CREATIVE INTERRUPTIONS

Grassroots creativity, state structures and disconnection as a space for 'radical openness'
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RESEARCH PLAN

Creative Interruptions: grassroots creativity, state structures and disconnection as a space for 'radical openness'

Funded by the AHRC Connected Communities Programme, Disconnection Call

This report provides an overview of the Creative Interruptions project (AH/N004094/1) including an outline of the project’s five research strands. It has been drafted in March 2017 by the Principal Investigator, the four academic Co-Investigators and the Digital Humanities Research Fellow. The research team will continue to build on this document as the project develops.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Creative Interruptions examines how marginalised communities use the arts, media and creativity to challenge exclusion. It researches the local and global dynamics that rupture, alienate, and marginalise as well as the creative tools used by communities to cope with such processes of disconnection that result from being disenfranchised through the practice of power relations in society.

Creative Interruptions draws on Sociology, Cultural Studies, Media Studies, Heritage Studies, Literary Studies, Theatre Studies, and Human Geography. It is led by Brunel University London with co-Investigators based at The University of Sussex, Sheffield Hallam University, Queen’s University of Belfast and The University of Strathclyde. Outputs will include academic articles, an edited book, a theatre production, films, a photo exhibition, and digital installations.

RESEARCH TEAM

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CO-CREATING RESEARCH

The project is designed around working with communities to produce the research, and so we are also interested in exploring the extent to which co-produced research (work that brings together a range of constituents including academics and community collaborators) can itself act as a creative, interrupting, destabilising and equalising process. Creative Interruptions therefore provides a basis for further scholarly inquiry that has the potential to enhance knowledge of co-creation, community-based participatory research, cultures at the margins and the role of public arts and humanities projects in supporting and informing excluded communities.
Research Questions

Our research questions seek to better understand the relationship between creative practice, community and disenfranchisement.

01. What is the emerging knowledge from current arts-led ‘interruptions’, both locally and globally?

02. What are the creative and artistic strategies that disconnected communities employ to resist structures of power they consider oppressive?

03. What are the historical lessons learnt from past arts-led ‘interruptions’, both locally and globally?

04. How can connecting disconnections facilitate new and enabling bonds between communities at the peripheries?

05. To what extent does co-produced research act as a creative, interrupting, destabilising and equal process? What is the role of this research in the academy and how can it work as ‘lived theory’?
How we work

The team of Investigators is leading the community participation process. Communities that are involved include migrant and long-term resident, food factory and warehouse workers in the East of England; African, Caribbean and South Asian communities in the UK; refugee, migrant and LGBT communities in Northern Ireland; Palestinian filmmakers and solidarity networks in the UK and internationally; and a cross-section of faiths in Punjab and the Punjabi diaspora in Scotland.

Why these communities?

The diverse communities we work with have been identified because they allow us to collectively explore the legacies of British colonial retreat alongside contemporary transnational migration, to offer a nuanced evaluation of the impacts of colonialism, racialisation, globalisation and resistance on creative forms and processes. We are interested in working with these communities to better understand the evolving experiences of groups affected by institutional racisms, faith-based conflicts and/or nationalisms.

Connecting communities

Another aspect that we are researching is whether connecting the different disenfranchised communities with whom we are working, can facilitate new and enabling bonds between communities at the peripheries. A recurring idea within our research is the capacity for connectivity (for example, intergenerational) across contexts of exclusion. One way of addressing this is by working with different generations of cultural workers and activists within particular strands of the research. Another is to explore the potential of connecting the communities, which we are engaging with in particular strands of the project, to communities involved in other project strands, in order to try and generate new connections and points of identification.

The themes of Creative Interruptions are driven by historical and contemporary local and global shifts that have seen nationalisms and a proliferation of anxieties converging around culturally 'different' minority communities and lifestyles, particularly in the current form of anti-migrant rhetoric. In the past decade, this has been catalysed by economic crisis, (new) media, global flows, and processes of fragmentation of the state and exacerbated in the UK by fractures in the union and a disruptive questioning of our role in Europe, which has exposed deep divisions in UK society.
The historical perspective

We use the late 1970s/1980s as a general starting point because it spawned a number of seemingly quite specific ‘creative interruptions’ tied to the emergence of the digital and to broader shifting socio-political contexts. In order to ‘unstick’ disconnection, we utilise Raymond Williams’ characterisation of counter-hegemonic “structures of feeling” as a conceptual underpinning to what constitutes an ‘interruption’. For Williams, “structures of feeling” are “social experiences in solution”, that primarily relate to “emergent formations” (or what we describe as creative interruptions) (Williams, 1997). The fascination of the research is in how it both locates the actively lived and emergent structures of feeling, whilst also retracing the lines from the past to the present; to capture what Williams calls the “consciousness of aspirations and possibilities” (Williams, 1980) through making culture. The research starts from the notion of disconnection as “a space for radical openness” (hooks, 1989) that is embraced by groups at times to challenge oppressive power structures. As well as the ‘politics of location’ that hooks speaks of, the politics of moments, histories art forms and mediums are central to our research focus.

Creativity

Being creative, in our research, is about relating to or involving the use of the imagination, original ideas and different forms and spaces to create something that interrupts or breaks the continuity of dominant power relations. Our definition of a ‘creative interruption’ therefore stems from a Gramscian understanding of hegemony and counter-hegemony. As Cornel West explains, hegemonic culture “begins to crumble when people start to opt for a transformative modality, a socialisation process that opposes the dominant one. The latter constitutes a counter-hegemonic culture, the deeply embedded oppositional elements within a society” (1982:119).

Our project engages with the cultural production emergent from these transformative, oppositional elements; instances of this production, of this process, we term ‘creative interruptions’.

New aesthetics and creative forms

In developing the creative and performing arts aspects of the project that we are both researching and producing, we are exploring why and how particular kinds of creative forms, textures and (alternative) aesthetics are used. What is it about theatre, film, or the digital space that makes each of them the most appropriate or enabling forms and spaces to communicate, share and enable certain messages? In what circumstances does vernacular creativity (Edensor et al, 2010), for example, constitute a creative interruption? How are new forms of solidarity and conviviality produced through creative production in this particularly intense moment of authoritarian populism? We want to review and reveal how different aesthetics, creative spaces, genres, repertoires of elements and discursive and material social forms have shifted over time and have been drawn upon to produce particular creative interruptions in specific moments.
Ethical Considerations

We will ensure that all research in the strands works in line with the wider ethical principles, guidelines and agreements of the Creative Interruptions project. Research will be conducted with the full consent of community collaborators. We will offer to share our research plans and progress reports with community collaborators and research participants. In some strands anonymity will be difficult to provide, for example when we interview cultural activists, since we will often be exploring some of the work that they have produced. We will provide other research participants with the option of anonymity.

We have already started to discuss ethical approaches with our research participants, for example in Strand 5, an extensive discussion of ethical considerations took place during a workshop in December 2016, especially in the context of literacy and hard to reach groups such as women in rural communities. We will continue such consultations.

Our key ethical questions include:

i. Who is doing the research and why? To whom does this project belong?
ii. How are discussions/workshops chaired and how are all voices included?
iii. How is knowledge created and how is it stored or gathered?
iv. Who has the right to identify a ‘community’? How meaningful or useful is that term?
v. What are we doing to ensure less visible groups have access to the project? How do we overcome issues of literacy in a project with so much writing?
vi. How do we ensure religious and cultural sensitivities are respected in a context of historical challenge and ‘interruption’?
vii. How does each strand ensure it is not part of the ‘periphery’ of Creative Interruptions? How can communication across the strands be fostered?
Our Aims

Creative Interruptions examines the cultural politics at work that deliberately invoke and engage with different marginalised individuals, organisations and networks in society. It seeks to identify, analyse, promote and share evidence on the contribution that these diverse communities make to creative culture and translate these findings to inform policy and decision-making by stakeholders in the arts and cultural sectors. The research will be of interest to policy makers on national and international levels, concerned with community, connectivity and creativity.

AIM #1

Connect communities not to the centre but to create spaces to build connections across the peripheries

The project seeks to problematise some of the ‘corrective’ intuitions of funded work with ‘disadvantaged’ communities that sometimes assume that such communities wish to be more like the ‘centre’. Rather, we look at how these communities can challenge the ‘centre’ and what can be learned by the ‘centre’ from the ‘margins’.
AIM #2

**Broaden ideas of what ‘creativity’ is**

We are developing historical and contemporary understandings of creative practices by minority and disenfranchised local and global groups, ranging from film and theatre to expressive work on social media, work that is largely unrecorded and unknown in broader mainstream culture. This allows us to deepen public understandings of the practices of disenfranchised communities, broaden ideas of what ‘creativity’ is, and relocate dissent as often involving creative processes that generate creative outcomes. Specifically, it enables us to produce new knowledge regarding how excluded communities agitate for social change through the arts and how that agitation interacts with state structures.

AIM #3

**Generate new understandings of community**

The project explores how disconnected communities see themselves through the way in which they express themselves in creative arts practices. Within the research, we recognise that although all communities reproduce divisions and exclusions, certain communities have been disenfranchised in particular ways and have been intensely demonised, objectified and culturally pathologised. The current uncertainties around immigration, cultural difference, rights and responsibilities are deeply entwined with our research themes of colonialism, race and resistance and our aim to explore the creativity that these circumstances produce. The project aims therefore to reveal different senses of community by asking what happens when we look at disconnection through the lens of creativity.
To investigate these issues, and address our research questions and aims, the Creative Interruptions team and community collaborators are conducting research activities organised within **five strands** of research. These strands are briefly summarised here:

**01 Creative anti-racisms: Black and Asian UK communities, screen media and racialised power**
Engaging with UK African, Caribbean and South Asian practitioners and activists to explore how screen media has been used to respond to racism.

**02 Intensive workplace regimes, worker creativity and dignity assertion in eastern England**
Research and creative co-production with current and former food supply chain and retail distribution centre workers.

**03 Creative Connections and Civil Rights: Co-Producing Memories and Connecting the Disconnected through Community Theatre**
Combining the recollections of former Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association activists with the engagement of contemporary civil rights campaigners in Northern Ireland.

**04 Cinematic Interruptions in the struggle for representation in the Case of Palestine**
Providing a significant global example of the use of creativity to interrupt hegemonic narratives, to explore the cinematic struggle to represent Palestinian life.

**05 Along the Grand Trunk Road: Disconnected Heritage and Memory in Post-Partition Punjab**
Facilitating an inter-faith dialogue between Punjabi Sikhs and Muslims by modelling a collective understanding of heritage that challenges the partitioning of heritage, memory and communities.
CREATIVE ANTI-RACISMS: BLACK AND ASIAN UK COMMUNITIES, SCREEN MEDIA AND RACIALISED POWER

This strand of research produces an analysis of how different generations of Black and Asian activists in the UK have mobilised screen media, from film to digital, as a response to the institutional practices and cultural norms that generate disparate racialised outcomes. A central concern is to better understand the motivations of those cultural activists, from the 1980s to the present day, who have selected either film or digital platforms (e.g. social media such as Twitter or Facebook) as a space for resistance, to both articulate experiences of racism and stimulate anti-racist responses.

There are several emergent concerns: the anti-racist interruptions that are made possible by different screen technologies and platforms; the particular interventions that are envisaged by cultural producers; and the effects that such representations actually create. Additionally, in terms of the politics of production, we ask: what is the relationship between marginalised experiences and marginalised creative labour? These are areas that we will research alongside interrogating both what this work can be said to represent, and its links with the dynamic between structure and agency implicated in the politics of representation. Related is the question of how contexts of racism and anti-racism have themselves been reconfigured or reworked as a result of the wider cultural transformation that film and digital media represent.

Through a process of co-creation, in which different constituents involved in anti-racist screen activism (producers, archivists, campaigners) will be brought together to exchange knowledge and help identify project outcomes, the strand seeks to revisit and reconceptualise creative (screen)production of the Black and Asian diaspora in the UK. Working with research participants, we seek to collectively constitute an archive; a moment that Stuart Hall has suggested, "represents the end of a certain kind of creative innocence, and the beginning of a new stage of self-consciousness, of self-reflexivity in an artistic movement" (2001: 89).

The strand provides an opportunity to focus on the motivations, the ‘screen-based creative and artistic strategies’ of creative activists, the linkages between past and present, and the digital (dis)connections of these ‘interruptions’. More broadly, it allows us to probe the relationship between ideas of ‘creativity’ and ‘anti-racism’, and the role of creative agency in impacting racialised structures and processes in ways that lead to change.
This strand’s main question is: How have screen media been used by the UK’s Black and South Asian communities as a space through which anti-racist activism has been generated? This question is linked to the wider project’s aim to find the creative and artistic strategies that disconnected communities employ to resist structures of power they consider oppressive.

The strand also uses the wider project’s central research questions as the basis for the following lines of enquiry:

i. What are the screen-based creative and artistic strategies that the UK’s Black and Asian communities have employed to resist structures of racialised power they consider oppressive?

ii. What are the historical lessons learnt from past screen-based ‘interruptions’, specifically those led by Black and Asian film practitioners in the UK?

iii. What kinds of social media narratives do people tell to stand for or against the ongoing racialised processes that generate disconnection, division, and exclusion in the UK?

iv. What is the emerging knowledge from current screen-based ‘interruptions’, specifically those led by Black and Asian digital practitioners in the UK?
Strand 1
Overview

This research strand hypothesises that screen media have provided a critical space for anti-racist politics in the UK. The empirical rationale for connecting film and digital, past and present, is to: bring together diverse anti-racist creative activists who have worked with screen media and digital media; make more visible the cultural history of anti-racist screen practice; and explore some of the broader connections between ‘Blackness’ and ‘creativity’ on the margins spanning several decades. By tracing both the links and the gaps between film and digital, past and present, we aim to uncover the ways in which new forms of creative resistance differ and share their tactics with older activism expressions. This directly references one of the wider Creative Interruptions aims, which is to ‘connect the disconnections’, both in terms of the ‘disconnected’ communities involved but also, for Strand 1, in connecting different forms of marginalised artistic practice to each other; screen practices that have been disconnected from the mainstream and also, until now, not been integrated in a single research frame.

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We find Hall’s notion of the 'living archive of the diaspora' useful here because it insists on 'living' as a continuous experience in the present that is always “unfinished, open-ended”, which also helps us to understand the relationship between film and the digital not as newer forms replacing older ones, but as both adding to and changing the archive of creative anti-racisms. In this context, newer work, whether film or social media based, is related to earlier work, “if only in terms of how it inflects or departs from it” (Hall, 2001; 89). Consequently, within this strand, we seek to constitute an archive, an act that, "occurs at that moment when a relatively random collection of works, whose movement appears simply to be propelled from one creative production to the next, is at the point of becoming something more ordered and considered: an object of reflection and debate" (Hall, 2001; 89).
Strand 1 proposes to refine the field by focusing specifically on screen-based interventions and in so doing bring together some of the knowledge about Black-British film practice (broadly located in Cultural Studies and Film Studies traditions since the 1980s) with more recent work in Digital Humanities that focuses on digitally-enabled social movements.

The strand will work on three main dimensions that frame this hypothesis about the significance of screen media for anti-racist creative movements: (1) the role of these particular media forms in established and emerging traditions and practices of anti-racist communication (what are these media and what does their work represent?); (2) the processes of practices involved in these different forms, which potentially shape particular kinds of ‘interruptions’ (what is the role of modes of production?); and (3) the effects of these media in enabling new critical understandings of the role of creativity in anti-racist social movements (with what effects?).

1. The first dimension analyses the role of these forms in the cultural story of anti-racist representations and how these mediums have been utilised and developed (for example in terms of genre conventions and thematic focus) in acts of subversion or disruption. This involves analysing the content that has been produced by creative anti-racists, engaging with the politics of representation and specifically, with what anti-racist possibilities these screen interventions suggest are available. Film (as part of the audio-visual sector more broadly) has historically played a significant role in UK activist politics, for example, in the Left political film of the 1960s and later in what has been described as an “oppositional film culture” (Dickinson, 1999). The marginalisation of certain kinds of (oppositional) filmmaking from mainstream practice historically, has revealed new artistic possibilities, motivations and thematic preoccupations, as well as modes of practice. So an idea emerges of the value of film in terms of its relative accessibility, civic possibilities and scope for self-representation.

For example in the 1980s—a decade of political turbulence symbolised in the 1981 Brixton uprisings—contestation over ‘race’ and national identity surfaced as a preoccupation of evolving forms of representation. In terms of the films of the time, these have been described as “cinemas of resistance”, influenced by ‘Third Cinema’ to find “ways of subverting the conventions of filmmaking to serve their own specific project in storytelling” (Givanni, 2004: 62). Several Black artists used this space to both push generic forms (most obviously in relation to documentary) as well as bypass the dominant regimes of representing ‘race’ and form a new identity politics around issues of migration, colonisation, displacement and marginalisation.

Meanwhile, digital responds to the current need to acknowledge that social media have become a core mode of communication, organisation and representation to anti-racist communities, even with the dangers and risks they encapsulate (e.g. state surveillance, inherent power structures, etc.). In terms of these questions of representation, digital has produced different kinds of visibility, participation, or engagement with anti-racist interventions in the UK.
The use of anti-racist social media discourses, like the use of hashtags, has been representative of social grievances in the UK (e.g. #1daywithoutus represented the importance of migrant labour in the UK) and may be evidence that the public has adapted the affordances of our technological context to communicate and connect on social media. Personal stories, told on social media, form bigger public narratives which in turn can unveil some of the UK’s complex socio-political context, the strong ties between social media networks and resistance, and the creation of affective networked anti-racist communities (Papacharissi, 2015; Chadwick, 2015).

The second examines the processes of practice involved in film and digital production respectively and the implications this has for understanding distinct approaches to cultural production. This involves analysing the practices of anti-racist creativity. For example in relation to film, central to the work of “oppositional film culture” has been the formation of collectively managed film workshops with non-hierarchical working relations in what can be defined as a community mode of filmmaking. This dimension of Strand 1 that relates specifically to film practice, builds on some of the findings of the Community Filmmaking and Cultural Diversity: Practice, Innovation and Policy project (2013-14), funded through the AHRC Connected Communities programme. This research identified the diverse participatory levels at which community filmmaking operates, but also the community mode of filmmaking as everyday cultural practice for cultural groups with diverse civic agendas (Malik, Chapain and Comunian, 2017). The relevance here is in acknowledging the potential significance of processes of practice (as part of a politics of production) in mediating anti-racisms and the value of film in contributing to wider anti-racist debates and practices.

Digital media, meanwhile, has given marginalised communities the ease and speed they lacked in previous decades and this has allowed these movements to form new networks of support that has rested either on the power of affect and/or identity (Dean, 2016; Kavada, 2014). One proposition here is that the introduction of social media into the organisation of anti-racist interventions have caused a move from collective to “connective action”—evidenced in the trajectory of film to digital as the space for anti-racist communication (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). This move has given us, as researchers, access into the creative processes of these interventions, since social media’s affordances as intimate and familiar spaces of timely and instantaneous communication allow us to view these interventions’ development as they are unfolding online. In these ways, the research in this strand provides an opportunity to contribute to emerging areas of media practice and cultural production that are currently attracting policy interest, including debates around cultural heritage, precarity and cultural labour, and diversity and the media.

The third builds on the exploration of content and modes of practice to interrogate the actual or potential meanings of these screen interventions in producing anti-racist effects (for example, in shifting understandings of racism, creating new artistic spaces, influencing theoretical directions, or altering practices of racism, including through changes in public policy). This involves mapping the relationship between cultural production and social change. Whilst much of the research in this strand is concerned with the motivations of cultural activists, questions of agency, and building connections through personal narratives, the research goes onto consider how such creativity actually ‘interrupts’, and specifically the movement’s or the intervention’s consolidated potential to interrupt current power structures and produce anti-racist discourses or change.

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Many of the earlier sets of film-based interruptions were underpinned by a deep sense of social and political urgency, triggered by concerns around institutionalised racism, law and order, and anti-immigration sentiment, which were aimed at undermining the rights of Black and Asian Britons. The media was identified as playing an ideological role in Black struggle against the state and it was recognised that media access was essential to achieve genuine civic equity and change prevailing attitudes towards ‘race’. Besides, African, Caribbean and Asian communities had a deep-rooted and organic tradition in the arts that many of them now felt was excluded from dominant expressions of British culture. Film and black cultural politics has since been deeply linked (though not exclusively, which is where we can start to define the boundary of the archive that we seek to constitute) in Black British artistic traditions.

In terms of digital, we seek to unpack how social media have managed to ‘creatively interrupt’ dominant power relations in society at a digital level, and the ways in which ‘bottom-up’ communication may produce social change. The persistence of social media’s capacities and the exploration of the content exchange between the online and the offline spaces will provide a critical range of traces against which new social forms of expression can be measured and through which they can produce new creative forms of resistance, collective identity, and citizenship (Isin and Ruppert, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2017). Strand 1 will unveil the degree to which digital media have exposed the potential of social media to translate social activism and the ideas of those on the ground and online into interruptive discourses that tell otherwise marginalised stories against racism, xenophobia and nationalism.

**BLACK BRITAIN TODAY**

The legacy of colonialism has produced a unique relationship between African, Caribbean and South Asian communities and the UK, a relationship that is deeply imbricated in a history of contestation and conviviality, disenfranchisement and diasporic connectivity. When the UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, said in 2016 that “if you believe you’re a citizen of the world, you’re a citizen of nowhere”, this spoke to an exclusionary idea of national belonging; May’s claim about the true meaning of citizenship chimed with the public anti-immigrant rhetoric that had framed the 2016 EU Referendum campaign by repudiating globalisation, pluralism and ‘unassimilable’ forms of cultural difference. The changing meaning of Blackness—articulated through the postcolonial media culture that we explore here—is necessarily situated within this current cultural politics of difference, being shaped by crises linked to intensifying xenophobia, racially charged ideologies and populisms in an unstable UK (and across Western liberal democracies more widely). For Black British citizens, the racialised notions of belonging that are being newly introduced into understandings of citizenship (including in the media) build on a post war history of racism and anti-racism (Gilroy, 1987) in British society and culture, suggesting the possibility of new formations and expressions of Black consciousness and cultural identity.
Disconnection and Radical Openness

The concepts of disconnection and ‘radical openness’ which frame the wider project, are central to developments in anti-racist screen creativity in the UK.

Disconnected from mainstream creative practice: Part of this pertains to the broader framing of the ‘creative industries’ in how arts and culture are publicly defined today. In the context of the more recent neoliberal instrumentalisation of the ‘creative industries’ – a post-1980s emphasis on the role of the arts in generating economic competitiveness is repeated throughout the literature in the UK—these concerns are exacerbated, as is the disconnection of those who wish to operate outside their frame of reference, especially as inequalities within the creative sector intensify (Oakley and O’Brien, 2016). We are interested in working with research participants to broaden ideas of creativity that takes place outside the formal creative industries framework.

Collective praxis and ‘communities of resistance’: The correlation between social and cultural inequality identified in the UK creative sector, suggests that certain communities are actually very disconnected from mainstream cultural production. Thus work that takes place on the margins occurs within a potential space of resistance against broader patterns of disenfranchisement (for example in terms of securing access and fairer representation in the mainstream). We also know that film and digital interventions are often enacted as group practices and modes of expression that set in motion bell hooks’ idea of “communities of resistance”, which she describes as “places where we know we are not alone” (1989). We are interested in exploring the idea, with communities, that communities are constantly being created, reformulated and reproducing themselves—more specifically here, through screen media and through new forms of social affiliation, such as digital media.

One hypothesis is that disconnection opens up a discursive arena and “a space for radical openness” (hooks), embraced by disenfranchised—in this case, those disenfranchised from the formal creative sector and also, more expansively, through social processes of racialisation. We will work with communities who seek to both challenge dominant racialised regimes of representations and also the established institutional (creative sector and beyond) arrangements that help to create and maintain unequal racialised outcomes. Here, we consider the potential for these communities to be regarded as what Fraser calls “subaltern counterpublics”. Fraser describes these, following Spivak’s notion of the ‘subaltern’ (1988) and Felski’s concept of ‘counterpublic’ (1989), as “where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser, 1992:123). As an extension to these “subaltern counterpublics”, we aim to unveil how social media can be considered as interruptive creative tools through and with which marginalised communities can create anti-racist counternarratives.
Community Partners

We have spent some time at the MayDay Reading rooms in London (Fleet Street) which is an active repository, resource and safe space for social movements, experimental and marginal cultures and their histories. Its holding dates back to the 1960s—and it is also an organising space for radical groups and collectives. June Givanni, whose pan African Cinema Archive is currently being stored there, is working with us to develop a knowledge-base around the activist-themed and motivated holdings in the archive. We have started similar discussions with other marginalised film archives and cultural activists.

In terms of digital, we have been in contact with some of the biggest arts, media, race, and power groups in the UK. We are planning to work with them to explore how social media influence their representation and how digital media have given them the tools to produce content that challenges dominant processes of racialisation. We plan to conduct interviews with filmmakers, digital producers and activists; organise workshops bringing together different screen producers; analyse Twitter and Facebook content to decipher the narratives that construct anti-racism discourses online; and design and deliver digital tools, such as virtual reality tools and augmented reality tools for and about the communities we are working with.

Timeline
Year 1 (2016-7)

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Building on a previous Connected Communities project (Places for All?), this strand will work alongside current and former food supply chain and distribution workers and community-based organisations in a provincial city in eastern England. It aims to learn more about worker creativity, agency, dignity assertion and resistance in the context of lean management regimes and struggles over urban citizenship.

Workforces in the food factories, retail distribution centres, horticultural fields and packhouses in eastern England have long included high proportions of international migrant workers. Workplaces on the edges of the city of Peterborough and in the Fens to its east have, since 2004, drawn many nationals of central and eastern European states recently acceded to the European Union. Building on an earlier agricultural tradition of gangmastering in the region, whereby gangs of workers were transported between fields and orchards for harvest work, most of the people currently working the industrialised food supply chain workplaces are hired by recruitment agencies that move workers from place to place according to variations in demand.

This hub of food supply chain employment is part of a larger national and international food industry structure whereby demand for workers emanates from large corporate retailers, which ‘[exert] their economic power over their myriad suppliers, pushing down wage rates and tightening job controls. The ‘lean’ workplace regimes identified with this retail food supply chain, also extend into food service (restaurants and catering) and, more generally, into distribution centres run by mail ordering businesses, such as Amazon (Beynon, 2016:311-2). Many Polish participants in a recent workplace ethnography in a UK food factory described the factory using the metaphor of a ‘labour camp’ (Lugosi et al, 2016:10). An interview-based study with workers in a contemporary Australian food warehouse similarly found a regime that was ‘temporally fast-paced with few opportunities for breaks, which were short and highly policed. Workers there described extreme forms of work intensification’ (Wise, 2016:484; see also Rogaly, 2008 on intensification in UK horticulture).

The UK national context for this strand of research is one of major political, ideological and policy change, following the majority vote in June 2016 to leave the European Union, and the importance given by the various leave campaigns, and subsequently by the UK government, to ending the free movement of workers from the EU. At the time of writing debates and negotiations are continuing about the residency status of non-British EU nationals already in the UK; meanwhile the referendum and its aftermath has also been associated with a spike in hate crimes against people assumed to be foreign nationals because of their accent, language or dress, as well as against minority ethnic British nationals (Burnett, 2016).

The wider political, economic and ideological context is likely to continue to change during the period of the research as the UK negotiates the terms of its exit from the EU, the policies and actions of the current US administration play out, and national elections are held in France and Germany.
This academic intervention will be located in literature that insists on connecting the analysis of places of employed and self-employed work with that of life beyond the work-place, including housing and other aspects of urban citizenship. In *Policing the Crisis*, Hall et al showed how in the 1970s and the preceding decades of black settlement in the UK,

[the residential concentration of the black immigrant population is one of the most significant features of their structural position... [It is in the] inner-city areas where, alone, relatively cheap housing, tenable in multi-occupancy fashion, was available in the early days as rented accommodation (2013[1978]: 338).

Discussion of ‘migrant workers’ in twenty-first century Peterborough by official and media sources has often focused on housing, with multiple-occupancy housing being associated with late-night noise, on-street drinking and accumulations of rubbish in front gardens (see, for example, Rutter, 2015:214-5). Our thematic analysis will thus further explore how much and in what ways:

i. recently arrived ‘migrant workers’ are effectively disenfranchised as citizens of the city (eg. in the absence of trade union organisation of food sector and distribution centre workers and with little representation in city decision-making fora beyond faith institutions and ethno-national community organisations);

ii. housing tenure, drinking and refuse disposal are viewed through the lens of culture rather than being linked to the anti-social shiftwork which is often a requirement employment in the food supply chain and distribution sectors; and

iii. newcomers’ experiences of the city are geographically differentiated.
Strand 2 — Creative Interruptions

Overview

This strand of Creative Interruptions is inspired by Berger and Mohr’s *A Seventh Man*, which achieved a critique of structural forces while retaining what John Holloway calls “a politics of dignity” (Holloway, 2010). Mohr’s black and white photographic images along with Berger’s writing (reporting speech based on visits to places people moved from, observations on journeys, workplaces and living quarters at the point of arrival together with many interviews), together evoke the subjectivities of people who migrated temporarily across borders. The strand will build on the oral history interviews co-produced with 76 people between 2011 and 2013 in the *Places for All?* project, including 61 life history interviews, to conduct new thematic analysis, including of workplace conditions, employment relations and forms of dignity assertion as well as resistance to harsh supervisory regimes, and to publish writing from this in the form of a book and/or academic journal article.

Eastern Europeans in the UK are caught up in the continuities of representation and governance emanating from the country’s colonial past

This strand is ground on which politics, economics and ideology interact. As Katharyne Mitchell puts it in her examination of the colonial histories underlying how, in the UK and in some other national contexts, “different groups attempt to influence and win control over the power to define, classify and manage difference... These processes are produced, contested and resisted in space’. The representations that emerge, she continues ‘[conflate] culture and race and [elide] structural constraints, which frequently work to uphold dominant white assumptions and privileges, as well as leading to economic gain for elites” (2014:70 and 77).

While many nationals of central and eastern European countries who come to work in eastern England may be regarded as and see themselves as ‘white’, Arat-Koc has argued that “‘in the post-cold War environment, East Europeans experience simultaneous inclusion and exclusion... The color line thus has clear, but ever-changing gradations of acceptance and privilege, based on geography and geopolitics, as well as on cultural classifications and struggles’” (2010:154, cited by Mitchell, 2014:85). Indeed, central and eastern Europeans in the UK are caught up in the continuities of representation and governance emanating from the country’s colonial past. In the words of Paul Gilroy, “‘[i]f today’s unwanted newcomers – from Brazil or Eastern Europe – are not actually postcolonials, they may still carry all the ambivalence of the vanished empire within them’” (2006, 31, cited by Back and Sinha, 2016:522).

Thus through new analysis of existing data, further academic and other writings, this strand will significantly extend the intervention made by *Places for All?* in the field of labour geography that
took the form of a co-edited themed issue of *Geoforum* (Buckley et al., 2017) and an article in the same issue. Building on four work-life histories co-produced with former food supply chain workers, Rogaly and Qureshi (2017) argued that narrating one’s story can itself be an important form of agency and co-produced knowledge that both evokes people’s own workplace moralities, and points away from a presentist social science tendency to categorise people according to their occupation at a particular point in time. This article also added to evidence of ethnicised hierarchies at work and competition over job roles and statuses in particular workplaces—something which has been shown to be missing in the work of labour geographers, who have tended to assume a unity of interests among workers in relation to capital in any given circumstance (see critiques by Featherstone, 2012, and by Hastings, 2016).

Further, at the time of writing meetings had already begun with current and former workers in Peterborough’s food supply chain and warehouse distribution sectors and with others involved in socially-engaged photography and film in the city to discuss the beginnings of the co-production of a series of short films, each involving a person who has worked in one or more parts of the industrialised food supply chain and/or distribution sectors and is currently resident in Peterborough. Here, we will build on the lessons of *Places for All?* in relation to co-production (see Rogaly, 2016a) as well as another previous Connected Communities project led by Andrew Flinn that conceived of co-production as involving “an over-arching recognition of the value inherent in the community owning their projects and controlling the production of their heritage.”

The strand’s film-making work will seek to build on lessons from that project in relation to “mismatched timelines’ which prevented [them] from creating starting points with [their] community partners and embedding co-production throughout the… project processes” (Flinn and Sexton, 2013:8 and 11). Initial discussions in Peterborough have stressed how the researcher and the film-maker will work around the constraints of anti-social work shifts and family commitments of the people who will be co-producing the work-life history films as subjects. The storyboards of these films are not being predefined by the project but will be worked on collaboratively with the individual research participants, a commissioned film-maker and the researcher. The intention is to enable current and former workers to be central to the creative elements of this work. In May 2017 *Metal* (Peterborough) will host a dinner to be attended by twenty people to enable a collective discussion among potential subjects of the films and invited photographers and film-makers from Peterborough, including Chris Porsz, author of *Reunions* (2016) and *New England*. This network and community-building event will also form the basis for the organisation of a live event co-devised and produced with research participants later in the life of the strand.
Research Approaches

The ongoing structural uncertainties of the late 2010s make it more appropriate than ever to see research as a process “whereby we are confounded and dislocated, where there are no easy answers…” (Herising 2005:148). This strand continues a process of research that, inspired by the oral historian Alessandro Portelli 1991 (1981), aims for equality through challenging hierarchical research practices and working against the idea of the all-knowing expert researcher. This is part of avoiding the tendency of academics not to question the ways in which higher education institutions can reproduce and perpetuate wider societal inequalities (see Rogaly and Taylor, 2015).

Rather than conducting research on any person or group, the research ethos of this strand involves a process of mutual accompaniment between the researcher and other participants, which may potentially include the transformation of all concerned (Rogaly, 2016a). Seeing research as always contested and in dialogue with wider structural processes of change usefully denaturalises it. This necessarily involves transparency about the research process. In Portelli’s words, the work of oral historians should contain the dialogic history of its making, and the experience of its makers. Let it show how historians themselves grow, change and stumble through the research and the encounter with other subjects. Speaking about the ‘other’ as a subject is far from enough, until we see ourselves as subjects among others and we place time in ourselves and ourselves in time (1991[1981]: 76) (see also Rogaly, 2016b).

Vernacular creativity: Similar motivations lie behind the concerns of this strand with the idea of ‘vernacular creativity’ (Edensor et al, 2010). As Edensor and his colleagues point out, in current conceptualisations, members of the creative class possess the appropriate qualities for producing creative work or products of value… Such an emphasis is shrouded in a particular set of middle-class values, and the implication persists that differently positioned social groups lack the necessary creative skills, cultural tastes and
competencies to effectively operate within the creative economy, and even more, that there is a creative class – and therefore other classes that are not creative (2010:6).

In contrast, the concept of ‘vernacular creativity’ that these authors elaborate opposes the kind of cultural imperialism that values certain forms of creative expression over others (Young, 1991). Many current and former food supply chain and warehouse distribution workers interviewed as part of the Places for All? project spoke about channeling their creativity outside the workplace (see also Rancière, 1989) yet the residential fieldwork and interviews with council officers and local voluntary organisations suggested that this had only rarely been recognised or valued by Peterborough’s arts programmers or national arts organisations working in the city. Problematising the terms ‘migrant worker’ and ‘marginalised community’.

Problematising the terms ‘migrant worker’ and ‘marginalised community’: The strand builds on the challenge made by a key output of the Places for All? project to taken-for-granted meanings of ‘migration’ and ‘migrant worker’ (Rogaly, 2015). Drawing on critical scholarship in the mobilities paradigm, Rogaly explored how class inequality and racisms structured the degree to which differently located people were in a position to choose whether to move or stay still. Alongside this, bringing ‘internal’ and ‘international’ migration, together he sought to expand who was considered to be a ‘migrant’, and thus create greater possibility for solidarity, for experiencing workplaces as sources of common experiences of oppression and exploitation and thus for united action (see also Schiller and Caglar, 2015). Rogaly argued further that people did not necessarily choose to be defined or categorised by a move of residence or country that they had once made.

The very term ‘migrant worker’ can be a form of epistemic violence, something which is also possible from labelling people as ‘marginal’, ‘marginalised’ or belonging to a ‘marginalised community’. The latter seems to take for granted the hegemonic location of centre and margins, including in relation to educational hierarchies, rather than asking questions, as for example Killian and Wolf do, regarding “which subjects can occupy the centre and which subjects are relegated to the margins: Who can appropriate the space to claim the position of the I/here? And who is displaced as a result of it?” (2016:6). Without such questions writing of ‘marginalised communities’ is akin to what John Holloway refers to as a ‘politics of poverty’ through which “[p]eople are understood not as doers, but as victims: poor people” (Holloway, 2010: 59).

Another reason why ‘migrant worker’ is problematic is its very contingency. This was made evident in two classic works in English on migration published in the 1970s, Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order (Hall et al, 2013[1978]) and A Seventh Man (Berger and Mohr, 2010[1975]). Both books emphasise the structural causes of migration, of people’s experiences in the countries they moved to for work, and how workers from elsewhere fitted the destination countries’ need for ‘a reserve army of labour’.

Yet, taken together, they show that the meaning of migration for work in the 1960s and 1970s varied greatly across different national contexts within Europe. In Germany at the time, where many of Mohr’s photographs were taken for A Seventh Man, the arrival of people from southern
European countries and from Turkey, was temporary. These were guest workers, staying for a limited period, who returned home, even if they would later seek to go back again. Hall and his colleagues showed through their work in Handsworth, Birmingham and elsewhere in the UK, that black Caribbean and south Asian people only became ‘migrant workers’ when immigration law was changed to restrict the access of Commonwealth citizens, who were in fact ‘settlers’ rather than migrants (2013[1978]:337; see also Sivanandan, 1976). By the time Policing the Crisis was written, ‘migrant workers’, including “some southern European labour[…] form[ed] the permanent basis of the modern industrial reserve army” (2013[1978]:373, emphasis in original).

THE BREXIT EFFECT

Brexit negotiations are likely to change even more the discussions around migration in the UK.

Following the UK’s 2016 Brexit referendum, it is particularly important to stress that while “immigrant and especially undocumented workers, are both more likely to be victims of workplace abuse, as well as less likely to context workplace violations” and their experiences thus “provide a crucial window into the origins and institutionalisation of precarity, […] they also commonly reflect the experiences of native-born communities as well’ (Paret and Gleeson, 2016:277 and 282, emphasis added). The impacts of the strand both as creative interruption, and in contributing to knowledge about the food supply chain and distribution warehouse employment, workers’ responses to these, and struggles over urban citizenship are likely to be greater if research in the strand connects with these wider commonalities, as well as ethnicised hierarchies and racisms in and beyond the workplace.
Community Partners

There are no formal community partners in this strand. However, the strand is working with and alongside Metal (Peterborough), Peterborough Racial Equality Council, and Peterborough Archives Service, as well as individual Peterborough residents and arts practitioners, building on close working relationships established during the *Places for All?* project.

Timeline
Year 1 (2016-7)

- **Ethical approval & Contract**
- **Photographer**
- **Meetings with participants & photography work**
- **Literature Review, Data analysis and Writing**
CREATIVE CONNECTIONS AND CIVIL RIGHTS: CO-PRODUCING MEMORIES AND CONNECTING THE DISCONNECTED THROUGH COMMUNITY THEATRE

How do those ‘on the margins’ make meaning through creativity? This question will be addressed specifically, in the practice of this strand, to the development of co-created community theatre it envisages. But more broadly, in the histories of civil rights struggles in Northern Ireland that this project will examine, the question will be addressed to the ways in which marginalised groups in NI used artistic practices—from song, to visual art, to comic strips, to agitprop, to radio—to challenge oppression fifty years ago.

The archival research and theatre-as-research approaches engaged by this strand will uncover new knowledge regarding how excluded communities agitate(d) for social change through the arts. It will connect communities, not to the ‘centre’ but across the peripheries, and develop further—through a sustained engagement with existing AHRC and other research on co-creation and participation through the arts—a model for ethically supporting critical practice in community theatre through ‘non-corrective’ interventions with marginalised groups. Community theatre can have the capacity to move “participants towards being visible where previously they were not” (Mienczakowski, 1997:170). This project will ask how visibility and voice can be found through theatre, and thus how theatre can perform as research.

This strand explores past (1960s Civil Rights) and emerging (rights struggles now - LGBT, women’s, migrant) moments of creativity and instances of possible ‘empowerment’, but also how these moments, in turn, can ‘successfully’ destabilise dominant structures.

The performance and scholarly outputs of the work will produce a ‘nothing-about-us-without-us’ approach to the project, with academic and creative outputs alike subject to dialogue and debate during and after the production/publication process. In doing so, the work will attend to some of the wider Creative Interruptions project questions:

i. To what extent does co-produced research act as a creative, interrupting, destabilising and equal process? What is the role of this research in the academy and how can it work as ‘lived theory’?

and

ii. How can connecting disconnections facilitate new and enabling bonds between communities at the peripheries?

Our Creative Interruptions Research Development project (AH/M006069/1), with Greenwich Inclusion Project pledged to connect “different stakeholders working in contexts of alterity and exclusion” and “enable an interrogation of the ethical concerns regarding researcher reflexivity” (RQ4). These too are an integral part of the project conceptualisation that will be scoped further through the research and creative processes.
Our co-produced play, exhibition and education pack, will facilitate diverse communities in using creativity to discuss contemporary and historic civil rights issues; they will also help us develop academic knowledge on the history of the civil rights period, its relevance today, and the uses of artistic forms in political action by disenfranchised communities then and now; and they will enable a critical and reflexive study of co-creative processes and theatre as research. We envisage this research playing a part in timely debates emerging from the 50th anniversary of the Northern Irish Civil Rights movement, having a public impact through professional theatre and community/school performances, and the creation of educational resources. It will also add to academic knowledge: in Irish cultural history, methodologies in theatre-as-research and Boalian theatre/co-production. Our arising research questions for Strand 3, based on the wider project research questions, are:

i. What are the creative and artistic strategies that disconnected communities employ to resist structures of power they consider oppressive? What are the historical lessons learnt from past arts-led ‘interruptions’, and how did the local relate to the global (US Civil Rights, Paris ’68, 1960s British left activism, Anglo-American popular culture etc.)

ii. What is the emerging knowledge from current theatrical ‘interruptions’; how has community theatre in Northern Ireland facilitated such ‘interruptions’?

iii. To what extent does co-produced theatre-as-research act as a creative, interrupting, destabilising and equal process? What is the role of this research in the academy and how can it work as ‘lived theory’?

iv. How can connecting disconnections—across time, across diverse communities—facilitate new and enabling bonds between communities at the peripheries?
Strand 3
Overview

The strand, ‘Creatively Connecting Civil Rights’, will involve the production of a play with renowned playwright Martin Lynch (Green Shoot Productions), on the subject of Civil Rights Then and Today. Its production is provisionally scheduled for March 2018, and will broadly coincide with the 50th anniversary of the foundation of NICRA—Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association—and the activities of the civil rights movement generally, and it is our intention to produce the play with a core group of professional actors (around seven) and a wider group of community actors (around twenty). Though the subject of the play will be the Civil Rights Movement here 50 years ago, we want to include actors (and themes)—not only as performers, but co-creators and collaborators (i.e. helping shape the script)—from communities struggling for civil rights here today. Specifically, we are working with immigrant/refugee, women’s rights and LGBT groups, and we have already completed work with a group of Afghan and Somali refugees in London as part of another, related, 2015 community theatre project. The activities will also create an exhibition and education pack, and parts of the evolving play will be used for Boalian performances in schools and cross-community venues.

Our research will constitute an ‘art-as-research’ intervention using peer-research techniques in which creative practices and processes become part of the research. The project takes its lead from methodologies assessed in studies by, for instance, Denzin (1997), Mienczakowski (1997), Houston, Magill, McCollum and Spratt (2001), Sliep and Meyer-Weitz (2003), Conrad (2004), and Sawyer and Norris (2013), but its range, ambition, and innovation—in terms of temporal and contextual comparisons, interdisciplinarity and the potential for learning in the interplay between text, performance, audience, theatre professionals and disenfranchised communities—presents considerable potential for further fruitful insights.

Community theatre can have the capacity to move ‘participants towards being visible where previously they were not’

Community theatre can have the capacity to move “participants towards being visible where previously they were not” (Mienczakowski, 1997:170), and part of the aim of this research is to assess the impact of the public performance elements (including the performances in schools, community venues, and recorded for the exhibition) on participants’ sense of visibility.

This will include an engagement with Boalian methods as research. Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed (1979), its inspiration in Brecht and Friere, has correspondence with the uses of theatre since the early 1970s in Northern Ireland (see Bill McDonnell, 2008), by community activists and organisations campaigning for political change, among them the practitioner/writer
engaged by this project, Martin Lynch. Conrad’s (2004) work points to the intersection between participatory research and popular theatre methodologies, entailing “shared ownership of the research process and community-based analysis of issues, all with an orientation toward community action”. The ways in which theatre ‘deepens’ the research, enables relationships between academics and communities, co-produces knowledge, facilitates connections between disenfranchised communities and articulates powerful counter-hegemonic narratives will be considered in the research through recording, observation and contextualisation within the literature.

‘Participation’ and ‘co-creation’ are deeply problematic terms for the academy. “The terminology surrounding arts participation is in a state of flux” as Alan S. Brown et al. observe; “there is no generally accepted set of terms to describe arts participation, but an evolving lexicon of words and phrases that describe how people encounter and express their creative selves and share in the creativity of others” (2011). The term ‘co-creation’, which we have used to describe our planned work, is still arguably quite elusive and continually evolving, yet as Ben Walmsley notes “the definitions provided in the literature do coalesce around a number of key ideas: collaboration, interaction, invention, experience, value and exchange.” He later adds ‘agency’ to this list (Walmsley, 2013:109). For many scholars and arts professionals across global contexts, and following the lead of practitioners such as Boal, the democratisation of process entailed by these ideas supplants, or at least qualifies, the traditional liberal humanist focus on individual creativity—and indeed artistic ‘excellence’.

Conrad provides an overview of research in this area that might inform the reasoning behind and approaches to the use of Boalian/theatre-as-research methods in our work. Conrad writes of participatory research that:

As research “for,” “with” and “by” the people rather than “on” the people, [it] seeks to break down the distinction between researchers and researched - the subject/object relationship of traditional research instead creating a subject/subject relationship. Ideally, participants are involved in the research process from beginning to end, in the attainment, creation, and dissemination of knowledge. (2004)

Sarah Banks and the Durham Community Research Team produced a scoping study in 2011 on the subject of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). In it they write that

By ‘participatory’ we mean some degree of active involvement of a range of community stakeholders in research design, process and implementation (e.g. as research commissioners, advisory group members, co-researchers or peer researchers). In projects with ‘deep participation’, ownership lies with the community rather than outside researchers (2012).

In their survey of the literature on CBPR, Banks et al. note that it “is often claimed to be inherently more ‘ethical’ (meaning ethically good) than so-called ‘traditional’ research in which there is alleged to be a clearer distinction between researchers and researched”; that CBPR is “more ethically-aware because it takes greater account of issues of power, rights and responsibilities and the roles of all stakeholders” and “more egalitarian and democratic, based on respect for and partnership with community members”. However, it is also commonly acknowledged that CBPR entails complex relationships of power and accountability and hence raises distinctive ethical challenges relating to developing/maintaining
partnerships, difficulties in maintaining anonymity and blurred boundaries between researcher and researched (2012).

We are acutely aware that “CBPR promises a move away from the “outside expert” and tokenistic involvement, placing emphasis on negotiating and developing relationships in specific cultural/spatial/political/historical contexts” (2012). How will theatre affect this process? How can a fusion of participatory theatrical and co-production methodologies enhance the research and the experience for participants within it?

Robert Walker acknowledges, in The Shame of Poverty (2014), how stigma, depression and isolation amongst those on the margins often result in creative interruptions that invert the alienating terms of oppression:

An alternative positive response, which […] features as a repeated theme in world literature, is for the people targeted by the stigma to reject the analysis into the fuel of protest […] with] some groups turning the stigma into a badge of pride with Gay Pride, ‘Black is beautiful’, and even the Black Panthers serving as examples. Historical examples include trade unions and the vanguard working class (2014:64).

In other words, disenfranchised groups repeatedly find strength in alterity, in the othering of their oppression. Fundamentally this process entails an act of creativity, a transformative reconfiguration, which ironises the othering process—which reverses the polarity of its terms. Implicit in such an act is not only an awareness then, of the malleability of language, but also of the importance of creativity, of imaginative acts, in creating social transformation, in exploding myths and challenging stereotypes.
Research Approaches

This strand links dynamically with both our Creative Interruptions Research Development Award (AH/M006069/1), Where do I belong?, and the other strands in the current wider project. Following on the learning outcomes of this development phase, ‘Creatively Connecting Civil Rights’ will seek to ‘connect disconnections’ across diverse socio-political and historical contexts as a means of linking communities of the politically marginalised and exploring the purchase of imagined and actual solidarities in processes of counter-hegemonic formation.

This strand will examine how such links can act as catalysts for change, fora for the communication of submerged narratives, and opportunities to develop new knowledge in how communities of the marginalised cultivate commonalities through creative practice. It will also learn from the critical lessons of the development phase in terms of supporting excluded groups through more sustained and meaningful resource provision, more fully integrated, local academic engagement from start to finish and a greater sense of reflexivity in terms of the conceptualisation of ‘co-creative’ practices.

As with our Palestinian film strand (4), strand 3 will investigate the validity of Conrad’s assertion: “what better way to study lived experience than by re-enacting it” (2004), assessing the potential—so evident in our development phase—of dramatic techniques calculated to communicate narratives of exclusion and oppression. If, as Johannes Fabian observes, certain experiences evade the confines of traditional methods and can only be called up “through action, enactment, or performance” (2014:11), then this strand will ask what role co-creation in creative arts practice can play in connecting, communicating and empowering marginal subjectivities to challenge the ‘centre’. Like strand 5 on submerged Indian histories and strand 2 on migrant workers and vernacular creativity, it will seek to connect ‘alienated contexts across time and socio-cultural boundaries’, connecting communities and scholarship in creative practice.

As with the other Creative Interruptions strands, Creatively Connecting Civil Rights will employ and reflect on co-creative and participatory arts methodologies, placing critical awareness and democratic practice at the heart of its activities, and tackling concerns about researcher reflexivity and academic hierarchies head-on. This work, as other research strands, will thus produce ‘creative reflections on creativity’, our wider project’s collective creative outputs (drama, song, visual arts, film, digital creation, dance) are fully integrated with and focussed on answering our central research questions regarding the role of creativity in counter-hegemonies.
of the excluded. As it is also indirectly concerned with the legacy of Irish Partition, this strand will also connect with a common theme of all five strands: border crossings and Third Spaces (Bhabha), the marginal as a space for ‘radical openness’ (hooks) in intellectual cultures and community self-creation. Creatively Connecting Civil Rights will ask how community theatre and humanities co-creation can build (and have built) solidarities across the margins, refusing the limitations of socially, politically and geographically imposed divisions and disconnections.

IRELAND NOW

Given the volume and viciousness of recent racist attacks in Belfast—many of them in areas in which loyalist paramilitaries have considerable control—“it is not surprising that racism has now been noted to be a problem in Northern Ireland, with increasing reports of racist attacks in the media and some media sources even stating that Northern Ireland is ‘the hate crime capital of Europe’” (Hamilton, Bloomer and Potter, 2015:75). As recent campaigns (such as that around equal marriage) have highlighted, NI also has a particularly intense climate of homophobia when compared with other regions on these islands; progressive legislation (including that which followed the widely publicised Marriage Equality referendum in the Republic of Ireland in 2015), which has been implemented in recent decades across Britain and the rest of Ireland, has been resisted locally through legal cases and often incendiary political manoeuvres. Many local politicians regularly espouse homophobic views—and LGBTQ issues deeply implicated with sectarian politics.

Across issues of migrant, LGBTQ, and women’s rights, contemporary civil rights debates are intricately related to the civil rights issues of 50 years ago, where sectarian inequalities in Northern Ireland fomented an armed conflict that lasted over thirty years. In this way, the tensions explored by the historical research that will be conducted by this project are still pressing in the contemporary civil rights issues it broaches today and moreover, a timely creative interruption of the commemorative discourses that suggest Civil Rights is an issue synonymous with past rather than present politics.
Community Partners

This strand will work with a number of communities and partners. Some of them are: Green Shoot Productions, Markets Development Association, Rainbow Project, Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Women’s Resource and Development Agency, and Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group.

Timeline
Year 1 (2016-7)
CINEMATIC INTERRUPTIONS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR REPRESENTATION IN THE CASE OF PALESTINE

The right of a people to represent themselves has been a key concern for anti-colonial and anti-racist movements. “If imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression,” as Amilcar Cabral has highlighted, “national liberation is necessarily an act of culture” (1970). For Palestine, the attempt to erase and diminish Palestinian culture and history was carried out systematically by the Zionist regime, who sought to either destroy or appropriate Palestinian culture and heritage. As Theodore Herzl stated: “If I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish before I construct” (1941:38). The 1948 Nakba not only saw the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians from their lands but also the confiscation of both public and private libraries and cultural collections—one example of this is documented in The Great Book Robbery that traces the theft of both private and public Palestinian libraries by the Israeli government.

As Memmi pointed out in his seminal text The Coloniser and the Colonised, one effect of colonisation is the elimination of the colonised’s culture (1974). Settler colonialism as Patrick Wolfe has noted “destroys in order to replace” as such the struggle against colonialism involves both the retrieval of lost histories as well as the development of new and vibrant indigenous cultures (2006:388). The struggle to maintain and develop a cinematic culture in and for Palestine has been an inherent part of the struggle for Palestinian national liberation. This research will trace the struggle to retrieve and develop a cinematic culture in Palestine and for Palestinians, exploring the achievements as well as the difficulties and barriers that have been experienced through this process.

Strand 4 does not aim to produce a history of Palestinian cinema but will investigate the ways in which filmmakers have struggled to use cinema to speak of Palestinian experience and how the barriers to creating such cinema have been creatively overcome. We will consider how creative practitioners have sought support for cinematic projects and how they have negotiated institutional and financial support systems in order to speak, both in Palestine and abroad. The establishment and running of Palestine Film Festivals and their role in providing a forum for critical appreciation and analysis, forms part of the research too.
In engaging with audiences in the UK and documenting the ways in which Palestinian films have been exhibited we will explore the ways in which Palestine solidarity networks have worked to interrupt hegemonic representations of Palestine and the Middle East, amongst a variety of audiences.

The Cinematic Interruptions in the struggle for representation in the case of Palestine strand’s arising questions therefore are:

i. How does Palestinian cinema articulate the dreams, histories, memories, experiences and struggles of the Palestinian people?

ii. What are the obstacles it has encountered in production and exhibition?

iii. How has Palestinian Cinema been understood by audiences in the UK?
Strand 4

Overview

While post-colonial cinema studies has primarily explored the contexts of societies that have won at least nominal political liberation, where an actual geographical space supports the nurturing of cultural development, for Palestine the production of culture has had to act as a tool to cement and unify a fragmented population that has been denied access to a national territory, suffering exile, occupation, violence and disenfranchisement. As such, culture has acted to provide expression of the Palestinian plight, and create a framework in which history and experience can be shared to provide narratives of nationhood that support the struggle for national liberation. Palestinian Cinema is no doubt ‘a stateless cinema’ with the most serious national consequences as Dabashi asserts; seeking to make visible a people and their culture fractured by the experience of settler, colonialism and exile, constantly seeking to make visible their invisibility.

This has meant that Palestinian cinema has not just needed to play a role in creating cultural tradition and history, but that it has also been forced to be outward facing—a cinematic culture that has needed to speak to and engage the international community as much as Palestinians. While all cinema speaks to a wider audience, cinema has often been used to ‘brand’ a country and has acted as a ‘soft power’ tool for national governments. For Palestinians cinema has played a crucial role in asserting that they exist. It has often been a cry from the heart—a form of cultural creativity to speak of the Palestinian plight, to raise awareness and challenge the Zionist narratives of history and contemporary conflict.

The unique environment of exile in Palestinian cinema has meant that while the number of film makers within the boundaries of historic Palestine and outside have increased, there is no national body to represent their interests. So if “National culture is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong” (Fanon) for Palestinians it is a culture (especially after the collapse of the PLO Film Unit in 1982) that has developed from its citizens, embracing a diversity of experience and often expressing an urgency to communicate internationally.

Palestinian cinema by its very nature is situated on the margins. It acts to consciously assert that Palestinians exist. “Making these films is like unconsciously making documents that can be kept in history and keep your case alive. It’s a way of resistance”, argues Hany Abu Asad. By exploring the struggle to produce films as well as reflecting on the constraints within which film makers have worked we can better understand the creativity that has been employed in these artistic products as well as their interruptive nature.
Research Approaches

This strand will have three research approaches. One will be based on historical investigative methods, which will be formed partly by archival research and partly by oral testimony methods. This first approach will aim to collect evidence and memories of Palestine film culture and the ways in which post-1980s films and controversies surrounding them have been discussed. It will also aim to collect stories about struggles encountered in film production, distribution and exhibition.

The second research approach will be formed by focus groups, surveys and action research. The objective of this approach is to explore through experience the problems and difficulties encountered in trying to exhibit Palestinian cinema and to consider how they can be overcome and to understand how a range Palestinian films have been understood diverse audiences.

Finally, we plan to use art as research. A group of four Palestinian film makers will work together to agree four narratives following the sharing of research carried out in the first year, to interrogate the experience and concerns of Palestinian film making. Through practice, the films will reflect on the achievements and struggles to use film to make the Palestinian voice heard. By bringing four film makers whose experiences will reflect the diversity of Palestinian experience we hope to symbolically interrupt the fragmentation of Palestinian experience and create a space that enables critical reflection on their engaged craft.

In these ways co-creation will be evident both in co-creating research on audiences (with SPACE), and through the short reflective essays on Palestinian film making, which will be developed collaboratively between the researchers and the film makers—while permitting the film makers’ creative freedom in the production phase. We also hope to interrogate ideas about co-production through stories collected on filmmakers’ experiences.
## Community Partners

Our community partners are FilmLab Palestine, a non-profit company established in 2014, and based in the Old Town of Ramallah, Palestine. Inspired by personal experience to empower Palestinian youth in refugee camps in Jordan to tell their own personal history and document their collective memory through film art, the Film Lab uses international models of public and private partnerships to effectively promote film art and film culture in Palestine with the greater aspiration to create a productive, dynamic film industry in Palestine.

We are also working with Sheffield Palestine Cultural Exchange to share and advance our research.

### Timeline

**Year 1 (2016-7)**

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<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
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<th>JAN</th>
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<tr>
<td>Literature review &amp; Desk research</td>
<td>Re-establishing community partner &amp; creative director</td>
<td>FilmLab appointed as community partner</td>
<td>First phase of research work in Ramallah</td>
<td>Audience research in Sheffield</td>
<td>Appoint a researcher in Ramallah</td>
<td>Reflection on the first phase and visit to Ramallah</td>
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**Strand 4 — Creative Interruptions**
ALONG THE GRAND TRUNK ROAD: DISCONNECTED HERITAGE AND MEMORY IN POST-PARTITION PUNJAB

This strand is focussed on using arts and humanities-led research to investigate and interrogate forms of cultural amnesia in a partitioned Punjab. The cultural amnesia relates to the deemphasis of history, memory, culture and material evidence of non-Sikh communities in East Punjab (this most clearly relates to Muslims who live or lived in East Punjab). The hypothesis of this research is that current creative and syncretic practices in daily life, worship and informal settings offer a powerful way of investigating how the material and cultural partitioning of cultures and regions operate.

The values of this research are based in working with a range of people with a direct investment in remembering, living in, or working on, ideas of ‘Punjab’. This ranges from small local organisations in Punjab interested in heritage to national-level bodies and international scholars.

As part of the basis of this work is historical, it relates to the contemporary moment by helping to unpick the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of certain cultural conditions in Punjab. For example, why is Mughal-era heritage relatively neglected? What are the barriers to better Sikh-Muslim relations in the region?

The impact of this strand will primarily be in:

i. Using arts and humanities research to influence policy relating to heritage in Amritsar, a city close to the border with Pakistan which hosts the world’s first museum of partition (due to its own importance in hosting refugees as well as being evacuated of the majority of its Muslim residents), as well as being the spiritual centre of Sikhism. A major impact has already been achieved here as we were able to co-write part of an Amritsar Municipal tender document for development in the city to include a community arts and heritage component. This is connected to the Government of India HRIDAY City Scheme.

ii. Using arts and humanities research in conjunction with artisans, writers and musicians to explore how art in the region has historically embodied syncretic traditions. This knowledge and practice can be used to develop new forms of arts practice to reinvestigate and reimagine what it means to have access to multiple heritages in today’s Punjab.
The objectives here are to:

i. Produce original academic research related to Punjab and partition;
ii. Host workshops for academic and non-academic audiences;
iii. Develop and curate community events with tangible outputs (such as an exhibition or materials for future workshops);
iv. A suite of online materials to archive the project as well as initiate avenues for future discussion.

The arising research questions of the Along the Grand Trunk Road strand are linked to the disconnected heritage and memory in post-partition Punjab. The main questions are:

i. Investigate partition as an ongoing form of disconnection and division which has an impact on cultural memory and heritage.

ii. How can arts and humanities research on Punjab and partition help to interrogate heritage policy and management today?

iii. What are the problems/opportunities in generating more inclusive and democratic approaches to understanding partition in the context of heritage?
Strand 5 — Creative Interruptions

Overview

Critics and historians of Sikh history have pointed to the ways in which Sikh religious identity has become grounded in historical moments of conflict which have been used as the foundations for sometimes competing national imaginaries for the Indian Punjabi state, an ideological agenda which reached its height in the 1980s and 1990s with the violent aftermath of Indira Gandhi’s assassination (Singh, 2004; Ballantyne, 2006; Murphy, 2012). Sikh political and cultural domination in the Punjab has enabled policy decisions which have neglected the complex and discontinuous religious and cultural history of the Punjab, especially in built history, in favour of Sikh sites and monuments that draw inspiration from Mughal-era architecture but were Sikh-associated (Glover, 2012).

This has resulted in a highly commemorative landscape in Punjab, focusing on the instantiation of Sikh history within the territory of the state. This commemorative landscape was, however, made possible only by the prior partition of the previously defined Punjabi state in 1947: when the British relinquished sovereign control to South Asians, they left behind the two, not one, independent nation-states of India and Pakistan (later, Pakistan and Bangladesh). The partition of the province was accompanied by tremendous violence and a massive population transfer, as Muslims in east Punjab and contiguous regions sought refuge in the Pakistani Punjab, and many Hindus and Sikhs from what was now the Pakistan-side relocated to the newly formed Indian republic. It is only in this reconfigured world that the memorial projects thus mentioned could proceed, excising memory of that which was lost at Partition, as well as the continuing dimensions of a more complicated religious life that persists at the periphery in Punjab.

‘Cultural heritage’ along the Indian-Pakistani border through Punjab has thus been both enabled and repressed by the partition of 1947. The violence of partition is itself under-remembered: while there have been scholarly attempts to address the history of the violence, there are no memorials or popular sites of memory dedicated to it in Punjab or Delhi.
partition heritage sites which are not predominantly Sikh in their cultural significance. On the Pakistan side, Islamicising programmes in the post-colonial Pakistani state (usually under the patronage of non-democratically elected military regimes) have pursued a policy of erasure of non-Islamic elements of the region’s shared past, emphasising a shared Islamic heritage at the core of Pakistani identity in keeping with the two-nation theory that lay as a founding principle of the state. This is indeed one of the controversies associated with the Punjabi language movement in Pakistan: the perception that pro-Punjabi activism would undermine the two-nation justification for Pakistan and establish unwanted cross-religious relationships.

Nationalising discourses thus have silenced those memories that do not figure into broader national narratives. Yet they can also be subverted in important ways, through physical sites and cultural practices on both sides of the India-Pakistan border that gesture towards that which has been lost—that is, the cultural whole that was the cultural region of Punjab before Partition—alongside forces that deny such connections.

In the wake of the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, the creep of colonial infrastructure facilitated the work of a diverse range of administrators, archaeologists, travellers and various kinds of amateur scholars, who sought to compile, categorise and understand this religiously and linguistically diverse region. The borders of Punjab would change dramatically throughout the colonial period, finally leading to partition in 1947 when the new national border between Indian and Pakistan was used to cut through diverse communities that had historically characterised the area. Recent scholarship on the broad idea of Punjabiyat or ‘Punjabiness’ practices a historiography that reads past partition to understand the ways in which cultural practice, memory and identity persist post-partition. Although Punjabi is a language shared by a number of faiths and cultures, studies of the history of Punjabi language and its management have demonstrated how it has become increasingly synonymous with the Sikh faith (Mir, 2010). Faith, rather than language, acted as the axiom of difference when it came to constructing the basis of new national imaginaries.

Connecting narratives across geographical contexts has made a powerful impact on contemporary literary scholarship, but it does raise questions about the relevancy and importance of this medium in areas like Punjab which have had exceptionally low rates of literacy. Farina Mir has argued that oral performance allowed Punjabi literary cultures to develop outside the formal and informal apparatuses of colonial power (Mir, 2010), especially as Urdu persisted as the official language of colonial administration in the area. By analysing the transition from oral culture to print culture this discussion offers an overview of a partial and incomplete project to variously transcribe, translate, curate and analyse a version of ‘common’ Punjabi culture conventionally divorced from official literary contexts.

The distinction between folklore and literary studies becomes important for the context of Punjab precisely because Punjabi was positioned as the vernacular or ‘folk’ language of an area which had a rich history of oral and literary material in Punjabi, albeit published in a variety of local scripts including Shahmukhi and Gurmukhi. Through the instituting of Urdu as the official

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**Faith, rather than language, acted as the axiom of difference when it came to constructing the basis of new national imaginaries**
language of government, Punjabi was relegated from literary culture as its legitimacy as the most commonly spoken language in region was undermined. According to Farina Mir, this created a social space for Punjabi's print cultures and performed literary cultures to develop and circulate with relative autonomy from the kind of colonial influence and regulation seen in other South Asian languages: ‘Punjabi literary culture offers, therefore, a particular instance of stability through a period usually marked for its ruptures, as people and institutions traversed the divide between precolonial and colonial rule’ (Mir, 2010: 4). In the context of this strand, the 'oral' goes beyond oral histories or discussions of the past: oral transmission is seen as an ongoing archive, negotiation and imagination of ‘Punjabiness’.

Strand 5 is one of three (also 3 and 4) that are based in regions that have experienced partition. Partition is a significant way in which the project understands division and disconnection. The ‘radical openness’ of this strand is based on remembering a larger, whole, connected Punjab that can foster imaginative, cultural and historical bridges between communities that have been divided. Its creative practice is based on interrupting dominant discourses at heritage sites in Amritsar and engagement with oral/literary traditions that continue to embody practices and stories of a 'connected' Punjab. Digital methods are used as a potential avenue for creating tools in preserving and engaging with intangible heritage.
Research Approaches

The past decade has offered more nuanced methodological approaches to understanding the relevancy of different kinds of discourse for South Asian literary research. Multi-disciplinary approaches based in literary studies have illuminated a series of networks of influence and impact across the Empire.¹ However, the study of colonial Indian literary culture continues to be divided between disciplines including history, English-based literary studies and South Asian studies. In a recent special edition of *Victorian Literature and Culture* Mary Ellis Gibson summarised the problem with discussing English writing in the context of India: “which Victorian India? Whose Victorian India?” (Gibson, 2014:325). This line of questioning could be taken further in order to consider what counts as fictional writing, and how useful the term ‘literary’ is in this context. Sukanya Bannerjee’s *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (2010) is a good example of this issue as it considers literary sources alongside governmental sources and historical material to offer a different kind of framing for literary culture that relies on Hayden White’s theorisations of narrative. The strength of this view is its approach to seeking similar levels of cultural value between a variety of discursive types; Patrick Brantlinger argues against sceptical reaction of historians to postcolonial literary studies: “a literary text is just as much fact as a government document […] It may even be epistemologically more reliable than a government document” (Brantlinger, 2009: 56). Gayatri Gopinath’s *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (2005) is another example of a recent critical study which weaves together colonial-era texts with Bollywood films and Caribbean texts to queer the understanding of race and sexuality by deliberately writing around existing historical genealogies. Part of the impact of transperipheral research has been to disrupt disciplinary conventions, especially in the literary and historical study of empire, alongside an interest in, “narratives that trace historical ruptures rather than teleological trajectories” (Gibson, 2014: 325).

Transperipheral research is imperative for connecting the project to other histories and challenges surrounding race, empire, religion and marginalised forms of creativity. From this basis, the project works to apply its research by working with local groups of musicians, artisans, activists, and community groups who have a vested interest in marginalised or interrupted histories and genealogies. One example of this is a collaboration with Preet Nagar, a utopian modernist literary collective outside Amritsar that used literature as one vehicle for challenging social marginalisation, as well as engaging in politics. This collective suffered heavily after the violence of partition but has been reformed to offer residencies for artists who want to explore creative practice as a research tool. Methods in literary and historical analysis will also underpin approaches to oral history collection and working to unpick the ‘validity’ of some heritages over others through memory studies and postcolonial studies.

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¹ An excellent example of this has been *Making Britain: South Asian Visions of Home and Abroad, 1870-1950*.
Existing research practice and expertise, especially from Durham will be used: https://www.dur.ac.uk/socialjustice/toolkits/. CRCI has a long-standing reputation for fostering grassroots approaches to understanding and developing heritage and conservation projects in India and it is imperative that this expertise is respected. The nature of our collaboration involves thinking about what we can learn from each other, and what kinds of challenges are posed in the field today. To take this discussion further, there was a three day workshop in Amritsar in December 2016 to begin an open consultation about the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the project. This involved international experts (including Amareswar Galla, the director of the Institute for the Inclusive Museum and an original member of the Subaltern Studies Group alongside individuals who working in various aspects of outreach and heritage, from commemorating Bhopal through community events and activism to digital approaches to increasing impact in creative economies. This workshop identified a series of challenges which are now being further worked and addressed between the research sub-team. This includes identifying particular sites and challenges specific to the Punjabi context.

The next phase of research will be to undertake a ‘cultural mapping’ to identify key stakeholders and beneficiaries. This will allow us to think about how the map should be produced, what kinds of ‘community’ we may be able to identify. Some of this crucial work has already been undertaken by CRCI around key heritage sites. An example of this includes the legal and illegal shops surrounding the Rambagh Gate, a key historical site in Amritsar in an advanced stage of decay which is now largely obscured by shops and pylons. CRCI have been working with the local community of shopkeepers to understand how conservation of the site can take place without destroying the local market which itself has become part of the local fabric of place. Living heritage is an important aspect of co-creation here: how can we understand and capture local, lived practices alongside ‘monuments’ and ‘monumental’ approaches to time. Once the cultural mapping has been completed, we will enter into a consultative process with some of the groups, individuals, communities, we have identified.

We are already planning on attending the ICOMOS conference on Heritage and Democracy in December 2017 as a way of opening up our work to challenges from an international expert audience.
Community Partners

This strand will work with CRCI, a community-focussed cultural heritage conservation agency in India: http://www.crci.co.in/

We also have an academic partner Prof Anne Murphy, UBC who has written extensively on memorialisation in the Punjab.

Timeline
Year 1 (2016-7)

- **OCT**: Ethical approval & Schedule community work
- **NOV**: Literature Review
- **DEC**: Preparation of public and academic outputs
- **JAN**: Collaborative planning with CRCI
References


Flinn, Andrew and Anna Sexton (2013) *Research on community heritage: moving from collaborative research to participatory and co-designed research practice*. *Prato: CIRN Prato Community Informatics Conference*.


