitious stitching, reworking and ultimately transforming cloth. These ‘old threads for new’ are described as originally being made from ‘old cloth: *sari, dhoti, lungi, kapa* – the traditional dress of the women of Rajshahi and Rangpur’ (Zaman, 1981, p. 22).

Dormor, describes piecing as a way to bring ‘different and differing voices together and alongside one another, the seams marking flexible points of juxtaposition and the seam allowances thickened, scarred spaces for mutual exchange, a space within the process of translation in which meaning becomes oblique, multiple and mutable.’ (2014 [no page number]) In her description she also is keen to disabuse the idea that piecing and montage are a ‘cobbled together process’, with a ‘range of free-floating-unrelated elements’. The fabrics within the scrap bag allow us to think about what Hoskins (1998) describes as the ‘... invisible, intimate associations with clothing: the biographies of clothes reveal histories of swapping, lending, and borrowing, inheriting and handing down; clothes can act as souvenirs, mementoes, and mnemonics of past relationships and selves through their very materiality, their physical condition, color, smell, and texture’ (Hoskins, 1998 cited in Norris, 2010, p. 55). I also think about the techniques that can be altered and improvised due to this messiness and the different ways fibre and fabric composition behave when worked with. When relying on recycled pre-used fabrics some materials will be more fragile than others. This requires more consideration when working with them. In the technique of stitching pieces together the relative flexibility of some fabrics will allow some ‘give’ and stretch to make a neat join even if the pieces have been cut slightly inaccurately (figure 56).
The use of ‘ordinary’ textiles like those layered within the scrap bag, items from everyday use – clothing, domestic projects, mass-produced fabric - is described by artist Françoise Dupré as a textile-based ‘global reminder’. Her work has included projects that reuse the fabric from the ubiquitous large plastic zipped storage bags, usually with a printed checked design, often found in markets and used in launderettes. She continues, ‘Imagining ourselves at home in the world, where our homes are not fixed objects but processes of material and conceptual engagement with other people and different places’ (Dupré, 2014, p. 171). In this context the connecting edges of patchwork could be seen as boundaries or thresholds and offer another layer of heritage. Viscose sari fabric now adjoins a cotton print from a nineteen-fifties recycled apron, washed and worn candy-striped brushed flannel sheeting abuts a donation from a stall in Bradford market. The scraps of fabric taken from the bag, added to other resources at the community venue, when reassembled create a new surface, a new fabric. The whole process is emergent, as Ravetz et al. in their book *Collaboration through Craft* comment, ‘The openness of craft to the contingent and the unknown make textiles a powerful medium and a context for collaboration and participation’ (2013,
In the group, knowledge about textile processes were shared, skills and new language were learned, new relationships developed within the groups and with the artist (figure 57). A participant commented in a group discussion reflecting on her involvement in the project and the layers of impact it offered, ‘That thing about textiles as a vehicle for conversation ink that into heritage and wellbeing...I’ve seen that happen and that’s something completely new for me. And working collaboratively not just thinking and planning but actually hands on, pinning, sewing, holding physically. That’s a new experience for me’ (H, semi-structured interview, 18.11.18).

Going through my fieldwork notebooks I find repeated references to tabletops in different buildings and spaces for example, ‘large table, covered in materials’ (22.11.17), ‘we always seem to find a scrap to fit amongst this mess’ (03.02.18). Uzwiak (2016) writes of visual and sensory methods and how they ‘enhance participatory research in complex urban settings’ (2016, p. 44). I describe the contents of the scrap bag as ‘random’ but of course this negates the fact that these project settings are chosen, relationships exist between organisations and myself and workers there, locations are suggested when writing funding bids and are often a partnership requirement of them. My knowledge of the geography of my city, the communities that live and work there is now also informed by the textiles they donate and choose to share. The scrap bag offers more than the ‘possibility of being surprised’ (Massey, 2005) as it speaks of locations and communities that are now after nearly twenty years of working here, familiar to me. When introducing the scrap bag I questioned in what ways it could offer ways in to the layered heritage and present lived experience of the community. Examining the way it works through this piece of writing: its histories, generative and dialogic potential, I think it can be used as a tool to
construct understanding. Participant comments from a group conversation at Hive about the Worn Stories sessions included this, ‘There was a sense of community...That thing where you walk with someone and they’re alongside you. You’re on a journey together and sometimes you’re interacting and sometimes when you’re hands-on stitching you can come out of any conversation that might be going on.’ (17.12.18) At a relational level it connected people from different groups and cultures. It offered a way of telling different stories of living in a community and like a place is it ‘never finished, always becoming’ (Pred, 1984, p. 279). As a researcher it offered me a way, through materials, of examining the dynamics of participation. I was interested in exploring how making a collaborative textile and the potential of this for making stories visible can contribute to community resilience. The ordinary materials the bag contains were removed from their original context but could still attest to history, memory, and skill. The bag of scraps invited continued potential for exploring multiple trajectories and narratives and a reflection about the raw materials and potential of a project and many projects before in motion.

The scrap bag offered many potentials but considering another more outcome focussed project, also using textile waste, speaks to collective processes in another way. One of the books I used in practical textile sessions during the project was ‘Needlework Economies: A Book of Making and Mending with Oddments and Scraps’ by Flora Klickmann (1919) found during early project research at Bradford Textile Archive. Through the use of this primary source we see how textile waste from community sessions offers a way to discuss multiple heritages and connections across industry and community. The next material engagement considers this, through the making of a quilt for exhibition in the Hive Talking Textiles group.

Textile thinking through an Economy Quilt

A Worn Stories group was delivered weekly at Hive for the duration of the project. Before it became Talking Textiles the group had been previously known as Anything Sews and before that Chat and Craft and had been a regular fixture in the Hive diary since 2012. It continued to be called Chat and Craft by many Hive members, despite its occasional changes of purpose, funder, and name. It took place at Hive as a drop-in session, open to all, on Monday afternoons between 1-3 pm in the Birklands Room, a studio space used for many different types of creative work, volunteer training and adult education classes during the day and the evening. The room was lined with cupboards with repurposed kitchen worktops around the edge. The Monday afternoon group was often volunteer led but sometimes worked with a tutor or Project Co-ordinator, all dependent on current project funding in the wider organisation. The group was quite big, sometimes twenty people attending each week, almost all women. Participants
came through a variety of introductions: as previous participants in Hive projects, retired people looking for a sociable activity, textile enthusiasts wanting peer support with ideas and new materials to use, participants sometimes came with a support worker. Most came with their own projects, brought in from home, knitting and crochet were popular, hand stitching also – patchwork, mending, toy making, textiles to be sold for fundraising for Hive and other charities. A selection of easily picked-up small projects were available for newcomers, already cast on wool for knitting a few rows of a blanket square. A simple pincushion, a flower brooch pattern made from recycled woollen jumpers and buttons.

The *Worn Stories* project offered a budget to work with the Monday afternoon group for the duration of the project and provided funding for practitioner support, materials, and a chance for regular attendees and new members to take part in reminiscing and making activities that considered the stories connected to the textile recycling industry in the city. The areas of Bradford the project was working in are the most diverse in the city and include two of the most diverse wards in West Yorkshire (ONS, 2011 census). My other day to day work at this stage in the project engaged with organisations for women from ethnic minority communities, particularly South Asian and refugee and asylum seeker groups, older people, health and wellbeing and local heritage groups. Moving around the city was an important part of the engagement aspect of this project but I also recognised the importance for Hive as an organisation to have outreach projects ‘embedded’ in the building and membership. At times there had been a certain amount of disconnect between the activities delivered inside and outside the building as outreach projects. This had sometimes led to a misunderstanding within the membership of how Hive supported outreach projects, particularly financially. I attended this group most weeks over the two years of the project, and as I describe offered a variety of different input into these sessions.

*The Birklands room is full of people. All the tables butted together, and everyone seated along the outside edges. I’ve put myself in the middle of the room along the long edge, I’m hoping that this doesn’t mean that I’m taking somebody’s seat. One end with sewing machines for people making clothes and cushions, a legacy from when the group was called ‘Anything Sews’ and offered help with sewing machine skills. Quite territorial, people in the same seat week after week, saving the adjacent one for a friend. The times slip a bit, the 1pm start time read as 12 for some members, but are they just arriving early to make sure they can sit in the same place? The 3pm finish sometimes spills over for an additional hour, even until the building closes at 4.45. I’m a bit concerned about this system, not for the current attendees, but for anyone new coming for the*
first time. It could be construed as quite unfriendly, very fixed in its working? The linear nature of the Hive studios means that each room leads into the next, and we are en route to the toilets so people wander through. But it’s not a quiet space, so doors opening and closing and visitors looking at what people are making are really part of the session. Sewing machines make it noisy. Animated conversations do too. But looking around some people are quietly working on their own projects. The hum in the room is industrious (fieldnotes, June 2018).

My long working relationship with Hive/Kirkgate Studios meant that a lot of the people attending the Talking Textiles sessions already knew me. One had attended my old WEA evening class, some took part in arts and health projects I delivered, others know me as a staff member who could operate the computer course booking system, who answered the phones sometimes, was a first aider, was there at the Christmas party. Initially there was some resistance to the idea of a more structured approach to the Monday afternoon sessions. ‘What if I’m not in the mood to listen’, ‘I don’t want any pressure’ ‘It’s that sometimes I can engage and sometimes I can’t, and I get frustrated because I’m wanting to do stuff and not really feeling up to it. That’s got nothing to do with the project, that’s to do with my own mental health’ (P semi-structured interview, 17.09.18). As a group we agreed that engagement with the Worn Stories project was not a prerequisite of attendance. If people were not in the mood, then they could sit in, alongside the session, and continue to work on their own projects.

This conversation also offered an opportunity to talk about wider issues of funding in the building. There is the cost of running the building, staffing the building, all the other things that go into the upkeep of an organisation. Conversations like these in my experience are sometimes not well received, there is an expectation that ‘the council pays for this’ (it doesn’t) that if you are low or no waged everything will be free (only in some circumstances), or, far worse in a group scenario, that having the conversation at all meant the group was going to end due to lack of finance. A previous group was so distressed at this idea that several participants stopped coming to sessions altogether. One Talking Textiles participant (in a recorded group conversation) commented, ‘I’d make a suggestion and it sounds kind of dramatic. That this group and other groups like it are actually life savers in terms of peoples health and wellbeing and mental health to the extent where if I hadn’t started coming here I might of thought other more depressing thoughts and chose to see that there was no goodness to look for in life and I’m so grateful that there is places like this that can help support us and nurture us and keep us on our feet because people
at the top would just see this as a simple textile group do you know what I mean. They don’t realise the power’ (H, group conversation 26.11.18). The make-up of the Talking Textiles group brought people from different backgrounds together, and many talked of their attendance in connection with their wellbeing.

The value of craft projects for wellbeing outcomes is a growing area of research (see Kenning 2015; Corkhill et al. 2013; Fancourt and Finn, 2019; TWigger Holroyd and Shercliff, 2016, 2020). Textile crafts including stitching, knitting and crochet have been clinically proven to raise levels of mood-enhancing serontin and thus help with relaxation (Yair, 2011; Jefferies, 2020). Nevay et al. (2019) note them as offering ‘immersive and playful experiences through repetitive action and tactile technique’ (2019, p. 488). Some members of the group were familiar with a framework used at Hive based on the New Economics Foundation Five Ways to Wellbeing set of actions: Keep Learning, Take Notice, Be Active, Give, Connect (NEF, 2007, p. 1). This meant that they were also familiar with evaluation strategies developed by Hive that used wellbeing as part of the question format. An independent evaluation of Hive’s services by Leeds Beckett University in 2017 using both qualitative and quantitative methods found that ‘The creative aspects of the programmes are critical as they mean people can become absorbed in the task – which is in itself relaxing and therapeutic – but it also means they can engage with others in a non-pressurised, companionable way via their shared endeavour’ (Coan et al., 2017, p. 16). Using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) they found that attendance at Hive projects brought overall wellbeing scores which at the beginning of engagement activities were 43%, lower than the UK average which is about 50% to around this average figure after taking part in the engagement. The percentage of participants with moderate or high wellbeing rose from 54% to 80% and those with low wellbeing fell from 46% to 21% (2017, p. 21). The overall findings of the evaluation noted that attendance at Hive projects fostered a sense of belonging and that ‘creative activities and the organisation of the sessions are central to the therapeutic impact Hive has on everyone involved and they help to give back control to individuals who have, in many cases, not had that in some time’ (2017, p. 18).

The textile making projects planned for this group had been partly visualised through the research another project group was doing, using local archives and libraries to piece together stories from the Bradford textile recycling industry from the 1880s-1930s. The two strands of the Worn Stories project, research-based and making-based overlapped at some stages, with some participants involved in both strands, others just one. An exhibition was planned at Bradford Industrial Museum at the end of the project (November 2018 - April 2019) and over the course of the project there was much discussion of how we could interpret the research in a creative, visual way. An example was Tattered Lives a large,
stitched installation of the names of 160 female rag workers found in the Creed Register for Bradford Union Workhouse at West Yorkshire Archives, each name stitched onto recycled wool fabric sourced from still-working Bradford mills. This was developed after a suggestion by one of the volunteer researchers who explained that her research, ‘... changes the way I look at my surroundings. You build up relationships with the people you’re researching. We’re crossing the centuries’ (Z, group conversation, 26.11.18). This observation evidences the way that multiple layers of heritage were identified by participants and in group conversations. They reference the contemporary lived experiences of participants and the communities they live in. It makes these experiences visible and problematises their perspectives on heritage and community engagement.

An outcome expected by HLF was to establish a Textile Recycling Hub (figure 58), partly so that the project could be self-sufficient in materials. This was also a response to the huge amounts of discarded fabric available from fast-fashion purchases, overwhelming charity shops unable to sell the excess on except to the rag man, donations of fabric bolts, ‘seconds’ from a local mill, collections from the craft cupboards from deceased elderly relatives that kept arriving in the Hive building. Shelves were built for the hub with sections for haberdashery, zips, buttons, bias binding, wool, often with the Bradford-based companies it came from on the labels, and lots of fabric, heavy pieces for upholstery and curtains, dress weight, nylon lining fabric, polyester in abundance, lightweight draping synthetics for making shalwar kameez. These were the materials for the Talking Textiles group, and we discussed how our projects should try to use this supply, only buying in anything in essential. The use of only recycled materials led to this comment from a participant in the Roshni Ghar group in Keighley, ‘We have benefitted by using recycled things in our work. Throwing stuff away makes you feel bad and just creates more rubbish. Using materials again to make beautiful things makes you proud.’ (G, fieldnotes, 16.06.18) but also the more problematic aspects of textile reuse and recycling, ‘It’s really made me think. Where do things go? I wanted to recycle my old duvet, so I took it to the tip to the fabric recycling bin – but got told to put it in the landfill skip. It’s confusing knowing what to do with stuff’ (D, fieldnotes, 03.11.17) Creative Threads group.
Figure 58: Donated materials for the Hive Textile Recycling Hub waiting to be sorted

We now see, from scrap bag to Hive textile recycling hub, that the project offered many opportunities for participants to engage with and make with excess and waste materials. The discovery of *Needlework Economies* by Flora Klickmann in a local archive offered another view of social attitudes to textile reuse and repair. Many books and pamphlets on these themes were published during and after World War Two, most famously *Make Do and Mend* in 1942. So, this, from 1919, was an interesting and earlier addition to the project bookshelf, written in the context of privations caused by the First World War. Klickmann writes, ‘War is a hard, stern teacher, and its lessons are bitter in the learning; yet some of its teaching we badly needed—and not the least important of its many lessons is the one it inculcated on the criminality of waste’ (1919, preface). I was taken with Klickmann’s description of an *Economy Quilt*, a method that made use of ‘...every scrap of material that would otherwise be wasted’ (1919, p. 73) in it she described saving any bits from dressmaking, mending and darning and cutting them into snippets, ‘everything comes in useful, even the fragments of darning wool, ravellings and basting threads!’ Using these snippets to create a substitute for an expensive eiderdown, she suggests that, ‘Any woman who has an elastic family and a non-elastic purse, is glad of one for a gift.’ I read aloud the description and method
to the group. The language was old fashioned, Klickmann has a slightly hectoring tone, and this amused the group. It began a conversation about the textile rubbish left over after each Monday afternoon session and its usual destination - the bin. H, a regular attender, decided to take the *Economy Quilt* idea on as a project for the group and a small pile of scrap fabric, threads and clippings were swept into the centre of the table at the end of this and each subsequent session and stored in plastic bags in the textile recycling hub. I decided that I would do the same thing when out delivering projects in the community (figure 59). A surprising quantity of material was generated for the new endeavour.

![Figure 59: Scraps of woollen fabric collected after a community session](image)

This new collection strategy offered another way-in to conversations about ‘zero waste’ attitudes to textile consumption. When first developing the *Worn Stories* project I looked at Bradford Council’s *Municipal Waste Minimisation and Management Strategy* (2014) that covered all areas of waste reduction in the city including textiles. It acknowledged that ‘The success of waste reduction and reuse messages will largely depend on the level of involvement by the public and the communities they live in,’ emphasising the need for ‘Special provision ... needed to cover the significant student, transient and ethnic groups, if the messages are to reach all of the district.’ The project was planned in the lead up to the *WRAP Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP)* 2020 commitment. SCAPs ambition was to improve the sustainability of textiles and clothing across their lifecycles. *Worn Stories* worked to address some of the issues identified as challenges to communities, namely the 700,000 tonnes of textile waste generated in the UK annually the doubling of global clothing production between 2000 and 2015, and the 36% decline
in the average number of times a garment is worn before disposal (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). I also had a desire to consider textiles as fragments in the messiness of city life, the temporalities, the storytelling to be found in recycled and reused fabrics and fibres. A quote from Reuter and Constantine’s Whole Cloth (1997) spoke to this idea and was used in project sessions to encourage conversation, ‘Bits and pieces of cloth sewn and glued together curtain the world. Bits and pieces of knowledge skilfully intertwined make up the study of history. Every civilization has this tradition of squirreling away precious fragments until they are needed to construct a whole. Works of art, especially in the 20th century, are often nothing more than ordered fragmentation – with each fragment carrying its own cultural load’ (1997, p. 91).

**Inventory of scraps saved for the Economy Quilt**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woollen darning threads from a mending skills workshop at a local museum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patchwork trimmings, Roshni Ghar project, CommunityWorks New Start project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edges left after making binding out of recycled shirt plackets [the part of the shirt where button holes are placed] for a community quilt at a refugee and asylum seekers project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polycotton sewing threads collected by a dressmaking class at Hive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A jumble of tapestry wool donated the Hive textile recycling hub and too tangled to be any other use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweepings from the large table space at every Talking Textiles session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A donation from a Hive member with a small business making pet beds - out of colourful cat and dog themed fabrics (lots of prints of bones and fish skeletons).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlocked edges on synthetic silk from a traditional dress maker in the Keighley Bangladeshi community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leftovers from personal projects, including yarn from knitted mice and wrist warmers, fabric from reusable shopping bags, and string from macramé, worked on by individual members of the Talking Textiles group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrap from selvedges and test weaves from Hield Bros Ltd (Bradford mill, est. 1922)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leftover wool recycled from jumpers and used to make textile flowers at a community event (fieldnotes, April 2018).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alongside the making that goes on in the group I brought and found other objects to be discussed in the group sessions. This was often improvised, based on the conversations I listened to as the group worked.
After the session I reflected about potential content for the following week. My sketchy notes made during the sessions, another type of scrap or fragment, reminded me to bring things in from home, ‘shoddy shirt’, ‘dolly pegs for proddy rug.’ Some unfinished patchwork in the English paper pieced style from the 1880s was an example of this, papers still intact inside and covered in tiny copper plate handwriting (figure 60). Other programming was dictated by occasional one-off sessions that required participants to bring in something themselves from home, for example, a garment from their wardrobe to talk about, or something that they had made. Fletcher and Grimstad Klepp in their exploration of methods for interrogating interactions with clothing and the world describe ‘Real lives’ are a counter narrative to the dominant story of fashion and clothing where fashion is an economic process, clothing a commodity and the prevailing definition of fashion describes a narrow view of who and what is valuable’ (2017, p. 2).

Figure 60: Paper pieced fragments

- Quilt archaeology

As part of my occasional series of object-based work I took a salvaged quilt piece into the Monday afternoon session, laid a piece of plain cream calico on the table, and one by one separated the layers. The fragment (figure 61) had been given to me by a textile dealer, who thought that I might be interested in its construction. She had a larger section of the quilt, in a state of considerable disrepair, and had been
separating sections that were strong enough to be salvaged and sold on to collectors, designers, or textile artists working with recycled materials. Using embroidery scissors, I carefully removed the few remaining anchoring stitches holding the layers and began to explore the interior of the quilt. The top and bottom of the quilt were 1930s glazed cotton floral fabric, and within I counted seventeen layers: patched and mended cream blanket pieces with heavily darned sections in a darker coloured wool, folded for additional density; fragments of frayed candlewick bedspread; a filigree of Turkey red dyed cotton pieced with white, almost worn to nothing; indigo dyed ticking with red woven stripes. Some of the layers repeated, with selvedge edges and seams from long-dismantled garments, and tiny scraps of print, giving some clues to the age of the pieces, which I reckoned dated back to the 1870s.

Figure 61: Layers found within the salvaged quilt
The group asked questions about the layers as the quilt was dissected, they noticed the darned sections in one of the wool layers, the shreds of cotton. We talk about ‘conversation prints’ popular in the late nineteenth century, tiny prints on cotton for dress material, items from daily life appearing on fabric, playing cards, anchors, bonnets, cats and dogs. At some point the reminiscences began, firstly through textiles in clothing, ‘... I think we’ve all got a lifetime of wearing clothes and I think most of us remember what our mothers and even our grandmothers did for clothes and reused them. When I was a little girl, I knew exactly what I would be wearing the following year because my older sister was wearing it that year. And sometimes a band of fabric would be sewn around the bottom of a frock to make it longer.’ Another reminiscence was less positive, ‘I’ve had this really big hang up about charity shops ever since I, this is stupid, I got my sisters hand me down clothes and I got this bag of clothes that was handed down once, for school, school uniform, gym slips, that was handed down from someone called [Ann Smith] and I always joked that I didn’t even get a new name tape. I just had [my surname] sewn over the top of [Ann]. [laughs]’ A (group conversation, 19.11.17). Even in their precarious broken state the small scraps of cloth were able to elicit reminiscences about personal histories.

At the following session there was a discussion about how we can connect objects like the deconstructed quilt piece to contemporary life and the global textile industry. We looked at a quote from Samuel Jubb, describing the shoddy industry in West Yorkshire in the 1860s ‘...the famous rag-capital, the tatter-metropolis, whither every beggar in Europe sends his cast-off clothes to be made into sham broadcloth for cheap gentility . Of moth-eaten coats, frowsy jackets, reecky (sic) linen, effusive cotton and old worsted stockings – this is the last destination . Reduced to filament of a greasy pulp, by mighty tooth cylinders, the much- vexed fabrics re-enter life in the most brilliant forms’ (1860, p. 24). ‘The participant comments evidence multi-layered heritage, and their relationship to the present. G commented, ‘It makes it current that stuff from a century ago, how it reflects on us in the UK now, or we hear from other groups, or watching a video now of what’s happening these days, the rag recycling in India apart from the lovely sunny hot temperatures it’s basically the same as in the UK less than a century ago where women were sitting there with rusty big blades pulling the clothes to bits. What goes around comes around.’ The small section of quilt allowed conversations about reuse and repair, about fashionable fabrics of today and the past. It also allowed a conversation about need: the use of every tiny scrap, where even those worn beyond repair could still be useful, about construction and the ‘loft’ required in a quilt to trap the layers with air, making for warmth and comfort.
It struck me that the bit of quilt archaeology done with the group was not dissimilar to the interior of the *Economy Quilt* we were in the process of constructing. The group was working on a tiny scale, in the same way that Shell describes in the West Riding shoddy industry of the nineteenth century. Making, from waste and scrap, the ‘new’ raw materials of our industry (2020, p. 22). G’s comment about Indian rag recyclers recalls the point made by Sarat Maharaj in *Thinking Through Textiles* (2012) who sees textiles as a form of knowledge production, about self, one’s place in the world, one’s personal history and how this intersects or misses the received history of a region’ (Maharaj, 2001, p. 7). She had made her own connections between the rags trapped in layers in an old quilt, the reconstruction of the textile waste from the project in another iteration, and the physical labour it involved. She had also considered the movement of labour and the changing geographies of global textile production. As part of the project, we watched a short film, *Unravel: the final resting place of your clothes* (Gupta, 2012) made in the industrial town of Panipat, Northern India, the centre of the world’s textile recycling industry today and a big producer of modern ‘shoddy’. The town specialises in the breakdown of fibres from discarded western clothing and the creation of new re-spun thread, to make blankets, often for humanitarian relief operations (Norris, 2012, p. 38). Another participant connected the textile processes explored in group sessions through the same film, but also to the thinking, collaborative work and making in the group, ‘I thought that film about shoddy stuff – I thought it was magical. And the machines! They came from Bradford... It’s not just a group to come together to spend time and make things it’s the knowledge and whole ethos. We’ve all reconsidered shoddy. Shoddy was good quality. That was something to aim for. The meaning changes completely.’ P, group conversation (26.11.18)

**Constructing the quilt**

‘I save any scraps of material large enough to make the bags; a useful size is five or six inches by three inches. I run up three sides of these when I have a spare moment; put in a small handful of snippets, and close up the end. These I put in a drawer until I have time to join them together. Almost any sort of material can be used for the bags, provided it is not too delicate in colour, as one does not want to have a quilt of this sort frequently going to the cleaners. Strong stuffs are best, such as cretonne, serge, stout print, sateen – anything in fact that will stand some wear’ (Klickmann, 1919, p. 73).
I’ve acquired, rather uneconomically for an Economy Quilt, some cotton organdie fabric, an expensive stiff sheer white fabric with a paper-like handle. There is enough to make a cot-sized Economy Quilt. The sheerness means that the contents of the small pockets of scrap will show, sections filled with thread, fabric, wool scraps all visible. It’s for the final project exhibition at Bradford Industrial Museum and will offer our audience a way of seeing the construction and what is inside it fully. The beauty of the fabric is also in its resistance to fraying, it is often used in constructed and sculptural textiles for this reason. It behaves very differently to the scrap the small pockets are to be filled with (figure 62). It’s an interesting juxtaposition, one that doesn’t go unnoticed in the Talking Textiles group. I find myself defending my curatorial decision, they suggested using cheap synthetic organza, also see through, but I knew this would slip under the machine needle leaving wobbly lines in the construction.

A production line with 3 members of the group has taken the organdie, is marking up the fabric before cutting and ironing. Another has got the sewing machine out. I’m not involved in this process. As the first pockets emerge from the machine end of the table, I see that a decorative stitch has been used and in blue thread. It’s not how I imagined it, with minimal white, plain stitching, nothing detracting from the contents of the pockets. We have such a small quantity of the organdie there is not enough to start again and what would I say? I don’t like it, do it again? I have to address my bias, and also my desire to control the making process, the choice of materials. It’s not my quilt, I’ve just supplied some instructions from an old book. The strategy to make the insides visible has worked though, you can see the colourful mess of different fibre compositions, fabrics and fibres that make up the inside of the quilt pockets. We take a photograph of it on a light box in the studio. A strange colourless x-ray is revealed, looking more like something from a forensic report than a textile made for comfort and warmth (fieldnotes, June 2018)
In my art practice textiles are my medium and have been for many years. I work with old fabric, often wool, local dyes, hand stitching, processes are engaged with the location the textiles come from. The work with the Talking Textiles group, made me address some of my own textile thinking, or rather how I think through textiles, in a more critical way. The challenge of working with large groups with many ideas and limiting materials to those that arrived in the recycling hub is shown in this reflection:

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I’m realising that I’m a textile snob. About synthetics, cheap stretchy fabrics, 90’s pastel prints (about to become fashionable again, but not just yet) all evidence of the huge change in global textile production. The excess: all that slippery nylon lining fabric, the unpleasantness of it, the feel when pushing a needle through it, the surface resisting, the static generated by some synthetics, the smell of cheap dye. There is an occasional donation of beautiful Bradford woven cloth from the 1950’s or earlier, found stashed in a sewing box or suitcase and never realised into the wool coat or suit first imagined, or a beautiful yard of Liberty cotton lawn. When these treats arrive my, and the hands of group members, pull and stroke the fabric understanding the give of the fibre, the warp and the weft, the quality. This is haptic learning that also allows recall of the department stores, market stalls and fent shops in the city that supplied home sewers with high quality materials until recently. There are stories too that accompany the feeling of the fabric, the heft of the wool, silk that catches on dry fingers, linen that creases into sharp folds with the press of a thumb. Textile thinking and feeling become textile conversation and reminiscences flow freely.

(fieldnotes, 20.09.18)
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Figure 62: Constructing pockets for the quilt (right hand side of the image)
Textile reminiscences became a big part of the weekly format of this group and were often triggered by a particular textile. A long conversation about the specific pink of 1970s nylon sheets, the coldness of getting into a bed made up with them, the bumpy feeling of seersucker fabric in a school blouse, party dresses for two sisters cut down from a larger dress of their mothers, newspaper pattern, made by their dad. But significantly, also reminiscing through the handling of textiles, the unmaking and remaking of them. Group members made as they talked, this had been how the group operated since it started as *Chat and Craft* in 2012. The difference was that now, as well as sharing everyday conversation, stories from home, observations and sharing of skills and materials, there was an emphasis on textile communication. ‘*Lots of us brought in examples, whatever topic we were doing and that’s a lovely thing about the group, everyone wants to join in, bring things in from home.*’ (L, Group conversation, 26.11.18). Almost every week a textile object, garment or piece of material, haberdashery equipment would arrive with a participant and an informal show and tell would happen (Figure 64). Links between attendance and engagement with the project themes and personal wellbeing, were again highlighted by some participants, ‘*Pulling a strand of red thread through a piece of grey blanket and discussing which stitch to use or having a feel of some strange shoddy cloth and exchanging opinions on it, could appear to be very ordinary little social exchanges, but to the socially isolated they hold significance, and are a bit extra-ordinary*’ (Z, letter, 23.07.19) and ‘*With the group I always leave feeling inspired to do more. Even if I come feeling not too great I always feel better when I leave. People here understand mental health and chronic illness. Watching how other people work and what they are working on makes me want to learn too and experiment and see what I can make and how it works*’ (T, fieldnotes, 11.01.19).
Catherine Dormor talks of ‘stitching and making seams [offering] agency, the potential for reflection, re-purposing, remembering, and imagining’ (2018, p. 305). In an individual interview a participant also offered this reflection on coming to the group in the context of re-learning sewing skills from her childhood, ‘It’s contributed to a lot of thinking. So, I’ve done a load of work on untelling the stories about who I really am’ (A, semi-structured interview, 25.09.18). Making and unmaking was explored as a theme alongside the generative potential of textile when made from scratch or repaired. Artist Helen Carnac writes of these processes as ‘ways of thinking’ (2010), layering knowledge and sensibility through the time spent handling material. This mirrors Maharaj and his Thinking through Textiles, ‘As needle and thread pass in, through and back, so there is a focus upon ideas in flux: the process for their formation’ (2001, p. 10).

The contents of the quilt, and its aesthetics for exhibition display became my focus of this part of the project. The more outcome focussed format of lottery funded projects is one reason for this, another, perhaps, my preference for constructed textile work in my own art practice. This became apparent, when H (who decided that making an Economy Quilt would be a good idea) came to a Talking Textiles session in late 2018 with her own single bed-sized version, made at home, to show the group. She had constructed
the pockets from old polycotton sheets and pillowcases, especially those with worn sections, cutting around them to use the best fabric. It was a range of colours – greens and browns mostly and constructed in a concentric pattern from the centre. We felt its weight and put it on the table to admire. I realised that my thinking through the textile of the collaborative Economy Quilt had moved far away from the idea of a functioning quilt. I had considered the journeys the textile scrap in the pockets had taken, local, from around different Bradford communities, and international, in their initial construction from fibre to yarn or fabric (figure 64). I had ‘followed the materials’ (Ingold, 2011, p. 8), the many hands that had engaged with them at some stage in their making, construction or use, the commodity chain involvement and the ‘biography’ of the object (Appadurai, 1986; Hoskins, 1998). However, for all my thinking through the textile, an instruction in a century old sewing manual had actually done the job it set out to do: helped somebody construct a practical, functioning, economically made quilt.

In the above section research participants respond to the multiple layers of heritage they encounter in community sessions. This is experienced through material engagement the scrap bag, the layers of a quilt, the use and reuse of project materials including the construction of an Economy Quilt. In semi-structured interview and group conversation they highlight the stories from the textile heritage uncovered by project researchers and how they connect this to their lived experience in the city today and the long histories of working-class textile labour. The next material engagement I describe is a community outreach session that includes a performative arts engagement with both textile heritage and the history of women’s suffrage. Through this we see more layers of heritage emerge through a personal story inspired by the creative engagement and that is shared by participants.
‘Holding the quiet’: Collective stitching and storytelling

C is wearing three small textile pouches on a black and white string around her neck. The printed fabric is worn and discoloured as is the white string. I ask about them. ‘My mum made them for me, they have special verses from the Quran inside them to protect me, they are talismans.’ There is a brief discussion around the table, and I discover these textile tokens are quite common. Why am I interested? I explain that I like handmade things, I am interested in the textile things that people make for others. (My notes, 03.10.18)

Figure 65: Community made plaque at The Friendship Centre

I’m at my fourth session working with the Women’s Group at a community organisation, CommunityWorks, Undercliffe, exploring themes related to the centenary of The Representation of the People Act 1918 when the first (limited) group of women got the vote in the UK. The Women’s Group met every Wednesday afternoon in The Friendship Centre (figure 65) at the back of the building – a collection of rooms attached to a Victorian church, St Augustine’s. The Friendship Centre served the area of Otley Road and Undercliffe covering the BD3 and BD2 areas of Bradford. This area of the city has a significant number of socially isolated older people of White British heritage, who have experienced a major shift in their neighbourhood with Asian and East European families moving in. There are also an increasing number of older women with South Asian heritage who are becoming more isolated as their extended family ties have become less strong. There is a very strong demand for a local day centre within this very deprived area of inner-city Bradford (CommunityWorks website, 2019). Undercliffe is one of the
10% most deprived wards in the most recent IMD (City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2019). There are few choices for local people and social exclusion/isolation issues are compounded by population shifts and language barriers (BMDC, 2020).

The Women’s group has up to twenty regular attendees and is open to all women. They are of mixed heritage and include younger and older women of mainly South Asian and White British heritage. I’ve worked with the group before and know their community support workers N and R well. They skilfully juggle conversations with participants about everyday concerns they may be having whilst keeping them engaged with the session, and offer volunteer translation when required in Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali. They organise a programme of talks and activities, often provided by external practitioners and organisations that have a main focus on projects that might improve participants health and wellbeing. Textile activities are popular, their universality a useful tool in projects aimed to improve cohesion in this community, their intimacy making them easy to connect with as story-telling objects. An activity takes place during the first hour of the session and is followed by a late lunch provided by CommunityWorks’ in-house kitchen that uses donated food from local supermarkets part of a city-wide intercepted food scheme.

The Department of Culture Media and Sport funding was received by Hive to explore the subject of women and the vote using creative methods and to work with communities least likely to use their vote today. I’m mixing up HLF outcomes from the Worn Stories project and getting recycled textile activities to work as part of our DCMS outcomes, both pieces of funding luckily allow some flexibility. It’s not an ideal scenario, as with limited time on both projects having to pull multiple outcomes together is not simple. It’s a time limited project and I felt rushed. Preoccupied with end of project events for Worn Stories, a conference and a big exhibition featuring work from multiple community organisations. There was no extra time for this engagement really. However, six sessions have been set aside from normal activities to explore this specific heritage story. In week one the group looked at images of suffragette medals, rosettes and banners from the period using a textile activity. They made medals of their own from a pile of green, white and violet scrap ribbons and fabrics (green, white and violet to represent the acronym **Give Women Votes**) and buttons from my button jar attached to kilt pins (figure 66). The session began by talking about women from history we admired, and strong women we knew. The participants all wrote a label to go alongside their medal. Most were dedicated to mothers, grandmothers, sisters. A short line
of text about why this person deserves a medal. ‘She does so much for all of us’, ‘I miss you every day’, ‘I like her’.

Figure 66: Making medals in the Friendship Centre 12.09.18

We also began to create a background for a textile banner made of scrap fabric and discarded clothing also in suffragette colours (figure 67). An old pink blanket (from Randisi Textiles again) was used as a backing cloth, and a collection of fabric – violet, green and white has been enthusiastically collected by Worn Stories project volunteers and members of the Women’s Group. It’s mostly deconstructed clothing, a pair of purple velvet child’s trousers covered in white stars, a tablecloth, patterned t-shirts and a polka-dotted green and white skirt. I demonstrated a quick method of attaching multiple pieces of different sized cloth to the background, first with a fabric adhesive spray then with simple stitches in purple and green to secure it. We looked at images of banners from the suffrage and suffragette movements, a banner from Huddersfield with an unusual black and orange design featuring a mill chimney; and a ‘quilt’ designed at Glasgow School of Art by Ann Macbeth and made collaboratively in 1910 with her students made of eighty squares of white linen, each containing the embroidered signature of a woman imprisoned for participation in protests or on hunger strike (Helland, 2020, p. 98). I’ve explained that these activists wanted to use their textile skills, particularly embroidery, to evoke femininity but as a source of strength, not represented as evidence of women’s weakness (Parker, 1984, p. 197). We examine the images and see bold combinations of embroidery, collage, and paint used with great skill.
The women spend two sessions working on the pink blanket, piecing the fabrics on top and stitching them down using running stitch. It’s a simple technique made more complicated and requiring negotiation due to multiple hands stitching the same piece of material (figure 68). We rearrange the tables into a long thin line so that the group can work opposite one another on different sections. Running stitches are worked either toward or away from the sewer but the multiple pieces of fabric mean that corners need to be managed without getting in the way of the person sitting next to you. Roles developed over the sessions, needle threading particularly useful, and requires good eyesight (or for group members to have remembered their reading glasses). Choosing the layout was popular, the pieces of fabric were different sizes and the fibre composition makes some easier to work with than others. As the pieces of fabric were added group members comment on them, where they found them, ‘That’s my t-shirt’.
Conversations overlapped around the table, comments on the work at hand, requests for thread, discussions between friends on topics other than the project, then move to some of the stories from the Suffragist movement. S comments that she’s never heard of them so she’s going to look them up on her phone. She later talks about how it made her think about her life and appreciates that it wouldn’t be like it is now without their activism. The expression ‘sideways talking’ comes to mind (McFadden, 2017; Maddock, 2021), the occupation of the needle and thread allowing for conversation to flow freely as participants sit side-by-side. A later interview with a participant also reflected this with the observation ‘...it’s not threatening is it. Somebody can talk or not talk, because they’ve got something to focus on. They’re not being confronted with something where they have to talk about their experiences or heritage.'
They can just be absorbed in what they’re doing or they can sit there and watch. It’s somehow safe. It finds a safe environment. And out of that all sorts of things can grow’ (C, semi-structured interview, 17.12.18). Hannah Maughan uses the phrase ‘the small stories’ to describe the glimpses into other lives these conversations around collaborative textile work can offer (2016, p. 99). There were also pauses and periods of quiet in the room as people just sat and stitched. As a practitioner this is something that I have grown to embrace, but still find challenging. I feel programmed to believe that silence should be read as lack of engagement, that I am not providing enough content, that the participants might be bored. I have learned over time to hold the quiet in the space, allowing it without interruption. In a community centre environment interruptions are frequent: workers popping in to see what’s happening or grabbing the groups attention, ‘while I’ve got everyone here can I just mention …’, telephone messages being passed on, electronic devices going off (despite ground rules that suggest silent mode), other women arriving late or to pick up a relative, ‘…while I’m here I might join in.’ In periods of quiet during a session I now try to use the time to consider what we are doing now, as well as what might happen next. This is something that has developed in my practice over time. Previously I would have used moments of quiet to maybe tidy up the scissors and threads, make sure everyone has everything they need. Now I am less inclined to interrupt. I also see a space for reflection myself in environments like these and consider the value of ‘empathetic listening’, as Suzi Gablik argues, as it allows room for the ‘Other’ even in periods of silence (Lacy, 1995, p. 82).

• A visit from Mrs Norton

This session introduces ‘Mrs Norton’ a hybrid performance piece by actor and writer Irene Lofthouse (figure 69). The group isn’t aware of this, though I have told them we will have a visitor today. Irene’s performative method is to appear in character and work with the group as it responds to her presence. Through this the heritage story arrives in the space and is hoped that the audience, in the present, communicates directly with it. They are working on their textile banner when Mrs Norton, a mill worker and activist, enters the room in Edwardian dress with Votes for Women sash and gaudy purple hat. She introduces herself to the group and starts to chat, there is some slightly nervous laughter from around the table then silence as she continues. She has an umbrella, she points out, not for inclement weather, but so she can defend herself when being attacked or arrested. She tells the story/ies of Bradford women and their activism in the early part of the twentieth century: their hunger strikes, marches on parliament, the national picture but also the local. Digging up the green at Bradford Moor Golf Course, dyeing
Chellow Dene reservoir purple (Keighley, 2007, p. 12), toffee hammer in her handbag to break windows. The women in the group were interested and start to question her. Details of domestic discomfort led to questions from the group about life for working-class women: not being allowed toilet breaks at work, tales of everyday misogyny from the mill floors, the overlookers with wandering hands, the indignity of working the same job as the men but for less pay. Mrs Norton sits at the table tells her story and those of others, and asks if she can join in with the stitching. She draws in her audience and speaks about the fight for equality today. About Barbara Castle and the equal pay act. About the women today whose pension age has been changed. About hearing women, about listening to what they have to say today and how exploring a story from the local heritage can speak to this.

![Image of Mrs Norton making an appearance](image)

**Figure 69: Mrs Norton makes an appearance**

The group needs to decide on some text for their banner. They consider phrases used by the suffragette and suffragist movements, ‘Deeds Not Words’, ‘First in the Fight’, and look at images of banners from the time, where slogans were ‘... direct with simple, strong, instantly legible ... ASK WITH COURAGE; ALLIANCE AND DEFIANCE; LEARN AND LIVE; DARE TO BE FREE; COURAGE, CONSISTENCY, SUCCESS’ (Parker, 1984, p. 198). We also look at contemporary banners, many made for the women’s marches in January 2017 around the Trump inauguration: We Must Try; Nevertheless, She Persisted, Make More Noise, Women’s Rights are Human Rights and ‘I stitched this just so I could stab something 3000 times’ (this was popular). Suggestions from the group include, ‘We are Strong’, ‘Women bring us into the world’, ‘Women together’. L suggests ‘Brave and True’ and there is agreement that these words should be used. The letters are
appliquéd onto the banner using repurposed fabric from an outgrown neon pink T-shirt from L’s young daughter, donated for our materials pile, the following week.

At 2pm the group gathers for their shared meal. Bowls of salad, pasta and dahl and plates of bread, fruit and cake appear from the kitchen. We sit in the more comfortable chairs away from our textile work, although a few women sit and continue to stitch. Over the chatter one of the women stands and says, ‘I have something to say.’ C joins in, ‘My mum needs to tell you about how she saved me’. The room is getting quieter. ‘Everyone must listen’ continues the woman. A support worker, N, asks everyone to stop talking and listen. We do. She tells a story from her family, about her teenage daughters, a visit home to Pakistan. An attempted forced marriage that ended her own. How she was cut off from her own family as a result. ‘I saved my daughter’ she said. ‘Now I am on my own, but I saved my daughter.’ She is crying and pointing at the quilt. ‘I am like those women.’ Her daughter says, ‘She is like a modern-day suffragette.’

Another kind of silence holds the space until a support worker starts a conversation about Islam, culture and divorce. Many of the group join in, people talking over one another, some in Urdu. The room is animated, the women help themselves to more food and continue to chat then begin to drift off, it’s nearly school pick-up time. I go back to the sewing table where M suggests we make a plaited border for the banner out of some long strips of fabric she has found in the scrap bag. White, violet and green cloth are plaited together and stitched around the edge, like the braid framing traditional banners. It evokes another kind of banner, those found in the Trade Union movement. She is delighted that her suggested text for the banner has been chosen by the group, ‘I’m absolutely buzzing that I came up with that and that it got picked.’ (figure 70) I start to pack up my box of equipment and materials. C is now chatting to the support workers with her mum showing them mobile phone footage of a recent road rage incident featuring her mum driving and swearing at a fellow driver who cut her up at a junction. It has gone viral and has had 70,000 views on Facebook. There is much hilarity as they leave together.
After the session I packed my car and grabbed the notebook I kept there and wrote down ‘how do you explain the value of this work?’ A group of twenty women, more each week, bringing sisters, friends along. I collect evidence about the number of participants, how they have engaged with heritage, have seen a theatrical performance (engaged with culture), perhaps enhanced their health and wellbeing in the process, reduced their isolation. It seems almost impossible to understand the sequence of things that led to a story like that being shared with a large group of women and the conversation that then ensued. However, there is something in the phrase ‘holding a space’ that I would like to interrogate. The pause for a shared meal allowed for a different moment of quiet and allowed A’s mother to tell her story. Everyone in the room was focussed.

Anni Raw in her transnational study of arts practitioners (2014) uses the term ‘workshop ecology’ to convey the ‘(as if) organic, constant interactivity of all the elements in the assemblage (people, spaces, conditions, activities, intentions, responses and so on) at all times.’ She observed arts practitioners constantly attending to the balance of this ecology ‘to enable positive responses during their workshops.’ One of her interviewees (an artist working with groups) describes ‘holding the process’ and that this can be exhausting and an intense responsibility. Another that it demands ‘complete attention in the moment’ (2014, p. 15). My reflexive writing about community sessions (ideally immediately after they happen) allowed me to try to connect my textile practice and collaborative engagement and my ideas around it.
Reading them again reveals the ‘connected knowing’ (Field Belenky, 1996) that I have gained through my years of community-based engagement work where empathetic communication is a vital aspect. Over time this reflexivity has taken into account the ‘mundane aspects of practice’ (Riley 2008, p. 66) that can include ordinary rituals in collective projects. Breaking off from work to eat, allowing a pause and quiet in proceedings that then offers space for participants to share extraordinary stories.

**Summary**

In this chapter we have explored the *Worn Stories* project through three material engagements. These all used discarded materials which linked to the heritage research uncovered during the project, to local businesses still working with scrap textiles, to community sourced fabrics from participants at organisations around the city. The scrap bag, *Economy Quilt* and suffrage performance offer three ways into discovering the multi-layered heritage of Bradford. We see this through conversations that happened while making and the outcomes of making itself, from the specific ‘West Bowling Cloth’ to the interior of the *Economy Quilt*, to the personal reflections stitched on squares of blue blanket in the *Talking Textiles* group. Whilst engaging with these materials participants reflected on their personal experiences of life in a post-industrial textile community. A *Talking Textiles* participant offered this reflection in a semi-structured interview beginning by describing her thoughts on retirement, ‘I didn’t really know what I was going to do, where I was going to be, where I was going to fit.’ She described participating in the project as being ‘... like I’m part of a patchwork, and I’m a piece in it’ (H, semi-structured interview, 25.09.18).

The various examples offered here of piecing fragments together work here to also describe the sense of community and resilience found during collective textile work.

Next Photo Essay B looks at the people and places of the projects. This is followed by an in depth look at the *Local Colour* residency in Church and where we continue to explore the processes of creative engagement with heritage.
Photo essay B: 
People and Place

This photo essay focusses on the spaces of engagement with people during the projects. These are shown in different contexts, indoors and outdoors, everyday places including church halls and community centres as described in Chapter 2. Doreen Massey talks about space and our relationships with one another describing ‘social space... [as] a product of our relations with each other, our connections with each other’ (Massey, 2016 interview). These connections are evidenced here in multiple ways. For example, in a recurring theme of work around shared tabletops that threads through this thesis. They are seen here as spaces to gather around, for textile work, for shared food, for skill sharing, for conversation. We see the ‘sideways talking’ (McFadden, 2017; Maddock, 2021) described in Chapter 5 implicit in these images.

The photos show the multiple uses of community spaces, where people make the place. The gathering together that transforms a side street into a textile heritage workshop; a canal bank into an object elicitation session; a place of worship that also acts as a community space. These are often improvised and multi-modal places where for example a billiard table becomes a print workshop.
Walk from ‘Owd Tom’s’ back into Gatty Park: *Local Colour*

Walk to the midpoint of the Leeds Liverpool Canal at Church: *Local Colour*
Roofless poly tunnel gardening: Local Colour

Mapping Steiner Street and environs: Local Colour
Table top banner construction, St Stephen’s Church, West Bowling: Worn Stories

Community printing workshop – basement studio, Hive: Worn Stories
Shared meal, CommunityWorks: Worn Stories
Printing on billiard table: *Local Colour*

Community Conversation with the *Local Colour* group and other SSW projects: In-Situ, Brierfield Mill, Pendle
Celebration event with groups, Bradford Industrial Museum: *Worn Stories*

Community Solutions Summer Fayre, demonstrating the mangle press: *Local Colour*
SHINE Clothes Bank visit, West Bowling: *Worn Stories*

Stable block / improvised exhibition space, Elmfield Hall: *Local Colour*
zoom room, object handling session: *Local Colour*
Chapter 6
Crafting Community – working with groups – Local Colour residency

Figure 71: Stitch Journal Block of stitches using thread dyed with madder plants from the community dye garden

Chapter overview

The second analytical chapter explores the work of the Local Colour residency commissioned by The Super Slow Way and delivered at Community Solutions North West in Church, East Lancashire that took place between 2017-2020. This community-based artist residency focussed on the heritage of Elmfield Hall and Gatty Park and links with industrial textile production in the area, particularly around dyeing and printing on cotton. The residency delivered weekly sessions to a group of local participants over a period of four years, an unusually long period that offers unique insight into the processes of artist-led community engagement.

This chapter addresses my second sub question: To what extent do processes in community settings that take place over time such as growing, making, unmaking and remaking embed outcomes? It answers this through the trust and confidence that emerge through the project work over time. The material engagements described include the development of a small garden for textile dye plants on site, the growing and creative work that evolved from this and the remaking of an ordinary domestic appliance, a
locally made laundry mangle, into a printing press. The chapter begins with a description of the organisations involved and the commissioning process including the period of research and development at the venue before the project work with participants commenced. It then explores the working methods and some of the minutiae of project work.

Residency background

The residency that became the Local Colour project was first mooted in mid-2016 and, after a period of research and development, worked with participants between January 2017 and June 2020. The Super Slow Way (SSW), the commissioning body, is the Creative People and Places (CPP) programme for East Lancashire. SSWs work was made possible by an initial investment of £2 million from Arts Council England for phase 1 (2015-17) and an additional £1 million for phase 2 (2018-20). The SSW partnership is made up of the Canal and River Trust, Newground, a social enterprise delivering services in community support and training, employment, environment and health and safety compliance, flood resilience, landscape architecture and grounds maintenance, Arts Partnership Pennine Lancashire (APPL) and the Local Authorities of Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Pendle and Hyndburn. The Local Colour residency spanned SSW’s first two funding periods being initially commissioned for work over one year and then extended incrementally due to the success of the project and desire of the partners and participants to continue the work.

SSW took inspiration from the Leeds and Liverpool canal and is named after a line from a poem by Ian MacMillan written when he was writer in residence for the Canal & River Trust in 2012. The slow-moving waters of the canal were used to develop “slow art’ attentive to the rhythms, vernacular traditions, built environment and landscape of the communities who lived along it…” it wanted to reimagine the canal and buildings connected to it as if in ‘transition, as potential places of cultural regeneration and developing social capital’ (Froggett et al., 2017, p. 3). Laurie Peake, Director of SSW adds that ‘since its inception [SSW has] sought to hold slowness dear and make time our most precious commodity, inspired by the slow, quiet space the Leeds and Liverpool Canal offers in our fast-paced lives’ (Peake, 2020). She uses this metaphor in her description of places that generated huge growth during the industrial revolution but that now have to find a new role in their post-industrial reality. She sees this as an opportunity for local people to ‘explore new forms of personal productivity when they are given time to work with artists, to think differently and find new outlets for action and expression, in collaboration with others’ (2020).
The challenges presented to this new programme are described in a report on the workings of Phase 1 of the project written by evaluation partner the Psychosocial Research Unit at UCLAN. They identified the problems of the physical spaces covered by the programme including often derelict industrial heritage and disadvantaged deindustrialised wards alongside the canal. These areas had difficult intercommunity relationships in some cases and mono-cultural neighbourhoods of White British and South Asian Heritage. Institutional issues included the multiple agendas of consortium members in a period of austerity where arts and cultural activities had experienced large cuts (Flood, 2016), and differences in perspective between the local authority partners who focussed on city and town centre initiatives and the Canal & River Trust who were focussed on the areas around the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. In common with other CPP projects the area had low levels of attendance in cultural activities as defined by Arts Council England ‘86% of people who participate in Creative People and Places were from neighbourhoods with low and medium levels of engagement in the arts’ (CPP website).

As a counter to this and through its programme SSW responded to these challenges in different ways. It tried to refine how a ‘slow’ art project could be delivered in practice with a focus on the canal as connector and asset. The communities and neighbourhoods based along it and the industrial heritage, particularly the textile heritage. This was done through a three-pronged commissioning strategy of large signature commissions to achieve impact; residencies hosted by local organisations or community groups (Local Colour an example); and community commissions developed using existing local resources, artists, and organisations. The signature commissions and residencies were also designed to bring artists of national and international reputation into the area to work with local organisations and communities in response to the economic and cultural history, landscape and built environment. It was hoped that this would raise the profile of the arts and allow for dialogue and cross-cultural conversations to develop.

The Local Colour commission was part of the SSW programme’s response to these challenges. Based in Church near Accrington, the central point of the Leeds and Liverpool canal (figure 72) the building the work was to be based at had strong connections to the local textile heritage and was now the home of a social enterprise and charity supporting isolated adults, Community Solutions North West (Community Solutions). The building, Elmfield Hall, then in poor condition, had been given as a Community Asset Transfer by Hyndburn Borough Council in 2014 and had since undergone a period of restoration. Community Solutions work is rooted in issues connected to disadvantage, poverty, and isolation and
particularly the mental and physical ill-health it can cause. The project there was the final residency commissioned during phase one of SSW’s CPP funding which also included large signature commissions working with internationally known artists, particularly Suzanne Lacy (Shapes of Water – Sounds of Hope, 2016), a well-known socially engaged practitioner based in Los Angeles and smaller short projects developed with local artists and resources. SSW’s initial approach to me had come from their knowledge of my previous community-engagement work and writing. I had developed several community-based projects in the North of England that engaged with textile heritage through colour and textile dyes and used community growing spaces to inform the development of the work (Hive, 2011, 2013). I had also written a practical textiles book about ‘slow’ textile practices including those around textile dyeing that also featured work by other textile artists working in this way (Wellesley-Smith, 2015). The proposal for the work came at a time when the arts funding landscape was becoming increasingly short-termist and instrumental (Hope, 2017). The idea of an open-ended, largely self-defined brief that would allow a group to ‘create on their own terms’ (Peake, 2020) with recognition from the start of the time that this process can take was appealing to me.

Figure 72: Church, central point of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal
Research and development

My first walk around the site with the Community Partnerships worker from SSW in June 2016 revealed Elmfield Hall, built in 1853, designed by a well-known local civic architect John Green. Grand, solid, five bays with classical columns, recently partially restored, in a public park setting with a mixture of buildings around the back (figure 73). The focus of this first visit was a small-detached building, now semi-derelict, described as the former personal laboratory space (figure 74) of Frederick Albert Gatty (1819-1888) a textile industrialist and manufacturing chemist originally from Alsace Lorraine, France.

I later wrote a reflection about what I saw when entering the building for the first time:

‘There are two windows, one now boarded up. The remaining glass is wreathed in dust and spider silk. The walls have lost some, but not all, of their original plaster, patches of the brick structure visible, metal work from the gas lighting system, hooks, a pulley. Looking up some of the roof laths are visible and daylight pours through the cracks. At the back of the building there is a trap door to a now blocked well: dyeing and printing are water intensive processes. Across the rear wall, below floor level, there is a dye vat, once lined with lead, long since removed. A small chimney breast and pipework to heat the vat. Other structures, racks, work surfaces, shelves. The room is swept clean.’ (fieldnotes, 2016)

I found it quite extraordinary that a building like this had survived. During previous projects I had worked with the Society of Dyers and Colourists whose Education Officer had shown me slides taken in the early 1950s in dyeworks in Bradford. Old machinery and processing work were shown in black and white shortly before demolition and the introduction of entirely new systems of working. Perhaps its location, away from a mill setting, in what had been a private family estate until 1920 had saved it? Too small for a workshop for groups and in too poor condition to do much with I was interested in how a building like it might be described and what the local community knew about it.
Opposite the courtyard from the laboratory, I visited the ground floor of the stable block, at that point undeveloped (during the project funding was received and it was converted into a multi-purpose community training room). I took photographs of an empty notice board on the wall, sun bleached spaces where flyers had previously been pinned and drawing pins, presumably for holding keys, for the dumper, bollards, mess room, flagpole, and bowling shelter, these written on in permanent marker (figure 75). More clues to the previous, and continued, functions of the site. Caitlin DeSilvey writing about places where decay and dereliction, managed or otherwise, has set in describes them as ‘perforated places’
(2017, p. 6). Using textile as metaphor she describes places where ‘interpretation stitches down the ragged line between presence and absence, here and gone, object and process’ (2017, p. 7). I was interested in the potential of these places, not in the sense of cleaning them up, but how they spoke to the industrial heritage of the area in their current condition. I wanted to hear how the potential participants felt about these spaces, what stories did they want to tell about it and how did they see the potential?

Figure 75: Ghost noticeboard

Further around the back of the buildings were five large glass houses and poly tunnels, multiple black outdoor town centre planters ‘Floral Market Town’ written on the side in gold and now redundant beehives in a locked metal cage (figure 76). This was the former site of the Hyndburn Borough Council bedding plant nursery and was now shared and managed by a collection of community gardening charities. Pitt (2013) describes a community garden as ‘a place where people work together to grow plants and share rewards.’ And highlights the broader range of horticultural, environmental, social, and political concerns that might also come into play. The site had multiple uses already and I later grew to understand the sometimes-high levels of negotiation required to keep this shared space running smoothly. I was shown the Community Solutions poly tunnel full of well-built raised beds at an accessible height, the beginnings of a food bank growing project and a ‘Grow, Cook and Eat’ project (figure 77). Potting tables, plant pots, a water connection were all there and three beds would be made available for my residency.
Figure 76: Community growing projects, reused town centre planters and beehive cage

Figure 77: Community Solutions poly tunnel, Food Bank growing in the foreground
I’d never gardened in a purpose-built space before having always borrowed spaces for previous community garden projects. A piece of overgrown brownfield site with improvised office bin water butts fed from broken guttering from an adjacent building; one shelf in a community allotment greenhouse; palette planters in car parks; a garden bed that doubled as a cricket wicket with stumps painted on the side (plants later decapitated by fast deliveries). Messy, precarious, one site was served an eviction notice, another set on fire, improvised spaces, sometimes on allotment sites, often not, were replaced here with a well ordered set up, where responsibilities for different areas of the garden seemed clear (figure 78). A garden designed for only gardening in was new to me, the process of making the bones of the garden as part of the project were not needed in this case. My normal experience of growing spaces as continuously under construction, as DeSilvey (2003) describes in her writing about an Edinburgh allotment site, was immediately different. Its ‘garden’ infrastructure already taken care of, all it appeared to require was plants and people.

Figure 78: Empty beds ready for Local Colour use

The period between research and development and commissioning of the residency allowed me to introduce ideas to various groups at Community Solutions. We often met in the café for a drink and a chat. Through these initial, informal meetings some sense of how a project might work emerged.
First meeting of the new group in the café area at Elmfield Hall. 6 people have turned up. We talk about the local area, the building, why they have come to the session. I have brought along a madder plant in a pot, dug up at my allotment (figure 79), to explain my idea for the project, that we might start a community textile garden in one of the poly tunnels behind the main house. We can see if we can create our own ‘Gatty Red’ and find out more about the history of the building, the people and the businesses and the workers that funded such a lavish family home. I bring along examples of Turkey red dyed cotton. Talk of the local textile industry draws the most conversation and debate, a group member says, ‘How do you make connections when there is nothing left of the industry except for derelict or unkempt buildings?’ another ‘There are no jobs here now except schemes for supermarket managers.’ However, there is an enthusiasm for some ‘Digging deeper’ into the local story and everyone says they will return the following week (fieldnotes, 2016).

Growing and making – The agency of madder

My proposal for the residency included the use of this garden space and used a quote from Lucy Lippard, ‘A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It’s about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there’ (Lippard, 1997, p. 7) It suggested using a slow methodology to explore historical connections to the area using ‘whole process’ working: seed-to-fabric projects where participants engaged in activities that have a localised approach.

‘This would include engagement with the local environment as individuals and collaborators. The rhizome like roots of the madder plant – tangled, slow growing, embedded in the place would be the starting point. Slowness is imbued in this plant, which historically would have been grown for at least two seasons before harvesting could begin. Harrison (2013) describes a dialogic relationship to heritage, an ‘entanglement of materiality and human engagement that when combined create heritage and are part of a process of production of the past in the present’. In the context of this project the creative processes of talking and making, or conversations through making, would be used to explore Gatty Park and its environs: how it was, how it is now, how it might be in the future.’ (Residency proposal 13.08.16)
From my long experience as a practitioner in these types of projects: looking at the raw materials, indeed, growing materials with a strong connection to the heritage of a site, offered several ways of conversing about them. Harrison’s dialogic method, as described in Chapter 3, of communicating a heritage discourse and how it works in contemporary global societies (2013, p. 227) with three interlinked themes, connection, materiality and dialogue was in my early thinking about the residency. His description of where heritage emerges, in relationships between people, objects, places, and practices were key. This linking ‘… by chains of connectivity [and] work together to keep the past alive in the present and for the future’ (p. 229). It is important to add that for this project the longevity became a key aspect, without the time allowed for these connections to develop the project would not have happened in the same way. SSW were interested in the project working with members of the local community and using the spaces in this building steeped in textile heritage. My approach included my long experience of using specific arts-based approaches in health and wellbeing work.

I wanted to engage the project in a whole process knowing that this would pace the project. It would have been relatively simple to buy ground madder root from a specialist provider and create a red dye. The group could have learned some of the methods of working with natural dyes and then applied them in practical workshops at any time of the year. Growing it was a different thing entirely. It embedded time in the outcomes in a somewhat precarious way. As Tracey Warr, describing an artist-led allotment project that grew hops to produce beer describes, the process of growing as ‘...not an easy business. It takes time – nature’s time, and the patient time of gardening: mulching and weeding, fertilising and turning over the soil, sowing seeds, pruning and watering, then harvesting’ (2013, p. 4). In addition, this project would then use the harvested plant material to make dyes and the learn the practice of using them on cloth. In all the spaces created around growing there would be time to consider the links between what we were doing and the heritage of the industry in the local area. However, at this stage these were only my ideas, coming in part from the small conversations with potential group members as part of the research and development work. However, the madder plant was a key element from the start. Its connection to the textile heritage of the immediate area was strong in the development of Turkey red processes and innovations. It offered a material source as a starting point and one that we could explore through growing.
The garden beds were suggested / provided for a purpose. The research and development work for the residency had revealed a strong link with the Turkey red dyeing and printing industry in Church and Accrington and particularly the work of Frederick Steiner, an immigrant from Alsace Lorraine in the early 19th Century who invited his compatriot Frederick Albert Gatty to join him in 1842 when they developed business interests and patents together in the East Lancashire cotton industry. My previous community projects had made links between growing dye plants and mental health and wellbeing outcomes linking creative engagement with green spaces (Longhurst 2006, p. 590, Crouch, 2003) and the health benefits of allotment growing (Parr, 2007; Ferres and Townshend, 2012; Pitt, 2013). Polley et al. suggest that activities happening in urban natural environments, such as community gardens have the potential to improve wellbeing (2017). The residency, though embedded in a social care organisation working with adults who may have been experiencing social isolation, was not designed to be instrumental in its approach to health and wellbeing. This process is described well by Cutcliffe and Travale as, ‘Using nature in targeted processes that are designed to have a positive effect on the holistic health and wellbeing of an individual’ (2016, p. 138). My approach, informed by previous arts and health projects was rather of the use of a green space where meaningful activities could occur in a social context. Health and wellbeing outcomes were not to be explicitly measured by myself or SSW, although participants who engaged with other Community Solutions services may have expressed them to their key workers. My knowledge of the reason participants came to Community Solutions usually came from disclosure in informal conversations with participants. Unless there was a specific reason for it (safeguarding or risk assessment reasons) support workers did not tell me the background of the participants. Wellbeing outcomes were often
expressed in informal conversations and interviews with participants, however. For example, these comments about the process of dyeing with plants from a participant, ‘It’s very therapeutic – natural everyday things from nature and life to create something very beautiful.’ and ‘Creativity like this increases self-esteem, self-confidence. It’s tremendous therapy. Being hands on changes our experience of the history side of the project. I understand it differently because I’ve used my hands’ (A, group conversation, November 2017).

My other textile dyeing projects had drawn strongly on the heritage of textile dyeing in the Bradford woollen industry during the nineteenth century (Wellesley-Smith, 2013, 2015) producing pop-up garden spaces around the city growing woad and indigo plants, central to the creation of black dyes, a staple of the Bradford Trade (Cudworth, 1888, Barker & Brown, 2015) and offering spaces to discuss the heritage of what was then the biggest piece dyeing works in the world (Webber, 2014). They had in common an opportunity for participants from local community organisations to engage in projects that were designed to work in a seasonal way, explore a generative process, see work develop from seed to fabric, and make things with hand dyed textiles in collaborative sessions producing project outcomes and interpretation pieces for exhibition. Textile dyeing workshops were part of this process, using raw materials gathered from the garden spaces as they developed and, using simple natural dyeing processes, creating colour on fabric and yarn.

These raw materials produced from plants allowed the projects to look back at the textile industry pre-1856 when the first aniline dye ‘mauveine’ was discovered by British chemist William Henry Perkin (Beer, 1959, Garfield, 2000). However, the projects acknowledged the contradictions in the phrase ‘natural dye’, as the processes used in industry added a large variety of metallic salts and other additives (Figure 80). They also disabused the notion that synthetic dyes replaced those using plant materials from 1856 and that this was seamless process. Rather it was a gradual and incremental adaptation, as popular taste, cultural expectation and the Victorian desire for all things new (Diadick Casselman, 2009). In the growing, nurturing, harvesting and then making with these dyes I was looking for an opportunity to explore the process of creating a colour from scratch, but also to produce an environment where the heritage of the colour could become part of our conversations through making. This process is described by a project participant, ‘… you’re talking about growing, then making the dye and applying it, there’s a whole raft of cycles of different trades there, different skills…’ (S, group conversation, 16.11.18).
Recently interest in the craft of ‘natural’ dyeing has experienced a resurgence. This has happened on several fronts. The craft-dyeing community has various bases, firstly, that found in the heritage craft sector, sometimes the preserve of the historical re-enactment community. Dyeing displays and demonstrations at historical sites are popular but can be problematic, as Diadick Casselman (2009) writes. She notes the inaccuracies in the portrayal of the lived experiences of the dyers from different historical periods and that ‘artificiality is a present risk if we subsume craft practice within a re-enactment mentality’ (2009, p. 23). It is possible to experience a version of the long and complicated Turkey red dyeing process in a week-long workshop for example (Bamford, blog, 2021). Secondly, sustainable textile research and developments in the textile industry have increasingly explored and interrogated industrial dyeing practices and alternatives (Goldsworthy and Earley, 2018; Fletcher, 2008; Burgess, 2019). The waste of synthetic dyes: disperse, reactive, acid and azo is categorised as hazardous. ‘Post-production water containing residual dye, mordants, chemicals, and micro-fibres is expelled into water streams untreated. This is frequently through pipes untraceable back to source, meaning factories can commit this offence anonymously. These hazardous chemicals do not break down as they enter rivers then oceans, making their way around the world.’ (Ranson, 2020, blog post) Natural dyeing processes, meaning that the colour is obtained from naturally occurring sources, are still used in some textile production, ‘natural dye technology...has a particular cachet and quality that works well in small-scale or specialist production’ (Fletcher, 2008, p. 54). Finally, the growing interest in sustainable textile production has had an impact on art textiles where textile artists have become increasingly interested in themes around sustainability in textiles and exhibition work that explores these issues (Flint, 2012; Fox, 2015; Wellesley-Smith, 2015).
In the case of *Local Colour*, as with my previous dye-focused projects, there was no intention to replicate or re-enact any local or historical industrial textile processes. We could not actually create our own ‘Gatty red’ as produced by his patent, extractions of alizarin using hydrochloric acid well out of my comfort zone, skill level and risk assessments. However, the use of community garden spaces, and particularly the growing of dye and other plants with connections to textile production was quite particular. The location specificity of projects like *Local Colour* and *The Fabric of Bradford* central to the working. A project exploring a specific heritage with links to industry found on site and in the immediate locale could not work in the same way elsewhere, just as the colours produced by the projects were unstandardised and unpredictable. Greenhalgh describes the ‘politics of work...’ as the best way to, ‘engage with the heart of the issue of craft and technology’ (1997, p. 112). Growing plants and then considering their impact on local economies, global trade and industrial production in the area was one ‘way in’ to the story at Gatty Park. The lived experience of work in the textile industry shared by some of the participants another; ‘When I was in the industry, we used to use vat dyes and after a sample had been produced, we had to check the colour in the lab. Quite often we could tell it was wrong. If it were a tight deadline we would top up with a direct dye. It’s a bit naughty really. It would wash out. Tricks of the trade!’ [laughter from a couple of the other former textile workers] A long explanation followed of the technical details for the rest of the group (fieldnotes, Book 8, 2018). Industrial textile production in the nineteenth century bears no resemblance to the improvised craft dyeing workshops we delivered in community garden spaces (figure 81), even if a few of the key raw materials to produce colour were the same. In addition, the dyes extracted from plants grown in our small community gardens were never grown on a commercial scale in the UK except for a small commercial woad industry in southern and eastern counties, the last portable woad mill was demolished in 1914 (Griffiths, 2017, p. 12) but were imported, mainly from mainland Europe, India and the West Indies.
Alison Jepson writing about a community garden, part of a mental health project, describes it as an ‘endless process of making of which growing is merely one aspect’ (2014, p. 148). As I will describe, the Local Colour garden, with its focus on dye plants, and particularly madder, Rubia tinctorum, colour source of Turkey red dye and Gatty’s first (madder related) patent offered an opportunity for conversations through making in the group that in turn led to a wide variety of outcomes from the garden site, not all material. Jones and Cloke (2002) writing about trees talk about the main focus often being the ‘output’ when looking at plant organisms. For example, the flowers, then leaves, then fruit of a tree. There is less emphasis on their presence, seasonal cycle and long-term ‘organic time’ (Jones and Cloke 2002, p. 60 - 69). Through the growing of the plants directly connected to the heritage of textile production in the area I hoped we could also have conversations about the time required, spent, and needed to understand the colours and the stories of work and community connecting them. During one of the many walks around the exterior of Elmfield Hall to look at the architectural details the group looked at the stone columns by the front door, inspired by natural forms. A detail in the carving was pointed out by a participant, I, ‘Maybe it’s a madder plant’ (27.01.18) (figure 82).
The garden project had begun with some research with the group and a plan for the three beds. One to grow madder, central to the Turkey red story, one for plants producing blue shades (indigo and woad) and finally one for yellows, weld, tansy, yarrow, coreopsis. The bright shades produced for Turkey red prints were the inspiration for this and a quote taken from a compendium of local newspaper articles about Gatty’s business partner, Frederick Steiner (1789 – 1866) that offered a way into conversations about the processes involved in producing dye using the madder plant and the working conditions required to do this:

‘Mr Steiner employed then a large number of children about nine or ten years of age. These little fellows, from the poverty of their parents, were obliged to come to school with clothing saturated with a substance that was then an absolute necessity in Turkey-red dyeing. The effluvia from these little boys’ clothing was fearful, especially when the room was hot. Good Mr Steiner was enthusiastic on this subject. He said it was healthy, it was a perfume equal to the honeysuckle or the rose’ (Crossley, Shaw Ainsworth, p. 233).
We had identified the raised beds and their colour themes by painting the top sections with emulsion paint and talked about the heritage of these plants as we planted seeds and painted. I had purchased some seeds from a specialist plant nursery and dug up some madder plants from my own allotment to add to the red bed. As the work was (initially) planned for one year this was not long enough to grow madder from seed that would produce the red dye and I was keen that the project worked with fresh plant material. This had offered the group their first sensory experience of the plant, handling while planting, someone else googling plant spread to work out the spacing between. The prickly stems, similarity to the weed cleavers, or goose grass and jokes about another of its common names ‘sticky willy’. The smell earthy, not even slightly like a honeysuckle or a rose as described by Mr Steiner, and a subsequent reflection, ‘... there was a lot in industry that were mistakes, the way people were treated. How they made money. I think it’s wrong to make money from children working in factories and risking their lives. That’s what they did’ (S, fieldnotes, 29.06.18). The plant and local industrial history linked through the experience of working with it.

- The Red Bed

The madder plant (Rubia tinctorum) is a hardy herbaceous perennial indigenous to Western Asia and has been used as a dyestuff since ancient times. There are thousands of species but only a small percentage of these contain sufficient quantities of alizarin, the active dye ingredient, found in the roots, to be of use as a colourant. The maturation of the plant so it becomes suitable for dyeing takes up to three years from sowing the seed. Depending on the mordant (or fixative) used and the strength of dye, the textile shades produced from madder range from pink, red, purple to black. William Morris commented, ‘Madder yields on wool a deep-toned blood-red, somewhat bricky and tending to scarlet’ (1889). Pliny the Elder discusses the importance of madder as a cultivated plant for dyeing both wool and leather to the, ‘herd of the sordid and avaricious...because of the large profits that are derived from them...It grows spontaneously but is capable of reproduction by sowing. The stem, however, is prickly, and articulated, with five leaves arranged round each joint: the seed is red’ (Pliny, ch 17). Madder has been found on cloth in Egyptian tombs dated to the third millennium BC. and has been cultivated in Europe since the seventh century. A story persists that the Spartans dyed their battle dress with madder dye to conceal injury and appear invincible on the battlefield (Chenciner, 2000, p. 37).
In the Middle Ages, the trade madder flourished in Italy in the dye-trade cities of Florence, Genoa and Pisa. Madder (or garance) cultivation was well established in France in the course of the Middle Ages, although the centre of madder production moved to the lowlands of Northern Europe (mee, or krapp-root), which was also the centre for tapestry production (Figure 83) (Chenciner, 2000, Garfield, 2000). In the European market standards were introduced to ensure the quality of the product with legal action taken against those who supplied inferior roots or adulterated product. Small pockets of madder growing occurred in England, encouraged by pamphleteers who had travelled to Europe. Henry Robinson’s 1652 ‘Certain Proposals in order to the People’s Freedom and Accommodation’ encourages domestic production of fibres for weaving as well as dye crops which demanded labour and would save the cost of importing dyestuff (Thirsk, 1970, p. 158). A later case for English production of the plant was made in the mid-eighteenth century with the writer commenting that, ‘...it is notorious, that as our demands have increased for this dye, our neighbours have in proportion raised their prices, knowing we had no other market to go to for a supply. And this is not all, but they have of late years adulterated the commodity, by mixing of dirt and rubbish with it in such quantity, as that in one case, an allowance of twenty pounds has been made to the consumer for the loss sustained by adulteration’ (Miller, 1758, preface).

Figure 83: Madder or Mee, from 1563, Cruydt-boeck van Dodoens
As the only widely available reliable red dye, demand for madder among textile makers in Europe was huge. It was the main ingredient in the creation of Turkey red, a red dye for cotton that was bright and reliably colour-fast, the recipe was introduced from Greece to France in the mid-eighteenth century and increased madder demand further. The process was complicated and initially expensive, involving multiple-steps and additives to the dye bath that included animal blood, dung and bile, rancid olive oil and hydrochloric acid (Nenadic and Tucket, 2014, Chenciner, 2000). The washable printed fabric was very popular and accessible to the wider population however and became the most profitable of the cotton finishing sectors in the nineteenth-century UK textile industry (Nenadic and Tucket, 2014, p. 1). A Turkey red dyeing and printing industry emerged in the UK in the 1780s, first in Manchester and then Glasgow. Between 1859 and 1868, wool and calico printers imported an average of 17,500 tons of madder and its derivatives each year, mainly from The Netherlands and France. Madder arrived in Church, transported on the Leeds Liverpool canal network in forty tonne capacity four-square iron boats known as ‘Tom Puddings’ (Holme, 1988, p. 6). F.A. Gatty, describing himself as a ‘Manufacturing Chemist employing 21 men and 3 boys’ in the 1861 census, was living at Elmfield Hall by 1853. His first madder related patent used ‘garancin’ a form of Turkey red dye extracted from madder roots using sulphuric acid (Freemantle, 2012). The dye became known as ‘Gatty red’ but was patented by his business partner and compatriot Frederick Steiner (1787-1896).

Alizarin, the principal colourant present in the root of the madder plant, was the first natural pigment to be synthesized in 1868; by 1871 it was discovered that alizarin could be abstracted from coal tar. William Perkin had created the first synthetic dye ‘Mauveine’ from synthesised coal-tar in 1856 and this had led to a rush of patents for other synthetic dye colours (Garfield, 2000, p. 51-59). In the case of alizarin, German manufacturing chemists Carl Graebe and Carl Liebermann (BASF) were the first to issue a patent (the day before Perkin) for a method to chemically reproduce alizarin (2000, p. 92). The vagaries of natural dye production: sensitive to time grown, soil quality, weather conditions, time of harvest, were now over. In synthetic form, an absolutely reproducible substance became available, with huge economic benefits for the early chemists. Marx, writing in Capital Vol III on the effect of turnover on the rate of profit, uses madder as an example: ‘The making of alizarin, a red dye stuff extracted from coal-tar, requires but a few weeks, and this by means of already existing coal-tar dye producing installations, to yield the same results which formerly required years. It took a year for the madder to mature, and it was customary to let the roots grow a few years more before they were processed’ (1981, p. 164).
Bayer began production of alizarin in 1870 and by 1871 a new factory was built for this purpose alone. The growth in demand meant that by 1877 Bayer produced and sold the most alizarin in the world, as 136 workers produced 6,000 kilograms a day (Leslie, 2005, p. 82). The market for natural madder collapsed rapidly. In France, the largest madder producer at that time a quintal (hundredweight) of powdered madder cost 200 francs in 1865, and 25 in 1875 (Chenciner, 2000, p. 265). In Synthetic Worlds: Nature, Art and the Chemical Industry, Esther Leslie turns to Marx’s Capital and his observations of how nature is humanly transformed, ‘… animals and plants alter slowly over time through humans labouring on them. Nature is reworked by human activity making nature directly historical.’ (2005, p. 81). William Perkin in the late 1870s began to grow madder plants near his London home. ‘I am growing it,’ he said, ‘lest the breed should become extinct’ (Garfield, 2000, p. 90). In Church, East Lancashire, Coppy Clough Madder Grinding Mill and all its machinery is advertised for sale in the Preston Herald in April 1872 (13th April). Frederick Gatty filed for bankruptcy in 1883 due to the impact on his Turkey red business (Dundee Advertiser, 30th March 1883) (figure 84) His fortunes were restored by his patent for a mineral khaki dye in 1884.

In the poly tunnel, we talked in the space between the red bed and the racks for flowerpot storage. Often about our raw materials and their connections. It was the spot we brought newcomers to and visitors on open days or at events, Arts Council commissioners too. The bed, in summer full of green and yellowed prickly, insignificant looking leaves, sprawling over the edge. In winter, cut back, pale straw-like tops and red roots just visible (figure 85). The participants explained to visitors that the plant tops offer no clue to the colour the plant will produce. Using a stick, or trowel if there was one to hand, they scraped back the

Figure 84: Lancashire Sheet XVIII, 1848 showing locations near the site of Elmfield Hall and Gatty Park related to madder use
soil from the roots to reveal the red, maybe breaking a piece off and washing it to reveal the intensity of the colour. Working in the garden with these plants became, from March until October every year, the activity that framed most of the sessions that took place during the project, creating a seasonal rhythm to the work (Ingold and Hallam, 2014, p. 17). Poly tunnel work involved mainly simple garden maintenance tasks. These included weeding the raised beds, turning the water on (the system was metered) and hose, dead heading flowers, harvesting and dividing plants periodically. These tasks were divided fairly evenly, although some members always hung back chatting, happier to pass tools than to dig. ‘I’m no gardener, every house plant I touch dies [laughter]’

Moving through the seasons I made notes about the growth in the madder bed, I always visited the poly tunnel first after parking my car and before unpacking materials and equipment for the session ahead. The growth and changes are something I noted week by week.

‘The red bed is now completely full, the plants multiplying from suckers. The growth in the red bed creates a surface with its own tension, a deliberate ‘show’ of the materiality of the site. Tim Ingold, writing in ‘The Textility of Making’, talks of ‘following the materials’, seeing the ongoing movement, ‘itinerant, improvisatory and rhythmic’ (2009, p. 99). This is a generative movement to read forwards, rather than to focus on a ‘finished’ object. The madder sprawls over the sides and I’m wearing a long-sleeved top having made the mistake of brushing past the bed on an earlier visit and scratching myself on the stems drawing
blood. We dig down carefully around the crown of a larger specimen and lift the plant shaking the dry earth from the roots. They are a bright orangey red and have a strong earthy smell. The light catches on the tangled mass of roots and they glow. We wash them and spread them out to dry. Writing about an allotment-based, socially engaged art and growing project in Oxford that produced hops, ‘The Fermenting Room’, Tracey Warr describes this type of growth as ‘…tangled like hair, like blood vessels, like nerves’ (2013, p. 3) (fieldnotes, September 2018 and from an unpublished conference paper).

Gathering in the community room the sessions mostly began with observations from the week, a collection of verbal notes from views out of windows to local walks, often featuring weather, seasonal reflections, birds spotted. This simple introduction to the session usually gave way to discussion more pertinent to our topics, and the sharing of something found in the local library, or online about local history or textile production as described by a participant,

‘The biggest thing really is what we’ve been able to uncover about the industrial work that has gone on in this area. I had no idea at all. I knew it was a mill town, but I didn’t know what went on. This has opened my eyes. First year we developed our printing and our dyes and this year we’ve just carried on. It’s a vast field. It makes you think. It makes you want to go into things on the internet. I find out bits and pieces from books I’ve already got. It’s ongoing.’ (K, semi-structured interview, 06.07.18).

Sometimes these conversations were hard to reign in. A participant, B, answered, ‘We have mastered the art of talking’ (fieldnotes, 29.03.19) when a visiting Arts Council England commissioner enquired about what we actually did in the project each week (Figure 86). This shows that the processes need time to develop, as identified in my research question. The conversations highlighted by B (above) reveal the importance of building trust and the confidence to talk about the experience of the project and the processes this involved. The setting and participants at Community Solutions, as described in Chapter 4, show that this level of engagement is not a given. For adults accessing the services at Community Solutions engaging in group discussions could be extremely challenging and needed incremental steps before they could happen.
‘At some point, I always say, ‘Coats on’ and we walk, past the laboratory shed and up to the poly tunnel (figure 87). It acts as a marker during the session, we break up the chat with a walk and garden activity, and when we come back it’s a cup of tea followed by whichever craft-based process we’re currently working on (plus more chat obviously). We head up a steep tarmacked bank that requires some interesting manoeuvres for wheelchair users with a garden bed alongside filled with overgrown hawthorn, buddleia, tansy. These too fulfil a function in our dye baths, ‘found colour’ from occasional collections of plant material around the wider site (figure 88). The brightest yellow from purple buddleia flowers. These plants and their flowering are a sometime conversation point as we walk, some participants slower than others, someone always ahead to organise the portable metal ramp into the poly tunnel. Sometimes the walk is an opportunity for me to have a brief private check-in with someone, perhaps they’ve not been for a while, are they ok? Do they need anything from the project or from Community Solutions? Other times, in the rain or wind we move faster. Into the poly tunnel: always warm, noisy if it’s raining, heading to the back to our beds to see how the plants have fared since last time we were in. Looking at the minutiae of growth, always chatter, always different roles assumed. Turning on the water for the hose, pulling out weeds, identifying stray plants that have wandered in from the wrong bed. One year we had an accidental tomato harvest in the madder bed from blow-ins from the food bank project that germinated and we potted up other strays to take home. Another year the weld (yellow) self-seeded successfully in the blue bed. We let it stay. Someone wanders back to put the kettle on and we follow slowly via the compost area. (My notes, 03.05.19)
Even working at this purpose-built garden site we had to adapt to the building we were in. At first with a ripped skin, the poly tunnel let in enough cool air on hot days to allow the plants to flourish. Then, during a winter storm, the polythene skin blew off leaving the beds completely exposed for a season. The plants, adequately watered by the Lancashire rain, flourished that year while funding bids were written to reskin the building. When that funding arrived the sealing of the building was so successful that no amount of watering on hot days could save the plants. Crispy on top and stressed, so unable to yield much colour. A conversation with B, about the benefits of working in a hands-on way recalls this situation,

... I mean we do a lot of talking in our group, then we have hands on stuff and always something we’re working towards, it’s a growing thing, if the garden wasn’t nearly dead, [Laughs]
Another participant innovated using a bin lid with the hose lying on top allowing water to pool and soak the madder bed during the week when I wasn’t on site. But the water was metered and no end of him arguing that Mr Gatty’s ghost was responsible for the hike in bills was going to work. My experience of working with improvised spaces led me to suggest we plant up a bed outside so that at least some specimens could flourish through the summer. We found a small corner next to the stable studio, seemingly full of weeds and moved some indigo, madder and coreopsis plants into it. The following week an angry sign had appeared. ‘This is not a Community Solutions bed! This is a bee pollinator bed!’ (fieldnotes, 31.08.18) The plants I had thought were weeds and had removed had been roughly dug back in, the roots of ours disturbed. A territory issue between the different community gardening charities using the space highlighted the multiple uses of the site, the relationships between project coordinators and volunteers, the need for negotiation and what van Duppen in his study of allotment and community gardens describes as ‘materialising boundaries’ (2016, p. 169).

In the first two summers of the project the poly tunnel doubled up as an improvised workshop space for working with the plant dyes. The plants were used within minutes of harvest; a thermos of boiling water poured over the leaves, roots and flowers quickly releasing colour. We watched the colour flood out of chopped up madder root in the stainless-steel bowl (figure 89). Adding in mordant printed cottons and we could see the prints emerge as they interacted with the dye. On one sample the words ‘Turkey Red’ gradually appeared as the madder dye was picked up by the alum mordant print (figure 90) deeper red letters on a pinkish background. This design had been made at home by B using things he found in his shed and example of bricoleur style improvisation. He had been inspired by the collection of print blocks from local factories at The Haworth Art Gallery in Accrington which the group had recently visited. These included metal inserts on wood, for hand block printing. He described how he arranged nails in mirror image on a wooden block, a piece of recycled kitchen work top, and hammered them in ‘with my good hand’ using a clamp (he had lost the use of the other after a stroke). As the height of each nail being even in the block was crucial to the printing process working, he had nailed through a piece of polystyrene packing material, some bits left clinging onto the nails (figure 91).
We hung the prints on an improvised washing line made of gardening twine strung up between plant pot shelves. A participant commented after one of these workshop sessions ‘It’s quite amazing really – you can just look at a plant and think it’s a weed or something quite unimportant. We’ve had a go at doing what they did back then. It’s quite revealing. Water and a bit of green stuff can do all this!’ (K, group conversation 30.11.17). While working in this space the links between the heritage and the process started to become part of the conversation in the group and a confidence in making connections. ‘We’ve learnt new skills we might not have trusted ourselves to try. We’ve tried things we didn’t even know about.’

Figure 89: Fresh madder root dye being made in the poly tunnel

Figure 90: Turkey red mordant print made using improvised print block
• **Multiple outputs**

While the madder plant, its heritage in the area, stories and histories were part of the dialogue of the project so too it informed multiple outputs, not always directly using the plant. Over the course of the project, madder appeared as a motif, snippets of antique Turkey red cotton in a series of patchworked framed pieces in the Community Solutions coffee shop (rebranded during the project as ‘Mr Gatty’s Tearoom’), the prickly plant tops used for contact prints with the mangle printing press then converted into a laser cut on wood (figure 92), as well as the more obvious use as a dye stuff for mordant prints and samples of colour produced in workshops as described earlier. The colour was replicated in commercially printed marketing and publicity material for the project, not always an accurate red but the closest we could find in the Pantone spectrum. For example, the stitching on a ‘Signature Cloth’ begun as part of bicentenary celebrations for F.A. Gatty in 2019 was executed in red cotton thread (figure 93), but one bought in as a colour match as we were unable to produce enough from our small madder harvest. Digital images of madder plants were projected onto the wall of the dye laboratory as part of Mr Gatty’s Experiment Shed in 2019 when the building was reimagined as a working space, 150 years since it was last in use, Elijah Bemiss’s recipe for madder dye from 1806 read out by participants in a looped audio to accompany the images as they flickered over large specimen jars filled with vegetable oil bulk bought at the Lidl branch across the road built on the site of the dyeworks reservoir, madder root dug from the garden suspended in the liquid and lit from below. ‘Of all the reds this is the most lasting, when it is put on a cloth or stuff that is thoroughly scoured, then prepared with the salts with which it is to be boiled

**Figure 91:** ‘Turkey red’ print block made using nails in repurposed worktop by B
two or three hours...’ (Bemiss, 1806, p. 77). The outcomes were both fast and slow, nodding to the heritage, using what we had in the present, informed by the conversations in the project sessions and around the dye beds as we worked.

Figure 92: Contact print on paper made with madder plant tops using the mangle press

Figure 93: Red thread to mimic madder dye on Signature cloth
‘Could a project like this be replicated in another place? Would you do another madder project?’ One of the participants, W, asked me in an online session toward the end of the project. My answer drew his attention to my other projects that have used textile dyeing heritage and growing as their focus and we looked again at the local map from 1848 (Figure 84) with its Madder Mill, Madder Mill Wood, madder storage barns. He reminded me about the contemporary ‘Turkey Red Industrial Estate’ just down the road. The same participant had worked for most of his life in the Lancashire cotton industry as a senior textile technologist including 25 years at a vertical (whole process) textile manufacturer with 5 mills in the local area. He had acted as a guide and invigilator at our exhibitions and open days during the project describing himself as the ‘unofficial archivist’ of the project (figure 94). On madder he reported that questions from visitors were always about why the dye from the madder plant was known as Turkey red and were they the same colour? For him I could see that the madder plant acted as an intermediary in the project, ‘I explained to them that Turkey red was really the name of the process that came out of Turkey and was very long winded. Madder red, you can produce all kinds of nuances of colour... rose, pink, orange, red and also regarding Turkey red as I see it it’s specific to natural fibre, dyeing on cotton. I mean madder you can dye on wool. Are you with me?’ (semi-structured interview, November 2019).

Working towards the material outcomes of the project as described here had led to other layers of knowledge about the heritage we were exploring. A group interview following Mr Gatty’s Experiment Shed in November 2019 included a participant describing how he ‘connected it all up’ when talking to the audience and that the physical layout of the installation in the laboratory shed, display of archive materials and film from the project, a triangle of buildings helped him connect the story of the dyes, people and industry. He problematised it for the group, ‘How do you give people a sensation of something, rather than “this is a history display” Give them a feeling about Mr Gatty’s work and particularly the materials and the colours and plants they came from?’ And (turning to his neighbour at the table) ‘You did the history-side, I explained the film’ (M, group conversation 08.11.19). This connecting is also evident in a quote from the same conversation when I recalled a visitor’s memory of working in the 1960s at the former Steiner and Co factory, by then a greetings card manufacturer;

‘CWS I had an interesting conversation with somebody who worked in the Steiner factory, now Express Gifts. When it stopped being Steiner’s, then started doing prints? W Greetings cards. Joseph Arnolds.

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CWS She worked there and she was talking about a room with a stone floor that was completely stained with red. She was saying I wonder if it was Turkey red. It’s a very powerful image.

W One way they could identify them was that they had red hands. The nickname for them in Scotland was jelly [jeely] eaters.’ (Group conversation 08.11.19)

This reference to the Scottish Turkey red trade gathered together the project themes in different ways: it demonstrates local knowledge of the industrial history of one local building, a recollection, imbued with material detail, from a local visitor to the project and the knowledge gained during the project, but not delivered by myself, found in personal research into the wider stories of the nineteenth century Turkey red trade in the UK, the madder plant connecting it all.

This section introduced processes through the growing and making involved with the madder plant over a period of time. Hawkins, writing about everyday creativity and referring to the work of Crouch (2009) and Hallam and Ingold (2014) describes the culture of garden spaces as ‘Creative acts of self-discovery and innovation. Such actions also cultivate generosity based on the collective enjoyment of growing and the sharing of practices, materials and crops’ (2017, p. 52). In my session notes two years into the residency I find the following, ‘Gardens as gifts: what do we give? Social space, materials source, skill exchange, learning opportunity. Creating a space where any conversation can take place’ (fieldnotes, 03.01.19).

Through making practices that developed around the garden space and the conversations alongside this, the madder plant became a material motif, that in turn offered ways in: to more thinking, making and research and new trajectories for the project. Crouch describes ways in which nature can become ‘creatively refigured’ in gardening through ‘coming across stuff’ such as animals and different plant materials. This allows community gardeners making creative discoveries to find ‘things anew, there is also evidence of creatively (re)discovering a means to hold on to their world, their identity, to whole they feel they are and to what matters them in their lives (Crouch, 2009, p. 138).

This observation echoes my experience of the Local Colour residency, to which I would add the connection to heritage through the growing of historic dye plants. The dialogue that emerged through this process is referred to by Harrison as allowing connections to be made through materials (Harrison, 2013, p. 227). Reflecting on the madder growing process and his involvement in it one participant said ‘It’s become fascinating to me how important the colour red was. All the meanings, its importance as a
colour. How many people would be prepared to carry on something [growing madder] that happened many years ago to bring the place alive again?" (M, semi-structured interview, 29.06.18). The growing processes and the rhythm dictated by the seasons and the issues encountered with the production and use of plants developed then embedded a format for the project. It gave the project structure allowing space around this core activity to engage and develop dialogue through and around the materials. The knowledges shared and produced through this process allowed a confidence and understanding to develop in the participants. This became clear in their approach to the creative activities using dyeing and printing and increasingly experimental and improvised ways of working.

The next section describes a process of remaking around a machine connected to the immediate heritage of the area. A laundry mangle made at a local factory became a printing press. The development of this repurposed machine as part of the project and its use in recording the growing activities in new ways layers themes, heritage and materialities.

Figure 94: Stable block studio space open to the public as part of the British Textile Biennial, 2019
The Mangle Press: Engaging and connecting with a site-specific history

The mangle was mentioned long before a conversation and an eBay search led to the Local Colour group acquiring one in May 2019. When looking back through a notebook for the project I discovered my first mention of it was in January 2017, the first group session of the SSW residency. It appeared as part of a list related to print processes, ‘cassava flour paste, citric acid discharge paste, a mangle printing press?’ (fieldnotes, 20.01.17). That day a participant had talked about a factory in Accrington, Entwisle and Kenyon, manufacturers of the Ewbank mangle and of carpet sweepers. The factory was long gone, now the site of a large Asda supermarket 500 yards down the road from Elmfield Hall where the project is based. I remembered an article I’d read years ago, and a photograph of a conversion I’d seen, from laundry mangle to printing press, and stored the thought away for later. ‘With a modest outlay combined with a little ingenuity and effort, you could be the owner of a converted mangle press that prints from relief blocks, intaglio plates and litho plates’ (Smith, 2003).

At this early stage in the project it was unclear how long the residency would run for. An initial contract of 30 days of work had been agreed. Ideas for starting a textile garden and other practical, process-based ways of approaching the site, as a way of uncovering the heritage we were working with had already been roughly mapped out. They also included walks around the building, inside and out, observation based, looking for details, architectural and also in the environment. Print techniques inspired by some of the heritage of the calico printing and dyeing industry, simple ways of achieving a block print on fabric, could be used to record some of these details. These were a list of potential activities rather than a formal scheme of work. I was drawing on my specialisms and also practical ideas developed from previous site specific long-term projects, and I was prepared to adapt to the needs and input of participants. As the project developed, alongside talking, we explored the heritage through storytelling, through things found in archives, in local libraries. We developed our own toolkit of activities that could be used to respond to the site, using colour from local plants, contact prints on paper and fabric, photography, film and sound. They were mainly processes using the hand, simple methods that could be adapted for use by participants with many different needs and abilities. They were chosen for their adaptability, their accessible nature. Things that could be done on a kitchen table, that didn’t require an artist studio or special equipment.
The mangle was mentioned again in my notes later that year as part of another disjointed list, ‘synthetic terylene, materials – the stories of fibres and where they come from, Ewbank mangle printing press, blended together? visit The People’s History museum?’ (fieldnotes, November, 2017). The commissioning body, SSW had agreed to support the project for another 60 days. By this point it had developed its own ways of working, the sessions had found a rhythm and the weekly plan was strongly informed by participant ideas. The project was busy, planning for a big community event in November 2018, a commemoration of the centenary of the Armistice. This linked to the history of the building as a military hospital during the first world war, and to the Gatty Park War Memorial and the men of Church listed on the Roll of Honour. The mangle was not mentioned again until April 2019 when the group had a chat that meandered around other examples of engineering and industry in the local area, some related to the textile industry, some not.

W ‘When you were talking about Ewbank I was reading up and there were a few companies that were making these things in Accrington. Accrington was known as the washhouse of England [laughter]

AH You roll your washing through it.

W It had a handle on the side or you clamped it to a Belfast sink and it was just a way of wringing out wet clothes.

CWS They pre-date washing machines. Nowadays a good place to spot mangles is at hand car washes.

A They wring out their chamois leathers.

B I remember playing with my grandmas.

K Hydro extraction – that’s the technical term [everyone laughs]

A When you put the clothes through you did it on one setting and you could set it depending on the type of fabric.

M The original rollers were the wooden rollers weren’t they? It had a wooden tray to catch the water.’

(group conversation 05.04.19)

A week later I received a short email from a member of the group, B, ‘mangle at £30, Leeds’ with a photograph of an Ewbank mangle, dating from the early twentieth century and a link to an auction site (figure 95). The mangle looked sound and I start watching the auction on eBay. After a flurry of bids at the
last minute I secured it for £46. I borrowed a willing friend with a large car, and we collected it and stored it temporarily in his garage. At the next session the group was excited at the purchase and we looked at the photograph of the mangle and online at ones converted into printing presses. There was muttered concern around the room. The rollers were rubber, not wood, they looked really worn. They need sleeving in steel, this would be complicated. How big was the internal diameter of the rollers? Would there be a steel tube available close to the diameter of the existing rollers? It all was suddenly more complicated than I had first imagined. This machine, not yet arrived, had already gathered histories, skills, knowledge around it. However, offers quickly arrived; someone knew someone else who worked at a re-grinder, the rollers needed re-sheathing. A photocopied article from Printmaking Today (the same one I read all those years ago) was produced complete with technical drawings, these were pored over, and M read quotes from it ‘Once you have acquired a mangle the most expensive outlay will be the cost of sheathing the wooden rollers in steel. The sheathing will provide the rollers with a surface that has the accuracy necessary to acquire a uniformity of pressure for printing. It is most unlikely that the old wooden rollers will be accurate enough to use for printing’ (Smith, 2003).

Figure 95: Ewbank mangle, pre-conversion
While the conversion work was being done, mangles became a topic of conversation at the group session each week. It was discovered by a participant that Robert Tasker (1812-1880), an Accrington blacksmith, was the creator of the world’s first geared wooden roller wet clothes-wrunging machine in around 1850 (Tasker, website). The use of industrial mangles in the dyeing and finishing industry was also discussed. This included the padding mangle, a system used for even colouration of materials with textile dyes, the pressure impregnating the fibres with dye. Discussions about Hyndburn Road, site of the Entwisle and Kenyon Factory, and Community Solutions today, revealed lists of the former industries based there, gasworks, dye and print works, tramway depot, abattoir. This inspired K to share childhood memories of the area with me in an email, something he later read to the group.

‘As a young boy I found it very frightening to walk along Hyndburn Road at night-time. The road lighting was very dim and the volume of traffic was extremely sparse large stretches of the roadside were uninhabited, derelict. It was a dark eerie foreboding place to be ‘by passed’. Machpelah Baptist Chapel and Burial Ground (a scary sight, I remember on dark nights) but Ellison’s Tenement (twice a year fairground / Speaker’s Corner) provided a solitary antidote to the grim surroundings. Hope these (uncheerful!) research notes are of interest to you Claire, Best, K’ (email, 05.07.19).

This recollection added to the layered stories of the heritage of the area, increasingly broadening as the project progressed. The specific geographies of the project location offered ongoing speculation in the group conversations about links between places and processes.

The group was keen to hear updates on the conversion process and wanted the transformed mangle to arrive by mid-July so they could use it for demonstrations at a stall they were running at the Community Solutions Summer Fayre (figure 68). I showed them photographs of the work in progress in Simon’s garage and arranged transit as described in this vignette:

We are waiting for the mangle to arrive and have materials ready to test it with. ‘The mangle’s coming home’ says N to much amusement. Simon, who has made a makeshift frame for the print bed (from a recycled wooden bed frame) and has kindly transported the mangle from Bradford, arrives and opens the back of his van and we lift it out carefully onto the flagstones outside our workshop room. The group gathers around the press and the Ewbank connection is explained to
Simon. He describes the conversion process to the group. Everyone is pleased that the original Ewbank logo is still visible, as is the patina of the characteristic apple green paint. I’ve brought pieces of old woollen blanket to use as packing around our test prints to increase the pressure through the rollers. We ink up a laser cut MDF print block made by N featuring repeat images of Frederick Albert Gatty. Aligning the print bed is not as simple as it looks. The wool buckles up and the print gets stuck, we repack the print block and try again. This time, as the handle is turned, the print bed passes through. M carefully lifts the corner of the paper and an image is revealed (figure 96). The print is a bit patchy, so the block is re-inked. The print bed moves through the rollers in the opposite direction and returns to its starting place. The pressure is not quite right, we add a stack of scrap paper into the sandwich and push it through the mangle again, this time a more even result.’ (fieldnotes, 12th July 2019)

Figure 96: First test print.

Reflecting on this in conversation with W the following week we talk about the process-based activity that attracted him to the project initially:
K ‘I think personally for myself I like the experimentation with dyes and printing and the ideas of how the industry developed in block printing, then the chemical side of it and we’ve experimented a bit with it and then the mangle...

CWS ... I was watching people with the mangle last Friday outside just here and I was watching the way you turn the mangle handle one way, and then the next print you make it goes back the other way and we had people standing both sides of the mangle press and I was thinking about what a cooperative process it is. You could easily do lots of stuff with that as an individual, but actually what I really like is the stuff you get when more than one person is doing it.

K Yes, it’s open for anybody’s contribution really, you have an idea and you develop it and print it off with them’ (semi-structured interview, 19.07.19).

The mangle was the first machine the group had engaged with collectively. The hands-on activities as described earlier included gardening, planting, weeding, watering and harvesting; textile dyeing, collecting our colour sources, processing the plants and using heat to extract dyes. The group also worked with and on fabrics they transformed with print and dye sometimes stitching the cloth together in a patchwork or embellishing the surface. However, these activities, whilst collaborative and involving skill-sharing between participants, were activities that we worked on individually. Individual items were sometimes then sewn or put together in other ways for display. The mangle was used collaboratively as there was only one machine. This new way of working led me to new observations of the roles developing around the mangle and that these roles were organised intuitively with little input from myself. Turning the handle as the print bed was passed through the rollers was a popular task (figure 97). Others included inking up the print block, aligning the print (figure 98), appraising the success of different inks, collecting and pressing plant material to make contact prints, peeling back the paper to reveal the result (figure 99). Decisions were made within the group about the subject of the print to be made.
Figure 97: L turning the handle whilst W aligns the frame

Figure 98: Positioning the paper and packing
The group gathered around the machine on both sides as they worked with great care given to the position of the cogs and the health and safety aspects of this part of the machinery. Advice was given, observations from previous attempts made, the atmosphere one of concentration. Each new print was revealed with some excitement and appraised by the group. There was technical discussion after each ‘reveal’, often concerned with the amount of packing around the print block and the amount of printing ink used. One participant had worked in the lithographic and screen-printing industry for many years before retirement. He started to use the language of printing, talking (and describing what he meant to the group) about registering the print, crouching down to see the gears as the print bed moves through the machine to check that it is running straight. After a while some members of the group drifted back to the community room to make tea but were still interested to see the results after each print run. A video I made of the print production process showed five participants discussing the ‘packing’ around the print and how to do this to best effect. A group member organised getting thin MDF boards cut to the size of the print bed to see if it worked better than wool blanket. The video shows everyone attentive to the movement through the machine, watching and commenting as the print is made (figure 100).
Designs using inspiration from the dye garden were popular. Visually they had some resonance with the textile prints produced by Gatty and Steiner & Co., the local textile companies connected to the site. At the beginning of the twentieth century these companies made prints for dressmaking and interiors based on Art Nouveau designs (VAM website). There was an ongoing aggrieved discussion in the group about textile prints from these companies now in the collection (in storage) of the Victoria & Albert Museum. An approach made by a local art gallery and Community Solutions to borrow items for an exhibition was turned down. ‘They have got our heritage and it’s just sitting in a cupboard. It should be here where it belongs where people can see it’ (fieldnotes, 18.11.19). However, inspired by these designs and our discussions of their methods of production a group member, N, independently visited a ‘maker space’ in Blackburn, The Making Rooms, and learned to use a laser cutting machine to make print blocks, an outcome not dissimilar to a woodcut. He emailed me to let me know that a design he made at home in Photoshop of Gatty and another of a madder plant have been reworked in this way.
Makerspaces, also known as design labs, innovation labs, fab labs, and hackerspaces (Peppler et al., 2015; Culpepper and Gauntlett, 2020) are sometimes found in schools, public libraries, museums, pop-up civic spaces, and privately run cooperatives (Hatch, 2013). They have become popular in the last decade. Oldenburg (1982) uses the phrase “third space” between home and school or work where people are at ease to congregate and be together, Anderson going further seeing them as the loci for ‘The New Industrial Revolution’, one of democratised access, to new digital technologies, networks, machines (2021, p.128). N has experienced difficulties in accessing services and maintaining links with groups at Community Solutions due to his physical and mental health. His attendance at the Local Colour project is intermittent as a result. I am pleased, knowing this background, that when he brings the A4 laser cut plywood sheet to the session the rest of the group decide that it is this print block should be used as the first print through the mangle press.

- Re-use and reinvention

The agency of the mangle begins to be revealed in a number of ways. The previous section shows how it allowed for an extension of the print-based work of the group, where they adapt their existing knowledge, through experience in working lives and also earlier creative sessions during the project. The work produced references heritage objects explored, particularly nineteenth century textile prints from local factories. The Local Colour group used the industrial heritage of the area, initially through stories related to the calico dyeing and printing industry but widened their interest into broader stories of industrialisation and deindustrialisation. Through conversations prior to its arrival and afterward, the group constructed a biography of the object and its connection to industrial production in the area (Gosden and Marshall, 1999; Kopytoff, 1986). This recalls Appadurai who describes following objects with material lives and which ‘like persons, have social lives’ (1986, p. 3). We now see how the mangle ‘works’ in other ways, including a detailed discussion of other industrial innovation in the area and health and safety in the workplace.

W began a session by producing a photocopy of an image found in the local library from the early 20th century of two young women working between a row of looms:
W ‘Just when M was talking about the gear oils on the mangle I came across this [he passes it around the table] Look at all the gears and cogs that are unguarded… how dangerous is that! If it could catch your clothing….

A There was no legal requirement. It saved them money. Making a working environment safe, they didn’t have to worry about that. People hurt themselves then so be it.

N [Quietly] They used kids for things because they were more nimble. And smaller.

CWS [To the group] N has pointed out that younger children were employed for retrieving things from underneath the machinery because they were small and they had smaller fingers.

W People working in the industry with missing fingers was a very ordinary thing. The biggest loss of fingers in the cotton industry was people working in the carding engines. You’d know they’d worked on the carding engine [laughs] I think it was invented in Huncoat.

A We need an East Lancashire map we’ve looked at very local maps before but not East Lancs because there are so many things that have been invented in this area - Mercer and Mercerisation...

B Jet engines in Clitheroe...

I Rolls Royce Barnoldswick...

CWS Maybe we need a good-sized map [laughter]

A Does everyone know the origin of the word NORI [local brick company]? It’s iron backwards. Incorrectly marked on the stamper.

W The hardest brick in the world. It’s because of the iron oxide. Empire State Building, Blackpool Tower, Battersea Power Station – all NORI brick’ (group conversation, 05.04.19).

The conversation evidenced the strong connections participants had to local examples of industrial production. These were shared with a strong sense of collective identity and pride in local achievements. The many examples shared were not supplied by myself, but came through conversations, although I sometimes later researched them to offer additional context to the group. The mangle, a small, ordinary, mechanical part of this diverse industrial heritage joined the project offering an opportunity to explore printing techniques and the changing technology of that industry. Harnessing the power of a locally made machine, repurposing it, using it again. There was an acknowledgement of personal histories as older members of the group reminisced. About using or playing with a mangle in childhood, the sounds ‘rickety clackety’ (K, group conversation, 05.04.19) as the handle turned, a sensory memory. ‘An object or place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is through all the senses as well as with
the active and reflective mind’ Tuan (1977, p. 18). The feel of the wooden handle, worn very smooth, was also commented on. The older of the group members shared their knowledge of this with younger, some of whom were unfamiliar the machine, its use or its history. All experienced and experimented with ideas around print production using the mangle in its new form. Edensor writes of industrial objects that transcend meanings and purposes, ‘They may be used in peculiar ways (as paperweights or garden ornaments) …curated in unusual ways on domestic shelves or transformed through vernacular or artistic appropriation’ (2005, p. 97). The Ewbank mangle was a resituated object, essentially obsolete, now usually sold as ‘decorative’ garden object or collectable ‘kitchenalia’. It moved away from the social-material order as it was designed for one purpose and used as part of a system of domestic routine, an everyday household object. It was an object out of place, removed from its specific cultural context through its conversion, but it had been relocated to 500 yards from where it was made. ‘The mangle’s coming home’, as N said [to much laughter] the morning it was delivered in its new form for the project. Appaduri’s description of the movement of objects in their use and purpose, from commodity to keepsake to discarded, talks of them as ‘far from static’ (Woodward, 2020, p. 97).

Taking ownership

The gathering of knowledge and skills over the period of the residency that led to the work with the mangle is a cumulative process. This can be seen as having an effect on the confidence of participants, evidenced in the way they engage with the mangle press. In August 2019 I was planning a piece of my own work, related to the residency, but funded separately with a grant from Arts Council England (Wellesley-Smith, 2019). This was shown as part of the first British Textile Biennial (organised by SSW) that took place across Pennine Lancashire in October 2019. The biennial which aimed to throw a spotlight on ‘the nation’s creativity, innovation and expression in textiles against the backdrop of the impressive infrastructure of the cotton industry in Pennine Lancashire.’ (BTB, 2021, website) attracted 54,000 visitors to its events over the month.

The Local Colour group was involved in this project, taking on some aspects of the curation and volunteering at the event in the small dyehouse where the mangle press was temporarily housed. I spent some additional time there, separate to my residency days. Working with the door wide open to let the light in, I was there to try out some ideas using the press and collected a variety of herbs grown in the community garden to use to make contact prints on fabric. I was keen to have this time, thinking through
my own making process, seeing what worked, what didn’t, also knowing that it would help inform the sessions with the group. In my own art practice, I had done a lot of printing over the years but had seldom had access to a printing press since finishing my MA. I needed to familiarise myself with its mechanics and the best ways to get results.

On one of these occasions some members of the Local Colour group were at Community Solutions for the weekly Men’s Group, or to use the café. My car had been spotted in the car park and M came to investigate why I was there ‘On the wrong day’ and gradually I found myself with an audience. The men talked about the mangle and were keen to see what I was doing with it. Looking at the materials I’m using W comments, ‘This is probably the first time anyone has used dye in this shed since Mr Gatty’ (fieldnotes, 02.09.19). It’s one of the first times during this residency that I’ve been ‘doing art’ without the group and working in the space alone. Except I’m not alone, now the group is back and has taken over the press. Suggestions are offered, ‘Maybe I could show you, Claire?’ and soon I’m in the background again, observing and facilitating, finding another roller, more ink, while a collection of black prints of herbs from the garden multiply on Lancashire woven calico (figure 101) produced, not by me, but by the project participants. My experimentation has become theirs. I’m observing and learning more about the process through watching, rather than doing. However, we’re out of our normal workspace, it’s a different day of the week, for the first time in over two years of project work I’m able to see how a project might work without me in it. My plan was to work up a series of samples. In my own textile practice I tend to work small, so I had prepared a series of ‘soft print’ bases to lay the plant samples on before inking them up to use in the press. Around ten cm square, this was greeted with much hilarity. Why am I making tiny things, have I run out of stuff? The group normally works to A3 size, a minimum A4. I find myself justifying my decisions and feeling on the back foot.
The encounter in the laboratory dyehouse made me think about the speed with which the mangle became part of the ‘toolbox’ of hands-on processes the group used to explore the site and the heritage around Elmfield Hall. There was a confidence I see in the use of the machine that I sometimes find participants struggle with when doing more independent craft work. For example, constructing a print block using adhesive backed foam and pre-cut plywood or threading a needle for stitching (figure 102). The mangle inspired conversations through making, where participants could play a part in a process that produced multiples of an image. Compared to our previous methods, using small print rollers as brayers, it produced better-quality prints, finer details and even colouration (figure 103). It led to more conversations about traditional methods of printing that had developed in Church, block and engraved copper roller systems made by the Peel factory at Church Bank Printworks in the late eighteenth century (Hogg, 1971, p. 14). It also allowed the group to organise itself differently, from the physical engagement with the machine, to who fulfils different roles when working with it. It offered a different way of looking at ‘things-in-motion’ (Appadurai, 1986, p. 5). The quality of the prints also led to discussions about how the use machine might be used in the future, ideas included selling prints in frames and taking the machine to a local gallery for demonstrations.
Burke (2019) in a discussion of a craft-based project exploring issues around climate change, draws on the work of JK Gibson-Graham to talk about the spirit of ‘…. Experimentation [where there is] no active transformation subject ‘learning about’ a separate inert object, but a subject-object that is a ‘becoming world’ (2019, p. 161). They go on to discuss this experimental orientation as another way of making ‘transformative connections’ and a willingness to take in the world in the act of learning. I am interested
in how the mangle offered a way for the group to make connections whilst actively engaging with a new mechanical and creative process. How an engagement with a storiied object from the local industrial heritage allowed for conversations, self-driven research, personal reminiscences, and ultimately an opportunity to voice all this and share it with a wider audience. As N commented during a group conversation about his experience at The Maker Space using the laser printer and how the group then worked with his print block, ‘We can use our old techniques as new techniques. We are layering all the fragments and scraps together’ (fieldnotes, 13.12.19).

N’s description of layering fragments and scraps together is later elaborated on in an email he sends to myself and SSW as a reflection at the end of the residency about the links he has found through the project and his ideas for the future. In it he describes his interest in the global connections the project has made, mentioning the export and import stories of the Gatty and Steiner businesses and how these stories ‘...might help kick down some of the barriers and help bridge the gap as seen in Blackburn and being similar in Accrington [between the White British and South Asian communities], sharing this great history from Accrington from Gatty’s exports to places like India, to Steiner naming local streets (where a lot of the Asian community now reside) to eastern countries he exported to etc. and its relevance today and to residents families today and examples like the silk road etc. on current fashion, new local artists and traditions adapted here in Accrington etc and how we all can be inspired and learn from the multicultural influences now.’

He continues by sharing that a relative helps out a Salvation Army soup kitchen and that they are closely linked to the Razia Jamia Masjid (Accrington Mosque) identifying the importance of community links for ‘community conversations to continue through our stories’ (email, 26.07.20). Multi-layered heritage stories are visible through his writing about the multiplicities he sees in his community, and the many creative connections he makes through this. His response is active and looks to the future and the possibility of more inclusive work.

At an event delivered as part of the British Textile Biennial in October 2019 I observed M and B, demonstrate and facilitate a printing activity using the mangle with the audience. This activity took place alongside an immersive installation with projection and sound in the dyehouse laboratory, and an exhibition of work and film from the project invigilated by other participants. A print paste using madder,
the dye central to the Turkey red printing process used in the area was used to make prints on paper. The audience varied throughout the day, local people, some who engaged with other services at Community Solutions, families and also some very well-informed visitors including artists and academics visiting exhibitions and events across Pennine Lancashire as part of the Biennial. I provided a variety of materials, existing print blocks made at the project, dried plant material collected from the textile garden, Indian wooden print blocks. There was also a stack of ‘safe print’ available, a polystyrene medium we had used during some project sessions. As the day progressed, I was intrigued by the prints that emerged (figure 104), a mixture of contact prints using plant materials, those using our existing print blocks, but then a range of more experimental prints. The Indian print blocks had been impressed into the safe print medium creating repeat patterns across the paper, the colour bright, like Turkey red dye. I listened to B and W explain the mangle conversion, link the history to the activity, make suggestions to the audience about their design ideas.

![Prints made with the Mr Gatty’s Experiment Shed audience](image)

As the project developed, I saw changes in the way I worked alongside the participants. There was also an opportunity to consider the work through differing lenses in the terminology of creative engagement. In my initial contract for the residency written with SSW the phrase ‘Working authentically in collaboration with communities’ was used. The work with the mangle from my practitioner/observer position offered another opportunity to look at the relationships and dynamics of the project. The mangle offered an opportunity for co-creation, a ‘collaborative journey’ (Govier, 2009, p. 3) although I recognise the
limitations of this definition. The project possesses some aspects of a co-creation process particularly as it has developed and this description of co-creation as ‘... ultimately messy, raw, incomplete, contingent and context dependent.’ Walmsley (2013, p. 117) certainly applied. I recognise that at various intervals I had consciously made a framework for the project to develop into. I offered a structure and let the participants fill in the gaps with knowledge, their own ideas, the overall structure is not theirs alone.

Beginning the final phase of project work with the group in January 2020 the first session of the year offered an opportunity to review the work of the project to date. A new staff member at Community Solutions requested that she observe the session to see what the project was about. I placed my own toolbox, one that comes to all my projects with me. It contains everything from scissors, needles, thread and glue to exhibition installation kit, cable ties, hammer, nails. I asked the group to think about the toolbox and explain the project through the activities and techniques explored, and the objects in the box enabling those activities. The audio from the session is one of overlapping voices telling multiple stories, contributions from group members who had attended the project since the beginning, some for only a few weeks. Some excerpts from my transcript mix details about processes using materials, dyes, arts-based processes, with observations about the heritage of the area and also about the reach of the project, its audience and wider significance.

K 'Using plants we grew to get the colours for the dyes. Amazing results, blues, yellows, reds, combining them...

N I started with the centenary [of the Armistice] and everyone did prints and I digitally messed with it and put it together with sound. Then with Gatty’s birthday, I made patterns with W’s lino cut. We made a community collage [holds up a packet of drawing pins from the tool box] like a community noticeboard.

W [Points at a reel of madder dyed thread] The development of some of the dyes from here have had a massive impact all over the world, so you can say this is just a local project but it’s an international story.

T His old factory [Gatty] is where Costa Coffee is now

K What we’ve done, we do a lot of talking, yeah, we do a lot of research, yeah, and we do a lot of artwork, yeah, but all this information you know, isn’t just in our heads. It’s all in our files [a collection of photocopied and scanned research done by the group, filed by subject area], it’s not just us doing it it’s there for people to use.
So when it was Gatty’s birthday there was a big table like this and just loads of people reading our research files, just fascinated by this history. When it was a military hospital, when it was a museum...

Ewbank, our mangle. We were looking for a mangle for a long time. Anyway, I was looking on eBay and spotted this one in Leeds so I told Claire about it and she went over and bought it and we’ve turned it now into a print machine.

You can put another meaning to the word ‘project’, because for us it’s not confined to what we do here, it’s projecting it out to the community. Is that right Claire?’ (group conversation, 17.01.20)

Shortly before the first lockdown in March 2020 while tidying up the workshop space I removed a piece of packing paper from the mangle press (figure 105). It was covered with traces of tests and prints made by the group from July 2019 onwards, marks from leaves inked for contact prints and from print blocks made from polystyrene and MDF. There were marks from where we spread pieces of madder root over the paper on the print tray, dug up from the textile garden as an experiment. The friction of the rollers crushing the roots made a strong earthy scent and left vibrant orange/red stains and deep debossed marks on the paper. Curator and historian Glenn Adamson describes friction as ‘a good craft word’ and weaves a dialogue between the resistance of materials, collaborative practices and how they profit from each other (2013, p. 249). The paper is colourful and messy and marks a chronology of use of the repurposed mangle over a period of time and evidences a growing season in the community garden. It shows how the machine offered the group a new way of engaging with their subject matter, consolidating craft skills previously learned. It added to their ‘toolbox’ of skills and processes, methods of responding to the site. The mangle press acted as a mediating object for the group, allowing a variety of personal knowledge (technical, mechanical, for example, when the frame needed a running repair), creative ideas (experimental print making) and research interests (the history of mangle making, and other industrial production in the area) to be used and to take shape. The role of the industrial object and its arrival in the chronology of the project meant that in my view more agency was given to the participants.

The Local Colour residency took place over a period of nearly four years, the first six months focussed on research and development. After weekly sessions began with the group, the longest break we had in the project sessions was one month between the end of SSW’s phase one funding period and the beginning of phase two. The importance of this longevity can be seen in several ways, both in the practical
outcomes for participants and the host organisation but also in less concrete ways. In a 2009 essay accompanying an exhibition that toured the UK, *Taking Time: Craft and the Slow Revolution*, curator Helen Carnac talks about what slowness means to her in terms of the thinking and making imbued in craft processes. She describes the development of trust. ‘You want to give a process time – a space to work within – to allow people to think and to think through on their own terms ... a layering, a layered approach to things and how they build. How they relate to each other through time’ (2009, p. 11). The *Local Colour* residency was time driven in its choice of materials and how they were produced, rhythms that developed over several growing seasons and how other craft processes and conversations fitted into this.

As the group became a regular feature in the programme of groups and activities run by Community Solutions several spin-off groups developed that were run on a voluntary basis by long-term participants in the *Local Colour* project. ‘Social Art’ was a drawing and painting group set up to encourage participants to think about the stories about Elmfield Hall and its history. Their activities included producing colouring-in sheets of an imagined street in Alsace Lorraine (Gatty’s birthplace), Riding Barn Farm (the building that preceded Elmfield Hall on the site), and the ornamental gates and gateposts that were at the front of Gatty Park in the 1890s. In conversation B, who organised the sessions, described to me what he felt the project was doing while they drew stories from the heritage ‘You can get the feel of how things have changed and what they feel about it and where do we go from here. X, for example, [showing me a photocopy coloured with watercolour paints] he’d never painted anything before now and now he comes every week.’ (fieldnotes, 15.03.19). A supported walking group organised by volunteers and participants used routes around the canal and explored sites of industrial heritage some still visible others long gone, recruited people attending Community Solutions. A photography group was set up by a participant with the aim of capturing views around the park and building and helping people master their digital and phone cameras. Describing the impact of the project M who took part in the *Local Colour* project from the start described it as ‘... like a pebble thrown into the water. A ripple effect. What they’re doing now at *Community Solutions*, the groups, activities, the things they help people with, it has a ripple effect’ (fieldnotes, 19.06.20).
Summary

In this chapter we have explored the Local Colour residency through a growing and making process-based project using the madder plant and the remaking of a laundry mangle into a printing press. It answers the second sub-question: *To what extent do processes in community settings that take place over time such as growing, making, unmaking and remaking embed outcomes?* The Local Colour residency took place over a significant period of time. The longitudinal nature of the work sees the residency through the processes of *growing, making, unmaking and remaking*. In the poly tunnel dye garden, the growing of madder and the seasonal shape this offers the project gives a sense of the temporalities of the work, sometimes unpredictable, and how the nurture, harvest and use informed creative outcomes. The remaking of the Ewbank laundry mangle into a printing press made a direct connection to the industries prevalent in the area while offering a wider view of the industrial heritage of Church and environs. The longevity of the project also demonstrates the confidence and trust that develop over time.

The dialogue and the making in this project that took place between participants, myself, the spaces the project inhabit, opened up further interjections and interactions, much in the way of the ‘art of talking’ described by a participant. In a semi-structured interview a participant reflected on the longevity of the project and the impact it had on his day to day life in the area, ‘I’ve started just strolling around these areas, where there were factories and it’s quite... it has an effect on the mind. When you’re walking slowly
through these areas and you’re looking for leftover signs that you can relate to how it was 100 years ago.’

He goes on to describe new skills learned during sessions and how ‘... we can have really interesting conversations. And a lot of the discussions do tend to focus on how the world was in the past and how it’s evolved and that includes the social and economic situation we’re in today. You know, what it’s like living in a post-industrial society’ (M, semi-structured interview, 08.06.18).

This participant also draws us to again consider the layers of heritage that emerged through both projects. Next, the final photo essay focusses on this and leads us to the conclusions.
This final photo essay explores the multi-layered heritage of the projects. We see archives and archival material, built heritage connected to projects, museums and collections, exhibitions of project work, object handling and oral history recording. These are engagements with both tangible and intangible heritage and show their mutual dependence. For example, we see participants from the Women’s Group at CommunityWorks wearing their suffragette medals standing in front of the banner they made at their exhibition at Bradford Industrial Museum. Photos showing elicitation work and visits to collections in the Local Colour residency later lead to creative process-based work. The built heritage including the area around Leeds Road in Bradford and F.A. Gatty’s small laboratory offer the projects context and embed stories of change over time in industry and community. The images show how these multiple connections are fostered and explored through creative and research practices during both projects. This echoes DeSilvey in her description of heritage as ‘a complex of practices and policies that structure our relationship to the material past’ (2017, p. 8).
Archive training at West Yorkshire Archives: Worn Stories

Digital record training: Worn Stories
Photo elicitation work – images of Elmfield Hall Military Hospital: Local Colour:

Turkey red archive at The Society of Dyers and Colourists: Local Colour
Former building of Wm. Baxter and Co (left) Leeds Road area walk: Worn Stories

Charity Clothing bank, Leeds Road area walk: Worn Stories
Small dye house of F.A. Gatty, with mangle press: Local Colour

Installing lino prints of F.A. Gatty for his 200th birthday, Elmfield Hall: Local Colour
Stable block as temporary exhibition space: Local Colour
Visit to Queen Street Mill (museum), Brierfield: Local Colour

Suffrage project visit to Bradford Industrial Museum exhibition
Oral history recording session about work in charity shops: Worn Stories

Antique lace mats reused as part of a personal project: Worn Stories
Antique mending thread, for object handling: Worn Stories
Chapter 7: Conclusions

Figure 106: Stitch Journal: Long thread ends couched into circles, making sense of ideas

Chapter overview

This concluding chapter offers an opportunity to present a final discussion of this research and to consider the contributions of the thesis for future funded projects and practitioner research. It has addressed the main question, ‘In what ways and to what extent do engagements with cultural heritage through slow, localised craft practices construct and articulate collective identity and build resilience?’ I interrogated this through long-term fieldwork conducted as part of my working life thus introducing myself in Chapter 1 as a practitioner-researcher and my motivations to explore it in depth after nearly twenty years work in the sector. I used Chapter 2 to explore socially engaged arts practices and their development and theoretical framing since the late 1960s. Chapter 3 situated the projects geographically, briefly describing the industrial textile heritage of both locations and the impact of deindustrialisation. The literature around this and the heritage response leads to a discussion of heritage as a social and dialogic practice. My ethnography and multiple methods are discussed in Chapter 4 and three photo essays interspersed through the body of the thesis show a visual ethnography of the projects. I then explored the two projects in detail in two analytical chapters (5 and 6) showing material and dialogic processes through stories of specific growing, making, unmaking and remaking activities. These included the growing, nurturing and processing of madder – the plant central to the making of Turkey red dye in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the conversion and use of a laundry mangle-cum-printing press; a scrap bag of donated fabric pieces; the leftover scrap fabric from community textile workshops around Bradford used in the filling of an Economy Quilt; and a suffragette banner made by a
women’s group. I conclude this thesis by examining and considering its potential contributions, the legacy of the projects and my experience as practitioner/researcher. A coda describes aspects of my final period of fieldwork during the first UK Covid-19 lockdown and its impact on projects where the site specificity is taken away, with some implications for work like mine.

**Reflections on findings: Crafting resilience?**

As introduced in Chapter one the main research question guiding this thesis is:

*In what ways and to what extent do engagements with cultural heritage through slow, localised craft practices construct and articulate collective identity and build resilience?*

It is accompanied by two sub-research questions:

*In what ways can the multi-layered heritage of Bradford, West Yorkshire and Church, East Lancashire present opportunities to explore the present lived experience in post-industrial textile communities?*

and

*To what extent do processes in community settings that take place over time such as growing, making, unmaking and remaking embed outcomes?*

This thesis argues that socially engaged arts practices used in heritage engagements can transform participants’ lives in a number of ways. These include giving space, over time, to participate meaningfully in the co-production of knowledge through slow craft making and storytelling and the revoicing and ownership of personal and community heritage narratives; the development of confidence and trust through process-based activities; opportunities to vocalise ideas and experiences and develop new ones. Examining two projects, in different locations, Church and Bradford was essential to explore this question in different contexts alongside different people, heritages, and materials. A wide range of voices was heard through this process, in conversations had while making, through discussion of heritage objects and practices, with individuals, in group settings, and with wider audiences at events and exhibitions. Multiple stories were heard and listened to at multiple sites, from buildings connected to the industrial
heritage in the case of *Local Colour*, to inner city church halls and community craft centres during the *Worn Stories* project. The evidence came from my longitudinal ethnographic data collection of multiple kinds and from the narratives of the participants. Both projects used everyday kinds of making as a medium and these processes were observed: the how, the why and the effect this making had on the individual participants, on the group, on the networks around the individuals and on the wider community.

In my introduction I introduced the concept of resilience, utilised in multiple contexts but with a focus in this case on community resilience and its connection to arts engagement. I shared Patel et al.’s observation that there was no common agreed definition of community resilience, but rather core elements, ‘local knowledge, community networks and relationships, communication, health, governance and leadership, resources, economic investment, preparedness, and mental outlook’ (2017, p. 1). My focus was on the use of arts engagement in connection with resilient communities and Kay’s (2000) framing of projects that can support ‘local people ...engage together, develop social and economic skills and assume the power to fashion their future’ (2000, p. 415) thus foregrounding the role that participatory arts projects can have in dealing with challenges. I was also interested in ways of framing resilience in the context of projects specifically looking at the cultural heritage of textile production. In Maddock’s textile-based critique of resilience she prefers the idea of porosity and stretch, like that of a knitted garment (2021, p. 55). The materiality of this reflection speaks to me, knitted fabric has ‘give’ or the potential for movement that doesn’t remove the original form of the garment. In this framing resilience is an active descriptor and one that can address the multiplicities of place-based community practice.

The analytical chapters show examples of community resilience in both projects, through the making and heritage activities the groups engaged with. For example, in Chapter 6 there is a strong sense of a trajectory or gathering of resilience as the *Local Colour* residency develops. I saw a clear connection between resilience and the making processes that went on during project sessions. A sense of agency and the eventual taking charge of the craft processes are evidenced: from growing activities connecting the heritage to the location, the conversations had through making, to the group confidently taking over, ‘you have an idea, you develop it and print it’ and heritage interpretation during the *British Textile Biennial*, a participant telling me, ‘I hope you don’t mind me saying this love, but we have to explain it better’ (fieldnotes, 26.10.19) then going on to rewrite the script that accompanied an audio/visual installation (see Chapter 6). Prior to the same event I witnessed
the mobilisation of various community members when the wooden frame around the mangle printing press suddenly broke, on the eve of the event. The group used their local knowledge, skills, and networks, as to find a way to fix it quickly, going on to plan some modifications to the structure through the fabrication of a metal frame so that the same problem would not reoccur (sadly abandoned due to the pandemic). A participant commented, ‘We’ve learned new skills we might not have trusted ourselves to try’ (fieldnotes, Local Colour, 06.06.19). These small examples echo the findings of Magis (2010) who argues that,

‘...the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise. Members of resilient communities intentionally develop personal and collective capacity that they engage to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and to develop new trajectories for the communities’ future’ (2010, p. 402).

These resilient making practices show a confident relationship with materials as the project progressed. The ‘nature of making as work.’ which Carr et al. (2018, p.96) observe has shifted dramatically over the last two hundred years and the perception of some male participants who had worked in textile and allied industries from leaving school until its rapid decline in the 1990s should also be noted. Very different kinds of improvised making practices were used when compared to the industrial printing and textile work participants had experience of but this was often used as a focal point in conversations. For example, in the ‘in jokes’ between group members about ways to create a quick but less reliable dye lot to meet a deadline (see page 192). This also roots the project in a specific location and in a post-industrial community. I saw this often in group discussions that included references to local companies, the specifics of their businesses, and the working relationships and networks described by group members. These links are described, in one example, through industrial innovations seen in the local area. It offers us an example of how through material entanglements we see geographies of embodied labour, ways of reflecting on working lives and the enormous changes and challenges deindustrialisation has brought to this part of East Lancashire.

The Worn Stories project offers other reflections on the idea of community resilience. In a written reflection shared in Chapter 5 a participant described the development of the Talking Textiles group through commonalities of lived experience in women with experience of the mental health system. Using the textile activity that took place during the sessions she describes the connections she made through
the materials and making processes, ‘Pulling a strand of red thread through a piece of grey blanket and discussing which stitch to use, or having a feel of some strange shoddy cloth and exchanging opinions on it, could appear to be very ordinary little social exchanges, but to the socially isolated they hold significance, and are a bit extra-ordinary.’ She goes on to make a link to one of the female rag workers whose story was uncovered during research into the project, a personal history that took her from the shoddy factory to prison for stealing garments, and in and out of the Workhouse (Williams, 2019, p. 24). Her description of the group understanding the hardship of life for single women in that period of Bradford’s history demonstrates the connections made from individual stories to collective reflection done while engaging with the materials of the industry.

The creation of a suffrage banner, also described in Chapter 5, offers another view of the hope and adaptability as described by Patel et al. (2017) as elements of community resilience. The story of family life changed forever shared by C and her mother emerged from a project session that featured a performative heritage engagement. This personal account reflects ways of adaptation and layers of connection in relationships. It was an emotional response to a heritage story that connected to wider stories from the community. Wilding (2011) observes that having no agreed definition of community resilience may be a positive thing as it allows people to define it in ways that work for their community (2011, p. 4). This is echoed in my research where the commonalities presented by post-industrial places and industrial heritage delivered different outcomes in Church and Bradford around resilience.

In my introduction I use Leach’s questioning of resilience ‘from whose point of view and resilience for what purpose?’ (Leach, 2008, p. 13). This is useful when looking at projects that took place during a period of profound global uncertainty and I reflect on the impact on projects and my experience as a practitioner in the early part of the Covid-19 pandemic as a coda to this chapter. These projects crafted resilience in different ways and the examples above show how we can understand this. They show the physical activities of growing, making, unmaking and remaking using existing and developing community skills. They also show the impact of gathering together over a considerable period of time in a specific location and the interactions, conversations and decision making that were part of this.

However, communities need ongoing sustained support and social infrastructure to use these approaches and to intuitively and as Hawkins’ describes ‘art-full(y)’ (2017, p.262) work with the geographies and challenges of the everyday. The neo-liberal shortcomings which include the ongoing impact of austerity, the roll back of the
state, the impact on arts funding and the pressure on the voluntary sector in providing community services show the danger of seeing resilience through a lens of individuals developing their own resilience. On page 96 I identify examples in both projects of participants sometimes finding the experience of observation of project impact from funders difficult, ‘I’m sick of all these funders thinking we’re all broken and helpless.’ Returning to Maddock’s employment of porosity and stretch, using the materiality of a knitted garment as a reference point. I see the possibilities and outcomes through these projects of using a more intuitive approach where movement can happen in many directions and resilience can be found in this praxis. It echoes Shaw’s idea of an ‘intuitive, “sense-making”, approach to unfamiliar or chaotic situations that remains the crucial challenge in an era of profound uncertainty’ (2012, p.311).

- **Multi-layered heritage**

The research has described two examples of community focussed heritage work, where heritage is seen as a social practice, described by Smith as engaging ‘with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present’ (2006, p. 2). Working in settings that engaged with participants in multiple ways, often in community based ‘ordinary places of care’ (Morse and Munro, 2018, p. 4) and working alongside wellbeing outcomes, for example the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework (NEF, 2007) allowed the ‘small stories’ their own bigger, safe spaces to grow and be told. An example found by a participant in the Local Colour group in a local library from the minutes of a Parks and Allotments committee meeting in 1944 describing the use of the Gatty Park greenhouses for growing tomatoes for the community was reflected back in conversation about a growing project in the same space, this time for the local foodbank, in 2019/20 (zoom conversation, 2020). Group conversations about the ongoing need for this service in the community and their disappointment that nothing had really changed were then later visualised by two participants who embroidered a tomato plant onto a length of bunting for a community exhibition.

Alongside the detail of these small stories, the projects also showed the broader picture, where participants reflected on the bigger changes in their local heritage and how this impacts today. An online session towards the end of the same project offered a discussion of the wider issues presented by deindustrialisation, ‘... in my era everybody was working, everybody had jobs. But it’s a total turn around - you’ve a lot of people, social and economic victims, social and economic changes and a lot of people who genuinely feel isolated.’ Conversations about the disruption, disconnection and change to social life post-industry as described by Strangleman (2013, 2017) and Taylor (2020), became more frequent as the projects developed. They were commented on
during the *Worn Stories* sessions at the Roshni Ghar project in the context of fathers, grandfathers and uncles who had come from Pakistan and Bangladesh to work in the wool textile industry in the mid-twentieth century at a time of full employment. Ways of framing this experience and what might come next were also discussed in the *Local Colour* residency, a participant commenting, ‘*A lot of these local councils now, they’re looking at regeneration plans for the future, in post-industrial society, and they’re becoming more conscious of the fact that regeneration has to be built on art, culture and sport, things like that.*’ (B, semi-structured interview, 15.11.19). This echoes Taylor’s research around a former carpet mill in West Yorkshire where she argues for ‘care and healing through cultural events which might offer the opportunities for the growth of bridging capital (Taylor, 2020).’ I was reminded of the *Plan for Accrington* from 1950 (see Chapter 3) and the decades of missed opportunities that followed it.

In Chapter 5, from the *Worn Stories* project, I shared the example of the ‘West Bowling Cloth’, a composite ‘new’ material made with fabric scraps by unmaking clothes donated to a clothing bank. The bright piece of unique chequered cloth that came from this process, the different, ‘historical sort of fabric’ as described by a participant, is a tangible material outcome that shows the multi-layered heritage of the area. Created by participants from community-sourced materials using skills gathered and shared in practical sessions it went on to be used in many ways – as part of a large community wall hanging for display in the community and a heritage exhibition, and in smaller objects, birds and hearts, first displayed then taken home by participants or given as gifts. The fabric scraps used offered participants new ways of telling stories: about hyperlocal connections to the heritage of textile recycling and reuse; the ‘global reminder’ (Dupré, 2017) in the movement of materials and the places they came from; but also of personal connections through their own donations of fabric and clothing to the project and their experiences of making things with them in a group setting. This material example of bricolage uses basic components – the cloth from donated clothing – as sociologist Dick Hebdige describes ‘in a variety of improvised combinations to generate new meanings’ (1979, p. 103). Alongside this, the ‘place of care’ the project was based in was reflected through this fabric: multiple pieces of fabric, multiple ways of looking at meaning.

Facer and Pahl, writing about collaborative research, describe the need to frame heritage and community engagement as ‘future-making’. This asks the question of whether the knowledge it produces leads to action and the production of meaningful potential for the participants (2017, p. 5). A quote from a *Worn Stories* participant describes the journey of the project and the process of piecing the heritage stories
together, ‘[it was like] building a jigsaw...starting with no picture and no pieces. Then start to collect the pieces but still no picture. The excitement when you start to build the picture ... Sometimes you build the wrong picture but then you find another piece of information [referring to her research] and that changes the picture’ (C, group conversation, 16.11.18). In the Local Colour project N describes their understanding of the heritage and connections of the area saying in a group session, ‘We had something that was totally fragmented before’ going on to add, ‘The plan for the future is revealed... and taken on! It’s theirs. It’s so exciting! There is so much more work to be done.’ In the same conversation another reflection also emphasises the potential for the future and the community resilience found through the project, ‘You just want to keep telling people, about the growing, the building, the knowledge you have gained’ (W, group conversation, 10.01.20).

• **Place**

These examples also offer insight into the role that textiles can play in connecting both post-industrial spaces and senses of place. The hyperlocal experience relating to the industries of both Bradford and Church was explored through the close attention to textile processes used in these areas and the workings of the projects based there, described in Chapter 5 and 6. However, we also see the links from East Lancashire to the international Turkey red dyeing and printing industry and its global reach. Through the built environment and connections made by project participants, connections emerged of how this remains today: in streets and industrial estates, named for local trade links, Russia Street, China Street, Persia Street, and in the communities now living in the area, many the descendants of textile workers from Pakistan who arrived there from the 1950s onwards. This global dimension, the mobilities of textiles and communities working with them around the world is also evidenced in the Worn Stories project in a discussion of textile machinery and its removal and deconstruction from West Yorkshire to its re-siting and reconstruction in the shoddy industry of contemporary Northern India (Norris, 2012, 2017). Thus, textiles and industrial modes of constructing and deconstructing them, become ‘effective producers of histories that entwine place and people (Robertson and Vinebaum, 2016). The investigation of textiles as material began in local spaces, archives, and stories but move and trace migration and mobilities around the world.

In both projects approaches to place show multiple layers. Harvey’s description of place as a ‘temporary constellation of connectivity (2014, p.589).’ can be employed here. Place can be seen in situ in the
experience of projects working in the community spaces and traditional and less traditional heritage venues described; in the built environment of the post-industrial town and city; in the intangible places found through conversations and collective memory of being there, arriving there, how participants felt they belonged there; and we see place through collective making and growing, the creative work with places, generative work that creates place over time. This final example, related to the mobilities of textile production and communities, crafts new connections and senses of place. It begins through the materials of an industry but shows the networks and flows of Massey’s ‘throwntogetherness (2005, p.141). These active spaces cannot offer a fixed view of heritage as they have to be seen within multiple senses of place. Harvey suggests that this can offer a more progressive and relational sense of place (2014, p.590).

- Time and making

Through my analytical chapters describing the detail of these longitudinal engagements, I have evidenced that time did embed the outcomes of the work, in trust, skill development and confidence building. This echoes the findings of Belfiore and Bennett (2007) who comment on the length of time it can take for the benefits of arts engagement to be seen. It is demonstrated in the new heritage engagements and creative projects that participants and partner organisations developed personally and collectively, as I describe later in this chapter. The methods I used as both practitioner and researcher embraced time on different levels, time was implicit in the growing of the project materials as shown in one case study, reflection on the lifecycles of materials in another, the time it takes to engage in a whole process, and what happened in the time allotted for each community session and in the planning, preparation, and reflection for each one. Deeper understanding came through the group conversations, interviews, and time I spent reflecting, using images and artefacts produced during the projects. It is shown through the multiple stitches used on my Stitch Journal, which accompanied me through my research. The opportunity for participants to have time to tell their stories, in different ways, reflect on their role in the work and on narratives from their earlier experiences gave advocacy in my development of the routes the activities and the projects took. The work and my research into it were far removed from what has been described as ‘blitzkrieg’, ‘focussed’, ‘rapid’ or ‘hit and run’ ethnography as described by Hammersley and Atkinson (2019).

With projects that developed over time and that listen actively to participant voices, the collective aspect of the creative projects echoes the findings in Collaboration through Craft (2013) that this process can be
‘wide reaching, forward facing, flexible, relational, pedagogically up to date, technologically innovative, socially engaged and politically charged’ (Ravetz et al, 2013, p. 2). This was evidenced in a quote from a participant in the Worn Stories work which uses textile metaphor related to the heritage of the processes explored during the project, ‘We’ve patched and woven our community. It’s interesting to see where we’ve come from.’ (group conversation, 19.11.18) The word ‘patched’ can also allude to textile repair practices, a significant part of that project and one that was able to illicit conversation about poverty and class during workshop sessions. I see repair practices as increasingly important in the context of the Covid pandemic and again, in thinking around community resilience described by Magis as meaning that communities can ‘thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise’ (2010, p. 402).

**Legacy of projects**

Cary and Sutton, writing about the sustainability of long-duration participatory community arts projects, note that ‘projects should not ‘finish’ but should evolve to meet the expanding capacity and aspirations of the community, as well as building on success’ (2004, p. 133). In examples of continuing work in the organisations I worked with and my ongoing contact from participants in the projects I can acknowledge this idea of evolving. Despite the disruption of the pandemic to work in community settings and in many cases the need for immediate reactive work for example, support with basic needs including food, and the additional pressure on that sector caused by short term funding and greater demand, (Thierry et al., 2021; NCVO, 2020-21) participants and organisations who took part in the projects described have continued to engage with heritage and participatory arts activities.

In addition to completing the Local Colour residency and fieldwork online (described in the coda to this chapter) I met regularly online with volunteer researchers from the Worn Stories project to support their work in developing a new community research project. Their interest in the communities around the Leeds Road area of Bradford who had worked in the textile recycling industry had uncovered stories of women organisers of social/charitable groups that made garments and domestic textiles for disadvantaged families from the late nineteenth century onwards. An idea for a new project started through online sessions with participants co-writing a funding bid. A participant commented, ‘The sessions have allowed me to continue to feel part of something and have given me something to look forward to... I have been able to continue with my love for the research side of the project as we not only chatted but set ourselves weekly research challenges...I have
continued to explore the West Yorkshire Archive online catalogue and have listed a number of things that I’d like to look at when the archive reopens.’ (email, 27.01.21).

Following the end of the Local Colour residency in July 2021 and building on the work done Community Solutions successfully applied to NLHF for a project celebrating the centenary of the gift of the Elmfield Hall site to the local council. Gatty’s Gift: A Centenary of Colour and Community was a year-long project that collected oral history accounts about the building and developed and exhibited work and archive materials at the Haworth Art Gallery. The organisation is now working towards funding for a permanent community exhibition space in F.A. Gatty’s laboratory dye house and to secure the future of that building. Participants in that project have continued to engage in these and other local heritage-based engagements and volunteering activities in the community. Alongside these more structured examples individuals have also reported other outcomes about the impact of the projects on their confidence, communication skills, and personal creative practices. A Worn Stories participant reflected, ‘It’s enlightened me. It’s helped me to communicate better.’ (fieldnotes, 05.07.19) Individual participants have also kept in touch with me, telling me about new connections made, walks taken, everyday observations, links to things they think might interest me. They include photographs of places visited in their emails, invitations to community exhibitions featuring their work, requests for references for volunteering roles, ideas for the future. These communications and the work towards new projects continue to be explicit in new understandings of the politics of engagement and deindustrialisation. An email from a Local Colour participant describes the need for proper investment in Church and its environs, ‘... it’s down to leadership, standing up and saying here’s a new project, it will bring in more new projects or a new spirit to the area or new funding.’ He bemoans the lack of investment in infrastructure of the North West where towns were ‘just left to rot, if you contrast it with the South of England’ (M, email, 03.06.20).

These exchanges, at the end of five years of regular conversations, demonstrate the breadth that heritage engagements like this can offer. They evidence what Lowenthal described as their ‘marvellously malleable’ potential (1998, p. 226). As a social process of meaning-making (as described by Kirshenblatt Gimblett, 1995; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996; Smith, 2006 and others) it offered projects like these critical spaces to articulate the dynamics of communities as the communities themselves see it. This is evidenced in a conversation with a staff member at Community Solutions who offered this reflection on the Local Colour project, ‘I’ve been thinking about it and I’ve realised, this isn’t really about textiles, it’s about culture. It’s about our culture’ (conversation, 08.11.19). However, this ‘evolving’ can also be problematic, particularly in the
context of grant funding and commissioning and the issues this raises for freelance artists. The drifting endings of projects, overlapping funding in some cases and the multiplicities this implies should be recognised. There were difficult aspects, for example, in the ad hoc funding arrangements of the Local Colour residency, initially planned for one year but in the end receiving support over almost five. The small incremental pots of funding allowed the work to continue without significant interruptions, but this was time consuming and stressful for all the organisations involved, the participants and myself. Sophie Hope (2017) highlights the often short-term, project-based approaches to socially engaged delivery and describes the mismatch between the fluidity of working practices that socially engaged practitioners including myself prefer and how and when a project ‘ends’.

My continued contact with participants from both projects, long after the end of my funding period is a personal choice, but it speaks to these challenges. The reporting structures, so often focussed on ‘achievements’ and value for money are rarely interested in the time relationship building really takes and, as Belfiore identifies, ‘the core participatory activity to establish a genuine rapport with the project participants’ (2021, p. 63). The insecurities of work like this cannot be underestimated (Jones, 2021, blog post; Szreder, 2021) and I strongly feel that funders committing to working over significant periods of time deliver the best project outcomes and potential for work to be taken on within the communities in a sustainable way. I am, through experience, advocating other more sustainable ways of working. These involve softer structures in the planning, other ways of funding that can allow a longitudinal approach and different methods to evidence soft outcomes. As society changes, community engagement needs to change with it. The discussions around these themes continue, as they have over generations of community-based practice.

Contributions of the research

This research offers learning in several ways and for a number of practices. In the context of cultural geography where creative and experimental research practices, what Hawkins describes as ‘art-full’, (2017, p. 262) have come to the fore in recent years (see also Wylie, 2010; DeSilvey, 2010) it offers new perspectives for looking at arts-based engagement in grass-roots community spaces and representing geographical knowledge during embodied and process-based activities. This kind of research can make these hyper-local projects visible, it evidences the importance of long-term community relationships and the difference between extractive engagement projects that parachute into an area then leave and embedded working practices. It challenges sometimes generic descriptions of ‘post-industrial’
communities and places through the nuanced and detailed evidence in its analytical work and visual ethnography. Participants offered richly described geographic detail about the places they had lived or worked, sharing it in groups and with wider audiences. One example would be through the remaking of and with the laundry mangle printing press and the description of the road the former mangle factory was on (Chapter 6). This shared detail of the location, rich with personal experience, the textures, smells and emotions connected to the site while growing up there during the 1960s. A comment about place and new understandings that had emerged from the experience of being part of the Worn Stories project brings the geography of the city into the present, ‘I don’t come from here at all, but I’ve lived here for a long time. I never really knew anything about the city. But now I go out on the bus, and I think, oh, so and so lived there, there was a dyeworks there. It’s a nice little feeling. It makes it really personal’ (T, semi-structured interview, 18.09.18).

In the context of heritage studies this research extends the work of Smith and Hope who posit that ‘an arts-led inquiry might lead to new and interesting directions for heritage’ (2019, p. 111). They base this on the processual nature of meaning making in community-based heritage projects and how processual arts engagement might add to this (Graham and Vergunst, 2019). The longevity of the projects in this study meant that arts processes were embedded, revised, and revisited in the duration of the work. These methods offered multiple ways of finding meaning through the heritage stories explored and the creative ways of exploring them. This study also builds upon Harrison’s description of heritage as a practice where three interlinked themes of connection, materiality and dialogue (2013, p. 227) are used to think about heritage and how it works in contemporary society. This was evidenced through the use of material engagements connected strongly to the heritage and work with groups over time who developed strong connections through conversation and dialogue. Through this, these creative engagements with heritage offer other frameworks for projects that are less typical, more intuitive and experimental and that work in places and communities that are historically underserved in the provision of creative, heritage and education projects.

Returning to John Law in After Method (2004) and his observation of multiplicity and the ‘craftwork implied in practice’ (2004, p. 59) This attention relates to the craft of research practices rather than the various kinds of craftwork I have described through my work in this thesis. The description is a useful one for me though, I have written through engagements with material practices whilst engaging with them and the many stories they offer. I have crafted a research project whilst facilitating participants to stitch,
dye, print and write their way through their experiences of a heritage engagement. The well-used analogy of the quilt (Lippard, 1983, Showalter, 1985), pieced and stitched together like several of the craft methods described can also describe the many relationships at play in projects like these, the joining edges of each piece and the offer of co-operation and negotiation to fit together.

I have found the process of going back to look at my findings, from before the pandemic, a difficult analytic and writing task. Günel et al. and their pandemic inspired definitions of ‘patchwork ethnography’ as described in my introduction have taken on new resonance for me. The final ethnography that I add as a coda at the end of this chapter evidences the huge changes and additional learning required by practitioner and groups and the disruption this caused to making and processual practices in the weekly sessions. It also evidences the sensation, as an experienced practitioner, of having to suddenly work in different ways, the ‘workshop ecology’ (Raw, 2014) changed completely. Linkon and Russo’s description of deindustrialised communities as sites of loss and failure (2003, p. 206), related not only to economic security and work, but also loss of identity felt very familiar in the context of my working life during this period. Therefore, the ethnography undertaken in the early stages of the pandemic offers an immediacy in its reflection. The narrative offered, recorded, and reflected on in a time of great change is vivid as a result. It shows the many demands and concerns of socially engaged practice as they were amplified due to crisis (figure 107).
Figure 107: 13th March 2020 preparing Local Colour garden or the growing season (final session in person due to lockdown)
The circle of people around the meeting room table has become a collection of small squares on my laptop screen. My physical engagement with the group is completely different. I ‘open’ the meeting at 9.50 to allow for people who may be having technical hitches to resolve them or so that I can help troubleshoot the issue. This means that I’ve had an early arrival to talk to every week. It feels like a much more intimate space than the usual scenario of us making the coffee together and checking that there are enough chairs and milk. I realise that we are very set in our ways, usually sitting in the same spaces around a block of tables in our community room, this includes myself. I’m having to re-orientate my attention around the room – or rather the screen. It’s difficult to make eye contact, we must pause and allow one another time to make a point or things become difficult to hear. I can’t rely on body language to help me read the room and the non-verbal communication is mainly lost, I can scan the individual squares on my screen but little more. We’re sitting in our homes – shelves with personal collections, wallpaper, a poster of The Beatles visible, one participant has an outer space background downloaded from zoom, anonymising his surroundings. The personal has become public. I’m in my kitchen where (out of sight) my now nocturnal teenagers are wandering about in their pyjamas making toast. The position of my wireless router means that the signal is too poor for this if I sit at my desk. The desk
is in my bedroom. Did I really want the group in my bedroom anyway? People’s pets wander in and are introduced to the group.

The format of zoom allows a ‘gallery’ view of everyone including myself in the same sized square. Then you can toggle between screen views to see the person speaking in isolation. Tiny talking heads on mini screens surrounding them. I find my arms more expressive than ever when I’m talking, I’m realising how important movement and the sense of the space around me is to my delivery and practice. I now know that when working in a room I can acknowledge an aside from a participant whilst still allowing full attention on the person who is speaking. This is impossible in our new format. The distractions of looking at oneself speaking can also interfere with the flow of the session. It’s a mirror on my insomnia that has been a feature of the last month.

However, there is a sense of delight that we are still able to meet and chat. It’s an opportunity to share the strangeness of this current normality. ‘Time seems your own.’ ‘I’m learning new technology. If you’d told me three weeks ago that I’d be doing this I’d have been baffled.’ [03.04]
And concerns, ‘You can’t keep people cooped up forever.’ When I suggest that we should continue with our weekly observation exercise everyone is very enthusiastic. It’s normal for the group, normal in extraordinary times (Fieldwork reflection, 12.04.20).

In this new format and feeling out of my depth I realised that face-to-face engagement sessions with the group featured a lot of breathing spaces and pauses. This, in a screen-based session is harder to do so I fell back on the familiar. Having not planned for it I asked the question I asked almost every session since beginning the residency. ‘Tell us about something that you have seen in the last week.’ This was a strategy employed from the beginning of the project, a way of focussing the group on one another, an opportunity to share experiences, minor details, from everyday life. I had collated these since the start in a document now 10 pages long. They revealed everything from the mundane: ‘I had a visit to the library’ (23.02.18) ‘I found some inner calm painting a radiator.’, (15.03.19) ‘I saw lots of used scratch cards on my community litter pick’ (24.03.17). The poetic: ‘I saw seagulls over the landfill in the light like little silver darts.’ (18.01.19), ‘Sunrise – pale yellow, flat clouds and dark hills’ (27.01.17), ‘Around the birdfeeder was a perfect circle of grey on the ground. It was feathers, a pigeon.’ (15.02.19). And as the group continued, for far longer than first planned, recurring small stories often about the workings of the local council. Current affairs and politics punctuated the local and personal observations too: ‘I’ve noticed people
begging. Everywhere. I was in Hebden Bridge and I saw it there. People are living hand to mouth. It’s Universal Credit, the food banks can’t keep up’ (05.04.19), and ‘This Brexit is a shambles. Three years is a long time. We’re polarised. None of us want this uncertainty’ (12.04.19).

These observations, the minutiæ of everyday life, had often served as the stepping off point for a wider discussion (sometimes way off topic and needing to be ‘brought back’ by myself) ‘We start talking and we never stop’ is an observation I recorded (10.05.19). They were a ‘gathering’ moment for the group, settling us back into each other’s company and ready for the real business of the session. Noting that defining the everyday as part of research is ‘notoriously difficult’, Cloke et al., note ‘we can generalise that it is an area of social life that includes repetitive daily cycles that we learn but eventually take for granted’ (2014, p. 296). This simple exercise began to serve another purpose too, to share experiences of lockdown through the everyday, ‘I’ve noticed fly-tipping everywhere’ (03.04.20), ‘This week has gone really fast, last week was slow.’ ‘It sounds like Sunday all the time.’ (17.04.20) and ‘I’m paying more attention – things I wouldn’t normally look at.’ (10.04.20). Now in this newly different kind of engagement it felt almost comforting to hear that M has been sorting out his stamp collection and that there has been a sparrow hawk on his bird feeder (27.04.20), (03.04.20), and that B ‘...went out to see the pink super moon but it wasn’t that impressive.’ (10.04.20). In a jotting in my notebook that week I wrote, ‘BE CAREFUL.’ Looking back at it I recognise the need for care, the ‘care-full’ as described by Hawkins and Price, (2018, p. 238) in this kind of work was needed more than ever.

A blog post by writer on cultural engagement and museums, Nina Simon, (written on the 29th March 2020) reflected my concern about what she described as ‘scrambling to engage’. She was describing cultural organisations who were, as a rapid response to the crisis, offering virtual museum tours, live opera performances and new digital educational resources. She asks, ‘Is this meaningful or just fast?’ and suggests considering what potential your skills as a practitioner/organisation have to offer this situation before deciding what to do (Simon, 2020). Other arts writing from this period suggests that doing nothing at all may well be for the best. In response to the Arts Council England emergency package for arts and cultural organisations and individual artists there were some suggestions that this should be a time for a pause, ‘an opportunity to stop and rethink.’ (Matarasso, 2020). The idea of using a pandemic as a ‘breathing space’ seemed laughable to me, although I recognised that reflecting on the how and why of engagement was essential in the suddenly changed day to day. Ultimately though, as a practitioner with a long-term commitment to a project and to my research, I could only see that I would have to somehow
find a way to continue both, and that this would initially be messy, uncertain, complex, and difficult to structure. My experience of previous projects where sessions had paused had also shown me that people lost interest rapidly once a weekly structure fell away. It then took time to rebuild confidence in a project and to re-establish the routine for individual participants too. I knew that several of the participants lived alone and may be feeling isolated. I was also thinking about who was missing and felt their absence in this situation keenly. The remaining members also commented on this asking weekly if I’d managed to organise access for the others.

A few sessions into this new way of meeting I recognised the absence of making from our meetings. I asked the group to have a piece of A4 paper and a pair of scissors with them (17.04.20). My idea was to try a hands-on activity with everyone, the construction of a small four-page book. I was thinking again about the making practices that I have identified as central to the way my projects work and how, since the start of this and during the Worn Stories project, had been a source of connection. Throughout the project the group had made various notebooks, learning basic book binding skills, to collect their own notes about the project (figure 109). I envisaged a ‘follow along’ tutorial, holding up my own piece of paper at each stage to demonstrate. The process involved folding the paper first vertically then horizontally. One participant found this simple and completed the task, proceeding to make several books as the session progressed. Another was struggling to get a good WIFI signal and said the image was too pixelated to see. I could see that another had folded his paper the wrong way, and that the final flip of the paper would not create a book form (figure 110). We tried again with a new piece, but the same issues remained, and he screwed up his paper (in good humour). I strongly felt the frustration of not being able to walk around the table and show him, working over his shoulder. Or to sit alongside and make one at the same time. After the session I thought about other methods I could have used to explain the process or props I could have made in advance to show on screen.

The flexibility and reflexivity that I have previously written about in my work seemed suddenly ponderous and unwieldy as I searched for better vocabulary to describe what I was doing. A participant reflected in one online meeting, ‘It takes more concentration this way because, you know when you’re sat opposite a person in a group like we have been doing, there’s a psychological, personal connection to each other whereas this – so well, we’re connecting and we’re talking, but there’s this barrier there. The screen is the barrier. You can’t – it’s psychological really, it’s like talking to a photograph... The craft side of it – you can’t replicate it’ (zoom meeting, 17.04.20)
Stephen Knott writes in his exploration of amateur craft about the ‘elastic relationship’ (2015, p. 83) that craft spaces can provide, particularly amateur spaces. This is a good descriptor for the resourcefulness often required in a participatory arts engagement, the car boot full of portable materials that can be brought into the community space as and when required. I found that I was missing the physical connection I had to the project, and that as a result that elasticity was less elastic. I felt this keenly as a lack of resourcefulness, missing the movement of the sessions even those that took place in improvised community spaces. Rose reflects on this experience observing that, ‘objects and contexts not only define each other, but may change and disrupt each other’ (Rose, 2007, p. 223).

Figure 109: Collating samples of hand-dyed and printed cloth in a handmade notebook

Figure 110: Making a miniature notebook on zoom (17.04.20)
By the following session, M, a keen stamp collector, had begun to adapt his tiny notebook explaining,

‘This little booklet is an ongoing project I’m going to put together using stamps. My first page is using a couple of stamps to signify spring, then using two (20p) stamps for 2020. Then travel stamps, keeping the roads empty, the queen, talking to the nation. It’s ongoing this is. I think it’s got promise this. A minimal amount of words but using the illustrations on the stamps to tell the story.’ (zoom meeting, 24.04.20).

He later showed the group the finished article, first stamp used one from a series on social reformers from 1976, Elizabeth Fry, shown through an illustration of hands clutching prison bars. The group commented on his ability to improvise, using what he had. The expertise and knowledge of his own collection showed through in the story of lockdown he had crafted (figure 111).

Figure 111: Lockdown stories told through a personal stamp collection (1.5.20)

The small handmade book told a story about lockdown, through an everyday collecting practice, personal reminiscence, and confidence in his own craft skills. All this as part of his new experience as a member of an online project. As a practitioner it pulled together several threads that spoke to the socially engaged practices of my working life. The emphasis on making as a starting point, offering an opportunity to use ordinary materials and then think through and communicate with others the process of making with them. The materials in this case were improvised in the absence of a more organised making
environment but the participant voice was strong. Price and Hawkins offer in their conclusions, ‘[that] making is not just about tracing through original movements of production but rather about extending and evolving discussions of the material lives of objects which take into account their ongoingness, as they are patched up, repurposed and otherwise reused, in place of being discarded.’ (Price and Hawkins, p. 236). These themes are echoed in a comment from a participant talking about Elmfield Hall, Community Solutions and the pandemic, ‘It’s not just a building. It’s an extra thing now. It’s rebuilding after the pandemic. We have to find even more resilience’ (19.06.20) (figure 112). This description of resilience evokes one of the definitions around the flexibility, and resourcefulness required after a crisis.

When thinking about resilience I must also acknowledge the huge impact of the pandemic on this research project, not only on the end of my fieldwork but also on my thinking during the analysis and writing up period. My experience of this period shows was that as a practitioner and for project members, even deeply embedded projects that take place over time have struggled to remain resilient in such circumstances. The pandemic impacted severely on the continuity of projects, meant that some of the most vulnerable participants were unable to take part in activities, online or otherwise (All Party Parliamentary Group, 2020), and practitioners in the community-based arts sector like myself found that the precarities (Jones, 2021; Szreder, 2021) of their working lives became ever more precarious. Had I completed my fieldwork before the first lockdown, I would have been happy to say that my research evidenced, through the engagements and my analysis, a positive overall impact on organisations and participants. However, the dislocation of the pandemic amplified the great inequalities that exist in the way that arts projects operate and in the support for communities most underserved. It made it clear that engagement with a weekly arts and heritage project was not going to craft resilience in the face of global crisis and long-standing structural inequalities. This understanding has been at times devastating to my perception of my skills as a practitioner and my overall confidence in my work which prior to the pandemic I felt relatively secure in. I have resolved this somewhat through thinking about scale, the ‘ripple effect’ described by M (p.242) and what textile curator June Hill describes as ‘small – potentially transformative – positive acts rooted in a community (2014, p.12).’
I embarked on this research wanting to gain granular insight into the juggle and reflexivity required in work like mine and the projects I work with. This has involved thinking through the activities and conversation to what has happened before, what’s needed today, what might come next. I understand it more as a practice of multiplicities, the inside/outside/alongside shifting during the course of a project. Clifford’s contact zone (2000, p. 59) a place that is constantly mobile, is sometimes, it would seem, evident during a single workshop session. I know there are structures and fixed points in delivery but I am also aware that fixity in project delivery doesn’t often work in the same way - It fails to deliver the spaces in-between the work. I think back to the scrap of madder dyed silk tied through the hook in the wall at the entrance to the Local Colour residency studio and the source of that colour, the bright red madder root. The madder plant and its behaviour – its tangled roots and side shoots, a network that will find its own way, avoiding stones in the soil, working its way around them to survive and thrive. The plant and the projects I describe embed themselves in many ways.

‘We are reconnecting with the past, it’s a combination of place, art and history. It tells us good things about keeping going. We can’t live in the past; we have to keep going’ (fieldnotes, 19.06.20).
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Appendix 1

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

From	Dr Louise Westmarland
The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee

Email	louise.westmarland@open.ac.uk
Extension	(6) 82462

To	Claire Wellesley-Smith


HREC ref	HREC/2608/Wellesley-Smith

Memorandum

Date application submitted: 15/06/2017
Date of HREC response: 20/10/2017

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given a favourable opinion by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Please note the following:

1. You are responsible for notifying the HREC immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware which would cast doubt on, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research.

2. It is essential that any proposed amendments to the research are sent to the HREC for review so they can be recorded and where required, a favourable opinion given prior to any changes being implemented (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the participant or researcher is or may be effected).

3. Please include your HREC reference number in any documents or correspondence. It is essential that it is included in any publicity related to your research, e.g. when seeking participants or advertising your research so it is clear that it has been reviewed by HREC and adheres to OU ethics review processes.

4. You are authorised to present this memorandum to outside bodies such as NHS Research Ethics Committees in support of any application for future research clearance. Also, where there is an external ethics review, a copy of the application and outcome should be sent to the HREC.

5. OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and where they exist, their frameworks for research ethics.

6. At the end of your project, you are required to assess your research for ethics related issues and/or major changes. Where these have occurred you will need to provide the Committee with a HREC final report to reflect how these were dealt with using the final

www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/  
November 2017
Appendix 2

Crafting Resilience: Community engagement with heritage through craft-based projects.

The Open University attaches high priority to the ethical conduct of research. We therefore ask you to consider the following points before signing this form. Your signature confirms that you are happy to participate in the study.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the study, or the details of this form, please contact Claire Wellesley-Smith (claire.wellesley-smith@open.ac.uk) or Dr. George Revill (g.revill@open.ac.uk) Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Sciences, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

This project session will be digitally-recorded and transcribed (it will be typed up and anonymised). The transcriptions (excluding names and other identifying details) will be retained by the project team and analysed as part of the study. The findings of the research will be written up as feedback for you, for policy makers and for other organisations interested in our work. The findings will be published in a thesis. The written work may include quotations from the interviews, but individuals will never be named.

Confirmation and consent:

I confirm that I have freely agreed to participate in the ‘Crafting Resilience’ research project. I have been briefed on what this involves and I agree to the use of the findings as described above. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason up to October 2021 (when the final report will be written).

I understand that the material is protected by a code of professional ethics. I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution to The Open University.

Name:
Signature:
Date:
Further information (Q&A) about:

Crafting Resilience: Community engagement with heritage through craft-based projects.

What is the aim of this research?
The purpose of this research is to look at how heritage can be explored through craft-based sessions that are delivered during community projects.

Who is conducting the research and who is it for?
Claire Wellesley-Smith is carrying out this research on behalf of the Open University.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?
As a participant in the Worn Stories: Material and Memory in Bradford 1880-2015 project at Hive I would like to invite you to participate in my research. You can be involved by simply attending the Worn Stories sessions. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to take part in the research project you can still take part in the sessions at Hive and it will not affect your participation in any way.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?
I will be conducting observational research during Talking Textiles sessions [Dates to be confirmed]. These observations will take place during project sessions at Hive [and other community venues TBC].

What will the observations be like?
I will be recording the project sessions and this recording may include still photography, video and digital audio recording. This information will be collected so that I can look at how the project progresses.

**What will you be observing?**
The project is using the history of the area to explore connections to people and places through a programme of creative activities and research. I will be observing the conversations that emerge during the project sessions. These sessions will include conversations about local textile heritage, creative textile recycling activities and looking at archive items related to this heritage.

**Is it confidential?**
Your participation will be treated in *strict confidence* in accordance with the Data Protection Act. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside the research team. I will write a report of the findings from this study, but no individual will be identifiable in published results of the research. You can decide to withdraw from the project at anytime until October 2021 when the final report will be written.

**What if I have other questions?**
If you have any other questions about the study I would be very happy to answer them. Please contact [Claire Wellesley-Smith](mailto:claire.wellesley-smith@open.ac.uk) by email claire.wellesley-smith@open.ac.uk
Further information (Q&A) about:

**Crafting Resilience: Community engagement with heritage through craft-based projects.**

**What is the aim of this research?**
The purpose of this research is to look at how heritage can be explored through craft-based sessions that are delivered during community projects.

**Who is conducting the research and who is it for?**
Claire Wellesley-Smith is carrying out this research on behalf of the Open University.

**Why am I being invited to participate in this research?**
As a participant in Local Colour heritage art project at Community Solutions North West I would like to invite you to participate in my research. You can be involved by simply attending the Worn Stories sessions. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to take part in the research project you can still take part in the sessions and it will not affect your participation in any way.

**If I take part in this research, what will be involved?**
I will be conducting observational research during Local Colour sessions [Dates to be confirmed]. These observations will take place during project sessions at Community Solutions North West.

**What will the observations be like?**
I will be recording the project sessions and this recording may include still photography, video and digital audio recording. This information will be collected so that I can look at how the project progresses.
What will you be observing?

The project is using the history of the area to explore connections to people and places through a programme of creative activities and research. I will be observing the conversations that emerge during the project sessions. These sessions will include conversations about local textile heritage, creative textile recycling activities and looking at archive items related to this heritage.

Is it confidential?

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside the research team. I will write a report of the findings from this study, but no individual will be identifiable in published results of the research. You can decide to withdraw from the project at anytime until October 2021 when the final report will be written.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions about the study I would be very happy to answer them. Please contact [Claire Wellesley-Smith](mailto:claire.wellesley-smith@open.ac.uk) by email claire.wellesley-smith@open.ac.uk
## Appendix 5

### Participant data Worn Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>&lt;16</th>
<th>16-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Did not disclose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>White British</th>
<th>Mixed/multiple ethnic background</th>
<th>Black/Black British</th>
<th>Asian/Asian British</th>
<th>Other White background</th>
<th>Did not disclose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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### Day to day activities of the participant limited due to health or disability?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes, a lot</th>
<th>Yes, a little</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Did not disclose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of time engaged with project</th>
<th>Full project</th>
<th>Attended sessions outside Hive in a specific time-frame</th>
<th>Sporadic attendance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>
## Appendix 6

### Participant data: Local Colour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>&lt;16</th>
<th>16-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>Did not disclose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Did not disclose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>White British</th>
<th>Mixed/multiple ethnic background</th>
<th>Black/Black British</th>
<th>Asian/Asian British</th>
<th>Other White background</th>
<th>Did not disclose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day to day activities of the participant limited due to health or disability?</th>
<th>Yes, a lot</th>
<th>Yes, a little</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Did not disclose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of time engaged with project</th>
<th>Full project</th>
<th>2+ years</th>
<th>Less than 2 years</th>
<th>Sporadic attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7

Project audit: Worn Stories: Material and Memory in Bradford 1880-2015

## Local Colour sessional engagement

| Date/s               | Number of sessions | Description                                                                 | Where                                                                 | Number of participants per session |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|                                                                      |------------------------------------|
| April – June 2020    | 3                  | Online sessions with project researchers (recorded)                          | zoom                                                                 | 4                                  |

## Resources created through the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/s</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017-Dec 2018</td>
<td>Letters, emails, written reflections from participants</td>
<td>Research archive</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017-Dec 2018</td>
<td>Semi-structured group conversations audio recorded and transcribed</td>
<td>External hard drive</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017 – March 2020</td>
<td>Transcribed semi-structured interviews with individual participants</td>
<td>External hard drive</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017-June 2020</td>
<td>Photographs from sessions taken by researcher</td>
<td>External hard drive</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017- March 2020</td>
<td>Creative work and exhibition work by participants including collaborative and individual textile work</td>
<td>Displayed permanently at project venues and kept by the artist and participants</td>
<td>Numerous examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Additional outputs

Project blog posts [https://wornstoriesbradfordblog.wordpress.com](https://wornstoriesbradfordblog.wordpress.com)
Project publication edited by Claire Wellesley-Smith and Jennie Kiff – Worn Stories: Material and Memory in Bradford 1880-2015
[https://issuu.com/cwellesleysmith/docs/worn_stories](https://issuu.com/cwellesleysmith/docs/worn_stories)

**Peer reviewed conference papers:**
Crafting Resilience: Textile heritage projects and wellbeing in post-industrial communities. *Cultural Heritage for Mental Health*, Ghent, Belgium, November 2018
The Stitch Journal: *Woven in Practice*, University of Huddersfield 23rd April 2021
Conversations through re-use and re-making in a contemporary *Economy Quilt*. *Secondhand Cultures in Unsettled Times Symposium*, Cardiff University 15-16th June 2021
Invited speaker

MAI-Day: Textile Elements Reflective Stitch-In, March 2022, Chelsea College of Arts, London
Research Lab: On Archives and artist research - Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design, Sweden, February 2022
## Appendix 8

### Project audit: Local Colour

**Local Colour sessional engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/s</th>
<th>Number of sessions</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Number of participants per session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017-March 2020</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Observation of 2 hour project sessions and collection of field notes.</td>
<td>Elmfield Hall, Gatty Park, Accrington</td>
<td>8-10 average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April – June 2020</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Online sessions with participants (recorded)</td>
<td>zoom</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources created through the project**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/s</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017-June 2020</td>
<td>Letters, emails, written reflections from participants</td>
<td>Research archive</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017- March 2020</td>
<td>Notebooks/ scans from notebooks created by participants</td>
<td>Research archive</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017 – June 2020</td>
<td>Semi-structured group conversations audio recorded and transcribed</td>
<td>External hard drive</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017 – March 2020</td>
<td>Transcribed semi-structured interviews with individual participants</td>
<td>External hard drive</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017-June 2020</td>
<td>Photographs from sessions taken by researcher</td>
<td>External hard drive</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2017- March 2020</td>
<td>Creative work and exhibition work by participants including prints, dyed and printed textiles, 3-D work</td>
<td>Displayed permanently at Elmfield Hall and kept by the artist and participants</td>
<td>Numerous examples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional outputs:

**Project blog posts and case studies for funders:**

- [https://superslowway.org.uk/projects/local-colour/](https://superslowway.org.uk/projects/local-colour/)
- [https://peopleplacetimespace.superslowway.org.uk/project/a-community-conversation](https://peopleplacetimespace.superslowway.org.uk/project/a-community-conversation)

Mr Gatty’s Experiment Shed – Exhibition publication including essay, 2019
- [https://issuu.com/cwellesleysmith/docs/mrgattysexpshedsmall](https://issuu.com/cwellesleysmith/docs/mrgattysexpshedsmall)

**Peer reviewed conference papers:**

*The Mangle Press Textile and Place 2*. Manchester Metropolitan University/ British Textile Biennial October 2021

*The Red Bed: Slowness and dialogue in a community artist residency International Sociological Association Research Committee 21 on Urban and Regional Development*, University of Antwerp, 14-16 July 2021
The Mangle Press: Engaging and remembering with a site-specific history.  *AHRC Interdisciplinary Conference on “Form and Forgetting”,* University of Cambridge, September 2020


The Red Bed - *Textile and Place* - Manchester Metropolitan University /The Whitworth Gallery, April 2018

**Invited speaker**

*IAPSIS, Swedish Arts Grants Committee* – Request and Response: Conviviality and Reflexiveness – in conversation about my practice, May 2021

*Jardinsanté (Jardins Santé à Bruxelles pour la promotion de la santé et la prévention des maladies)* (Health gardens in Brussels for health promotion, disease prevention and city resilience) – Expert panel lecture and workshop November 2019

*Art of Wellbeing Symposium*, University of Central Lancashire – Panellist – Collaborating at the intersection of art and wellbeing, June 2019