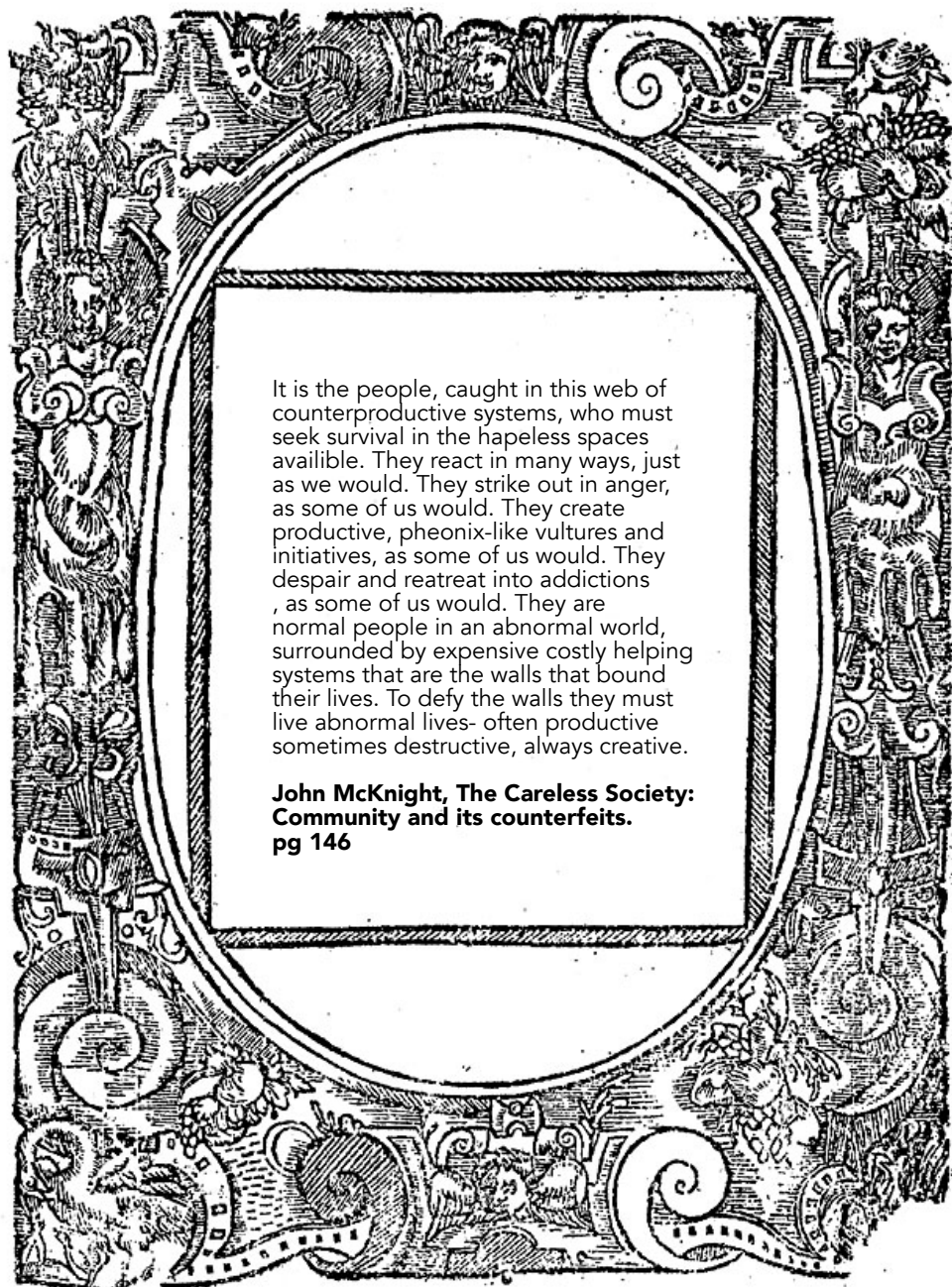




## **A balancing act: Precarity & socially engaged arts**

**Hosted by Kinning Park Complex  
Fri 16 November 2018**



It is the people, caught in this web of counterproductive systems, who must seek survival in the hapeless spaces available. They react in many ways, just as we would. They strike out in anger, as some of us would. They create productive, pheonix-like vultures and initiatives, as some of us would. They despair and retreat into addictions , as some of us would. They are normal people in an abnormal world, surrounded by expensive costly helping systems that are the walls that bound their lives. To defy the walls they must live abnormal lives- often productive sometimes destructive, always creative.

**John McKnight, The Careless Society: Community and its counterfeits. pg 146**

## Introduction

This zine emerged out of A Balancing Act – an event held at Kinning Park complex in November 2018. Led by Alex Wilde, the event explored how precarity affects us as individual artists, as a collective of artists, the people who we collaborate with and the people who participate in the projects we run.

The zine is designed to reflect and provoke conversation- how do we respond to these issues and take collective action? It reflects the discussions that happened between a small group of artists who defined their practice as socially engaged over a bowl of soup to mull over issues, challenges and questions we found ourselves faced with.

We discussed how we define and describe our practice, how socially engaged practice is valued, inclusion in the arts, privilege and power, burnout, earning an income, resisting being coercion into artwashing, and ways of collaborating across project and building solidarity between groups. Precarity tied together all the topics. It related to the nature of our practice - in practical terms such as unpredictable income, lack of security, and ways in which we practice - balancing different interests, agenda, expectations. Precarity is an issue that affects many of the communities we work with and is sometimes the subject matter which we are tackling in our work.

The idea of creating a zine in response to the session was to create a space that would support self reflection - in a room of 40 people it can be hard to find space to really get to grips with our own situations and practice. Over the course of the day we added results of discussion to the zine to document what we worked through alongside space for new ideas.

Thanks to all the contributors and attendees of A Balancing Act. May the conversation continue. **Josie Valley**

## Programme

### 9.30am - 10.30am

Talks and question and answer

#### **Katharine Wheeler – The Stove Network**

Katharine, an artist on the curatorial team in the Stove Network will talk about of the importance of spaces that allow communities to explore ideas of place without a pre-defined agenda and the role of the artist in those spaces. How can we, artists, help facilitate community-led, creative problem solving to social challenges. She will focus in particular on how individual artistic practice can work within the structure of community organisations, the challenges of collective working where the community is a leading player and the importance to be able to take risks.

#### **In Kind - Janie Nicoll and Ailie Rutherford**

Artists Janie and Ailie will talk about their research project charting the hidden economies of the arts using Glasgow International festival as a case study. The project reveals the volume of unpaid labour, unseen and unaccounted for efforts, and volunteer hours that enable arts festivals to take place. In Kind questions the apparently successful arts festival model rolled out across major cities, and challenges whether this is a sustainable model for artists and who these festivals actually benefit.

### 10.30 - 11.15

Group discussion about themes raised in the talks

### 11.15 - 11.30 Break

### 11.30 - 12.15

Group discussion about mutual support and future actions.

### 12.15 - 12.30

Feedback from group discussions

### 12.30 Lunch

### 1pm Finish

## Blogs

**The Stove Network** is an artist-led organisation in the centre of Dumfries High street using creative practice to effect change in the area. In 2016 it was awarded the Scottish Regeneration Award for Creativity in Regeneration. [www.katharinewheeler.com](http://www.katharinewheeler.com)

**Katharine** is a Visual Artist with a practice that spans from studio-based visual art to public and socially-engaged work and collaboration. She is a member of the Curatorial Team (a collective that acts as Creative Director) for The Stove, she is developing their 'place-making' partnership work and mentors the youth arm blueprint100. [www.thestove.org](http://www.thestove.org)

**In Kind** is a research project by artists Ailie Rutherford and Janie Nicoll, charting the hidden economies of the arts using Glasgow International festival as a case study. [inkindproject.info](http://inkindproject.info)

**Ailie Rutherford** is a visual artist with an interest in alternative and feminist economies. Her collaborative practice is grounded in the places she works inviting people to become co-producers of works that activate local public space and collectively imagine alternatives to the way we live now. She is currently working with designer Bettina Nissen on proposals for a feminist crypto-currency. [ailierutherford.com](http://ailierutherford.com)

**Janie Nicoll** is a Glasgow based Visual Artist who studied Painting at Edinburgh College of Art and the MFA at Glasgow School of Art. She creates hybrid-works across a range of media using collage techniques, often in collaboration with other artists or communities. She has exhibited locally, nationally and internationally, and recently spent three years as President of Scottish Artists Union ([www.sau.org.uk](http://www.sau.org.uk)).

**Alex Wilde** is a visual artist who lives and works in Glasgow. She has been involved in projects across Europe focused on creative engagement with people about the communities and places they live. In her practice she often seeks to investigate, frame and encourage critical reflection upon our relationship to food, in particular how it impacts upon the planning and design of communities. She is a founding member of the Open Jar Collective. [www.alexwilde.info](http://www.alexwilde.info)  
[www.openjarcollective.co.uk](http://www.openjarcollective.co.uk)

**Josie Vallely** is an artist and designer based in Scotland with an interest in place, belonging, identity and health. Josie co-produced Communal Leisure publication. Communal Leisure is a space for discussion and sharing of music, art and politics, based in Glasgow. We aim to unpack ideas of work, labour, 'DIY' culture, and leisure <http://www.josievallely.com/>  
<https://communalleisure.com/magazine/>

**Kinning Park Complex** is an independent multi-use community centre. Run by the community since they had to step in to prevent closure of the facility by the local Council in 1996. We maintain and rent out halls, meeting rooms, studios and office spaces at affordable prices where people and groups can put their ideas into action. We also manage community development projects in the local area. <http://www.kinningparkcomplex.org>

**Axisweb** is an independent charity, we are committed to providing a platform to support [artists] and profile what they do. Social Works? Is a programme of workshops, get-togethers, critical writing and artist commissions to support socially engaged artistic practice in the UK. Developed by Axisweb and Manchester Metropolitan University. <https://www.axisweb.org/social-works/>

## BUST YOUR BOSS!\*

card for freelance art and cultural workers

During a negotiation about work you have the right:

**not** to remain silent about money

**not** to subsidise the production from your own pocket

**not** to accept a change of agreed conditions without a renegotiation

**not** to take this job on the promise of a future!

\* *Warning: In the cultural sector your boss may not look like a boss – they could be your friend/drinking buddy... It might even be you!*



In solidarity – Precarious Workers Brigade  
[www.precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com](http://www.precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com)

**BUST YOUR BOSS!**  
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ASK:



*What's the budget? How much am I getting paid? How much are YOU getting paid? When am I getting paid? Do I get paid sick leave and holidays? Will my pay cover a living wage for the period of the project? What union can I join? Are there separate budgets for production, expenses and pay? When shall we agree the terms of the contract? What is the compensation fee if the work gets cancelled? Has all the money for the project been raised? What is the maternity/paternity and pension provision? Where is the money for the project coming from and what degree of involvement do funders have in my work? etc..*



## What is 'socially-engaged' practice?

If 'art' is a creative exploration of an idea, 'participatory art' may be the desire to include others in that exploration and 'socially-engaged art' may be the context of that exploration to be relevant within a particular community. But whose perspective sets the context? IS a practice socially-engaged if it does not co-create with 'community'? If it is a comment from outside the 'community'.

I am interested in the tension that exists between the work/perspective of the 'individual' and the 'collective', the questions that this brings up, the perceptions it challenges. **Who do we mean when we talk of 'community'?** Can we truly see what a community has and value what it wants without the building of significant relationships over long periods of time (and even then)?

How do we build projects in the context of collective working, management and authorship where the community are co-creators? Can socially-engaged arts practice be better integrated across sectors?

- Katharine Wheeler, The Stove Network

**Samar Ziadat** | @samarziadat · Oct 14  
The past six months I have seen so much funded work by white artists (who are not refugees or asylum seekers) about 'the refugee experience'. This work is often created in 'collaboration' with refugees/asylum seekers who are not paid for their consultation. This has to stop.

10:20 AM - 14 Oct 2018

656 Retweets 2,225 Likes

30 656 2.2K

Tweet your reply

**Samar Ziadat** | @samarziadat · Oct 14  
The work is often a neoliberal celebration of 'diversity', but more often it's about the suffering and pain of these displaced peoples.

1 30 197

**Samar Ziadat** | @samarziadat · Oct 14  
White institutions, and their primarily white audiences, have a perverse demand for work about the suffering of people of colour - especially if the narrative is constructed by a white artist.

2 54 248

**Samar Ziadat** | @samarziadat · Oct 14  
Today I walked through a grand colonial era art gallery, which was built using slavery money, amongst a very white audience, and looked at images of a people who look exactly like me in insurmountable emotional and physical pain. This 'work' was made by a white artist.

3 17 149

**Samar Ziadat** | @samarziadat · Oct 14  
Walking through this exhibition I felt physically ill, partly because I was being confronted with these images, but also because the people in these images have so obviously been exploited for white pleasure and entertainment.

1 8 120

**Samar Ziadat** | @samarziadat · Oct 14  
Exploited so that white audiences can feel good and charitable; so that this audience would have an interesting starting point for 'intellectual debate'; and so that a white elitist institution could meet their 'equality and diversity criteria' for the next 12 months.

1 18 136

**Samar Ziadat** | @samarziadat · Oct 14  
Also exploited by this white artist of course, who will gain capital (financial, cultural and social) through this exhibition and everything that is associated with it.

Go to <https://www.gofundme.com/dardishi-festival> to support Samar's project Dardishi is a feminist collective and an online magazine which exclusively showcases the cultural production of Arab women and Arab non-binary people.

**In Kind is a research project by visual artists Janie Nicoll and Alie Rutherford, using Glasgow International 2018 as a case study.**

The project aims to map the hidden economies of the visual arts and the "below the water-line"\* economy, charting the unseen and unaccounted efforts that enable the festival to take place, exploring unpaid labour, mutual support, favours and volunteer hours that go into making arts festivals happen.

In Kind challenges the apparently successful arts festival model rolled out across major cities, looking at whether this is actually a sustainable model for artists and the sector in general. Conversations with a range of artists have made it increasingly apparent that the festival's 'in kind' economy is the elephant in the room, while also being endemic within the art scene in general. The excavation of the extent of this underlying economy aims to empower artists and organisations alike to make the case for proper remuneration for their labour. Our discussion based events interrogate issues of artist precarity, opening up the debate on how lack of payment affects lack of diversity in the visual arts in Scotland.

Our research builds on information obtained through the Creative Scotland Visual Arts Sector Review 2015, where 45% of respondents estimated that over half the work they do is unpaid or voluntary. Similarly Scottish Artists Union Membership Survey 2016 shows high levels of volunteering by its membership, 52% in the arts; also with 45% of respondents thinking the sector is not healthy and viable for their practice.

Over the duration of the project, we devised a set of proposals and demands. This list of demands was read out during our Soapbox event on Sunday 6th May, at Kings Court, Glasgow. We are continuing to develop these demands and would value other contributions; if you would like to contribute please get in touch with us at [inkindproject@riseup.net](mailto:inkindproject@riseup.net)



## PROPOSALS AND DEMANDS

- We will abolish art hierarchy.
- We will work in solidarity with other artists not in competition
- We will not exploit ourselves and others by giving our labour for free- because this culture of unpaid labour exasperates inequality and only gives a voice to those who can afford to work unpaid
- We will campaign for a Citizens Basic Income so that everyone who wants to can afford to be an artist
- We will stop exploiting ourselves through social media using our art to create content for Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram
- Artists will refuse to become the unpaid gentrifiers of cities
- Those of us with the privileges of being male, white, cis-gendered, affluent, able-bodied or free from caring responsibilities will give up power
- We will incorporate care into all the plans we make
- GI will no longer ask artists to sign contracts demanding that artists work for 20 days in a row, up to 8 hours per day unpaid
- Artists will not agree to contracts that demand they work for 20 days in a row unpaid

**During the the In Kind project presentation, as a group we discussed the demands made by the project. We considered them from a variety of angles, and fed back as group the ways in which we would change them. The whole process fed into really interesting conversations and we came out of the end with more questions than answers!**

### **We will abolish art hierarchy.**

We struggled with the notion of hierarchy- there are hierarchies within hierarchies. Some disadvantages are viewed as more significant than others. Hierarchies of popularity and commercialism- how selling art dictates the culture of arts more largely. Intellectualism- does criticism push people into positions of advantage. People knowing reviewers and critics can advance someone's career. Hierarchies of institutions- they work in hierarchical ways, very old fashioned, male dominated. The power of association with an institution- university, clients. Is it possible to remove a hierarchy or is the whole systems based on hierarchy. We will abolish **art hierarchies!**

### **We will work in solidarity with other artists not in competition**

What does it mean to not be in competition- we feel like we are enabled and supported by our peers, but there are only so many jobs and funding pools that people can access. You are inevitably competing for resources. What does solidarity look like? Radical acts of community- how do we work within our communities to create space for making. How do we create collective models of working that sustain us? Individualism is strong in the arts, which can be linked right back to art schools and funding. There is not structure to assess collaborative working. What can we do practically do support each other- how do we destabilise the systems and work against them collectively.

### **We will not exploit others and ourselves by giving our labour for free.**

We talked about whom we are giving our labour too- in activism (political / community). We wouldn't want to rule this out. But we felt that work institutions could be more easily identified as being problematic. We will be honest and transparent if we exploit ourselves by giving our labour for free. We will actively challenge this culture of unpaid labour exasperates inequality and only gives a voice to those who can afford to work unpaid. Organisations have to take responsibility for people how are working for free and reign it in- make sure that staff are only working their hours.

### **We will campaign for a Citizens Basic Income so that everyone who wants to can afford to be an artist**

There is a need for a base level income so everyone cans who wants to be can afford to be an artist. Do we want to commit to this particular type of model? Perhaps we should commit to be part of this conversation. This is big debate- is this demand too big? Is it achievable?

### **We will stop exploiting ourselves through social media using our art to create content for Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram**

What is art? Do we want to clarify this a bit? Is there awareness about who owns the content on these platforms? Should we explore how people to use social media to their advantage?

### **Artists will refuse to become the unpaid gentrifiers of cities**

Is there a parallel action that can be added to this- can we unbecome the gentrifiers? If we demanded higher standards of working environments would this change things? We are part of a bigger system of landlords, rent etc. There is a distinction to be made between being paid by developers or other bodies who are focussed on building capital from communities, vs building capacity in a community.

### **Those of us with the privileges of being male, white, cis-gendered, affluent, able-bodied or free from caring responsibilities will give up share power**

Whoever meets these descriptions can actively reject opportunities etc but we could view it from the opposite side- thinking about how we take on staff, actively supporting people who don't have these privileges. Self-awareness and a reframing- rethinking how you manage rejecting opportunities and seeing this as an opening of opportunity for others. Do to others what you would do to yourself. Don't see very opportunity as an opportunity just for you. Ask how you can use that opportunity to support others. If you are getting paid well then share your money. Others don't think this works- imbalance in pay is not good; people working in communities should share their privilege and money, but we don't want a race to the bottom- we have an austerity agenda, which has inflicted a lack of proper funding in the arts. We need to value the work we do – but we do need to look in the mirror and acknowledge our privilege.

### **We will incorporate care into all the plans we make**

This can be practically ie. in our budgets. The real cost of art making is not often acknowledged- doing the maximum with the minimum is the norm. Care should be incorporated into the budget. Something needs to shift – we cant expect to have the same numbers of artists, but a more diverse group, on the same budget that festival use at the moment. Also acknowledging when artists are being asked to offer care that they are not qualified to do. Often we are working in settings with people who have specific needs - we need to be clear with ourselves what our abilities are in terms of the support we give to people.

### **GI will no longer ask artists to sign contracts demanding that artists work for 20 days in a row, up to 8 hours per day unpaid**

We think this should change to all institutions- not just GI.

## WHAT'S NEXT...

① Cont. SHARING — <sup>How?</sup> supported

② Places/spaces to identify challenges.

③ Ways/methods of encouraging  
TRANSPARENCY

↓  
'our' systems

→ How do we make this visible?

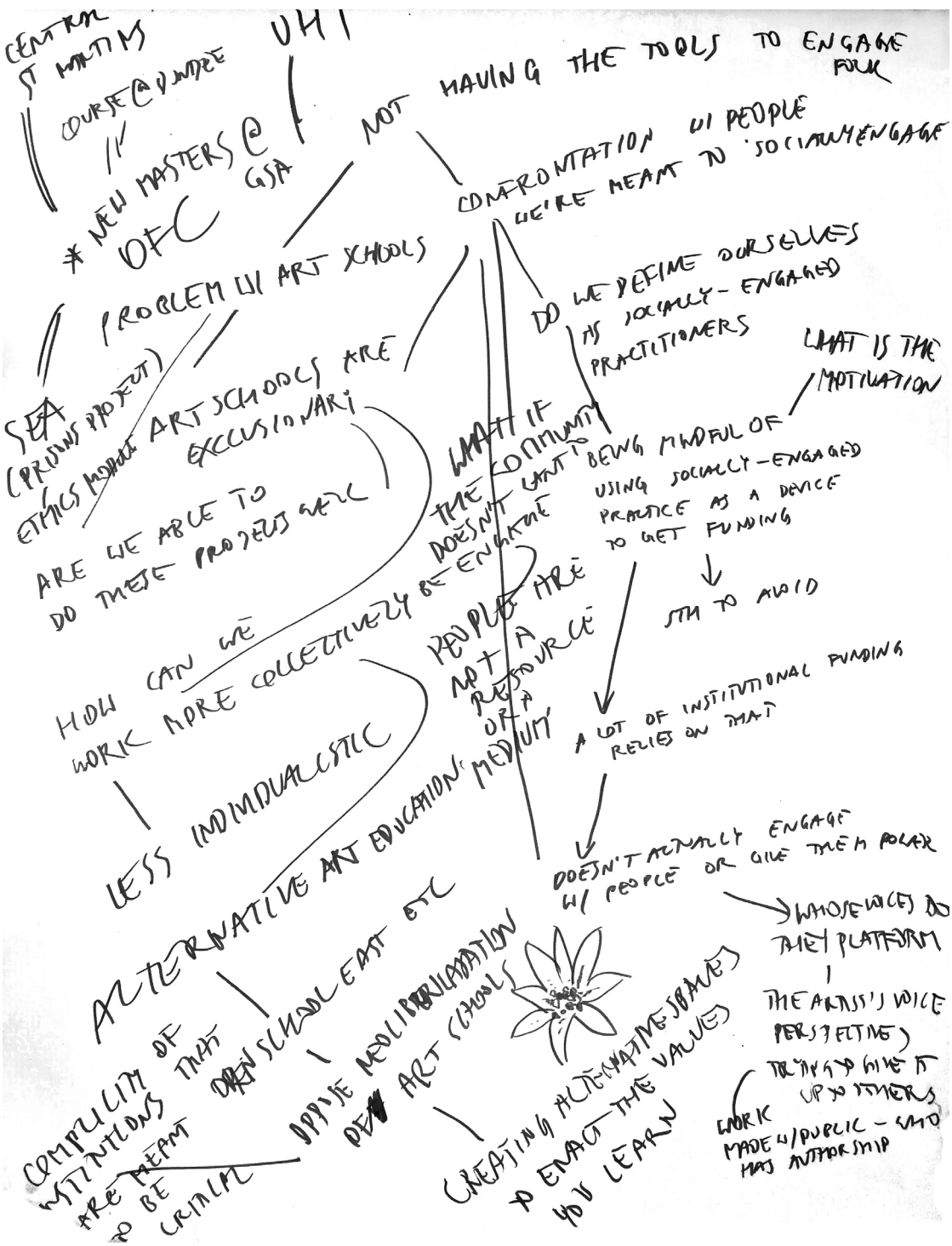
→ How do we talk about 'PROCESS'  
as 'PRACTICE'?

④ IDENTIFYING what we would  
consider "best practice"

develop: Language for COLLABORATIVE practice  
NOT STANDARDISED

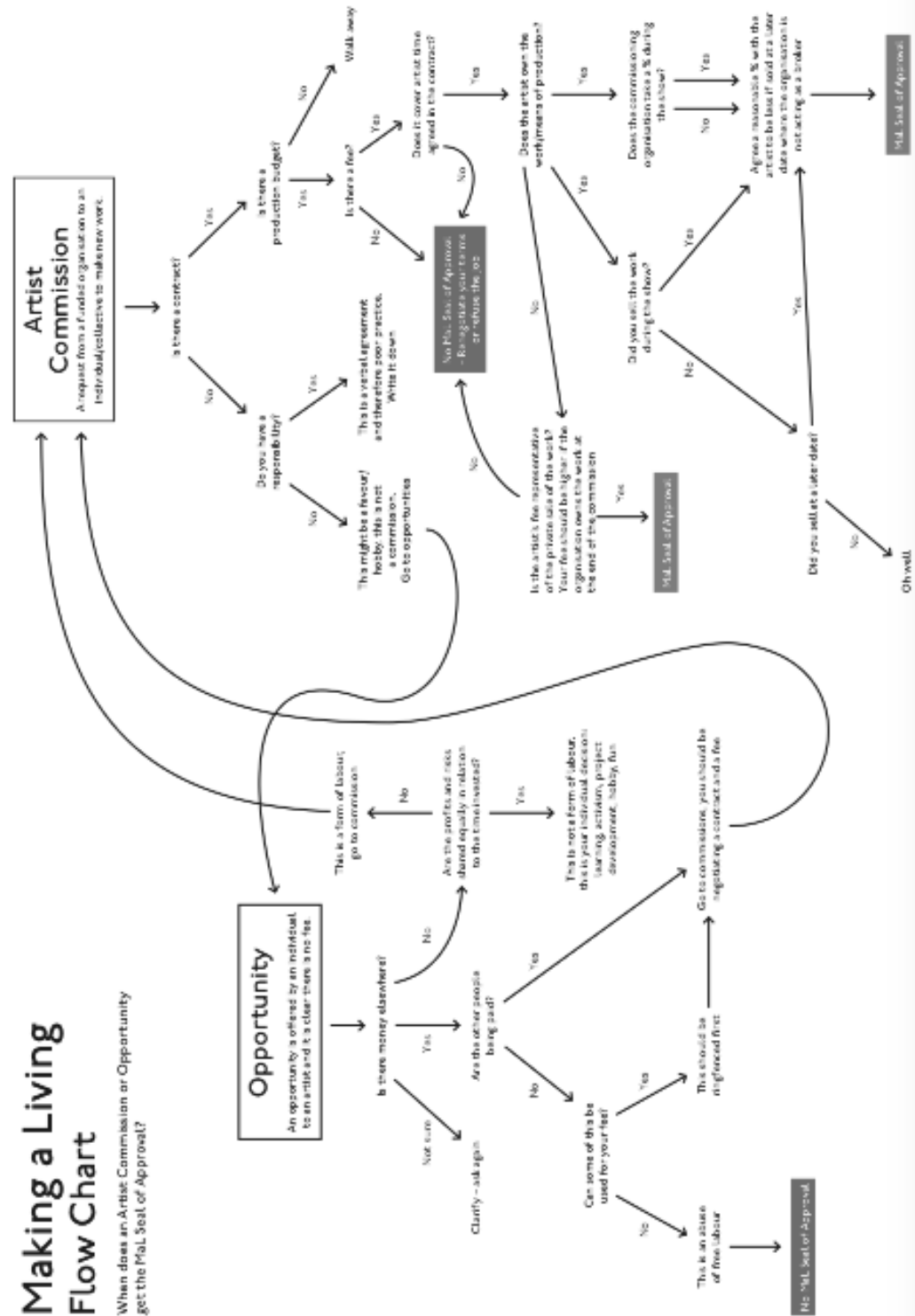
## ACTIONS

1. Peer network- future meet ups.
2. Setting up a reading group
3. Sharing models and structures of collective working
4. Representation of artists, how to gain more leverage for Scottish artists union to give it power to challenge exploitation. How to organise the factory floor when there is no factory. Unionising!
5. Continued sharing, place and spaces for identify challenges.
6. Transparency- of our economies, budgets and working practices
7. Identify best practice- talk more about what we have done wrong
8. Continued ways of connecting
9. Looking at work that is being made outside of the art world
10. Exploring the language- what does it mean to make socially engaged work?



# Making a Living Flow Chart

When does an Artist Commission or Opportunity get the Mal Seal of Approval?





# What resources do you have already to support your practice?



Places

Funding

Tools

Expertise

Materials

Networks

Learning opportunities

Critical friends

Time

Ideas



## Artists Against Artwashing: Anti-Gentrification & the Intangible Rise of the Social Capital Artist

By Stephen Pritchard from his blog  
[www.colouringinculture.org](http://www.colouringinculture.org)

*"This is a transcript of my paper I presented at the Edge | Situated Practice conference at Here East on Saturday 7th October 2017. The conference was organised by the UCL Urban Laboratory and the Folkestone Triennial, with additional support from the Bartlett School of Architecture and Slade School of Fine Art. It was a really interesting conference and I think my paper provoked some challenging debate."*

Artists and arts organisations have always skirted the edges of gentrification. Like pretty moths, they have happily fluttered around the naked flame of accumulation by dispossession, quietly spinning intricate little cocoons in decrepit capitalist disinvestment. Precision migrants, they move on the favourable wind of financial investment, astutely drawn by the tiny new bright lights of frontier navigation beacons. Intention is everything in this cyclical and cynical gentrification dance and artists can no longer play the role of innocent victim.

Some artists nibble away the decaying fabric of working-class community; part of a complex, multi-scalar global infrastructural web spun by transnational agents – property developers, investors, banks, big brand retailers, managed wealth funds, NGOs and the creative industries – using the fine silk state investment. But, whilst there are few strings attached for corporate regeneration 'partners', the creative industries willingly trade funding and cultural status in exchange for increased state instrumentalisation, partial privatisation and new civic responsibilities. And, cajoled by the state into ever-deepening relationships with the private sector, many arts organisations, artists, architects, etc. discovered new value in the intangible worlds of 'community development' and 'community engagement'.

From community arts to placemaking, some artists coalesced under socially engaged art's catch-all banner. Quickly and quietly depoliticised, they became, I argue, Social Capital Artists: specialists in artwashing.

Yet this web extends far beyond the sphere of socially engaged practices. Nowhere is off-limits! Art is ensnared by exploitative vested interests – by neoliberal governance and transnational capitalism.

And regeneration is a game. A game played by the privileged; by those in positions of power. The regeneration game, like everything in this neoliberal hegemony, is about capital and profit and massive human loss.

And so here we are at Queen Elizabeth Park: a massive private site - a pseudo-public space. UCL were complicit in plans to demolish the Carpenters Estate, before dropping out following fierce campaigning. Yet UCL's Here East and future East campuses are integral to the gentrification and social cleansing of Stratford and Newham. People were socially cleansed to make way for this. Mothers and children were displaced. Scattered by Newham Council's wilful social cleansing.

People resist. But the wrecking ball just keeps on swinging. And we talk about the 'edge' - a deeply problematic abstraction, valuable only to the privileged ... And that includes all of us.

This space is not about the 'unknown or ignored' nor 'contrary or diverse phenomena' nor 'connectivity and interaction'. This space is about us – the privileged few – and them – lower-class people who've been forcibly dispossessed of their homes and lives. Evicted.

For Smith, the 'gentrification frontier' divided 'areas of disinvestment from areas of reinvestment' (1996, p. 187). This, I believe, is not the subtly depoliticised notion of 'edge' at the heart of this conference. Gentrification was a 'dirty word' for Smith, particularly for working-class people whose lives are negated and destroyed by the process and its 'language of revitalization, recycling, upgrading and renaissance' (1996, pp. 25-32). Working-class areas become, in the eyes of gentrifiers, barren wildernesses devoid of anything of value or significance, barring a few 'salvageable' landmarks that add much needed 'authenticity'.

So can situated practice's exploration of 'creative use' for 'interstitial spaces' ever function as anything other than artwashing? Is this conference really about artwashing? Are there alternatives? Yes. Are these alternatives 'situated practices'? No.

I will briefly now describe the struggles of two activist groups on London's 'gentrification frontier', specifically looking at examples of how they oppose 'situated practices'. First Balforn Social Club and then Southwark Notes Archive Group.

BSC is a collective. Residents and artists who resist the social cleansing of iconic Balforn



Tower and call out artwashing. They demand 50% social housing in all regeneration projects.

For founding member, artist Rab Harling, who was a tenant during Bow Arts Trust (BAT) tenure of Balforn Tower, 'art no longer equals freedom of expression, but forced oppression, a violent assault on working class communities by a class of educated and privileged people who choose, in the most part, to turn a blind eye to what is going on, at least until it directly affects them' (2017). Harling maintains that BAT not only used artists to act as live/ work tenants in place of decanted Balforn residents but that they colluded with housing association Poplar HARCA to artwash the social cleansing of the tower. When Harling called them out. He was evicted.

In 2015, BSC wrote what was, I argue, a crucial article on the role of socially engaged artists and their involvement in artwashing: Brutalism [redacted] – Social Art Practice and You. The article began as follows: 'It has come to our attention that a new and "innovative" art practice is coming to the area. It is an organisation that engages in ... wait for it: "Social Art Practice"' (Balforn Social Club, 2015).

Funded by the lottery and employed by councils and property developers, 'The Social Art practitioner is placed in sites of contestation, and asked to do the footwork of those who really are creating concrete

social change: the social cleansers'. The idea of creatively engaging citizens, stimulating employability and building 'positive social change' parrots those of the state, housing developers, housing associations, councils and arts funders.

The collective identified a 'new currency': that of 'social capital' and 'enterprise' (Balforn Social Club, 2015). In its sinister toolkit: social practice, engagement and placemaking. This is top-down policy. It is not grassroots.

Artists serving under this system become Social Capital Artists: the harvesters and monetisers of the intangible elements of people's lives and the bonds and ties that once held vulnerable communities together. Once their social capital has been sifted, it is used as corporate PR and case studies for arts funders and the state; used as evidence of community engagement and consultation by local councils and property developers alike, validating the displacement of the very people who, by taking part in these 'creative engagement processes', gave their social capital away for free. This practice is what I term community artwashing. Social Capital Artists – proficient in garnering trust - are its agents.

One of BSC's key strategies is the use of social media. For instance, when socially engaged artist Hannah Nicklin was commissioned to work with the community in the Teviot Estate, BSC

intervened. Nicklin had been commissioned by ACEfunded socially engaged art organisation the Social Housing Arts Network (SHAN) who in turn were commissioned by Poplar HARCA. Nicklin became 'storyteller in residence' for Poplar HARCA, collecting 'collected people's stories about living in the area' and turning some of them into illustrated 'modern day folk tales' (Social Housing Arts Network, 2016a, pp. 3435). She gathered the social capital of local people – their life stories, thoughts and fears – then digitally re-presented them as a simulation; a game.

When challenged by BSC, Nicklin explained that a transaction of sorts had taken place between herself and the 60 participants she had worked with in which she had 'shared my skills and craft in exchange for the stories people were willing to offer' (Nicklin, 2016). This notion of exchange is interesting, reflecting an exchange of social capital. Yet can the value of Nicklin's skills (which were delivered to participants as part of her paid function as a commissioned artist) be compared to the value of the stories gifted by participants?

Nonetheless, Nicklin understood that art and gentrification often complement each other. Nicklin concluded that her project was artwashing because, whilst it attempted to address gentrification, it also promoted 'the values of Poplar HARCA'. BSC had opened a debate with an artist that led her to reflect upon her work and begin to understand how socially engaged artists can be embroiled in artwashing gentrification. BSC revealed how artists were used to strategically glean intangible community assets – social capital; a complementary value-adding extra to accompany the tangible accumulation by dispossession associated with the material practice of land-grabbing.

And, like BSC, the work of Southwark Notes (SNAG) is of central importance to my research. SNAG is a politically independent group of 'local people who aren't particularly happy about what is going on in the name of "regeneration"' (Southwark Notes, 2017a). It demands regeneration schemes enhance the quality of existing communities. Like BSC, the collective uses the moniker Southwark Notes to maintain anonymity. The group works to oppose gentrification across Southwark and further afield, both individually and with other local groups. It also has links to other anti-gentrification groups in other countries, including international activist art collective Ultra-red. SNAG was involved in the occupation of the Heygate estate's

gardens, organised regular walks around the area, helped community groups fighting the demolition of the nearby Aylesbury Estate, and played an important role in the successful scrapping of artist Mike Nelson's planned pyramid sculpture which was to have been constructed from the rubble of a demolished building on the estate.

For Graham and Vass, SNAG 'is exemplary of [a] kind of solidarity, in which artists work alongside residents in campaigns to develop interventions against the gentrification of the Elephant and Castle ... with little distinction made between artists and other activists'

SNAG often campaign about art projects in the area. For example, they became concerned about ACE-funded artists' project, the People's Bureau. For SNAG, People's Bureau failed to challenge 'Delancey's ground zero plans for the Shopping Centre', or their plans to make 'Elephant a luxury destination'. And, whilst the People's Bureau claimed to offer empowerment through art, for SNAG the artists 'brushed aside' the 'everyday concerns' of local people and local small businesses facing displacement with the 'empowerment to surrender' (Southwark Notes, 2016a). Crucially, SNAG examined how People's Bureau's 'skills exchange' programme led to the 'harvesting of personal experiences' for conversion into 'museum exhibits as traces of a disappearing life' (2016a). Such circumstances facilitate the conversion of personal narratives and community bonds and ties into first social capital and then into cultural capital via the construction of a particularly sentimental and yet divisive form of third person nostalgia narrative.

For SNAG, the community (like so many others) was disempowered by a 'mummification process' epitomised by the work of People's Bureau:

There will always be a fundamental power imbalance here: the community is studied in its natural habitat by the artists sponsored by the council/ developers. The unspoken agreement is that the artists never really look at how the community's desires might be in conflict with regeneration plans. Without tackling that power imbalance, all of this works to prove that regeneration is inevitable: it is the best of all possible worlds, there is no alternative. The community is destroyed and its colourful life is placed in "the museum of fish and chips" (2016a).

People's Bureau's go-anywhere, do-anything colourful cart became a metaphor for Elephant and Castle's soon-to-be-displaced 'colourful

local community'; the artists became 'low value assets' capable of smoothing the impact of regeneration; 'part of the problem', the artists worked 'for Delancey's interests' as an 'on-the-cheap service provider' (Southwark Notes, 2016a). Yet SNAG acknowledges that, inevitably, the area will be redeveloped.

I suggest both BSC and SNAG reflect, in different ways, three forms of action against neoliberal urban governance. Firstly, they challenge the 'forms, goals and effects of corporate urban development' and oppose the commodification of public space, simultaneously highlighting the impact of these policies upon those people dispossessed by their outcomes. Secondly, by fighting neoliberal policies and politics, including the dismantling of the welfare state, they seek social justice. Thirdly, they challenge global financial institutions and defend public services locally and nationally, effectively opposing neoliberalism at the levels of global investment and within national and local systems of governance (Mayer, 2009, p. 366). Both BSC and SNAG have a strong sense of, and commitment to, place and yet they seem to avoid what Chatterton and Pickerill called 'defensive localism' (2010, p. 485). They shatter

any notion of entrenched or 'parochial place-boundedness' that may be levied at activist art seeking to oppose gentrification. I therefore argue their practices reflect how today's activist art collectives attempt to work with and function within (or perhaps at the edges of) the everyday:

*Being simultaneously against, within and after capitalism means that the everyday becomes the terrain where our politics are fought for and worked at ... Just as capitalist social relations are reproduced at an everyday level, so too ordinary everyday practices can be generative of anti- and post-capitalisms (2010, p. 485).*

It is therefore possible, I claim, to use art theory as part of a broader armoury; to think and act creatively in radical ways that collapse art into everyday life and grassroots protest. Such a tactical outlook may not only assist local collective actions against gentrification but may also be an effective form of 'calling out' artists and arts institutions who are working in the services of gentrifiers; of contesting the complicity of art and the creative industries as a sometimes subtle, sometimes obvious foil for global capital.



# Mapping your working life

Mapping can be an incisive way of examining your work balance. Mapping can reveal options where none seem to exist, and can be a way to dismantle what is presented as irrefutable and inevitable. Your work- place can be mapped in various ways: identifying supportive people, resources and accomplices, as well as mapping the organisational power, problems and blockages that may exist. The map can function as an early warning system, a way to address small problems before they become big ones, and in general to help you articulate your experience. Locating yourself can be a source of power. Maps can show you ways to move, and maybe show you if you should get out!  
Here is a template to use to map your working life.

It will help you to imagine how where you are now relates to where you might be in the future. It's a graph divided into four sections, along two axes: Luxury – Poverty and Flexibility – Stability. You can try three ways of working with this diagram:

1. Mark where on this map corresponds to your current position
2. Mark where you would like to be in 3 years time
3. Mark where some of the people in your organisation are (interns, different staff, managers, cleaners, etc)

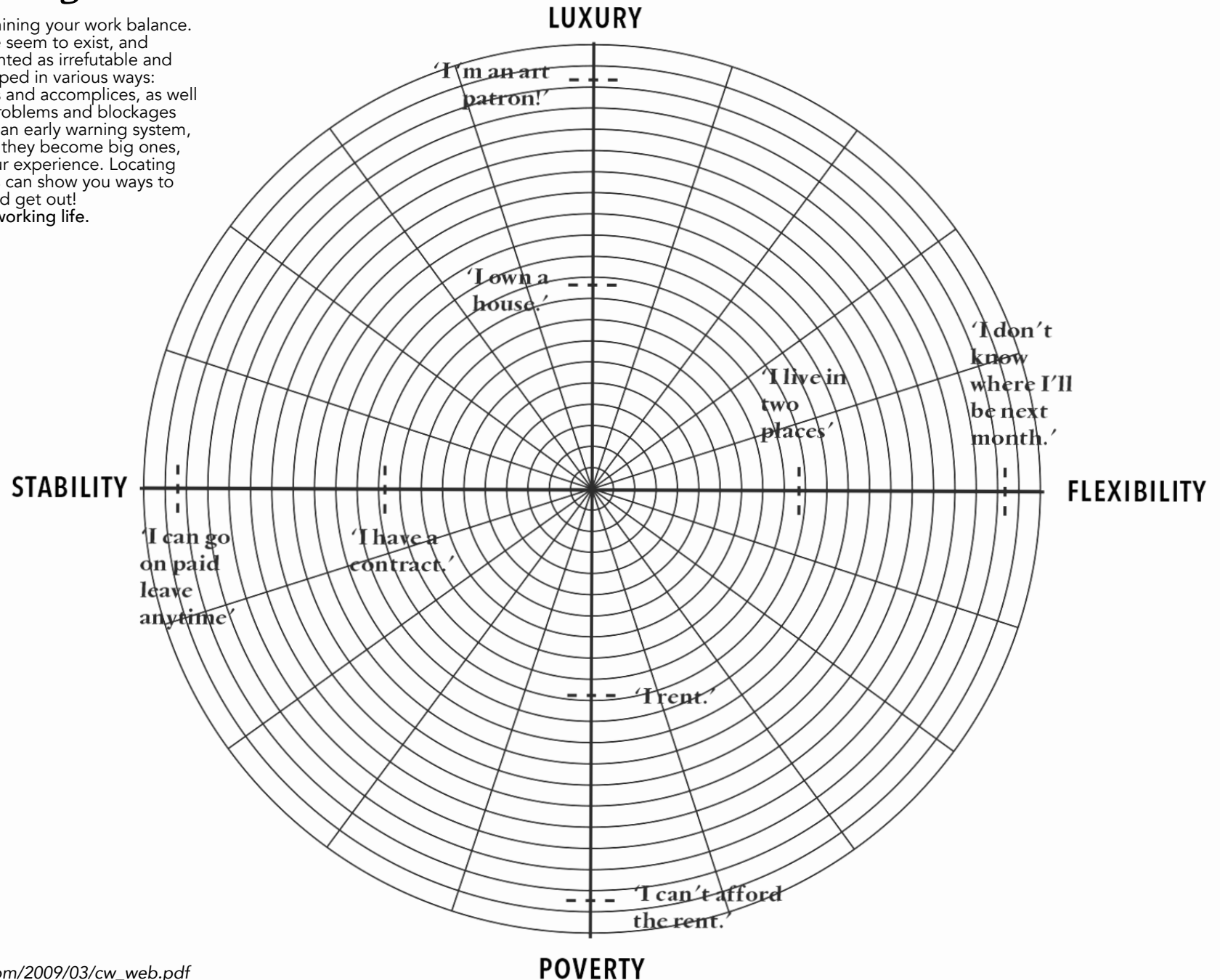
**Luxury & Flexibility** = having a flexible job and a lot of money (the star creative)

**Poverty & Stability** = stable job and little money (the loser caught in tedious work)

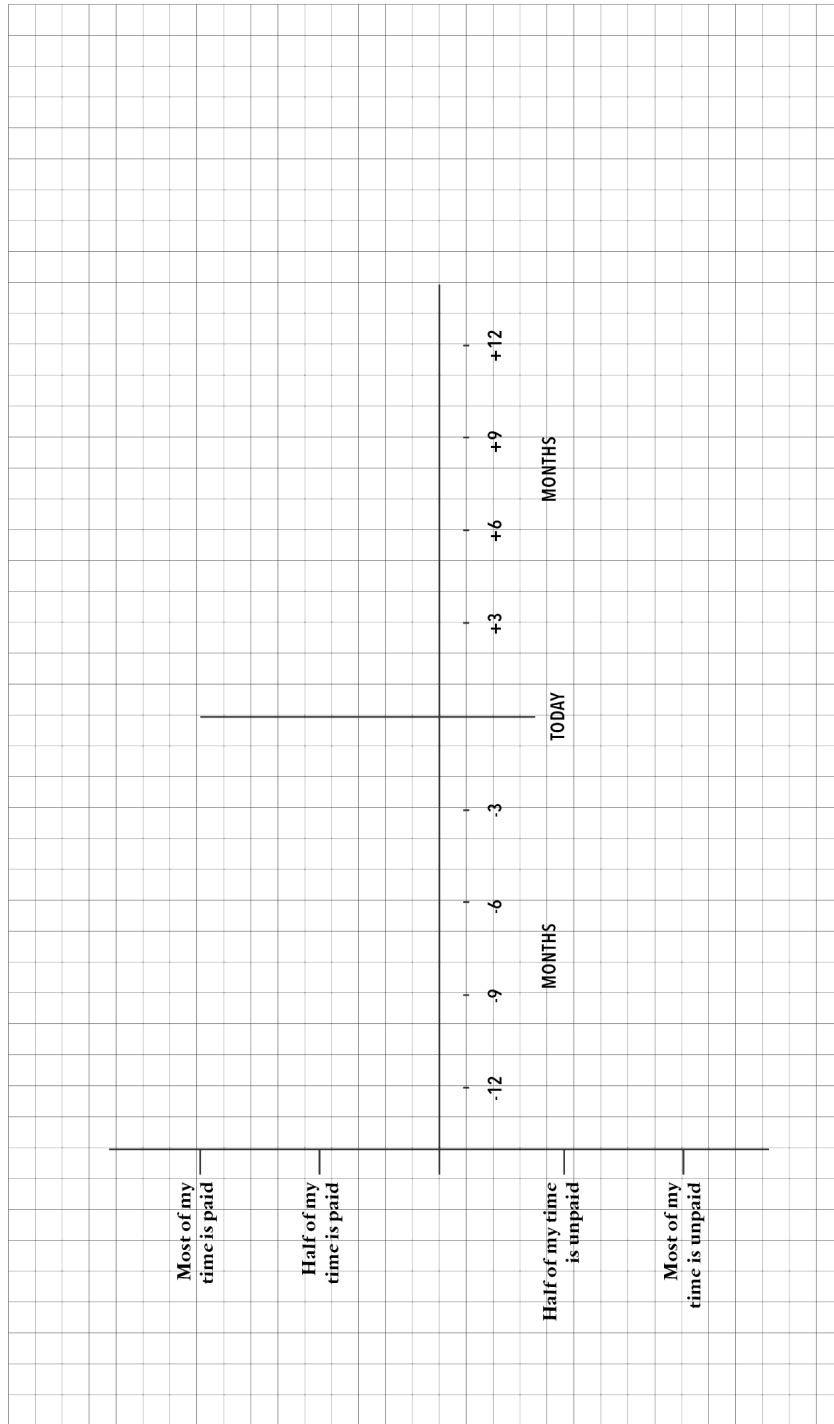
**Luxury & Stability** = stable work and lots of money (rarely what we're into culture for)

**Poverty & Flexibility** = either flexible work and little money (exhausting and alienating in the long run), or no work and no money, but doing things we like (burning us out rather soon)

Written by Carrot Workers Collective:  
[https://carrotworkers.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/cw\\_web.pdf](https://carrotworkers.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/cw_web.pdf)



## Mapping paid vs. unpaid work



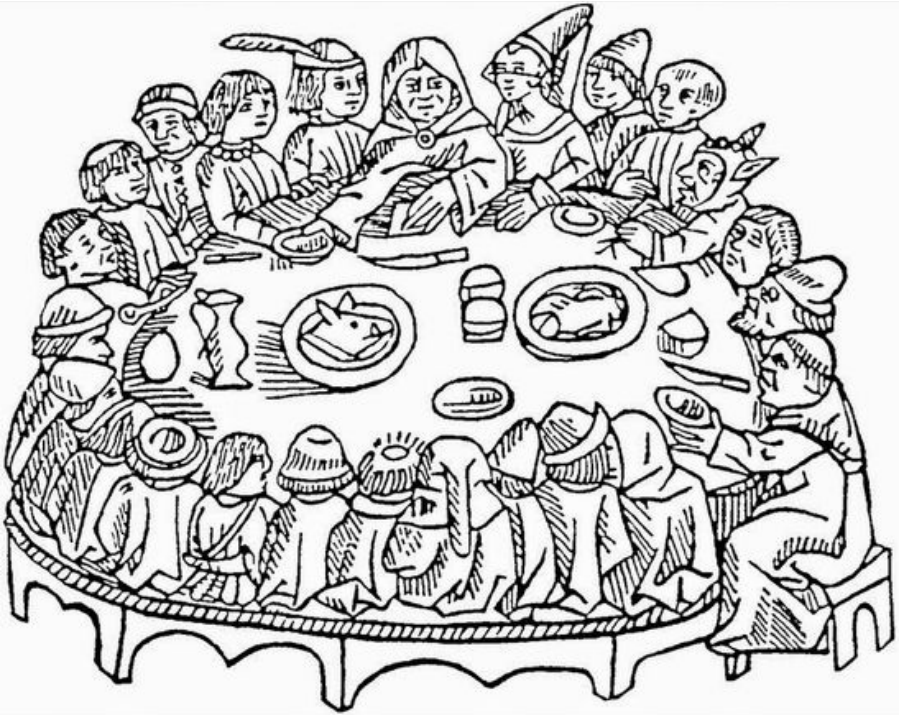
## Mapping paid vs. unpaid work

Doing unpaid projects can take up a lot of time, and you are likely to be compensating for the lack of income with another paid job. For instance: have you been doing a part time paid job as well as projects on the side? How much time on a paid job do these projects cost you? Use this graph to map out how much time you have been spending doing paid and unpaid work in the last 6 months, and how you would dream this may evolve in the future.

Along the vertical axis of the graph, indicate how much time per day you spend working. To do this, you will need to define what you see as 'work' – jobs, projects, networking, childcare... and then to consider to what extent these are 'paid'.

Along the horizontal axis, you can chart out how work in your recent past, present and future compare. What do you want your working patterns to look like in the future – what ratio between paid and unpaid work would you like to see?

Written by Carrot Workers Collective:  
[https://carrotworkers.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/cw\\_web.pdf](https://carrotworkers.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/cw_web.pdf)



**When you have more than you need  
Build a bigger table not a higher wall.**

Zine by Josie Vallely  
Funded by Axisweb



**Axisweb**



**MANCHESTER  
SCHOOL OF ART**



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**