



Navigations in city and online space

**A student led initiative funded by Art and Humanities Council (AHRC)
Beyond Text programme**

Coordinated by:

Heather Connelly - Loughborough University, Andy Coverdale - University of Nottingham, Rebecca
Gamble – Nottingham Trent University, Rachel Walls - University of Nottingham

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New Research Trajectories – an introduction

New Research Trajectories (NRT) is a student led initiative funded by the **AHRC** (Arts and Humanities Research Council) as part of their **Beyond Text** programme. Developed **collaboratively** by PhD candidates Heather Connelly (Loughborough University School of Arts), Rachel Walls (American and Canadian Studies, University of Nottingham), Andy Coverdale (School of Education, University of Nottingham) and Rebecca Gamble (Nottingham Trent University, School of Art and Design).

Our aim was to create a **network** for Postgraduate Research Students (PGRs), where they could discuss and experiment with alternative modes of disseminating their research and explore the potential of **research in action**, in process, thus **challenging** the usual protocol of publishing or presenting papers as the outcome of research.

We planned three **face-to-face** meetings i) at Nottingham Contemporary in September 2010, ii) at Loughborough in October 2010 and iii) in various venues in Nottingham City Centre in December 2010 to coincide with the British Art Show 7 as part of Sideshow Nottingham Artists Fringe event.

Our initial aims were to:

- Network with postgraduates around the region
- Share ideas in progress
- Collaborate across and between disciplines
- Explore alternative ways to disseminate research
- Engage in active dialogues
- Experiment with alternative modes to communicate research in process/in practice
- Respond to different situations and environments, online and in the city through action, practice and innovation

The events consisted of a mix of formal and informal activities, discussions, presentations by artists and researchers, field trips and performances.

In order to encourage participation and continued **dialogue** we set up an online space <http://www.newresearchtrajectories.net> where participants and web-users can interact and follow the process as it happens, and help shape the activity. We deliberately used **open-source** platforms, software and familiar **social network** tools to maximise **interactivity** and **collaboration**. This has also enabled peer-to-peer training to occur as participants instinctively discover web tools that can aid their research and put them in touch with other researchers and networks.

Quotations from active participants:

Why they got involved:

‘I was also keen to connect more broadly with the postgraduate community and engage in a dialogue about different methodologies and different ways of approaching practice as research or practice *through* research’

‘I wanted to explore research dissemination outside the usual university formats. Work creatively and meet other researchers from different backgrounds and institutes.’

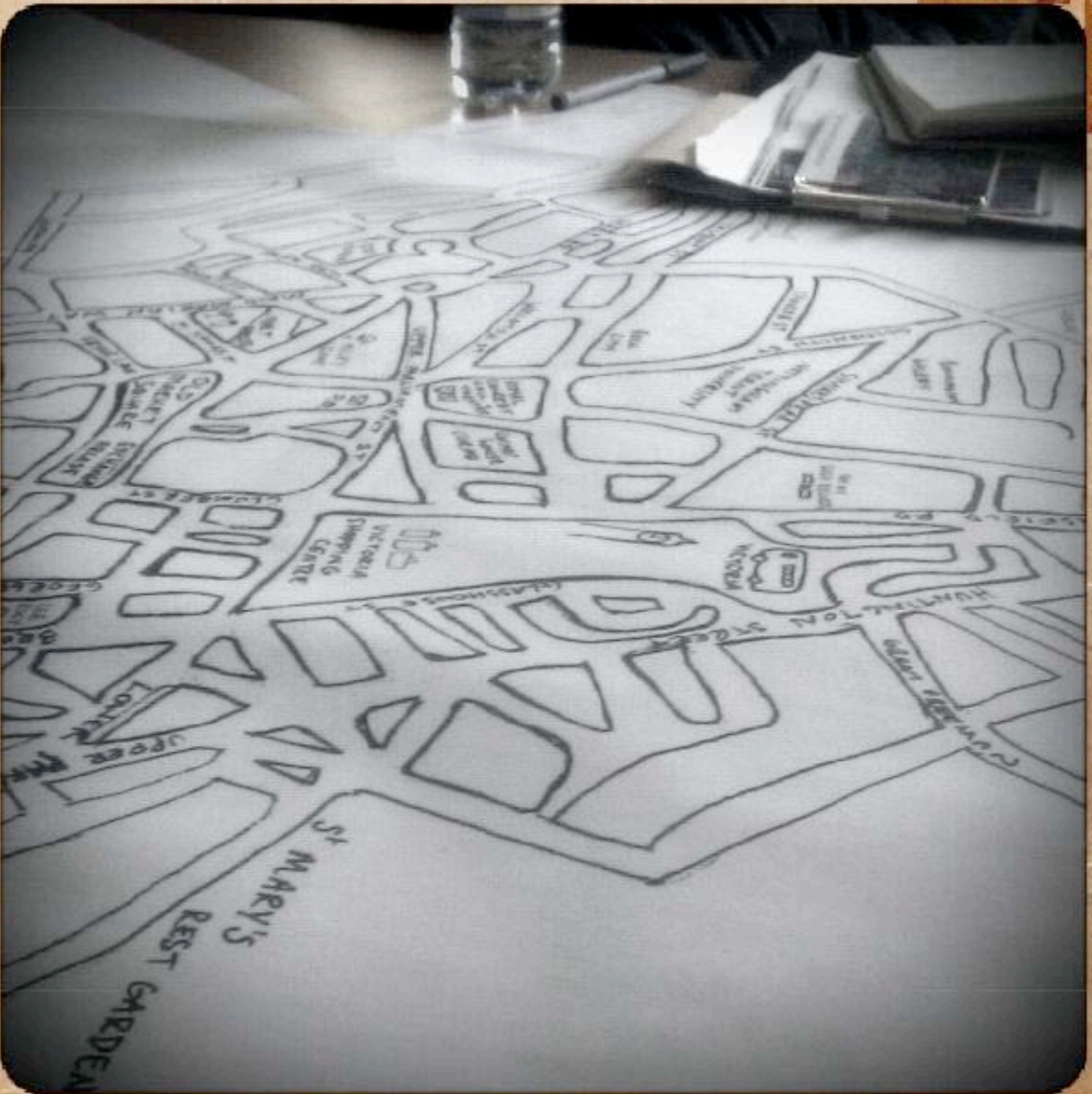
‘I am interested in walking as an art activity in my own work, also interested to find out more about Nottingham based art and the research of the PhD students, was keen to meet other artists/practitioners. Hoped this would give me some ideas/inspiration or theoretical frameworks I can reference in my own practice.’

‘To connect with a wider network of postgraduates / artists / critical thinkers in the region and to share my practice/research’

‘I wasn’t sure what to expect as I hadn’t been given a great deal of information about the structure of the event, but I thought the premise was very interesting. ‘

‘I attended it for work, but I am also interested in research’

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Overall Summary of New Research Trajectories

The network successfully brought about an interdisciplinary and cross-institutional active network that experimented with alternative ways to disseminate research.

The first two meetings were, in themselves, important for networking, training and peer support, but their principle role was to get interested students together so we could form collaborations and shape the collaborative event scheduled in December. Although time commitments prevented many students from attending all three meetings, this did not prove to be too much of a problem as we were able to maintain contact online and summarise each event on our website for interested absent parties.

The December event proved to be a useful focal point and opportunity for a number of people to test out new ideas, approaches and collaborations. The event was widely publicised through the local newspaper, gallery brochures, our own flyers, word of mouth, email and websites and attracted non-academics, artists and members of the general public. The movement around the city, the variety of approaches, sites and spaces and the large amount of unstructured time for discussion proved to be a real strength in the December event. The three meetings and the network as a whole have proved to be important and influential points in many of the participants' research trajectories, providing opportunities for forming new relationships and a supportive network for East Midland PGRs.

Documentation as a form of recording and analysis played a much bigger role than we initially anticipated. Each meeting was recorded through photographs and audio and the December event through video. The audio recording was useful in that it meant we were able to capture the live 'dialogic and conversational' activity that happened during the event and look at it as 'material' to reflect and act upon. This was important as we felt we needed to demonstrate how our deliberately 'vague' and 'informal' structure of the events encouraged valid academic and critical discussion.

We disseminated and shared the audio recordings of the discussions, performances and events with the participants after the event, so that individuals could feed back any findings into their research, and on many occasions this has proved pivotal in their 'research trajectories'. In particular, researchers presenting their ideas, some publicly for the first time, gained new insight into how their work is perceived by disparate audiences, and were surprised by the outcomes.

We also wanted to try and disseminate the achievements of NRT by going beyond text, producing a DVD which functions in conjunction with a detailed written evaluation or on its own as a visual record (as we recognised that this was the only way to capture the energy and diversity of what had happened). The

activities of NRT are also documented on the website: <http://www.newresearchtrajectories.net>.

The December event created a focus, a pause, a time and place where people could experiment and show work in progress and disseminate their research in a physical environment rather than on paper or through a formal presentation. The critique and discussion in response to these disseminations of research were framed and grounded in the knowledge that the network was made up of PGRs and therefore the discussion was pitched at this level.

What New Research Trajectories has achieved is to create a network of like-minded people who are interested in pushing the boundaries of what academic research can be and specifically how practice based research can operate within or outside of the academic institution. It actively employed research methods of action research and knowledge transfer within the sessions/meetings without announcing it or addressing it in a formal way. Individuals were able to use the network for their own gains, finding out about their own approach through engagement with others.

NRT also managed to create a neutral and supportive environment for PGRs within the region (and beyond) to come together and to discuss the common problems and misunderstandings about academic terminology, including methodology and other PhD related issues. One of the strengths of the initiative has been its premise to work outside of the academy, wherever possible, initiating links with local galleries, research centres and independent organisations, thus providing a different perspective on research, relationships and dissemination of ideas. We were able to do this through the support of Nottingham Contemporary, City Council and Bunkers Hill Tavern who, respectively let us use their meeting room and the Space, market stall and function room for free.

Quotations from active participants:

about the network:

‘I feel more connected to researchers at different universities across East Midlands and consequently less isolated in my own research. Great to see/hear/meet people and see what they are doing in a flexible and meandering format. Great opportunity to test out my own new work in a responsive, safe atmosphere – that’s really helped with what I’m doing now.’

‘It seems New Research Trajectories has enabled people to enter cross disciplinary dialogue across practice and institution.’

‘I have gained new ways of looking at practice and research and interesting connections with practitioners and researchers in the region.’

‘I enjoyed the creative dialogues that took place and Learning to work with new contacts /networks in new and enlightening ways.’

‘It gave me the chance to meet others who are interested in similar approaches to research, practice etc and put me in contact with so many people who were also struggling or trying to identify differences between being an artist and researcher etc.’

‘Through meeting Zalfa and being able to collaborate with someone who can translate, be creative and who is also doing a PhD has been invaluable and has allowed me to really progress in my own research/practice.’

‘I enjoyed the flow of the network and the fact that there was time in between the meetings to develop words and ideas, it also meant that a conversation and discussion could be built upon each time we met. And it allowed me to weave it into my practice’

‘it seemed more horizontal, than vertical, like a river meandering with equal emphasis on the twists, turns and tributaries...which set it apart from the intensity of a conference ...’

‘it was useful to different people in different ways – people, whilst being part of something were able to use NRT for their own ends.’

Future plans/activities

Following the evaluation event on 10th February 2011, it appears that everyone is keen to see New Research Trajectories continue and there is a desire for regular scheduled events. Participants felt it was a valuable and unique platform and a supportive environment to discuss and test their research and practice.

It has been suggested that future activities could take place on a bi-monthly, quarterly or annual basis, whereby individuals, institutions or groups take it in turns to co-ordinate a meeting/gathering/event. Everyone recognises the need and desire to continue the initiative but also the inevitable struggle with time commitments and providing the ongoing driving force that it takes in order to make future events happen.

Through discussion, participants have agreed the online space needs to be developed to offer more functionality and moving it beyond what it has become, an information space. The online space is yet to fulfil its potential as an online network, but perhaps in the absence of physical meetings and for planning future events this may become a more essential platform. One member hoped that it could support links to other participant websites and another saw it as a discussion point.

We are keen to make use of the online space in order to promote and sustain current initiative and are currently discussing various ways this may happen. One way of augmenting our use of online space is to devise a specific event or workshop that focuses upon the potential of online space, thereby creating an opportunity for researchers to make work and use the web for dissemination. We envisage that this would function in much the same way that the physical event in December did by acting as a catalyst for many of us to test out and create work that addresses the potential of 'the virtual' and online audiences.

Following a successful collaboration with LAB (whose Sideshow residency and workshops at Surface Gallery identified that PhD students formed their core audience at their events) during our December event, we have decided that we want to build upon our 'shared aims' and target participants. We propose to use the remaining budget from our Beyond Text funding to run a NRT workshop with LAB to support and encourage PGRs to explore alternative ways to make use of and disseminate their research online – thereby continuing to fulfil our initial aims.

We have also been approached by Alison Lloyd of **Art of Contemporary Walking** (who was previously senior Arts officer at ACE East Midlands), who has offered to take the group on a walk as part of her

ongoing research and has also offered to introduce the group to action learning. The group decided that this was an appropriate and exciting prospect and we are currently arranging a date to meet with Alison to organise a walk, and invite interested participants and others to join in. (Alison heard about NRT via Michael Pinchbeck, an NRT participant, and is currently facilitating Action Learning – “A Field Guide to Ideas” - research for Nottingham Trent University.)

Michael Pinchbeck, who has been an active participant and is co-director of Nottingham live art platform Hatch, suggested that there are crossovers and therefore potential opportunities for Hatch and NRT to collaborate, and we look forward to seeing where this may lead in Autumn/Winter 2011.

Quotations from active participants:

About the networks future:

‘I think the website and network is very beneficial and hope to be able to find ways to be more involved bearing in mind my lack of time currently. It was great to have discussions around interdisciplinary methodologies and to look at how these can continue and ongoing ‘show and tell’ type events.’

‘I think it was hard for non-artists to understand the potential of the December event...and perhaps the language/terminology we used could have helped this’

‘perhaps people would be more likely to be involved from other (than artists) disciplines now we can show them case studies – and describe what we did in December?’

First Meeting

September 22nd 2010, Nottingham Contemporary



23 attended from across the region, from diverse departments and from various stages of study (MRes-final year PhD.) University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University, Loughborough University, University of Lincoln, University of Northampton, De Montfort University, University of Derby and Sheffield Hallam University were represented. Disciplines included English, Architecture, Fine Arts, Creative Technology, Computing and Mathematics, Art and Design, Politics, French, Education, Fashion, American and Canadian Studies. Among these, David Bell, Jackie Calderwood, Zalfa Feghali and Lee Campbell became 'active participants' at our final event in December.

Speaker: Rachel Jacobs, Artistic Director of Active Ingredient and 2nd Year PhD at Horizon Doctoral Training Centre, University of Nottingham. <http://uk.linkedin.com/pub/rachel-jacobs/4/41a/784>

Summary: This meeting was primarily about getting to know one another and for potential participants to work out whether this initiative was for them and if so how they wanted to use it. Everyone had

chance to introduce themselves and their research interests to the group. This was so that people could approach each other with similar interests to initiate collaborations. As we are interested in exploring the process of research and how this might be negotiated alongside / compared with practice, Rachel Jacob's talk was extremely useful: she has the dual perspective of an artist studying a technical subject in a formal academic setting. She spoke of interdisciplinary working and accommodating different registers of language and different methodologies. Her work with Active Ingredient also connected our interests in city and online space, as their interactive artworks have explored how technology bridges and enhances the relationship between human presence and the environment. After Rachel's talk, we had a discussion with participants about methodologies, the PhD experience and started to consider how we could disseminate our research in online and city space. There was some discussion over whether we needed a fixed theme for the December event, but generally the group was happy with an organic approach.



Second Meeting

October 27th 2010, Loughborough University and Beacon Hill.



21 attended, with a greater proportion of participants from Loughborough University as this event was scheduled into their postgraduate program and our speaker was hosted by RADAR, Loughborough University Arts. We also welcomed Nicola Donovan and Michael Pinchbeck who became ‘active participants’ in the December event. Professor Tom Fisher from Nottingham Trent University also attended in an informal capacity, as he was interested in the network. Jennifer Jones, from the School of Creative and Cultural Industries at the University of West Scotland, attended and wrote this blog post: <http://jennifermjones.posterous.com/new-research-trajectories-loughborough-univer>

Speaker: [Nils Norman](#), Artist, Activist and Academic. Royal Danish Academy of Art, Copenhagen.
(funded by [Radar](#) Loughborough University’s contemporary arts programme)

Summary: This meeting brought a handful of participants from the first meeting together with a cohort of [Loughborough University School of Arts](#) PhD students as well as a few new participants from other universities. We didn't have time for everyone to introduce each other as part of the sessions but people had plenty of time to network during coffee and lunch. The day contrasted a very formal academic presentation *about* alternative education practices by Nils Norman with an exploration of such practices as we took a coach to Beacon Hill to explore how hospitality and walking outside of the institution could encourage collaboration and new research insights.

Nils' talk gave us a context for our explorations of alternative spaces, introducing methods of play, invention, adaption, recycling and thinking outside the classroom, promoting tacit and practical experience as a valuable and essential part of research and knowledge. He also discussed how he considers his teaching/lecturing as collaboration and as part of his artistic practice. After this talk, we travelled to Beacon Hill by coach and Jackie Calderwood led an activity where she asked us to use colour grids to map our research experience. We ate homemade soup around picnic tables and then climbed to the top of Beacon Hill for a panoramic perspective on Loughborough and the East Midlands, all the while sharing ideas and experiences. On our return to Loughborough University we began to plan and map ideas for the December event, and several ideas for sites and activities were suggested.



Quotations from active participants:

Approach/ Location / sites

‘I think it was vague and open enough to engage any proposal as long as it was prepared to take place in the city site in some way. I prefer working with a performative and experimental approach and felt this was another strength of the project.’

‘I particularly enjoyed excursion to Beacon Hill and opportunity to de-institutionalise ourselves into an open/rural context. Which is perhaps what we did in Nottingham in an open/urban context.’

‘I was particularly interested in walk to Beacon Hill and the chance to share some work/thoughts/processes’

‘We decided on the site as a space that could catalyse our research and act as a lens to look at the notion of process. The backstage space / dressing rooms are spaces for preparation not usually seen by the audience so by revealing them we were hoping to acknowledge the sharing of our own work-in-progress.’

Final December Event: detailed report

December 15th 2010, Various Locations in Nottingham City Centre



December 15th's event was a great success, with 21 people in attendance throughout the day and with approximately 10 more joining us for the collaborative evening event with LAB at Surface Gallery (see below). The event was scheduled and advertised in the Nottingham Contemporary public program and as a [Sideshow](#) event, which was the Nottingham Artists Fringe for [The British Art Show 7](#).

What Happened?

We began the day at [Nottingham Contemporary](#) who had hosted our introductory event in September and we were pleased to see a number of new faces as well as participants that have attended previous meetings. We began the day with refreshments and a general introduction to the project, recounting previous events for those who had not attended.

After this introduction, we handed over to [Jackie Calderwood](#) (Institute of Creative Technologies, De

Montfort University, Leicester) who distributed question sheets, coloured pens and stickers containing blank space and a grid. She asked us to colour in the grid to represent our research or artistic interests. This task could be carried out at any point in the day and could reflect the journey we were taking as well as our personal research journeys. The questions and the blank sticker were part of an experiment with 'Clean Language,' which we would come back to at the Park Tunnel.

We then travelled by foot to the **Park Tunnel**, a hidden underground passageway between Derby Road, a main thoroughfare out of the city to the affluent and exclusive 'garden' neighbourhood of the Park. Participants were led, unsuspecting, through a car park next to Budgens shop and down some steps into a sandstone tunnel. One of the participants, a gentleman in his late 50's who joined us for the day (having seen the event advertised in the Nottingham Contemporary brochure) shared his knowledge of the local history of the area, an unplanned addition to the day.



The Tunnel essentially consists of two parts, punctuated by a large open area, which houses a staircase that can be accessed from ground level. The participants we invited to explore this magnificent and surprising space and gathered in the central area where [Heather Connelly](#) (Loughborough University

School of Art and Design) and **Zalfa Feghali** (University of Nottingham, School of American and Canadian Studies), began their experimental performances without introduction.

They decided to use the full range of the area physically and acoustically. The first piece involved Heather and Zalfa attempting to communicate as Zalfa descended the stairs, speaking in Arabic, whilst Heather repeated what she heard as best she could, conveying the information to the audience in the tunnel below. The text was an edited compilation of Italo Calvino's 'Invisible Cities,' modified and mediated by Heather and Zalfa specifically for this performance.

The second piece involved Heather and Zalfa playing with the echoic properties of the tunnel. They took it in turns to enunciate words and properties associated with translating: spoken in English, Arabic, Greek and French, playing on the slippages that occur in translation. They attempted to communicate with each other or at least reach some sort of understanding as they traversed from one end of the tunnel to the other. The physical space between them has the potential to draw attention to this seemingly invisible process.

An in depth discussion followed naturally from this performance, with audience members asking Zalfa and Heather about their own PhD research, in particular Heather's practice-based research focusing upon translation, how they came together to produce this work and more generally about the possibilities and problems encountered when considering or using translation in one's work. The discussion covered academic references, interdisciplinary concepts, useful observations, practical feedback and comments upon the work, which the pair used to further develop their work for the **Beyond Text: Making and Unmaking Event** (another Beyond Text AHRC student initiative). The ensuing dialogue demonstrated the value of promoting 'practice' as research and the power that practice has to provoke new ways of thinking, to test out and embody references and research. The intimacy of the group and perhaps the informal nature of the space, discussion and performance invited and encouraged more open discussion about process and ideas in progress with most (if not all) of the group joining in. There was a sense of active involvement, sharing, and collectively unpicking/discovering, as opposed to merely informing the audience (which can often happen when delivering an academic paper).



We stayed in the Park Tunnel to experiment with '**Clean Language**,' the concept that Jackie had introduced to us at Nottingham Contemporary. We were assigned a task: to work in pairs to help each other to explore their metaphor landscape. The questions were deliberately designed so as not to add or change the metaphor used by the participant but to guide them deeper into their figurative imagination. The idea was that the participants reflect on the resulting images or figurative phrases, which offer an insight and help them to understand how they approach their research. We were also asked to write the resultant words/phrases on the blank sticker and disseminate this, along with our colour grid, somewhere in the city, and photograph it in place. This builds upon and contributes to a larger body of research that Jackie is undertaking upon the subjectivity of experience.



Jackie further explained the concept of 'Clean Language' and demonstrated how it could potentially work after the event. She described in depth its development by New Zealand psychotherapist David Grove and how she intended to apply it. As with other events this extended the group's knowledge and experience of alternative methodologies.

The group opted to walk to the **Market Square** (town centre) via another route, through the Park Estate and by the Castle, which offered a different perspective on the city and more chance to get to know each other and to discuss ideas further. **Nicola Donovan** (Nottingham Trent University, School of Art and Design) had installed herself and her work directly in front of the town hall in a market stall, which usually housed a Nativity scene in the Christmas Market. Her intention was to create a temporary studio, '**Lacepoint**', to provoke conversations about Nottingham lace. Nicola, like most of the other 'active participants', used the NRT event as a catalyst and an opportunity to try something out that she had considered but not pursued. She liaised with the local council and Christmas Market manager to secure the stall (which was opposite a 'merry-go-round' and various German food stalls). She placed herself in a vulnerable position for example: people became angry because she wasn't selling anything, or offering anything Christmas-themed, however she did gather many valuable contacts, comments and

made connections with people who had been connected to, or had worked in, the lace industry.



We arrived en-mass and stopped at her stall for twenty-minutes or so, for discussion. Nicola found the research-specific questioning and discussion challenging and a welcome diversion from the general conversations she had been having, as it brought her back to the context of our event and her reason for being there. Also one of the participants, who had lived in Nottingham all of his life, had much local knowledge to share with Nicola and they had a valuable exchange. While we paused at Nicola's stall the noisy bustling environment of the market square contrasted with the quiet of the tunnel. Moreover, our cameras, used to document the whole day, and the presence of a large group attracted the attention of more passers-by.

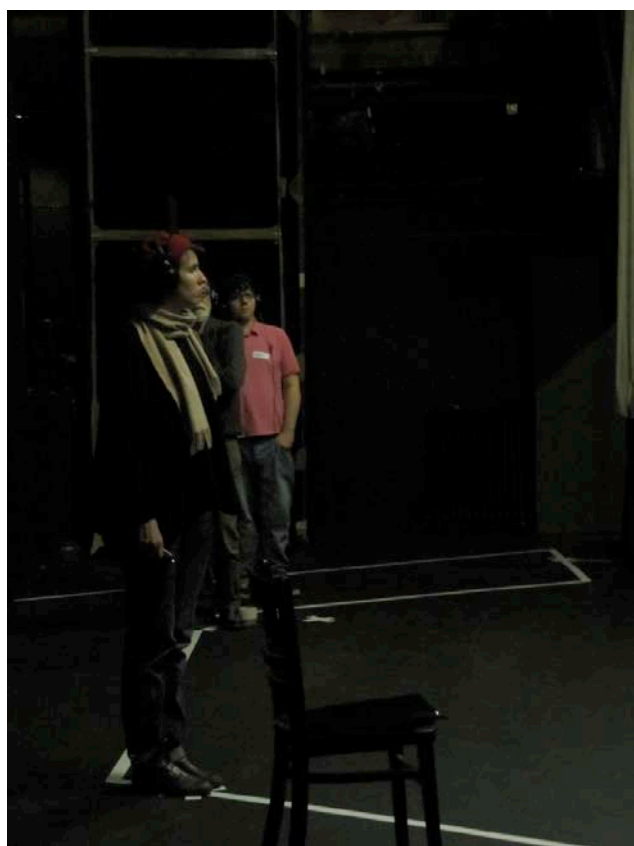


We then headed to **Nottingham Arts Theatre** on George Street in the Lace Market area for lunch (which we provided) and the afternoon session. The café room was narrow but cosy and the atmosphere convivial, and provided participants time to continue to chat, exchange ideas and relax.



We subsequently moved into the theatre where **Michael Pinchbeck** (Loughborough University, Department of English and Drama) and **Rebecca Gamble** (Nottingham Trent University, School of Art and Design) introduced their work. [Michael](#) restaged "[And the Curtain Falls](#)" which was originally commissioned by [Radar](#) (Loughborough University Arts Programme) for a theatre in Loughborough. The work consisted of a soundtrack compiled from multiple interviewed amateur dramatics groups about their experience of performing and being backstage with sound effects that continued the resonance of the voices even after they had stopped speaking. Three participants at a time were invited to listen to this soundtrack on iPods while following a white line around the backstage area and pausing at specified points to look around and listen to the commentary. It was interesting to see how closely some people followed the instructions and how much they deviated from the white line, the specified trajectory. It

was also curious how participants became actors on the stage, and how they related to each other on their own private tours. Some stuck closely to the white line and followed instructions and others were more adventurous and took the opportunity to explore the backstage and pick up Michael's props. In many ways the subtle observations and differences in behaviours enabled individual participants to reflect upon how they approached this, and consequently their research, because the experience was contextualised and framed by the event. Michael represented the work in order to gain some response and critical feedback, which he had not been able to do when it was first staged. It was interesting to hear the experiences of amateur dramatists: the complex fears and emotions they have as they prepare for and take the stage; and about how the stage space was used to build temporary worlds that actors and audience alike could step into for an evening. Again this led to interesting conversations and analogies between practice and research.



[Rebecca Gamble](#) invited people to sign up for "Host, Guest, Stranger," asking everyone to choose a role to play: guest, host or stranger. Rebecca's practice usually employs technology and props to interact with participants, however for this piece she wanted to strip her practice back to its essentials and make the most of the physical potential of the space. Each group had their own tour/experience as she led them to different parts of the theatre and used different strategies with each group. One group went out of the front of the theatre then straight into the back door and down to the dressing rooms. The dressing room was basic and unglamorous but an interesting space, full of mirrors, which offered

multiple perspectives and unexpected views of others and ourselves as we interacted as host, guest and stranger. There was coloured writing on the mirror that seemed to be giving us instructions on how to act. However these texts - "Should I introduce myself? Should I take photographs? Am I a voyeur?" - were written by the participants after their performances had ended, thus documenting their reflections on how they felt when performing their roles.



[Lee Campbell](#) (Loughborough University School of Art and Design) joined us at 2pm having delivered a five-minute paper in the morning to his fellow PhD cohort at Loughborough University. This was significant and interesting as he had not been party to the informality and emphasis on 'practice' of the morning's events. Lee had worked with Michael Pinchbeck and Rebecca Gamble on securing the venue and discussing how they may collaborate and use the theatre space prior to the event. Lee decided to read out his paper, essentially his thesis statement—'The Politicised Text in the Total Theatrical Event'—to contextualise his work. This was the most 'traditional' part of the event but it was delivered on stage with the curtain drawn back, so in many ways it both corroborated and subverted the conference paper. He spoke about his interest in the politicised body and politicised space in the 'total theatrical event' and drew on diverse theorists and practitioners including French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau Ponty, German dancer and choreographer Pina Bausch and British composer, poet and artist Dick Higgins. He explained his interests in auto-ethnography and the discursive potential of the body. (His

full statement can be heard here along with a video of the participatory performance:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_13_BgHa00). This 'paper' unintentionally helped to illustrate the 'alternative' way that the event had approached the dissemination of research.



Lee then followed this formal delivery with a participatory performance, which couldn't have been more different! He stood on the stage and in a manner akin to a comedian or magician hosting a live performance and invited five people onto the stage to participate. He then asked them to follow his instructions, which were interpreted and acted out by the volunteers with differing results. The effect was very humorous: three of the five followed only his first instruction to mime “no” and ignored subsequent instructions; the other two interpreted and followed each instruction, and one participant took 'know' for 'no'. This performance, like Michael's, was a re-staging/reworking of a previous work and very different results emerged in contrast to its previous presentation.

In a later discussion Lee revealed how surprised he was at the reactions and chaos that ensued as he thought he had been very clear in his instructions. He plans to build upon this further in his work.

The contrast between Lee's two 'performances' was extreme and perhaps revealed the underlying complexities in seemingly 'simple' and 'conceptual' works, and the knowledge and background that is needed to in order to make them work. It is also useful to reflect upon how much the paper informed a) the participants behaviour on stage, b) the dissemination/reception of the work and c) the following discussion, and the consideration of 'the reading of the written paper' as performance leads to interesting possibilities.

The relaxed environment in the theatre and staggered level of participation with Rebecca's and Michael's work meant that there was plenty of time for conversation, sharing of ideas and experiences as people waited to partake. The theatre also offered different spaces for people to congregate and interact with each other: some sat and read and others moved around. The different dynamics of the 'works' throughout the day and different levels and ways of engagement that the 'active participants' used, meant that the day flowed and created many different modes of interaction and much food for thought. In essence it proved productive to have a combination of large group, small group and solo activities.

However, it was interesting that the sites chosen by the participants nonetheless proved a challenge: both Rebecca and Lee talked about their struggle and anxiety about producing something 'theatrical' for the space. Instead they decided to respond to the spaces and use it to determine their creations and to provide a context and frame for experiencing the work, which would ultimately effect the perception of it. In this way, as with the Park Tunnel, the works could have happened in 'other' spaces and sites and would have been interpreted differently: in this respect the activities made use of alternative sites but the works are not 'site specific'. The city proved to be a provocative space and a vehicle for the work but Nicola's Lacepoint was the only work that was bound by the city. This is implicit within her research, whilst the others' research interests are not associated with a specific place.

Most people got to experience all the activities, and then the group moved to Bunker Hill Tavern for drinks and a more formal discussion about the day's events and about the potential continuation of the network. After a relaxing pint we moved to a private room upstairs and pulled tables and chairs together and for a more 'directed' discussion with feedback about the 'event' as a whole. The organisers wanted to use this opportunity to evaluate what had happened, what people had learnt and whether we had achieved what we had set out to do. This was a useful time of reflection: some key issues were raised and a detailed report of the topics covered throughout the day can be read below. We also used the final discussion to begin to evaluate the initiative as a whole.



We had to move on from the space at 6pm when a Salsa class was due to start in the room and ended up passing our business card/contact details to the Salsa teacher who was interested in what we are doing: he has an MA in Art from NTU and was considering doing a PhD. Thus the networking continued!

We had a farewell drink downstairs, before a smaller group of us headed over to [LAB](#). LAB is a group of artists who were occupying the attic space at the [Surface Gallery](#) (an Artist Led Space opposite Sneinton Market) as part of Sideshow. That evening they presented a talk by **Dave Bell** (University of Nottingham School of Politics and International Relations). Dave participated in our first September meeting and had also been active in another Sideshow project in the meantime. Rebecca Gamble, since August a core member of the NRT organising team, is also part of LAB.

LAB had designed and built a flexible space for the duration of Sideshow and had been running a series of workshops, weekly talks which encouraged collaboration and experimentation. In many ways we found that their aims were similar to ours (other than the fact our network was aimed predominantly at PGRs), and therefore we decided to join forces. Significantly, LAB reported that a majority of participants in their workshops and events had been PhD students who were seeking a more

communal/social environment/activity. The space was constructed and divided up by particleboard and featured a large desk, chairs, cooking area and cinema chairs. It echoed the sort of inviting, multifunctional, flexible, physical space that NRT had tried to create conceptually and thus felt like the ideal place to finish off the event. NRT participants were hosted by LAB, who offered homemade soup and refreshments to accompany Dave's talk, which continued our emphasis on hospitality and self-catering.



Dave spoke about his involvement in '[Critical Pedagogies](#)', offered a definition, and contextualised arts practice, methodologies and teaching practices in relation to this. In Critical Pedagogies there is an avoidance of hierarchies and one way dissemination and an emphasis on learning from one another rather than from a designated teacher, although there may be a facilitator who brings everyone together to learn, an approach that echoed Nils Norman's talk at the October Event. The presentation contextualised internationally, historically, academically and artistically, what we had been trying to do throughout the day and through our network. It crystallised many parallels and connections between LAB, Critical Pedagogies and New Research Trajectories' aims and objectives so this was a perfect note to end on, leaving open many possibilities and collaborations for the future.

Quotations from active participants:

About the Dec event:

‘Good to have something in mind whilst maintaining an open and flexible approach. Nice knowing there’s an opportunity to test things out, and to ‘mark time’ and move on to new ground.’

‘Really exciting and brilliant way of getting us all talking and interacting, more discussion. I felt more relaxed walking and talking than if we had been sitting in a room.’

‘I approached the final event in a consortium of researchers ...and found our ongoing dialogue very useful and supportive. Would be keen to continue this dialogue if possible as all working in and around performance and I feel a little isolated with my work in Loughborough as a live artist and my work in Nottingham as an academic’.

‘I encountered critical feedback on the work for the first time ...and will bring the critical dialogue into my PhD through the framing of the event and how practice and research can share a space in some way.’

‘The support I received on the day of events was really encouraging, I was quite frankly terrified on the day of my project, it was something new, in a relatively new place, and I would be exposed to the public. Knowing that the NRT team would be along at some point during the day really bolstered me and kept me going, I'm only sorry that I couldn't get anyone to mind my stall so I could be present at the other events...’

‘Having help from Rebecca at the end of the day was invaluable and the financial assistance was just so welcome, I can't thank you enough.’

‘I got valuable critical feedback from the NRT visitors and the added bonus of having it all recorded.’

‘The informal atmosphere of the event and network enabled me to test out something that I perhaps wouldn’t have had the courage to do in public, I have never performed before and shy away from this – however my practice is becoming performative – so having the opportunity to create something to share was great!...the comments and object perspectives upon what the other participants ‘saw’ or ‘read’ into the work has led to new ideas and directions....and I would also like to work with the site to develop a more resolved and ambitious work in the future.

‘I thought it worked very well; the format seemed to hold everyone’s interest, and it certainly brought the research to life.’

Detailed Evaluation / Feedback from December Event (gathered via discussion built into the event.)

There was a general consensus that everyone felt that the event had operated as a 'pause' within our research trajectories and served as a moment to take stock, experiment and discuss our ideas in practice. It functioned by creating a platform that encouraged experimentation, discussion and a chance to work across disciplines and boundaries, beyond the institutional framework. As a whole the network provided opportunities to share ideas and anxieties, make connections with others and by doing so learn new skills, techniques and methodologies. The events provided different stimuli and contexts for making work and provoking discussion, allowing room for criticality whilst also allowing people to explore, be vulnerable, ask questions without being judged. The meetings all included a lot of unstructured time to enable and encouraged discussion, which allowed connections to be made between researchers. There was energy, excitement and enthusiasm about the informality of the days.

Our event was attended by: PhD and MA students, artists, curators, a lecturer and members of the public. Half of these had not attended any of the previous two meetings. Therefore, this was an interesting testing ground for disseminating research, and precisely the mix that we had hoped disseminating work beyond the academic realm/conference circuit would create.

In Process and Practice

The 'participants' felt like the event was **inclusive** and said that they felt **comfortable** and **welcome**. They found the event **stimulating, open, honest** and **reassuring**, with the last two comments referring to how the researchers presented their works in progress/in process and not as 'finished products' or as 'experts,' looking beyond the completed, end product and final output. They enjoyed being part of the development and the process of the works/research and felt this to be a positive and privileged position to be in. They liked the way the event relied upon propositions and looking at various ways the process presenting the 'problem'/'question.' They felt phrases such as 'I wish I knew what I was doing' and 'I think it may behave like this' presented an honest and realistic viewpoint/position of being a researcher.

Structure and Format

The participants enjoyed the scale of the event, which meant that everyone could interact and become part of the day. The small number of participants was appreciated by all of those who attended, as everyone felt that they could easily interact with each other and it was not too intimidating if anyone wanted to speak up/out.

Others commented upon how much they enjoyed the organic nature and fluidity of the event—the fact it was not fully resolved or presented as a ‘done thing’—and they felt that the event was dynamic. They enjoyed the way in which the day was allowed to unfold and was not delivered in a prescribed formula. One participant had expected the event to be PGRs delivering ‘papers’ in none traditional sites, but was pleased that its approaches were more varied and innovative.

The structure of the event and the ways in which the researchers presented their works actively sought dialogic responses and therefore the participants felt that they were able to offer criticism in a positive way and contribute to the debates. The participants confirmed what we had attempted to articulate or present conceptually through using the term ‘trajectories’ and mapping them onto various sites and locations within the city. They said that they felt they had been taken on a fluid journey, and been presented with fertile ground.

Sites

There was much discussion about the use of SITE and SPACE and how this changes the nature of what you say and how you say it. The participants were interested in how the spaces/sites had influenced and changed what we may have done elsewhere, as in many ways the work could have happened in other situations but the context provided a texture and brought different meanings to the works.

Practice & documentation

Some of the participants remarked upon the amount of documentation (video, photo and audio) that was happening throughout the day and wondered why it was necessary. This issue was raised by curators/artists specifically who understand how this can change and create new work – and they wondered why we wanted to make something transient so permanent, which seems to go against artistic instinct/practice. The PhD by practice students all remarked upon the emphasis of documenting works, so that they can be used as ‘material’ to analyse and as evidence of what they are doing. Also we acknowledged the differences of PhD study and practicing as an artist and how part of the aim of a PhD is to make the process more transparent and to try to articulate what the practice is achieving. One participant later mentioned how the discussion added to debates about ephemerality and documentation explored in this book: *Practice-as-Research: in Performance and Screen Media*, co-edited with L Allegue Fuschini, S Jones and B Kershaw, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Following this, a discussion broke out about practice-based research, with individuals sharing their perceptions and experiences of being artists and PhD candidates. This was useful to participants who

feel isolated within their institutions, and to those were considering applying for a PhD in the near future.

Beyond the conference

One of our original intentions was to challenge and to experiment with alternatives to the formal situation of a conference and to test whether there are other situations that would enable researchers to disseminate their research particularly in process and in practice. We appear to have achieved this by subverting the usual hierarchy associated with institutional seminars and critique. This may have been because no senior academics were present: a number of participants commented upon this and how it created a level playing field without the competitive one-up-manship that can occur in academic contexts. Also, this was perhaps because everyone was there voluntarily (as opposed to a scheduled seminar/group critique).

Beyond Text

The use of **text** and **language** was debated throughout the day. We all noted that although New Research Trajectories was a Beyond Text initiative it relied heavily upon written text and language to articulate aims, concerns and research, and most activities involved text in some form or another. A number of presenters also commented on being very aware of the language that they use, as they are often borrowing terms/theories etc from different disciplines. With regard to the question is whether it is possible to go beyond text, we decided that this is perhaps not possible in the sense of beyond as 'clear of,' but certainly in the sense of "further than," by incorporating performance, sounds, images and technologies into our research dissemination. Moreover, we can challenge the types of 'hierarchical' or 'traditional' academic approach to written text, formalities, register.

Summary of participant and organiser outcomes

Participant **David Bell's** encounters with people, ideas and practice throughout the New Research Trajectories process has led to an interest in the visual arts as a way of expressing his idea of nomadic utopianism, and an interest in blurring the boundaries between art, education and the world at large. He has reflected on the potential to communicate outside the traditional realm of academia and is now actively looking for opportunities to engage with non-academic audiences.

Jackie Calderwood (participant): Through networking in the group, Jackie was invited to apply for a public art commission with Chrysalis Arts in Yorkshire, to develop ideas for Geo-caching (a member of NRT passed on the contact after talking to her about and participating in her research). Jackie was successful in gaining this and is currently working on it. She was also able to gather data for her PhD by getting participants at two events to fill in her colour grids and her 'clean language' conversations.

Lee Campbell (participant) was delighted to find a network of artists / researchers with similar interests as he was new to the East Midlands and to the PhD. He collaborated with Michael Pinchbeck and Rebecca Gamble for the December event, deciding how to use the theatre space and the work that he presented has led to new insights into his approach to his practice and his research. The network has provided a place and platform for him to explore research in practice/practice as research, which compliments the more academic training that he is undergoing at LU. He also found the documentation of the work, discussion and reading this objective report useful – as he had not considered the different elements of his performative practice i.e. the significance of reading his paper in a different context. He has continued to work with Heather Connelly performing part of her and Zalfa's work at the Beyond Text Making and Unmaking event and hopes to work with Rebecca and Michael in the future.

Heather Connelly (participant and organiser) met Zalfa Feghali through the group and was able to collaborate with her to create new experimental work, using performance and Arabic language. They have gone on to work on other new work and hope to continue working together in the future. Heather has adopted social media as a key tool for her research and dissemination, setting up a number of websites and projects using open source software that she had previously not engaged with.

Andy Coverdale (organiser): New Research Trajectories has provided an excellent opportunity to collaboratively develop a student-directed and participatory initiative, and to engage in a multidisciplinary research environment; two activities I wish to explore further after completing my PhD. First and foremost, I learnt a great deal from my co-organisers, particularly around the coordinating of

events and funding; of which I had had limited experience. On many occasions, they would think of things I hadn't even considered! Secondly, I encountered some new challenges in developing online sites, and was able to explore the use of social media in new novel situations. In addition, as an educator interested in shared practice, it was immensely satisfying to see other core team members actively engage in these activities, and to hear examples of how it was influential in their own skills development. Finally, meeting Jennifer Jones at one of the events has subsequently led to collaborating on an explorative open publishing project that may lead to co-authoring a paper.

Nicola Donovan (participant): The December event served as a catalyst and gave me a date for me to create 'Lacepoint', something that I had been considering for sometime. It allowed me to find a way to bring together my research and practice in a way I had not been able to successfully achieve before. Being part of an event or group of people in the same position as me (as a PhD student) meant that I had to follow through with my idea, as I couldn't let them down. So in spite of being 'out of my comfort zone' and terrified on the day of my project by being exposed to the public, I knew that I was part of a bigger thing. The stall provoked lots of discussion, and through it I have many contacts to further my research. I was surprised by the generosity of the market manager who also published what I was doing and invited the local radio to cover the event. Having recorded the conversations, reactions and also reflected upon how my ability to 'talk to anyone' can be seen as an asset to my research has enabled me to see how this research can be fed back into my PhD and has been a real turning point. This alongside the critical feedback and discussion had with the NRT participant on the day has made a real difference to my research by practice.

Zalfa Feghali (participant) collaborated with Heather at our event and for another Beyond Text initiative in London called "Making and Unmaking." As a traditional academic PhD student Zalfa was pleased to work with practice-based students and actively experiment with performance and translation, two issues central to her PhD, which looks partly at performance and language poetry. Zalfa also met Lee Campbell and David Bell and hopes to work with them in the future.

Rebecca Gamble (participant and organiser) was pleased to join the organising team and form connections with East Midlands PhD students, given the lack of doctoral candidates in her own department. She collaborated with Lee and Michael in exploring the theatre space at the December 15th event and found the feedback from co-researchers helpful for aligning her practice and research. Rebecca has specifically developed a portfolio on Action Research as a methodology, which she has since presented at a conference, citing New Research Trajectories as a case study, and will be implementing this new knowledge in to her PhD thesis.

Jennifer Jones (participant) is a student at the University of West Scotland but lives near Loughborough. While she has connections with researchers in the Midlands she was pleased to join a new network here and learn about the approach of practice-based students, which was relatively new to her. She found the process of walking up Beacon Hill and exploring different perspectives of the city a useful process for encouraging conversation and collaboration. Jennifer hoped she would be able to document the December 15th event using photography and social media but was unfortunately unwell on the day. She has been a supportive member of the project, sharing information with her networks through twitter and blogging about our Loughborough meeting. <http://jennifermjones.posterous.com/new-research-trajectories-loughborough-univer>

Participant **Michael Pinchbeck**'s collaboration with Rebecca and Lee was a very valuable exchange that may lead to further dialogue. It was an interesting proposition to curate a journey through a theatre and, with more time, a more holistic experience for the audience might have been created. As it was, it was a useful forum for experiment and feedback. Staging "And the Curtain Falls" when trying to focus on research questions brought the realisations that it was about exploring the value of the conversation with amateur dramatists. Michael is about to enter into a phase of interviewing practitioners about how and why they work with a dramaturge so to remember the value of these conversations was very important. The secondary level of dialogue about the work with other practitioners and academics enabled him to consider how and where the work is framed and explore its potential for relocation to another theatrical context.

Rachel Walls: The connections with researchers and artists I have made through Beyond Text are invaluable. I hope to work with my co-organisers again as we have been an effective and complimentary team, sharing common interests but bringing diverse perspectives and experiences so that we all were able to train one another in new skills. I also intend to keep in contact with Jackie Calderwood and Nicola Donovan with whom I share research interests. The project management experience I have gained throughout the initiative will be useful in my future career and I have already cited this initiative on a few job applications. I am pleased to have worked with Nottingham Contemporary, Sideshow and LAB and strengthened links between artist organisations and the PhD community. Moreover, I have learned how to use Wordpress and Tumblr and have increased my experience in social media, particularly through working with Andy Coverdale and Jennifer Jones. Finally, it has been inspiring for me to learn from practice-based researchers as I am interested in action research, self-reflexive methodologies and the position of the researcher in relation to their research.

Quotations from active participants:

Impact upon future research/PhD:

The experience has encouraged me 'to consider letting go of my need to be a completionist and being prepared to open up a process / work-in-progress for feedback / debate.'..... 'I like my Dad's responses about Am Dram. When he said 'an amateur practices until he gets it right. A professional practices until he can't get it wrong.' I am now trying to work how researchers practise and still not sure if I know how.'

'The New Research Trajectories has been extremely positive for me. Doing a PhD can mean that practice gets put on the back boiler and a disconnection can start to happen. What NRT did for me was help me to re-engage in the context of the PhD research, along with other people in the same position.'

'Thank you for giving me the opportunity to explore new avenues, and well done for organising all this in the midst of you own studies'

'Perhaps the biggest benefit and revelation for me was understanding how social media and open source websites/tools could be of use to me in my own practice and research. By working alongside other PhD students who were familiar with such tools and actively engaged within it – I began to use it to disseminate and document my own project/research – using it as an essential tool to engage with and find participants to work on a project in Estonia and as a project space for collaborative practice. I have also passed on this knowledge and set up a number of google sites for other groups I have been involved with so that we could work collaboratively.'

Evaluation Meeting – Nottingham Contemporary 10.2.11

6 people in attendance: Jackie Calderwood (De Montfort University- Leicester), Heather Connelly (Loughborough University), Rachel Walls (University of Nottingham), Tom Fisher (Professor), Nicola Donovan and Rebecca Gamble (Nottingham Trent University).

What we did

Reviewed 1st edit of DVD.

Briefly discussed what we had achieved as a group and personal experiences of presenting and being active participants.

Discussed about the sustainability of the event and how the network can continue and what we need to put into place in order to make this happen.

Tom Fisher drew our attention to the fact that the network had created a valuable resource, stimuli and a platform for people to share and try out their practice/ideas in process – to try things out /to take risks– which has been particularly useful for practitioner researchers. NRT has identify a gap and a need for an experimental research network

The network has also attracted attention of others who would like to engage with the group, to further their own ideas and research.

Future

We discussed the fact that the network could only continue as a series of rolling events and as a ‘notice board’/‘forum’ for PGR’s to disseminate their research, get people together to discuss shared issues, for instance methodology, and to inform people about opportunities, things they are involved in. The organisers were keen to point out their lack of time in order to continue to orchestrate day long/events/activities as some are finishing their PhD and others entering into their final year, and ideally wanted participants to suggest and initiate ideas/talks/opportunities that they thought would be of interest to the group. We also want to signal the changing nature and direction of the initiative to enable its longevity and sustainability by developing the website into a place whereby people can meet, discuss and disseminate. It needs to be user friendly whilst also requiring little in terms of editorial or central ‘input’/ ‘administration.’ In many ways this differentiates it from existing sites and opportunities which are edited and peer reviewed etc.

It was also suggested that we look into setting up a JSIC group or something similar so that all participants can share news without everything having to come through the organisers.

A suggestion was made that we could potentially have face-to-face meetings and activities every two-three months or every quarter, alongside a regular timetabled opportunity for an online gathering or live forum. We have recruited someone who with a good knowledge of creating useable online spaces to help us make our platforms more user-friendly and self-maintaining and to advise us on how we might organise online gatherings and facilitate innovative research dissemination.

With thanks to participants:

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Jackie Calderwood, De Montfort University
Lee Campbell, Loughborough University
Roger Caney
Vivianna Checchia, Loughborough University
Lawrence Chuang, Loughborough University
Heather Connelly, Loughborough University
Andy Coverdale, University of Nottingham
Leigh Cunningham
Alice Dallabona, Nottingham Trent University
Joanna Dacombe
Nicola Donovan, Nottingham Trent University
Michael Eades, University of Nottingham
Dylan Sebastian Evans, University of Nottingham
Michelle Fava, Loughborough University
Zalfa Feghali, University of Nottingham
Jenna Finch
Tom Fisher, Nottingham Trent University
Rebecca Gamble, Nottingham Trent University
Ehsan Gill, University of Northampton
Catherine Hunter, Loughborough University
Rachel Jacobs, University of Nottingham
Jennifer Jones, University of West Scotland
David Jones
Yanhui Lei, University of Nottingham
Gavan Lennon, University of Nottingham
Katie Lloyd
Fangqing Lu, University of Nottingham
Caroline Matthaei, University of Lincoln
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Lisa Murphy, Sheffield Hallam University
Nils Norman, Royal Danish Academy of Art
Michael Pinchbeck, Loughborough University
Miffy Ryan, Loughborough University
Nick Slater, Radar
Mark Smith, Loughborough University
Lizzie Soden, Loughborough University
Rachel Walls, University of Nottingham
Emily Wilczek

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Heather Connelly - Loughborough University
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