

# **TRANSFORMATIONAL FIELDWORK**

**Or: How might a sustainable cultural provision in  
the rural/small town context be framed?**

**Claudia Friederike Zeiske**

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## ABSTRACT

Name: Claudia Friederike Zeiske

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Title: TRANSFORMATIONAL FIELDWORK  
Or: How might a sustainable cultural provision in the rural/small town context be framed?

While a lot has been written in the past two decades about the impact of participatory arts on people in urban places, my practice based research aims to fill the gap in relation to the rural context - often places with little traditional arts provision.

Based on the development of Deveron Projects in Huntly/Aberdeenshire, where the 'town is the venue' rather than a gallery or arts centre, my aim is to show how cultural provision can be framed through a combination of durational commitment to place and effective cultural management.

To do this, I have been reflecting on twenty-five years of working in the small town community setting, examining retrospectively my role as curator/producer. Underpinned by Scottish philosopher Patrick Geddes's Place/Work/Folk thinking machine and artist Joseph Beuys's idea of social sculpture as well as other thinkers' engagement with place and social context, I show how we can create a cultural ecology that assists the wellbeing of rural communities.

The study is based on four case studies that explain how the collaboration with artists can lead to transformative change through participatory practice led projects. Through them, my inquiry leads from the identification of socio-political themes to collaborative development of the projects between community, artists and ourselves, the 'Anthro-Producers'.

The research shows why and how art provision in rural locations can be structured sustainably through field-research akin to anthropological methods. The ensuing approach I call *Transformational Fieldwork*, a form of cultural management that combines social engagement with research methods relating to long-term participatory observation. Structured around 16 inter-woven administrative/artistic principles, this framework offers a tool kit for continued arts development in the rural community context.

My contribution to curatorial sustainability discourse therefore is to show step-by-step how *Transformational Fieldwork* can contribute to rural development and community wellbeing in places that, unlike urban cultural contexts, have limited involvement with contemporary art.

Key Words: participatory art - transformational fieldwork - rural context - Patrick Geddes - thinking machines - Social Sculpture - AnthroProducer - autoethnography - curation - hospitality



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## CHAPTER 1: THE WHY? INTRODUCTION

My thesis concerns the development of Deveron Projects (DP), an art organisation based in the rural town of Huntly in the North-East of Scotland.

I have guided Deveron Projects (formerly known as Deveron Arts<sup>1</sup>) from its inception in 1995 to its 25th birthday in 2020. My methodologies and practices have developed the organisation from a voluntary local art initiative to a facility of international reputation, renowned for its unique framework of matching challenging artistic work, with community participation related to this place (Huntly).

Our context is framed by the traditional market town and its surroundings. Huntly's population size is around 4500 people serving a hinterland of a further 4500 people. The nearest places with a considerable traditional cultural offer are over an hour's drive or train ride to Aberdeen. What makes this size<sup>2</sup> special for this way of working is two-fold. On the one hand it is big enough to have a reasonable amount of facilities, groups and venues that artists can link themselves into. On the other, the town is small enough to enable a method of working with its community as a whole. Unlike in larger populated urban cities or peripheries, where one would automatically focus on certain demographic strata such as poorer or wealthier areas, touristy or art audiences, the size of Huntly - where there is only one secondary school - allowed us to work with everybody without labelling people into groups of class, age or other demographics.<sup>3</sup>

I came to Huntly for family reasons. Before that I lived in different European cities – Munich, Berlin, Paris, Bilbao, London and lately the ancient Dutch University town of Leiden – all urban places with a high cultural provision. Having taken this offer of institutionalised art and culture for granted, today - I need to admit that I had a kind of 'culture shock'<sup>4</sup> on arrival. With traditional city cultural offers of

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<sup>1</sup> The name change took place during the 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday celebrations on 3 December 2016.  
<https://www.deveron-projects.com/21-years-town-venue/>

<sup>2</sup> My way of working and this thesis focuses on smaller rural towns; an indicator of size is that it has only one secondary school. If we worked for example in an urban place, we could still engage in participatory art, but by nature it would be in more transitory communities and less diverse demographics. Having only one secondary school I stipulate as a size-indicator of working with the community 'as a whole' rather than pockets of class or other social strata.

<sup>3</sup> I am leaning on the Situationists' psycho-geographic understanding of 'unitary-urbanism' here, which rejects the division of people's lives into working/resting/leisure areas, this is the context we are working from. In a place the size of Huntly people largely still work/live/play in the same place. For more information on unitary-urbanism: <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/unitary.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Today with much more knowledge about Huntly's rich traditional and contemporary activities, I am rather embarrassed that I felt like this when I first came. As Lucy Lippard says, when somebody asks, what is there to

theatre, cinema, galleries etc. largely absent, I had the personal need to make my new home interesting for me and my family to live in. Luckily I met two other like-minded people, who also felt this need and encouraged each other to take this as an opportunity to contribute to Huntly, our new home.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 1: PRINCIPLE 1 - Time + Place

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see here? It depends what you are looking for. Huntly has a rich tapestry of cultural activities, folk music, bothy ballads, coffee mornings, food, craft, its Doric. At one point we counted over 200 clubs, all of them add to the 'culture', one just needs to dig deep, look and listen to find all this. More on Huntly in [Appendix 7: Context - Huntly](#).

<sup>5</sup> Annette Gisselbaek, an art collector, came originally from Copenhagen. Jean Longley, an excellent fundraiser, had moved to Huntly from London.



My background comes from anthropology and not from art. I therefore started rather naively without any professional knowledge of art, but with a lifelong interest in people, their cultures and concerns. I am now reflecting on my career, as a director/curator/producer - which I call the Anthro-Producer<sup>6</sup> - of an art organisation based in the rural/remote context, where I worked through a range of distinct strategies and concepts involving artists from all over the world in projects of community concern. To help analyse the ways I undertook my work in Huntly I draw on traditions of auto-ethnography<sup>7</sup>. To understand the wider cultural and socio-political experience, I have been seeking self-reflection through both anecdotal memory and extensive archival material that we have gathered at Deveron Projects over the years<sup>8</sup>.

‘Transformational fieldwork’ is the terminology I use to describe my practice throughout this thesis. Explained in more detail through the chapters, it brings together anthropological research methods with transformative practices collaborating with artists through participatory ways of working. Many artists engage in socially engaged/participatory manners, but their practice often takes place across the world. Instead – and this is rather unique in the cultural landscape - our work has become durational, through a long-term commitment by myself to Huntly, involving a wide range of artists in this work. My specific transformative<sup>9</sup> fieldwork way of working is informed through long-term participant observation.

My hypothesis for the lasting realisation of the organisation therefore lies in a key position that runs through all the curatorial, administrative and artistic methods: durational commitment to this one place (Huntly). Duration I see as durational living, like a passage of life rather than merely a quantitative accumulation of time<sup>10</sup>. Arriving as a foreigner with a family in tow, over the years I have slowly become more and more a local in the town. This local-incomer position allowed

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<sup>6</sup> The slashes frequently found in my writing in this thesis highlight the multiplicity of roles and tasks; meaning that all those function in tandem with equal weighting. My term Anthro-Producer refers to the job combining art production with anthropological methods of fieldwork. More on Anthro-Producer in [Appendix 8: Terminology](#).

<sup>7</sup> More on auto-ethnography in [Appendix 8: Terminology/Auto-Ethnography](#).

<sup>8</sup> The Deveron Projects archive consists in on and offline versions. Every project has an archive box based in the organisation’s library – these have been meticulously updated over the years. This archive is mirrored online at the [www.deveron-projects.com](http://www.deveron-projects.com) website established by myself. I am frequently taking materials for case studies and other aspects in this thesis based on my own writing from this site.

<sup>9</sup> I am using the words transformative and transformational interchangeably throughout the thesis

<sup>10</sup> More on duration in [Appendix 8: Terminology/Duration](#).

me to try to understand the place, its people and cultures through deep looking, deep listening and deep and slow mapping<sup>11</sup>.



Figure 2: Deveron Projects Team

My team and myself in the Brander Garden, Autumn 2019. From left to right - Back: Najmeh Doostar (Erasmus Intern coming from Humboldt University, Berlin), Kawther Luay (Cook in Residence), Robert Singer (Baker in Residence), Bill Logan (Cafe Coordinator), myself, Rhian Davies (Intern), Caroline Gatt (Gardener in Residence), Petra Pennington (Art & Community Worker). Front: Robyn Wolsey (Project Manager), Joss Allen (Green Coordinator)

Engaging anthropological methods is not uncommon in participatory art related practices. However, there are few (in particular rural) places to be found where this has been carried out with a range of artists and socio-political topics over an extended period of time in one place. While the artists come in and out through time-fixed residencies, I with my team have been developing and carrying those approaches since the organisation's inception. My position therefore comes from me as the constant in my combined role as community member as well as curator/producer, arts administrator, field researcher and socio-political activist.

I am using the first and third person forms interchangeably in my writing to acknowledge that while I have been the driving constant, none of the work could

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<sup>11</sup> More on deep mapping/listening/looking in [Appendix 8: Terminology](#).



have been achieved without the dedication of my team members.<sup>12</sup> At Deveron Projects, this team grew over time. While we started as an entirely voluntary initiative<sup>13</sup>, over the years we took on other workers and I became the Director with organisational and curatorial responsibilities. Together and in continuous dialogue we facilitated the programme linking the artists with the community and ourselves in a triangular method organised around a set of 16 curatorial/organisational principles explained below.

In 2010 I wrote the book ARTocracy (Sacramento and Zeiske 2010) in collaboration with Nuno Sacramento<sup>14</sup>. Nuno has introduced the idea of shadow curating as an 'agonistic critique' to me, which allows for continuous self-reflection. Like a Shadow Minister in the UK parliament, it is a method that provides a criticality to all our work through the invitation of Shadow Curators. Explained in **PRINCIPLE 12: Anthro-Producer** this method of check and balance (Sacramento 2006) safeguards a critical approach.

Written as a practical handbook for collaborative art, ARTocracy systematically explains how the creative methods are applied through its layers of people, context, processes and outcomes/outputs. Here we gave insight into the organisation of collaborative projects at what was then called Deveron Arts, providing 'practical guidance – from the definition of each theme to the selection of artists, as well as key strategies for funding, marketing, education and artistic output – paying tribute to the precarious balance between artistic quality and social consequence' (Deveron Projects 2022)<sup>15</sup>.

Over ten years on, this thesis builds on the analysis made in ARTocracy. I do this by exploring Deveron Projects' long-term survival through the lenses of a range of theoretical frameworks provided by Scottish philosopher and community planner Patrick Geddes and other past and current thinkers that link to place and participation in and through art.

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<sup>12</sup> Jenny Lodge, Lindy Young, Sarah Gallie, Sue Brown, Kelly Anderson, Anna Vermehren, Kate Sargent, Joss Allen, Rachael Disbury and Robyn Wolsey who have worked as Project Managers or other administrative roles. Norma Hunter, Catrin Jeans, Elisabetta Rattalino, Petra Pennington and Jess Carnegie who inhabited the Art & Community Worker or similar roles. All of those have been wonderful without exception in their dedicated giving of love and intellectual rigour to the organisation. There is also an active and dedicated board, over ten Shadow Curators and over 80 interns that have worked with me and critically challenged our work (the names of those can be found on the about page of the Deveron Projects website). I wish to acknowledge these collaborations. Hence the 'we' form when talking about my work and actions is prevalent throughout this dissertation.

<sup>13</sup> Voluntary, as there was no money involved in the first years at all; only after about 7 years I started working with a part-time fee which grew into a self-employed position by 2007. I took full time employment in 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Nuno Sacramento is a curator currently directing Peacock Visual Arts in Aberdeen; check **Appendix 12: Shadow Curator** for more information and fictive examples on how shadow curating works.

More on Shadow Curator at Deveron Projects: <https://www.deveron-projects.com/about/shadow-curator/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.deveron-projects.com/about/artocracy/> (Accessed 9 February 2022)

On the basis of my experiences, my contribution to this discourse is to identify where my double role as anthropologist/producer (The 'ANTHRO-producer' **PRINCIPLE 12**) explained in Chapter 3 'Where Curating/Producing meets Fieldwork', sits within the collaboration between invited artists and the community. And how opportunities for transformative change can be created through such durational bridging processes between the community context, the artists' work and my life and work.

'You always are listening to others, to yourself, to the artists, to the people that are taking part. But what is critical: it's your continuous decisions. You did not have a plan, but you have an evolution. An evolution is a living thing ...'

Mary Jane Jacob<sup>16</sup>

With a focus on the rural, small-town context, I analyse this with the help of four case studies (**Appendix 2/3/4/5**). Manifested through the name change from Deveron Arts to Deveron Project, my distinct methodology rests in a meshwork of intertwined administrative/organisational and curatorial/artistic methods that underpin this way of curating/producing. Based on the long-term living and working in this one place, these in particular combine the deployment of methods for field research and artistic production, the engagement of artists for community participation, the activation of 'found' spaces and the engagement of a range of cultural practices that bring people together through conversation and debate.

Grounded in the key premise of study 'Transformational Fieldwork through Durational Commitment to Place', evidenced by my 25 year work (1995-2021) in Huntly, **PRINCIPLE 1: Time + Place** I have been examining the infrastructure of Deveron Projects through a set of 16 intertwined artistic/curatorial and organisational/administrative principles. The application of those principles illustrate how my cultural management approach can be framed in the context of a rural small town in a sustainable and durational way. This thesis is to be read in tandem with both case studies and the principles, which in combination form a tool-kit for arts development in the small town context.

'In Huntly, (Zeiske's) curatorial approach has evolved ... in response to Deveron's changing relationship with the town and its needs as well as to global transformations. Its key features, however, have remained constant: art projects are linked to the town but they also address global issues by making them locally relevant; they promote experimentation that transcends disciplinary, political and social boundaries.'

Elisabetta Rattalino, University of Bolzano (Rattalino 2021 n.p.)

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<sup>16</sup> Taken from an informal Zoom conversation between C. Zeiske and Mary Jane Jacob, 6 March 2022.

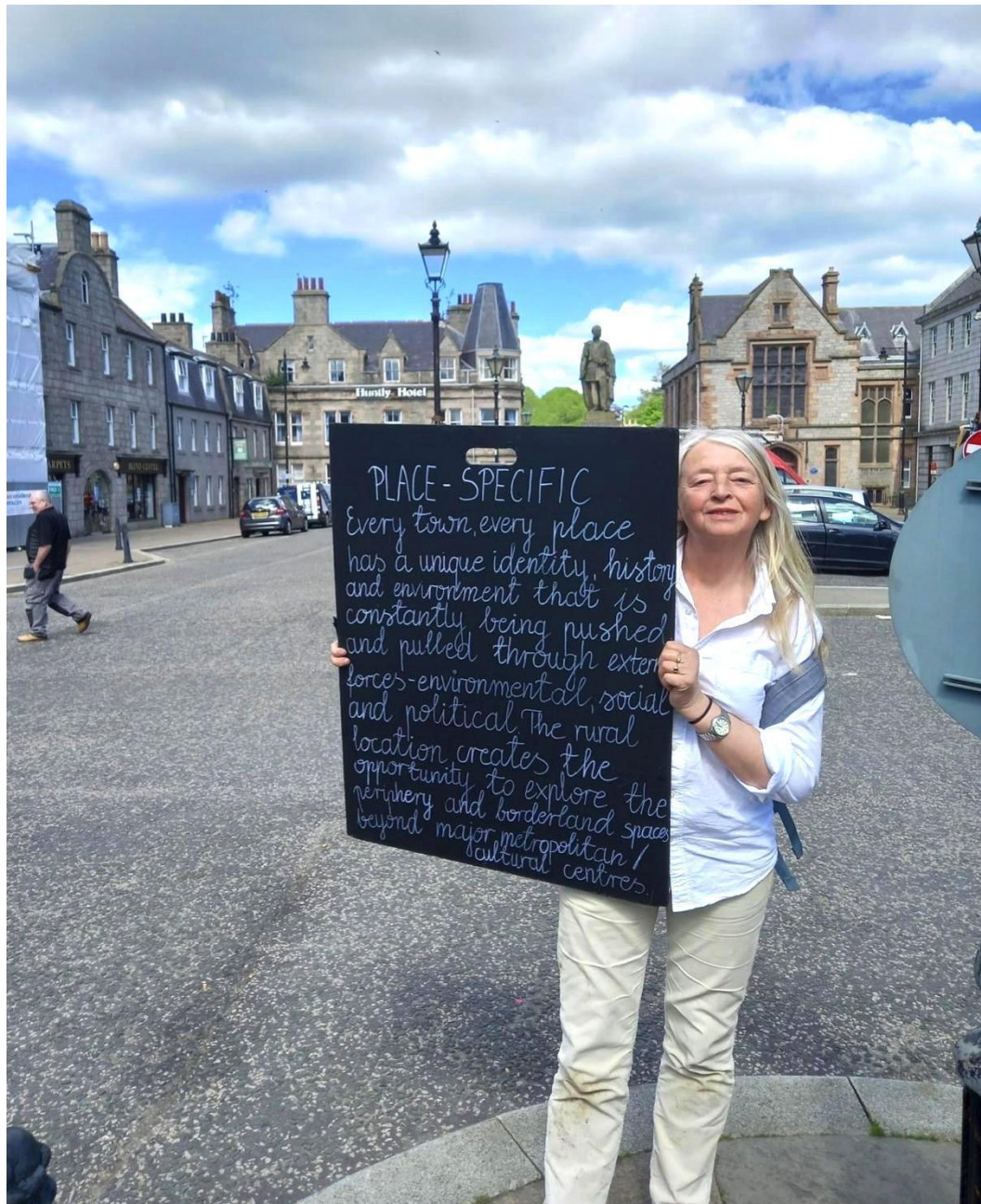


Figure 3: PRINCIPLE 2 – Place-Specific

## CHAPTER 2: PROJECTS and ARTISTS

'It is because of the infrastructure you set up, that I – as an artist - could develop at DP a much deeper engagement with a project and the local community. It's the infrastructure that combines effective management with hospitality that allows it to happen, where you set up a system that is both functional and effective.'

Anthony Schrag, Queen Margaret University<sup>17</sup>

Since its inception, Deveron Projects has run over 100 projects with over 100 artists<sup>18</sup>. They were made possible through a combination of art funds such as Creative Scotland, Henry Moore Foundation and other smaller and larger funds ranging from the local authority (Aberdeenshire Council), Climate Challenge Fund, Leader EU Fund, Heritage Lottery, Forestry Commission to earned income, private donations from individual supporters and in kind donations from local companies.

It was Gary Cameron, Head of Place at Creative Scotland and our art officer who pointed out to me that *place-making* had become an 'in-vogue' term in Scottish planning and policy making. 'Deveron Projects has been ahead of the game years before the term was invented - basically you conceived it' he said<sup>19</sup>. Many towns have undergone a place-making strategy, often through the application of such methods as the Scottish Place Standard Tool or the Town Tool Kit.<sup>20</sup> Applying the *town is the venue* methodology offers an alternative to potential imported quick-fixes based on standardised methods of application.

By contrast our community sourced project themes are the key starting point for any collaboration between the artists, local people and ourselves. 'It is about relationship making, not place making' says Mary Jane Jacob (Jacob 2018 p. 68). Instead of design driven 'making a place' approaches, our long-term commitment puts us in a continuous position to get behind the skin of the place.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Anthony Schrag, 15 March 2022; [Appendix 11: Conversations/Letters/Guestbook](#).

<sup>18</sup> Link to a talk by myself in November 2020 about all the projects organised between 1995-2020:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIVeF\\_8SREE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIVeF_8SREE). (Accessed 14 November 2022).

The Deveron Projects website lists 131 artists engaged in 139 projects between 1995 and March 2021 when I left the organisation: [www.deveron-projects.com/projects](http://www.deveron-projects.com/projects); [www.deveron-projects.com/artists](http://www.deveron-projects.com/artists). An analytic list of projects undertaken can be found in [Appendix 13: 25 Year Project Grid](#).

<sup>19</sup> Gary Cameron was our Creative Scotland Art Officer from 2018 till I left the organisation in March 2022. During this time he was also Head of Place. He now is a Senior Policy Manager within the Scottish Government's Community Justice Division.

<sup>20</sup> See for example <https://www.placestandard.scot> Scottish Town Partnership Toolkit: [https://www.scotlandstowns.org/town\\_centre\\_toolkit](https://www.scotlandstowns.org/town_centre_toolkit); 20 Minute Neighbourhood scheme: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2021/march/20-minute-neighbourhoods/>



This point of departure allows us to test and apply creative durational approaches that we can contribute collaboratively and in partnership with people who live here. Only this way we are able to build up trust and buy-in over time. Based on a steady gaining of understanding of how the community ticks, it can take years of fieldwork until a topic is identified, the right artist and required support is found and the project realised.

For many art organisations their gallery or art centre building frames the artistic programme. From there they look for the artists, and finally identify ways of engaging audiences. We do it the other way round. In the following I am now trying to analyse how this works and why we do it like this.

We start simply by living in this one place. **PRINCIPLE 8: Fieldwork** explains how this allows us to always keep our ear on the ground, develop our cultural audit and ideas bank through deep followed by slow mapping. To ensure place specificity, it is essential that we know all aspects of our place well. Based on this ongoing research, in collaboration with the artists, community and ourselves we identify new transformative ideas and solutions. Always linking to the wider world, to date they have addressed health and wellbeing, environment, economy, identity, heritage and other fields of local-global urgency.

Rooted in this combined method of living, working, listening and looking we can offer the invited artists direct connections and deep understanding of the place. Balancing artistic innovation and community welfare - are of equally important weighting to us. While we are not explicitly working towards a social betterment of individuals, our aim with **PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Tactics** in everyday life is to find ways of making Huntly a better place for us and others to live and work in. This is WHY we do this work.

What our projects have in common is, that they normally all:

- are identified through field research based on living within the community which ensures **PRINCIPLE 2: PLACE-SPECIFIC**
- work in collaboration with an incoming<sup>21</sup> artist **PRINCIPLE 6: Our Artists**
- create friendship, while embracing conflict **PRINCIPLE 5: ARTocracy**
- have a local-global relevance **PRINCIPLE 4: Local+Global**
- have hospitality at heart **PRINCIPLE 13: Hospitality matters**

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<sup>21</sup> Note: while most artists have been coming from elsewhere, we have also worked with those artists that live in Huntly or its vicinity. Anne Murray, Rachel Ashton, Donald Brown, Jake Williams are all locally based artist that were given residency projects for a period of around 3 months. They are 'coming in' as artists like those who come from further afield.



Figure 4: PRINCIPLE 3 – Town is the Venue

'The world needs more artists, not more art!' is something that people heard me saying often - meaning that the physical output is less important than the process of collaboration.<sup>22</sup> As the projects are process based, the outputs result in walks, common meals, gardening actions, rallies. The outcomes are much deeper and often less measurable. They can be new friendships, learning processes, or often simply thinking of the 'otherwise'<sup>23</sup>. What they have in common is to contribute to some form of community transformation or betterment. The collaboration with artists is essential in all this, as in the words of Mary Jane Jacob, a curator who has in her own words escaped the 'suffocating' world of museums and galleries (Jacob 2018 p. 53), 'Artists spur us on to imagine differently' (Jacob 2018 p. 94).

Leaning on **PRINCIPLE 3: town is the venue**, we only look for a fitting venue – if needed at all - as the projects progress. Katie Johnston's Community Pottery for example was launched in collaboration with the Rotary Club during a weekly coffee morning at the Stewarts Hall. Other projects were happening in a car garage, the train station, at TESCOs, the bike shop and many more places in and around town. The Friday lunches of our HOME programme often take place at the venues where the speaker is based, for example at the church, the ski centre or the Castle. Some projects such as *Room to Roam* have their venue distributed across town through signage, t-shirts, mugs and posters all over the place. Others such as *Slow Marathon* (**Appendix 5**) find their venues in private houses, churchyards, cafes, etc. along the 26 mile stretches that lead back to Huntly.

The artists invited came from our locality, from somewhere else in Scotland or from anywhere else in the world. Some were established, others up-and-coming, of any age, ability or discipline. Many came from the visual arts, but taking a Beuysian 'Everyone is an Artist' approach, we also welcomed musicians, writers, philosophers, bakers, chefs, thinkers and gardeners or simply 'others' in residence. Many of those residencies were running for three months<sup>24</sup>, which

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<sup>22</sup> Having said that, many of such projects have an after-life through the career of the artist, who may show documentation of the work in galleries or other platforms across the world. Documentation therefore is very important for both our own as well as the artists' records **PRINCIPLE 16: Making Visible**.

<sup>23</sup> This wording was first suggested by former intern and then colleague Catrin Jeans, who was Cultural Health Worker at DP. She often said her task was to make people think of the 'otherwise'; meaning allowing people to release their creative ability by doing something out of their daily norm. The concept of the *otherwise* has also been prominent in recent anthropology to explain political potentialities. 'Within these fields, the otherwise summons the forms of life that have persisted despite constant and lethal surveillance; it brings forth the possibility for, even the necessity of, abolishing the current order and radically transforming our worlds' (MacTighe and Raschig, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Bringing artists in and out, some may argue they are parachuted in and unlikely to deliver meaningful long-term outcomes. But I argue that Deveron Projects as a whole is the project. Like in a town library of books

was found to be a good time to get to know the community and establish meaningful collaborative work. Others worked longer, needing a degree of flexibility. In some cases we stretched the months over a year. The *White Wood* for example - outlined in detail in [Appendix 4](#) - created by 150 local people with artist Caroline Wendling as a living monument to peace, took much longer to create. 'What they have in common' the artist page on the website states 'is that they get involved in participative projects, often with a peaceful protest in mind.'<sup>25</sup>

The artists we have been working with have widely featured in the literature on participatory arts<sup>26</sup>. Socially engaged, co-curated, community-based, activist, public or site-specific art – or 'socially concerned' (Lippard 2010 p. 25) - are all forms describing the type of artist that have come to Huntly. For ease of writing and reading I have settled for the terms of 'participatory art' and artists with a 'participatory practice'<sup>27</sup>.

Bringing new artists in every time allowed for a continuous refresher for the community that sits in the in-betweens of what is happening in a place normally. But to undertake this delicately balanced work, artists need to be carefully selected to fit with their artistic/aesthetic endeavours as well as their personal ability and interest to connect with the place, its communities and people under the 'town is the venue' umbrella.

Our artists were reached through a continuously evolving network and selected according to a set of criteria. Key considerations were: how they would take our small town context into consideration?; how they relate to the project's theme?; how well would they fit into the community?; how do they relate to our approach of curating/producing?

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people can go and pick up ideas or leave them where they are, sometimes dismiss them, sometimes work with them, sometimes just have them linger at the back of their minds. They might shape their thoughts and ideas or ignore it all together.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.deveron-projects.com/about/partners/>. (Accessed 29 November 2021).

<sup>26</sup> Socially engaged or participatory artists do not come without critique. Sometimes they are deployed towards a betterment agenda that aligns with the notion of 'artist as a social worker'. Others have been criticised as 'using' people as actors for their own practice of showing mass engagement. More information on this can be found in [Appendix 8: Terminology](#). At Deveron Projects we were not interested in the betterment of the individual, but in the betterment, welfare and regeneration of our place. Focusing on 'hard to reach' groups in our view increases rather than weakens social boundaries, while finding ways to bring people together from different walks of life helps improve a place for all.

<sup>27</sup> More on terminology to the kind of artists with such practices are described in [Appendix 8](#). [Appendix 9: Participatory Art Practice](#) lists a range of such artists.





Figure 5: PRINCIPLE 4 – Local + Global

The artists engaged with either work in an established participatory manner - a good example of this was Jaak Coetzer who with *Room to Roam* ([Appendix 3](#)) applied his practice by talking to as many people as possible in the community. Rejecting social boundaries this ranged from school children to community council, folk club to supermarket shoppers, council workers to early morning commuters. Listening to so many voices helped to identify what is important to people and allowed the artist to distil the ideas, which resulted in the new and widely embraced identity-building brand.

Or they are artists with relevant socio-political interests, who want to engage their practice with communities guided through our unique participatory 'anthro-

curatorial' way of working. An example of this is Iman Tajik's *Under One Sky* Slow Marathon (Appendix 5), where in reaction to the restrictive Covid regulations, he turned his initially planned *Bordered Miles*<sup>28</sup> project into a world-wide solidarity walk around the globe. This brought local Huntly people together with hundreds of other walkers from across the world. It was a unique sharing opportunity during a time of great physical restrictions and emotional anxiety.



Figure 6: PRINCIPLE 5 – ARTocracy

<sup>28</sup> The *Bordered Miles* project was initially abandoned due to Covid restrictions. However, the artist has then organised it in 2021 under his own regime: [www.deveron-projects.com/bordered-miles/](http://www.deveron-projects.com/bordered-miles/)

In most cases the artists were chosen through a continuous evolving network. They are invited to write a proposal in response to a theme, then negotiated between the artist and ourselves to match key criteria - above all collaboration with the community of Huntly or certain segments of it.<sup>29</sup> They also have to be original in artistic terms. We call this the 50/50 approach: balancing community engagement with artistic innovation<sup>30</sup>, outlined in **PRINCIPLE 11: Balancing Acts**.

To facilitate this, we always wrote a brief relating to the project theme. We then often invited the artists to come for a short research period, which enables them to meet the team and people in town in advance of establishing the proposal. This process can be thrown back and forth (or even rejected in the end) until it has been mutually accepted. Ross Sinclair in the book *We Love Real Life Scotland* gives a good insight into how this process works from an artist's perspective.

‘Perhaps observing a place where art doesn’t exist, at least not in the way we usually discuss it. That’s why this is fertile ground.’

Sinclair 2012 p. 27

Working over a long period of time like this also has its difficulties. People can get tired and we sometimes need to protect them from the artists’ demands. Artists can come up with ideas that are inappropriate, even offensive or address the same kind of people repeatedly. However, every time a new artist comes, they provide oxygen for the place, which leaves the town more refreshed and revitalised.

We also need to manage expectations from the community towards the artists. Ideas of what art is are hard to challenge. ‘Art’ as Mary Jane Jacob says ‘is still widely associated with something convivial based on the luxury of having money and/or time. It’s associated with entertainment, leisure and something different from everyday life’ (Jacob 2015). We share a mission to dispel misconceptions by making it open to everyone and showing that art has a place in our lives and the lives of our communities. But most of the time, we just do what we do and *simply* don’t call it art.

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<sup>29</sup> Here the emphasis is on the newness and depth of engagement, rather than high numbers or targeting certain social groups.

<sup>30</sup> Of course they have also to be workable within given budgets, team capacities and timeframes.





Figure 7: PRINCIPLE 6 – Our Artists

In Huntly we regularly heard comments like 'what you do is not art'. Well what is it then, we ask them and ourselves? Leaning on Beuys' 'Everyone is an Artist' slogan, we did not see the need to define who is making the art. Realising that our work has a socio-political function, but acknowledging this tension, we could show how one can make this work. In 2016 working towards our 21<sup>st</sup> birthday we had a major rethink leading to a name change from Deveron Arts to Deveron

Projects. This was a key step change to communicate better what we do – namely, projects that address community-generated topics with artists and others that think like artists.

From then on it was up to the participants, the people in our community, as well as our stakeholders in the ‘arts world’ whether they like to call it art or something else. Committing ourselves to working with artists, but leaving the word ‘art’ to the art world helped to break down the barriers that this – for us rather alien – world has inadvertently created. As Neil Mulholland said: ‘The fact that Deveron Arts has now changed its name to Deveron Projects is testimony to how, as an institution, it inherently embraces its need to shape-shift. If being an ‘arts’ organisation becomes a barrier to supporting the arts, then there is always an alternative’ (Mulholland 2017 n.p.).

It's our duty to continuously think about why we do this work and what our role is in Huntly, in Scotland, and in the wider world. The simple answer is that we wanted to make this and other places better places to live in and with. Continuous manipulation of information, austerity consequences, nationalism and xenophobia urged us to rethink our purpose and doing in recent years. What ideas or even solutions can we and our artists offer that are citizen-driven, grown from the soil of our own place?





Figure 8: Deveron Projects Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter depicting 50/50 approach: Synchronised Brexit rally with attendance in London and gathering in Huntly, Oct 2018

While I have listed a range of participatory art programmes in [Appendix 9](#), my research shows that there are few other examples, especially in the rural context in either Britain or indeed Europe in their communities. Rural art based on community art can be found across Britain, while in Germany the cultural map is dominated by Künstlerkolonien/Artist Colonies such as Worpswede, where artists come together looking for respite from the cities. Or they are commissioning agencies such as Nouveau Commanditaires in France or SKOR in the Netherlands. A non-European initiative was the Bishan Commune Project; a long-term socially engaged art initiative created by activist artist Ōu Níng in the Anhui province (it sadly closed down in 2016 by the Chinese government after five years).

Grizedale Arts in England's Lake District is one of the few arts organisations that I have come across that has been working for a longer period of time in a rural setting through social engagement. However, what differs is the demographic situation. While we would share their underpinning philosophy that 'art and artists can affect change and benefit wider culture and society' (Grizedale 2022), Huntly and Coniston/Lawson Farm, where Grizedale Arts is based, are very different kinds of places. Huntly has a large income gap featuring severe social deprivation without any art audience; Coniston is an affluent village almost entirely dependent on cash-wealthy tourists coming from urban centres. This demography provides a very different context, where Grizedale Arts is engaging with 'the complexities of operating in an much-visited yet rural environment, and with its often conflicting stakeholders' (GRIZEDALE ARTS 2022) - in Huntly by contrast our aim was to contribute to the town which is threatened by aspects of rural decline.

O'Neill and Doherty in their book *Locating the Producers*, acknowledge that the 'curator-producer' is the linchpin in negotiations between artist and place' (O'Neill and Docherty 2010 p.2). 'Participation' they say 'can only be experienced durationally, as a lived difference that extends beyond a momentary engagement with art and with one another' (O'Neill and Docherty 2010 p. 13). However only one (Creative Egremont) of the five projects they illustrate their argument on, was happening in a rural context, and none of them lasted over 2 years. In their case examples the curator-producer, unlike in the Bishan or our case, stays an outsider, often – one could argue - reduced to a role of managing artists who interact with the communities.





Figure 9: PRINCIPLE 7 – Polyphonic Tactics



There are of course many urban art projects that work through participatory/socially engaged or anthropological practices. Examples include *Artangel* in London, TAKE A PART in Plymouth and CASCO in Utrecht where the curator is the constant. But as my position is focused on the rural/small town context, my interest for this thesis rests on initiatives where we can work with the demography of one place as a whole. Deveron Projects, I feel, has carved itself a space in this wide spectrum of participatory arts development. Of further interest relating to **PRINCIPLE 15: Growing the Creative Ecology** are a number of Scottish art projects, to name especially Timespan in the small coastal town of Helmsdale, where Anna Vermehren who worked at Deveron Arts initially as an intern then as a Project Manager took on directorship and changed the curatorial outlook by bridging the gap between heritage, art and community. Similarly Rachael Disbury and Joss Allen who both started as interns, then took on various positions at Deveron Projects and now are the directors respectively of *Alchemy Film & Arts* in the Scottish Borders town of Hawick and *ATLAS Art* on Skye.

‘DP created something like a school. Art workers, interns and artists are immersed in a bootcamp of methods, scenarios, challenges and engagement practices - every day learning something new. People like myself and others who are now running rural organisations, adapting and developing methods of social practice in a range of contexts beyond Huntly, are the evidence of that.’

Rachael Disbury, Director Alchemy Film & Arts (former Intern and Art Worker)<sup>31</sup>

‘Working at Deveron Arts/Projects, one had to unlearn all institutionalised knowledge about art or art objects first, then embrace practices of different disciplines. At Deveron Arts and during the early phases of Deveron Projects, whether what we were doing was art or not was conceived as an uninteresting question. Thanks to your approach as an anthropologist, I believe we explored arts and curating as the practice of inquiry into specific topics and contexts, learning to weave together different disciplines and non-formalised knowledge.’

Elisabetta Rattalino, University of Bolzano (former Intern and Art Worker)<sup>32</sup>

To illustrate our way of working through the 16 Principles, I have chosen four case examples. The selection attempts to reflect a representative mix with one

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<sup>31</sup> quote taken from a conversation with Rachael Disbury in [Appendix 11: Conversations/Letters/Guestbook](#)

<sup>32</sup> quote taken from interview with Elisabetta Rattalino in [Appendix 11: Conversations/Letters/Guestbook](#)

having a long-term transformative impact addressing identity and place; one that durationally joins key themes of environment and peace outliving all of us; an annual walking project bringing people and thematic conversations together; and the last being our year-round methodology that connects incoming artists with the community. Those are:

**HOME** the programme that binds it all together ([Appendix 2](#))

**Room to Roam** a new identity building brand for Huntly ([Appendix 3](#))

**White Wood** a living monument to peace ([Appendix 4](#))

**Slow Marathon** an annual thematic walking project ([Appendix 5](#))



Figure 10: Butcher/Baker/Artist

Illustration for Deveron Projects' brochure and website by Jaak Coetzer. From left to right: Artist Sanaa Gateja, Huntly's Butcher Gary Raeburn, Bakery Worker (name unknown) at Strathbogie Bakery, Huntly



Figure 11: PRINCIPLE 8 - Fieldwork



### CHAPTER 3: ARTocracy: Geddesopedia and Beuysophilia

Deveron Projects is guided through **Principle 5: ARTocracy**<sup>33</sup>, a utopian idea imagining if the world was ruled by art, where artists can help release creative thinking and where ultimately everybody can be allowed to be, live or think like an artist. It 'draws inspiration from Sir Patrick Geddes, the Aberdeenshire born father of town planning who viewed society as a bio-diverse interconnected system' (Deveron Projects 2017)<sup>34</sup>. There is not one text, not one single theory that can be applied from his chequered legacy, but 'by adopting his plural approach, we seek to respond to the many interests and needs of all age groups, cultures and demographics in our community'<sup>35</sup>.

'Deveron Projects would have been Patrick Geddes' Art Organisation' was the introductory sentence of Murdo MacDonald's Place/Work/Folk lecture at our 17<sup>th</sup> AGM<sup>36</sup> who, in his compendium 'Patrick Geddes's Intellectual Origins' encourages us to think of him from a 'generalist perspective' (MacDonald 2020 p. 159). What is so beautiful about Geddes' way of thinking is that he was a real polymath and lateral thinker who refused to be squeezed into one single discipline. A biologist, architect, teacher, community planner, philosopher, ardent gardener as well as a devout family man, traveller and true internationalist, he objected to the compartmentalisation of civic life and promoted the enduring interconnection of environment, community and economy. It was our belief that dividing people in demographic categories can increase, rather than reduce demographic boundaries of class, race and other divides.

One of the main advantages of working in a small place like Huntly - where with around 4500 people we are dealing with the size of lets say, a large hospital or factory - is that it is possible to work with the place as a whole. Never shying

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<sup>33</sup> The term ARTocracy was devised by Nuno Sacramento and myself through the: *ARTocracy - Art, Informal Space and Social Consequence: A Curatorial Handbook in Collaborative Practice*. The book methodically explains how DP's creative process is applied through its layers of people, context, processes and outcomes/outputs. The 16 principles described here are an extension of this work established in 2010.

<sup>34</sup> While less relevant to this dissertation, I wish to acknowledge that Geddes worked closely throughout with his wife Anna Morton who provided vital support that enabled the carrying out of many of Patrick's diverse projects in Edinburgh and the rest of the world. Their son Arthur Geddes writes: 'Without Anna without the intimate relationship they made together, Patrick's flashes of discovery might have lacked the fire which sustained thought and civic action.' (Stephen 2021. p. 63)

<sup>35</sup> Deveron Projects homepage: [www.deveron-projects.com](http://www.deveron-projects.com) and brochure.

<sup>36</sup> Lecture delivered at Huntly Brander Library on 20 September 2016. Available from: <https://www.deveron-projects.com/events/deveron-arts-agm/>; (Accessed 4 June 2022). Excerpt from Murdo McDonald's lecture notes: 'If there is one of Geddes' statements that captures the achievement of Deveron Arts it is this: by creating we think. Equally relevant is *by living we learn*. Geddes is sometimes credited with *think global, act local*, and it certainly encapsulates both his philosophy and that of Deveron Arts. He would have adopted *the town is the venue* as a motto immediately. It is a perfect expression of his belief in the interplay of folk, work and place as driving both cultural and ecological sustainability. The fact that this is the motto of Deveron Arts speaks volumes about the synergy between Deveron Arts and Geddes.'

away from difficult socio-political questions, the communities we worked with in Huntly, ranged from forestry workers to council administrators, from people in sheltered housing to marathon walkers. This fact allowed us to resist the segregational ways of working with target groups, often stipulated by funding bodies as 'hard to reach', or coming from certain 'protected characteristics'.

**PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Tactics** ensures that we don't box people into demographic categories, but take everybody at face value. Far beyond the obligatory Equal Opportunities stipulations, this principle encourages school pupils to be on our board, the dinner ladies to join our Slow Marathon, a care home inhabitant eating at our Friday lunch, an oil executive planting our peace wood.

At the same time Geddes had also an honest and outspoken appreciation for artists. 'We need to give everyone the outlook of the artist, who begins with the art of seeing – and then in time we shall follow him into the seeing of art, even the creating of it. In the same way the scholar and the student may be initiated ... into the essential outlook of the astronomer and the geographer, of the mathematician and the mechanic, the physicist and the chemist, the geologist and the mineralogist, the botanist and the zoologist, and thence more generally, of the biologist. Next, too, the anthropologist ... and the economist'.<sup>37</sup>

'Beuys's motto "everyone is an artist" was at the roots of Deveron Arts, whilst Geddes' appreciation for artists and their role in a society permeated the vision of Deveron Projects' (Rattalino 2021 n.p.).

Almost pre-empting the thoughts of the artist Joseph Beuys' *Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler/ every man is an artist* philosophy, Geddes encouraged everybody to be their own art critic and then be their own artist (MacDonald 2020 p. 26). In both their views, everybody is able to be creative, as every person owns creative powers, as long as such powers are released and enabled to use them. Beyond this, Beuys encourages us that 'this way of thinking must go through the entire social system' (Bodenmann-Ritter 1972 p.197). I would extend this train of thought to think less literally of everybody being an artist, but rather that everybody has an interesting, creative, imaginative or innovative side on offer. This could be a hobby, a professional trait, an unusual experience. It is our job to listen better, to dig deeper and harder to find out those streaks and then help

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<sup>37</sup> Farewell Lecture to his Dundee students: <https://murdomacdonald.wordpress.com/patrick-geddes-farewell-lecture-to-his-dundee-students-1919>. (Accessed 18 December 2021).

release those creative assets in people, which often they may not even recognise themselves - **PRINCIPLE 6: Our Artists.**

'Working with you and DP was a learning curve. You got me to think big: international, but also small:local. I think that way of working is very relevant in a rural place. I have worked with many rural organisations. They all want to do the 'International' thing and forget the richness of what lies near them. During my residencies at DP, I have met so many people in their kitchen! More brilliant minds than what I meet in Cambridge or London. That does say something about the work of the director (your work) and DP pull. I have enjoyed the diversity of the voices and the far-reaching work you do. I have admired how you draw on the local talents and richness and how over the years you gave chances to people. Chances to make work but also chances to be and have a curatorial framework with the critique necessary to the development of the artist.'

Caroline Wendling<sup>38</sup>

Believing in the creative ability of everybody on the one hand and the beauty of creative interconnections on the other is an approach that has been building the foundation of Deveron Projects' work, philosophy and daily interaction with and between artists and communities. As such, while many of our artists came from a visual arts background, they were matched over the years with writers, storytellers, singers, gardeners, bakers, crafters, musicians, dancers, historians, filmmakers and thinkers in residence.

Patrick Geddes' 'thinking machines' are the key instruments for his multi-faceted way of gaining understanding. Essentially those aides are not manifested in any specific methodologies, but rather a manifold range of conceptual frameworks bringing together biology with community, architecture with landscape, local with global through a wealth of mottos, catchphrases, diagrams, drawings and illustrations that are open for multilayered interpretation.

For our purposes of shaping the vision of Deveron Projects and contributing to the life of Huntly, the interconnected concepts that most influenced our thinking and way of working could be summarised in the following 'Geddesopedia'<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Letter by the artist to Claudia Zeiske, 1 April 2022. See [Appendix 11: Conversations/Letters/Guestbook](#)

<sup>39</sup> More of Geddes's terms and concepts in [Appendix 8: Terminology](#)

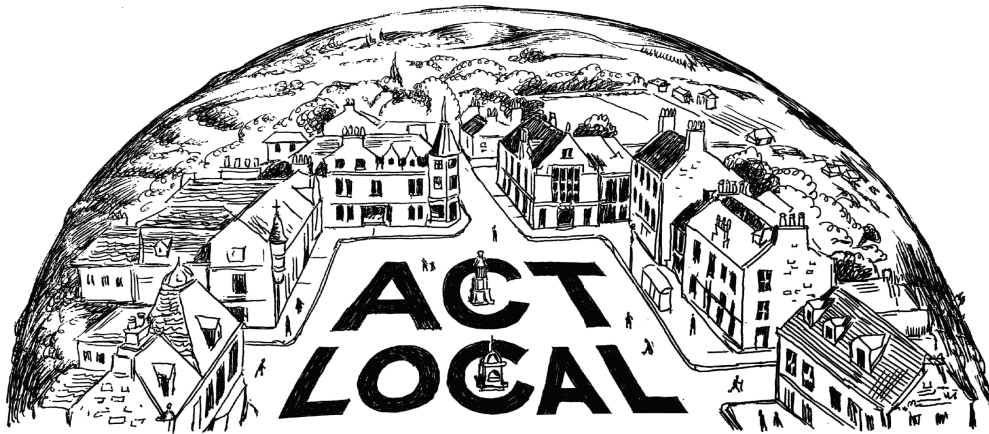


Figure 12: Think Global – Act Local – Start Here!

(Illustration: J. Coetzer)

- *Think Global - Act Local* is a phrase widely attributed to Geddes. Acknowledging that whatever we do, can have an effect in another part of the world, manifested in our **PRINCIPLE 4: Local + Global**, through which we ensure that all our projects link in some form with elsewhere.
- The *Outlook Tower*<sup>40</sup> is a place with a wide view as a key to a better understanding of one's own place within a wider region, country, the world.<sup>41</sup> **PRINCIPLE 2: Place-Specific** ensures that we are firmly rooted in our town and its rural hinterland.
- *By Leaves with Live*, underpinning our desire to look deeply at our natural environment and how we can contribute to our and our community's lives through such activities as growing trees and food is manifested in **PRINCIPLE 10: By Leaves we Love**. The *White Wood* is an important example of this.
- *By Living we Learn* allows us to give time to experiment; to try things out, where the process of the art we engage with is more important than the finished outcome. The concept also underpins my own learning while living in Huntly, which unfolded my long-term work and now the writing of this auto-ethnographic thesis. **PRINCIPLE 15: Growing the Creative Ecology**
- *By Creating we Think* captures the overall ethos of Deveron Projects<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Today it is the site of Edinburgh's Camera Obscura: <https://www.camera-obscura.co.uk/>

<sup>41</sup> Looking at them as a possibility for new grass-root democratic community based institutions, Lorens Holm says, they could replace current political systems and ultimately national borders.

<sup>42</sup> 'If there is one of Geddes' statements that captures the achievement of Deveron Arts it is this: by creating we think.' (unpublished lecture notes; 21 September 2016, generously supplied by Prof Murdo MacDonald)

- The *Valley Section* is a conceptual drawing, which shows us the socio-economic interdependence between our town and its hinterlands along the river (Deveron). **PRINCIPLE 2: Place-Specific**

## From mountain to sea

The 'Valley Section' was one of Geddes' methods to analyse geographic region according to occupations that it sustained. The illustration on the right is based on one of his studies from the early 1900s, while the one below represents Aberdeenshire a century later.

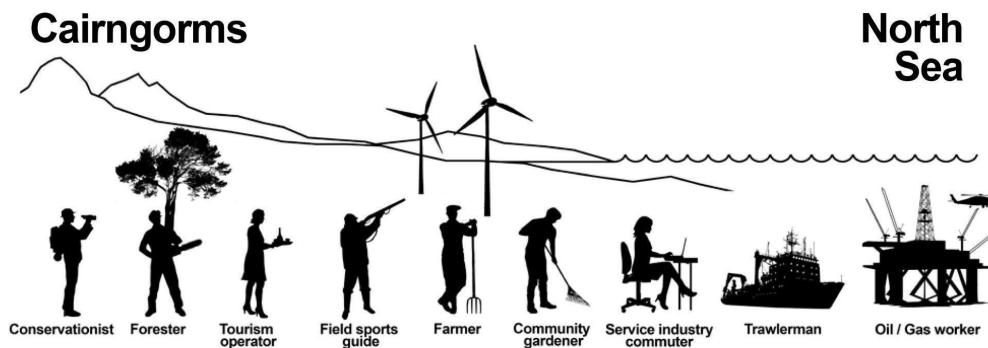
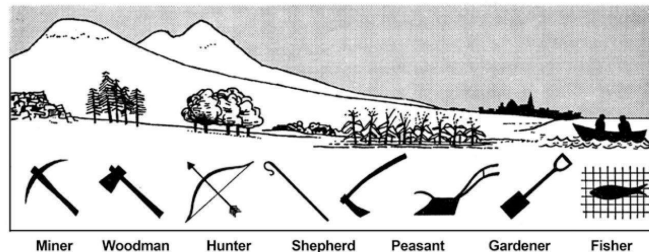


Figure 13: The Valley Section now and then  
(Illustrations: a. Patrick Geddes; b. Jaak Coetzer)

But most importantly out of all of these trains of thought 'Geddes's model of *PLACE / WORK / FOLK* inspired how we were looking at our HOME by informing our project themes' (Deveron Projects 2017). Bringing geography, economy and anthropology together in one conceptual framework, which underpins a wide range of Deveron Projects' thinking and visioning. Starting from the needs of an individual person, this three-pronged requirement for a balanced life of individuals as outlined in much literature around psychology, care and related disciplines can be translated into 'happy (extended?) families', and therefore the wellbeing of a community. Ultimately, if all those – individuals, families, communities - are all satisfied with their work, their place and their relationships in balance we would have a world that is in a positive equilibrium<sup>43</sup>. As such,

<sup>43</sup> In disciplines such as counselling or psychotherapy, there is awareness that if we lose one of those three pillars, we jeopardise the other. For example if we lose our work, we might lose our home and subsequently our relationship. If our partnership breaks up, we might be very unhappy which might lead to poor work performance and so on. Having all those 3 in equilibrium gives a good grounding for a healthy family life.



social wellbeing as I understand it, is the base for transformational wellbeing that we foster through our work.

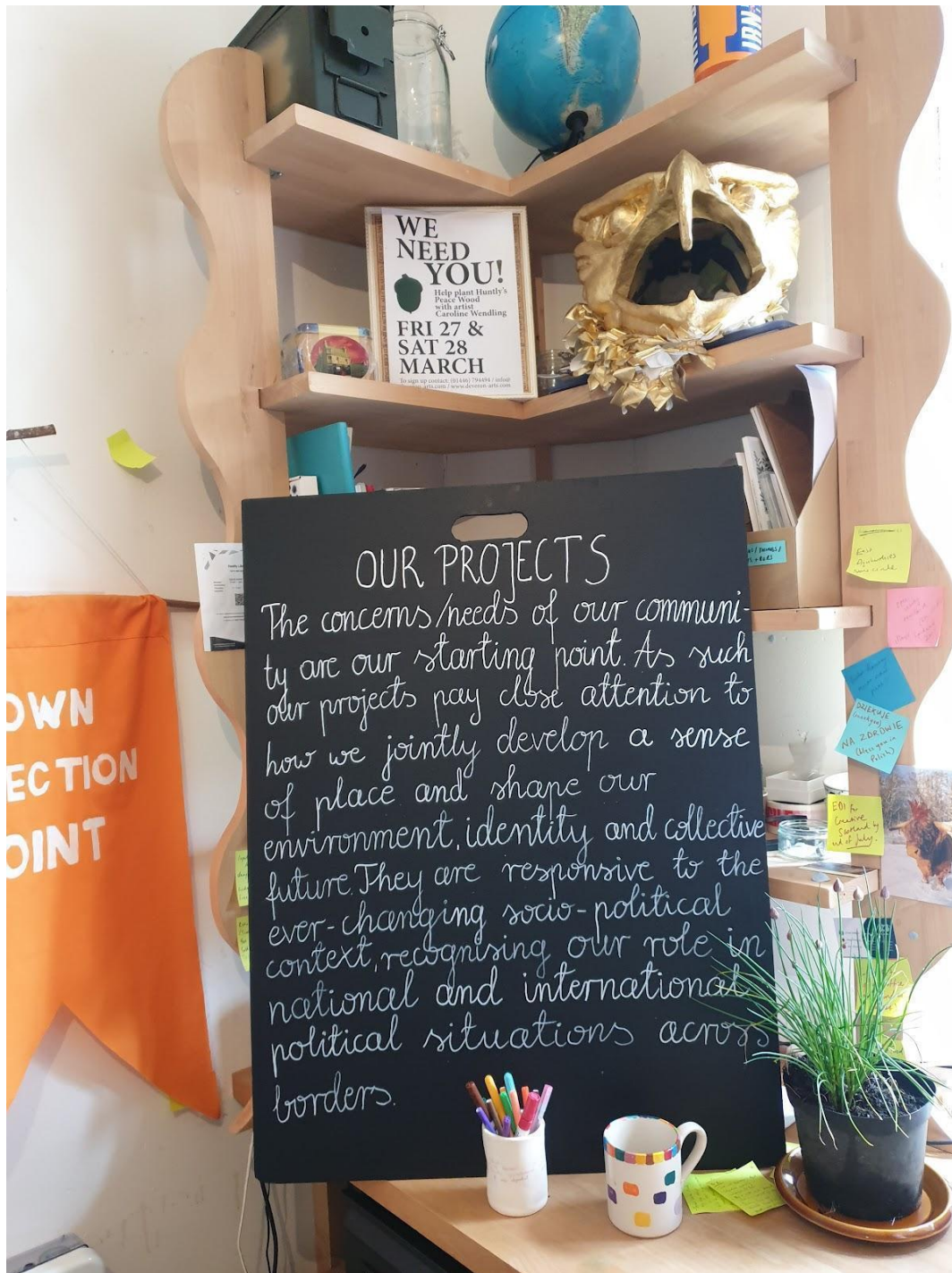


Figure 14: PRINCIPLE 9 – Our Projects

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Talking about 'happy families' may sound a bit old fashioned, but reading Geddes' early 20<sup>th</sup> Century explanations, this can easily be translated into nowadays' communities.

At Deveron Projects we have adapted this triptych by attributing 'nature/culture'<sup>44</sup> to PLACE (see **PRINCIPLE 2: Place-Specific**), taking inspiration from Lucy Lippard who understands culture to be 'what defines place and meaning to people. But where place equally defines culture' (Lippard 1997 p.11).

To FOLK (i.e. relationships) we added 'conflict/friendship' into the interrogative equilibrium. Inspired by Lippard's notion of the vernacular element it finds connections between land and people and 'what people *do* in a place' (Lippard 1997 p.8) - **PRINCIPLE 5: ARTocracy**.

To WORK we added PLAY. If WORK is the mediator between nature and culture (in a marxian sense), place as the product of work in Lippard's view 'is a synthesis, resting somewhere between the two' (Lippard 1997 p.8). Naturally, the (playful) notion of WORK can be replaced by ART for our purposes. Or in some situations with Walk, Cook or Garden<sup>45</sup> to reflect the ongoing, relentless need to look closely at our place, our community and the activities related to our cultural practices; i.e. applying **PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Tactics**.



Figure 15a: Patrick Geddes's Place/Work/Folk Diagram

Figure 15b: Deveron Projects Application (2016)

<sup>44</sup> There is a common assumption in Western culture that humans are not part of nature. This dualism has often been described as nature-culture, i.e. nature v. culture. Taking inspiration from Donna Haraway's notion of 'Humus' (Haraway: 2016, p.32) for our purposes we put a slash in between nature/culture in line with other writing in this thesis (e.g. curator/producer, art/anthropology, me/team). This indicates that the two opposites merge - like compost/humus - together, both coming from and also coming to one soil. Nature/Culture is therefore a combined term which brings both together (see also Deveron Projects Environment Policy 2018: [https://www.deveron-projects.com/site\\_media/uploads/environment\\_policy\\_2018.pdf](https://www.deveron-projects.com/site_media/uploads/environment_policy_2018.pdf)).

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Place/Walk/Folk; Place/Cook/Folk; Place/Plant/Folk





Figure 16: PRINCIPLE 10 - By Leaves we Love

Where Geddes and Beuys differ is in physical representation. For Deveron Projects this is particularly relevant in relation to buildings. Patrick Geddes in the early 1920ies was a committed believer in the exhibition as a vehicle of education<sup>46</sup>, he was an architect and town planner who in Edinburgh alone bought multiple buildings to advance the city<sup>47</sup>. Meanwhile Beuys at the beginning of the 1980s, had decided not to exhibit in museums or galleries any longer. This, according to Eugen Blume (a friend and contemporary of Beuys), 'because he was highly sceptical about such institutions, in relation to public critical thinking' (Blume 2012). All this informed the birth of the *town is the venue* strategy, where we used 'found' venues rather than the traditional gallery/art centre models as a platform for our process-led events and other creations. Coupled with a low-tech 'Small is Beautiful' approach it is resourceful to our environment and finances alike<sup>48</sup>. Adding to other strategies outlined in the 16 principles, using venues where people already are (as opposed to bringing them to our venue), helped us in our main ambition to create civic dialogues 'within and not' – only – 'with the community' (Lippard 2010 p. 24).

Many art organisations, tied to a building and the impending administrative necessities are bound to long-term planning. At Deveron Projects, we were not dictated by a physical home, which allows us to be lighter at foot in relation to arts programming. Our work is situational and this no-building strategy allowed us to respond to changing conditions rather than being tethered to specific sets of institutional priorities. We always needed flexibility to react to socio-political changes that we are confronted with locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. As Lippard says 'It always astounds how global our local is' (Lippard 2020).

Patrick Geddes, 'flitted like a butterfly from one topic to another' (Geddes 2022)<sup>49</sup>. And sometimes I wonder whether my affinity with the polymath comes from this kind of way of working. Often moved by situations outwith our control, we decided at short notice to change track and react to ideas, opportunities and current political contexts.

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<sup>46</sup> Geddes Institute, Dundee University: <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/geddesinstitute/outlooktower/>. (Accessed 1 February 2022).

<sup>47</sup> Examples are the Outlook Tower, Riddles Court and the Ramsay Gardens.

<sup>48</sup> This approach is borrowed from the economist E.F. Schumacher and his book *Small is Beautiful* (Schumacher 1973), a kind of manifesto pledging for an economy where people matter.

<sup>49</sup> I am quoting Senior Manuscript Curator of the National Library of Scotland Olive Geddes talking about Patrick Geddes' life and work.



Locally in Huntly the closure of the tourist office, numerous retail outlets and the last remaining three banks last year alone are all consequences of globalisation trends, where no place remains untouched. Instead of 'sticking to our long-term strategic planning' it is and was always our duty to our community to react to such situations, as and when they are emerging. Geddes' essential components of a community are schools, offices, clubs, churches and today art galleries. 'All these' Geddes as reported in Judah says 'are groups of people in the first place and buildings after' (Judah 2018). Not being bound by the constraints of a building greatly enhanced our ways to move agile and flexibly.

'Time and again, the organisation (Deveron Projects) not only chose timely themes but anticipated much larger discussions. Artists worked on wind farms, the challenge of big retail, the credit crunch, the impact of Brexit'.

Susan Mansfield, The Scotsman



Figure 17: Future Fruit event

Art + Community Worker Petra Pennington disguised as Patrick Geddes leading the *Future Fruit Cosmic Walk*, summer 2019





Figure 18: PRINCIPLE 11 – Balancing Acts



## CHAPTER 4: Where Curating/Producing meets Fieldwork

‘Deveron Projects connects artists, communities and places through creative research and engagement’ (DP Mission Statement).<sup>50</sup>

As my academic background originally comes from Social Anthropology<sup>51</sup>, my initial career path was related to human rights<sup>52</sup> and not to the arts. When my family<sup>53</sup> and I moved to Huntly in 1995, I had no intention to study people nor place there. Neither observation nor fieldwork was planned, instead it came by association, assimilation and participation in the town and its many communities of interest. ‘By living we learn’ and ‘By doing we think’ as Patrick Geddes would have said. Based on a life-long anthropological sensibility and curiosity<sup>54</sup> in people - participation and observation came in tandem. Instead of carrying out planned time-specific traditional fieldwork, I found myself as a long-term observing participant in Huntly. The reflective study of which – taken from both memory and archive – now forms the auto-ethnographic<sup>55</sup> research of this dissertation.

To do this, I am leaning on Lucy Lippard’s multi-centred thinking laid out in her ground-breaking exploration of our multiple senses of place:

*‘Lure of the Local* is concerned with the historical narrative as it is written *in* the landscape or place by the people who live or lived there. The intersections of nature, culture, history, and ideology from the ground on which we stand – our land, our place, the local.’ (Lippard: 1997 p.7)

In my position at Deveron Projects I was called the Director. People in this position, leading an art organisation, tend to combine their management role with that of what is often called the curator. ‘No curator is an island’ David Balzer says in his book *Curationism* (Balzer: 2014 p.27) which is exploring the current interest in and fashionability of curation – both as a term and as an activity.

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<sup>50</sup> Mission Statement: [www.deveron-projects.com](http://www.deveron-projects.com). (Accessed 4 December 2021).

<sup>51</sup> Freie Universität Berlin (1982-86 Vor-Diplom/BA equivalent); London School of Economics and University College London (1986-88 MSc)

<sup>52</sup> I worked for British Refugee Council, Refugee Support Centre/London, Oxfam-Novib/The Hague/NL

<sup>53</sup> I moved to Huntly with my three children Rachel, Deborah and Michael then aged 4/3/1 and my husband Nick who had work in Aberdeen. My children all attended Drumblad Primary school (ca 4 miles to the east of Huntly) and later attended The Gordon Schools until they set off to the Universities.

<sup>54</sup> Under anthropological sensibility I understand a general curiosity in people, based on openness, sensitivity and susceptibility towards others. This originated, I believe, from a combination of anthropological training and people-interested travel all over the world, which includes an inquisitiveness in the places I came to inhabit (such as Huntly).

<sup>55</sup> More on auto-ethnography see [Appendix 8: Terminology](#).



Figure 19: PRINCIPLE 12 – The Anthro-Producer

Featured are former and current workers (May 2022); from left to right: Jess Carnegie (Art and Community Worker), Zuzana Fryntova (former Intern, now Administrative Assistant), Anita Krasowska (Erasmus Intern), Natalia Palombo (current Director), Claudia Zeiske.

People use the word for arranging weddings, recipes, song or reading lists, even designing gardens. Much quoted around relevant literature, 'curating' originates from the Latin verb *cura* (to care), normally associated with museum or art collections. Our form of curating by contrast was referring to the relentless linking

of artists with community. Looking at a place with the fresh eyes of the incoming artist brings new and unexpected ideas to a place. Meanwhile through our long-term presence we become part of its fabric.

The work of the curator as described in Balzer – ‘a profession that insists on value, and who makes it, whether or not it actually exists’ (Balzer 2014 p.26) - is under pressure to please artists and trustees, spinning multiple plates from finance to governance, from hospitality to documentation. Where our work as curators and our work as field researchers come together is in its etymology.

‘Curious and curator have the same Latin root, cura; care in Latin connotes both custodianship and taking an interest in something’ (Balzer 2014 p.28). So it is not only the cura/caring (for artists and community), but also through the cura/curious, where we come in with our interest about this place, its people and its activities through our ongoing research. While we certainly care about all those interconnected aspects in our work, this caring is situated within the realm of hospitality<sup>56</sup>. As a residency host Deveron Projects has by its very nature engaged in a great deal of hospitality, made towards both invited artists who come here to work and live, and the local community—ourselves becoming both guest and host through this process. HOSPITALITY is therefore written in big letters on our mental wall, manifested in **PRINCIPLE 13: Hospitality Matters**.

Personally, I never felt comfortable with the term curator because this title reflects a role, mainly associated with collections and exhibitions in the (largely urban) art world. It’s a role I don’t identify with. My work as producer rests largely on my durational field research based on participant observation. A lot of the discussion around contemporary art and anthropology however focuses within this realm of the curator’s work around exhibitions in white cube or similar institutions.

There is a wide discourse around the ‘ethnographic turn’<sup>57</sup> of artists working in participatory ways since the nineties. But instead of the artist being the anthropologist/ethnographer, at Deveron Projects it was us, the curatorial team who was involved in the anthropological ‘correspondence’ activity as Tim Ingold calls it (Ingold 2021). This, because of our enduring commitment to the place and our continuous correspondence based on participant observation.

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<sup>56</sup> <https://www.deveron-projects.com/about/hospitality/>. (Accessed 10 November 2021).

<sup>57</sup> More on this term in **Appendix 8: Terminology/Anthropology**



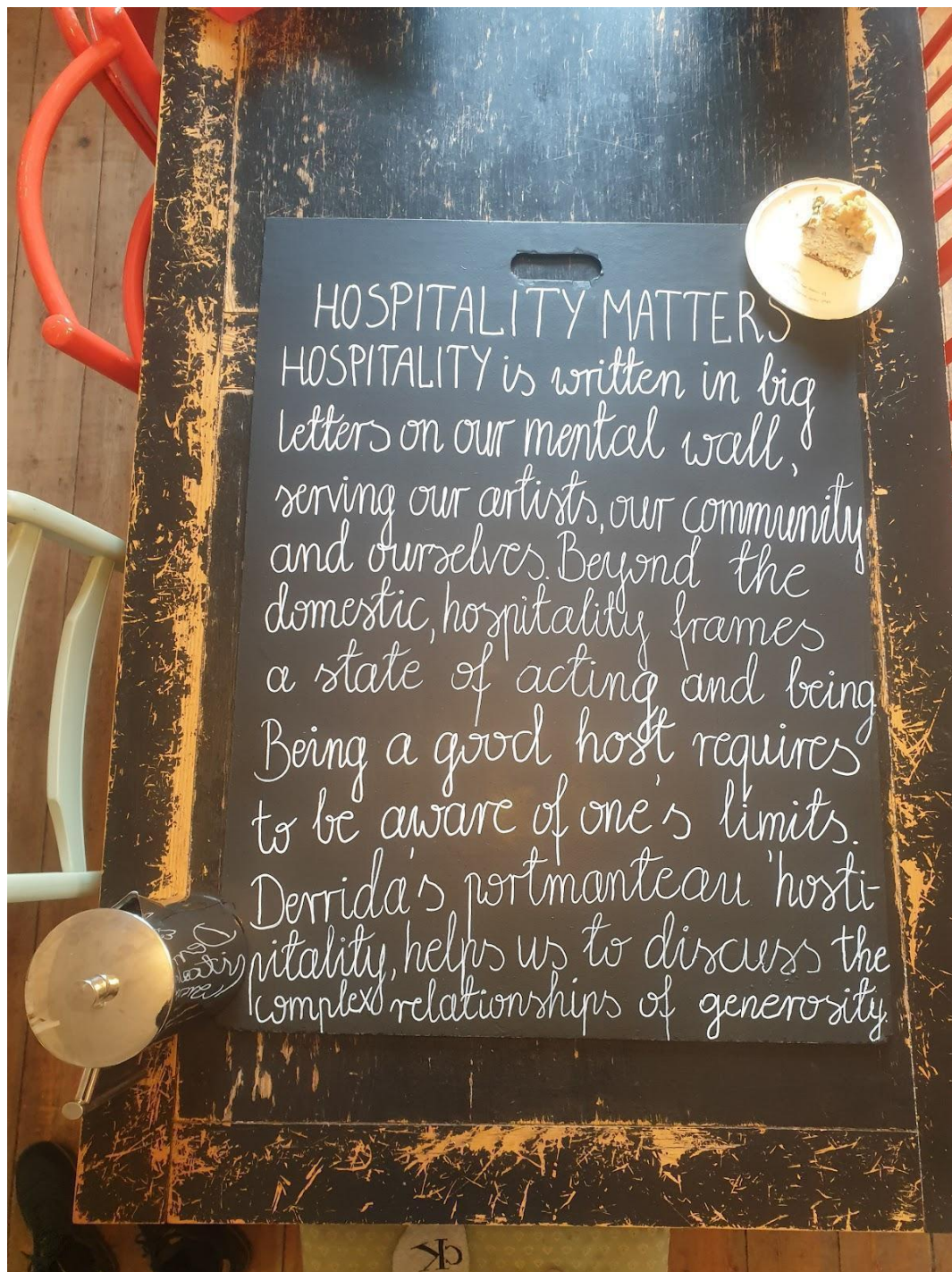


Figure 20: PRINCIPLE 13 – Hospitality Matters

Anthropology as a discipline - since my studies in the eighties<sup>58</sup> – has moved on to be more topic rather than place concerned. Then our studies were informed by such ethnographies based on people as the Nuer in Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1940), the Hadza in Tanzania (Woodburn 1970) or Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islanders (Malinowski 1961). Some good examples of modern studies by contrast are Ingold and Vergunst's book 'Ways of Walking' (2010), exploring the diversity of walking behaviours and the variety of meanings these can represent. With 'Perceptions of Environment' Ingold (Ingold 2022) offers an approach to understanding how we as humans perceive our surroundings in relation to sustainability. More locally I have worked with Annabel Pinker, an Anthropologist at Aberdeen's Hutton Institute. Her research addresses the relationship between social and political life and infrastructural systems such as renewable energy schemes in communities across Scotland<sup>59</sup>. In Huntly she was looking at the community wind turbine, comparing it with other local energy initiatives in Scotland. Her work related to a number of our projects, such as the Dalziel + Scullion project *Breathtaking*, or Andrea Geile's *Energising the Landscape*, whose Slow Marathon route walked past Huntly's community wind turbine.

Meanwhile, we at Deveron Projects, not unlike traditional ethnographic fieldworkers, have been inadvertently (almost accidentally) studying the place with our participatory presence. From such findings, we have been slowly intervening, contributing and transforming with subtle but steady interventions. This process is what I call 'transformational fieldwork' which draws on anthropological sensibility through deep listening/looking techniques expressed through **PRINCIPLE 8: Fieldwork**.

... this organisation, and in particular its director, has been integral in forging a link between these networks of vernacular or indigenous culture and those networks that constitute what is discursively understood as the 'cultural sector' (Stevenson and Blanche 2015, p. 184).

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<sup>58</sup> I was trained in classical Anthropology which normally saw an Anthropologist spending an extended period of time in one location. Good examples for this are Malinowski who was living for two years among the Trobriand Island off the East Coast in New Guinea (Malinowski 1961); Evans-Pritchard who undertook his fieldwork among the Nuer in Sudan (1940); or my tutors Lawrence Krader at Freie Universität Berlin whose fieldwork took place among Pastoral Nomads in Mongolia (Krader 1979 and 1997) and James Woodburn (Woodburn 1970 and 2015), who spent many years with the Hadza, a hunter-gatherer population in today's Tanzania.

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/staff/annabel-pinker>



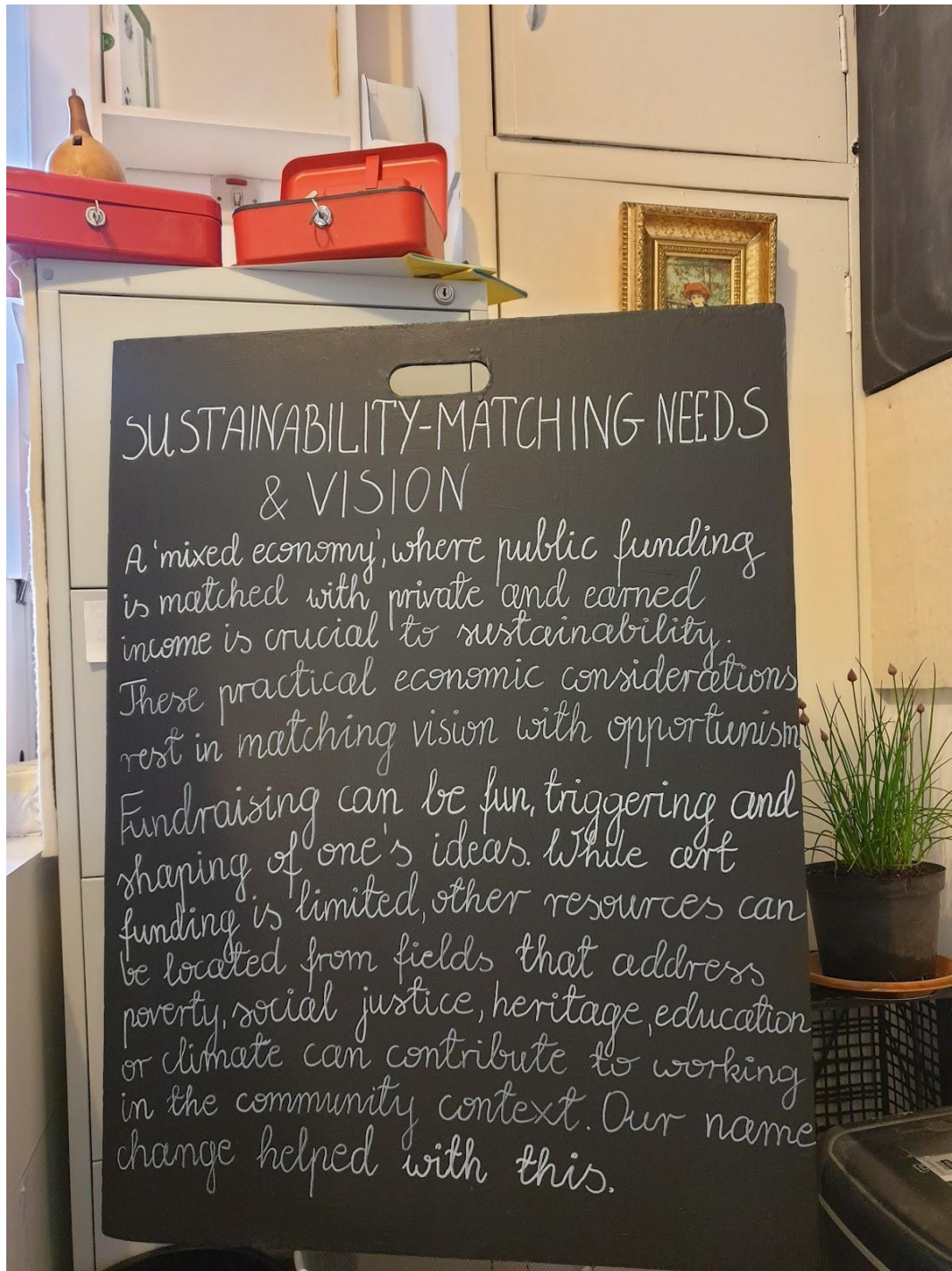


Figure 21: PRINCIPLE 14 – Sustainability - Matching Needs & Vision

But why and how do we do this?

Answering the *Why?* is simple: because we live here. *Work where you Live/Live where you Work* has been one of our mantras to conduct our ongoing research laid out in [Principle 8: Fieldwork](#). As we were not commuting to work elsewhere, we had a vested interest to make this place a good one for our children and ourselves. We wanted to make Huntly the best place it can be. Whether working or during leisure time, one always has one's eyes and ears open to what is going on in one's place. For our environment, our economy, education, housing, past time and so on. But why art, and not other, more conventional, civic means, such as community or social work? Maybe it is because 'Art', as American philosopher and educationalist John Dewey says, 'has the ability to help us develop into better citizens, because art catalyses change, helping us as well as society to grow and remain vital. Thus the appreciation of art has an oral and political dimension' (Jacob 2018 p. 94). For Deveron Projects I refine this statement in that it is the working with artists, rather than art in itself, which allows the possibility for social change.

As exemplified in the case examples we do this by bringing people together from different walks of life on topics of local interest and/or political concern.

*Room to Roam* the new town branding, described in [Appendix 3](#), instigated with artist Jaak Coetzer involved everybody, the schools, council meetings, rambles, eco and family groups to name a few. His/our synthesis - following Dewey - came about through the 'primary aesthetic experience of life', helping people to look at themselves with fresh eyes and jointly co-creating a new widely acceptable brand. This bold new expression of identity - only possible through long-term engagement - was of an ambitious scale far grander than any curatorial/artistic program we could have imagined.

*White Wood* as described in [Appendix 4](#), was developed with some 150 towns folk as a living monument to peace during the nation-wide World War 1 centenary commemorations in our town to discuss Huntly's deep military history at a time of ongoing UK involvement in war activity.

*Slow Marathon* explained in [Appendix 5](#) is an annual walking event that aims to create friendship and understanding of the wider rural surrounding through yearly changing themes. With a focus on the bucolic and other realities of the town's hinterland, it forms a new way of gaining understanding of Geddes' *Valley Sections* by bringing people, landscape and place together.





Figure 22: PRINCIPLE 15 – Growing the Creative Ecology

Self-analysing my practice, I have to consider first of all me/my team/s in the double role of anthropologist and curator/producer, secondly the artists we work with and thirdly the community we were working in. All three are of equal importance. In the literature around art/anthropology however, the curator and their multiple roles are regularly and - I wonder - maybe even deliberately ignored. More of this discussion can be found in [Appendix 7: Terminology/Anthropology](#).

As discussed in the previous chapter, for most art organisations with the prevalent gallery model, the starting point is a building. From there, the curators select the artists for their programme, and at the end of the process identify ways to bring audiences to it. At Deveron Projects we work the other way round. Huntly, our place and its community is our starting point. Leaning on the ideas of John Dewey, it is 'through communication that we can create community' (Jacob 2018 p.138).

'To listen deeply is to unearth the values by which life is lived' says Mary Jane Jacob (Jacob 2018 p. 55). Through the method of continuous year-round listening, looking, mapping and connecting, we identify the topics that are of people's concern or interest. Those relate for example to health and wellbeing, economy, socio-political concerns, environmental urgencies, historical aspects or wider identity building. Following the identification of the project, as evidenced in the case examples of *Room to Roam*, *White Wood* and *Slow Marathon* ([Appendix 2/3/4](#)) we look for the fitting artist and the venue to work with.

While each project has some form of transformative element, e.g. *Room to Roam* allowed people to look at themselves with fresh eyes and come up jointly with a new brand; *White Wood* forced people to think about notions of how we celebrate 'heros' of WW1; *Slow Marathon* brings people of very different walks of life together to think of a political theme such as migration, energy or transport, it is the sum of the whole that is creating the slow transformation of a rural place. Not every individual project, every individual artist and their participatory practice is creating the ethnographic fieldwork, but the criss-crossing songlines of all those projects, connections and correspondences. Almost taking Beuys' *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) literally, where no facet of life can be left out in this intertwine.

The relationship between anthropology and contemporary art has been much discussed in recent literature, from a range of different perspectives (Ingold



2018, p 672)<sup>60</sup>. It is however less relevant to this thesis due to its connection with traditional museum/gallery curating.

'Experience is the currency of communication. And experiences held in common are the glue of association...' (Dewey in: Jacob 2018 p. 127). Instead of curators, taking inspiration from our friends Geddes and Beuys, I therefore preferred to call ourselves facilitators or producers, which is more all-encompassing, both for the range of tasks and the continuous involvement of the team. But then there is also the participatory fieldwork, our **Principle 8: Fieldwork** in the community. Beyond etymology, in the following I try to describe how we are actually doing this, combining my anthropologist/curator/producer role that leads to transformative fieldwork with art production.

By embedding oneself into the local community, there are many ways to facilitate participant observation through deep looking/listening as the basis of 'transformational fieldwork'. The techniques we use to unearth the ideas for our project topics and subsequently implementation are manifold and polyphonic<sup>61</sup>, an approach borrowed from Patrick Geddes, the polymath. In practice this means to apply **PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Strategies** by always, always keeping one's ear on the ground, to never, never throw away a bit of local gossip. It is your hairdresser, the butcher, the local farmer, the administrator at the council reception or the library cleaner that have lived there for generations – and they are the ones who know the place best. It is also your children that bring home some unanticipated knowledge.

Essential for us was also to get involved in local committees such as the Community Council, the school board, the tourism group, the local development trust, or joining the local ramblers' group. It is at those meetings, walks and events when you find out what is going on, what people's concerns are and what makes them proud of their town. Reading the weekly *Huntly Express* paper from beginning to end is another important way of getting an endless source of information/inspiration as well as being a transformational fieldwork tool for regular communication.

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<sup>60</sup> Representative sources according to Ingold include Bakke and Peterson (2016), Laine (2018), Rutten, van Dinederen & Soetart (2013), Sansi (2014), Schneider (2017), Schneider & Wright (2006, 2010, 2013) and Van der Grijp & Filitz (2018). I want to add to this list: Grimshaw and Ravetz (2015), Rikou and Yalouri (2018), Ssorin-Chaikov (2013), Takragawa (2017). Many of those writings build on much earlier works of writers such as Gell (1998) and Hyde (1983).

<sup>61</sup> I am grateful to my supervisor Dr Jon Blackwood for directing me into considering 'polyphonic' as an approach of listening to and absorbing many voices.

'Every life is interesting' filmmaker Mark Cousins said when talking about his film and book 'The Story of Looking'<sup>62</sup>. Grounded in this belief, I myself did a lot of this listening/looking through inviting people for walks. I undertook regular *Walking Lunches*, where I combined lunchtime sessions with meetings on the hoof. In exchange you get nuggets of information, which lead to new ideas for our projects. Arranging *Friday Lunches* through the HOME programme is another effective way of getting to know local skills, interests and knowledge. Whenever we met somebody new and heard of their profession, their hobby, their interest, we schedule them for a talk. This way you don't only learn something new, but it is also a great opportunity to meet other people who would normally not come to an art event. Likewise the stalls at the monthly farmers' market, where we set up a mini café, always centre on digging for information around the current topic. This is described in detail in the case example HOME in [Appendix 2](#).

Lucy Lippard writes: 'Our personal relationships to history and place form us, as individuals and groups, and in reciprocal ways we form them. Land, history and culture meet in a multi-centred society that values place but cannot be limited to one view' (Lippard 1997 p. 9). The continuous digging for deeply grounded facts, happenings and information therefore does then allow for the deep/slow mapping<sup>63</sup> of community assets and needs which subsequently translate into our programme and plans. In 2009 we established a Cultural Audit<sup>64</sup>, which contains all kinds of information from physical assets to local groups, requiring continuous updating. Allowing art as a way of thinking about the world, the insights gathered lead to focus our project themes, based not just on uniqueness of place in geographic/cultural terms, but on common needs and concerns. They can be issues such as health or social, highlighting specific interests or making friendships through new group building. In the past they have ranged from addressing decline in retail, night-time street fights, rising obesity to missing male role models. Identity building projects included the *Room to Roam* branding explained in [Appendix 3](#) or an artist driven consultation in the *People's Café* to address town regeneration after the closure of many facilities and services.

Patrick Geddes' Place/Work/Folk triptych provides here a flexible framework around helping to make Huntly a good HOME for our community and ourselves.

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<sup>62</sup> Film presentation and talk at Edinburgh Filmhouse: 25 June 2022

<sup>63</sup> See more of my understanding of deep/slow mapping in [Appendix 8: Terminology](#)

<sup>64</sup> What we understand under Cultural Audit is extensively described and illustrated in the ARTocracy book (Sacramento and Zeiske 2010 pp. 59) [PRINCIPLE 2: Place-Specific](#)

A Home that is actively aware of its surroundings and links with the wider world. Not having a fixed venue is essential in this work. As instead of trying to bring ‘non-art audiences’ to a gallery or art centre, we and our artists can work where people are already.

This all means that our way of curating/producing consists of many different activities. First of all they lean on traditional anthropological methods of participant observation: listening and looking as described in classical anthropology such as the works of for example Malinowski, Krader or Evans-Pritchard. Followed by identifying the topics we wanted to work on, we needed to find and manage the money to make it all possible matching needs and vision through **PRINCIPLE 14: Sustainability**. This all was entangled with writing the policies and reports, finding the partners and venues, cooking the meals, making the beds... These are just a few of the things we did. No day, no hour was the same. It is this range of intertwined artistic, anthropological and administrative methods, which underpin our way of working, grounded in hospitality. Those are laid out in the 16 principles and together with the case examples must be read in parallel to my argument for ‘transformational fieldwork’ through artistic intervention to fully understand our methodology and how it could be applied to other rural places of similar size. Always, and this is important: always as a team. Each and every one of us is equally important in this ‘meshwork’<sup>65</sup> (Ingold 2021b) of relationships, jobs, artistic outputs and socio-political outcomes.

I have explained why it is my colleagues and I<sup>66</sup>, who have been both the constant and the field researcher in Deveron Projects’ way of producing. And how we work in an overlapping anthropological/participant-observing as well as art producing manner. To do this, we took advice from our champion Patrick Geddes and drew our own thinking machines.

For our work within this conundrum, I drew a diagram, which shows that we are both anthropologists as well as curators/producers. I now call that team the ‘Anthro-Producers’ who engage in this transformative fieldwork with artists and community.

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<sup>65</sup> Ingold distinguishes between network and meshwork, where network goes (mathematically) from point to point and meshwork intermingles with different strands of action and thought.

<sup>66</sup> An analogy between my/DP’s and Geddes’s way of working can be noted in one of Murdo MacDonald’s unpublished writing: ‘A key part of that practice was the dissemination of information through the publications of ‘Patrick Geddes and Colleagues’ of which *The Evergreen* was the central publication. Now ‘colleagues’ is a carefully chosen word. Geddes avoids the more normal phrase ‘Patrick Geddes and Company’ which would refer to a business. Instead he refers to ‘colleagues’ that is to say people who are – in the most fundamental sense – members of a college, an educational grouping. Thus, Geddes makes it very clear that *The Evergreen* is both a group project and an educational project. (MacDonald 2021, p.1)

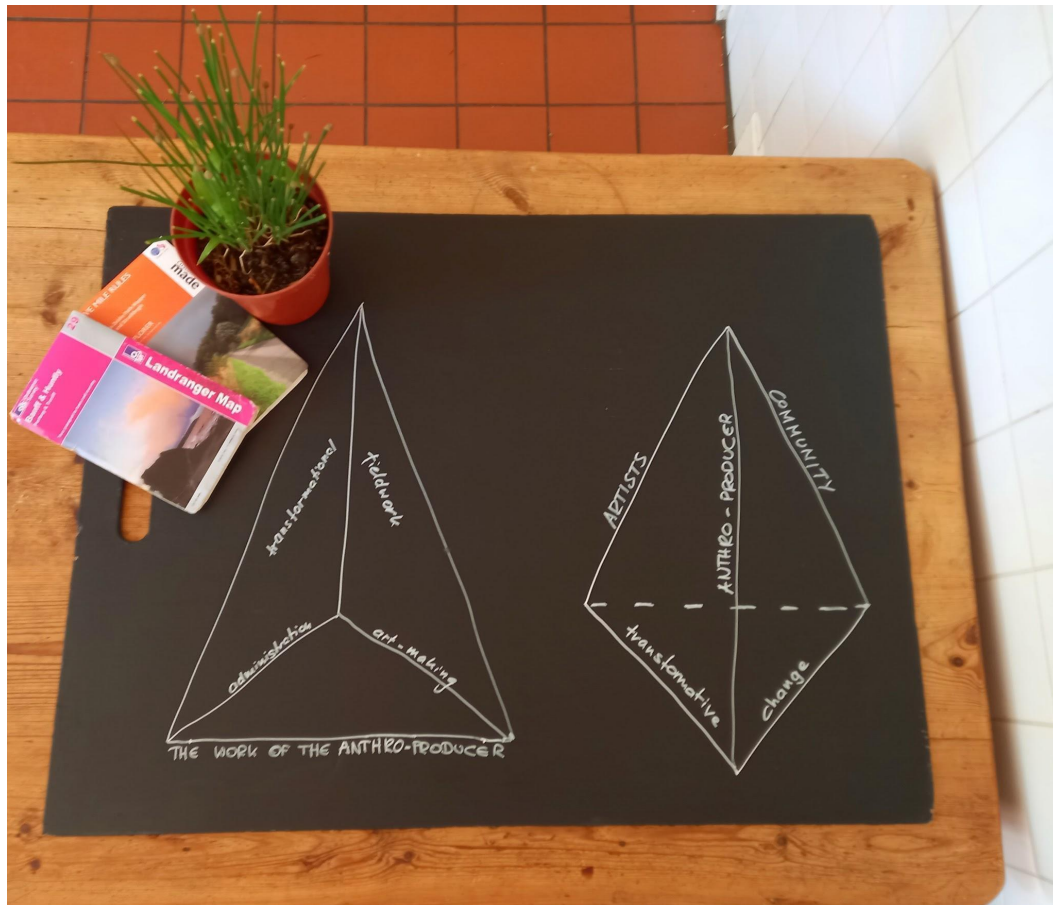


Figure 23: Communal Team Tetrahedron Drawings

(a) working out the ANTHRO-Producer's tasks including curating/producing/anthropological methods with the transformational fieldwork in the middle; (b) placing the ANTHRO-Producer among its collaborators Artists + Community with the transformative change in the middle.

For the collaboration I imagine a tetrahedron with a triangular base<sup>67</sup> showing our contribution to the discourse in the durational work with artists (applying participant observation through their own but shorter-term methods) and the community. All three of us form one apex line. The opportunities for transformative change fill the vacuum in the middle through **PRINCIPLE 12: The ANTHRO-Producer's** long-term presence. The sustainability of it lies in the combination of this durational commitment and the polymathic Geddesian approaches that bring together the many thematic strands. In this lies 'the sustainability of everything' as Ingold explains. 'It cannot be of some things and not others; it can countenance no boundaries of inclusion and exclusion' (Ingold 2022 p.325).

<sup>67</sup> I am grateful to Prof. Tim Ingold who in conversation led me to these triangular thinking machines.



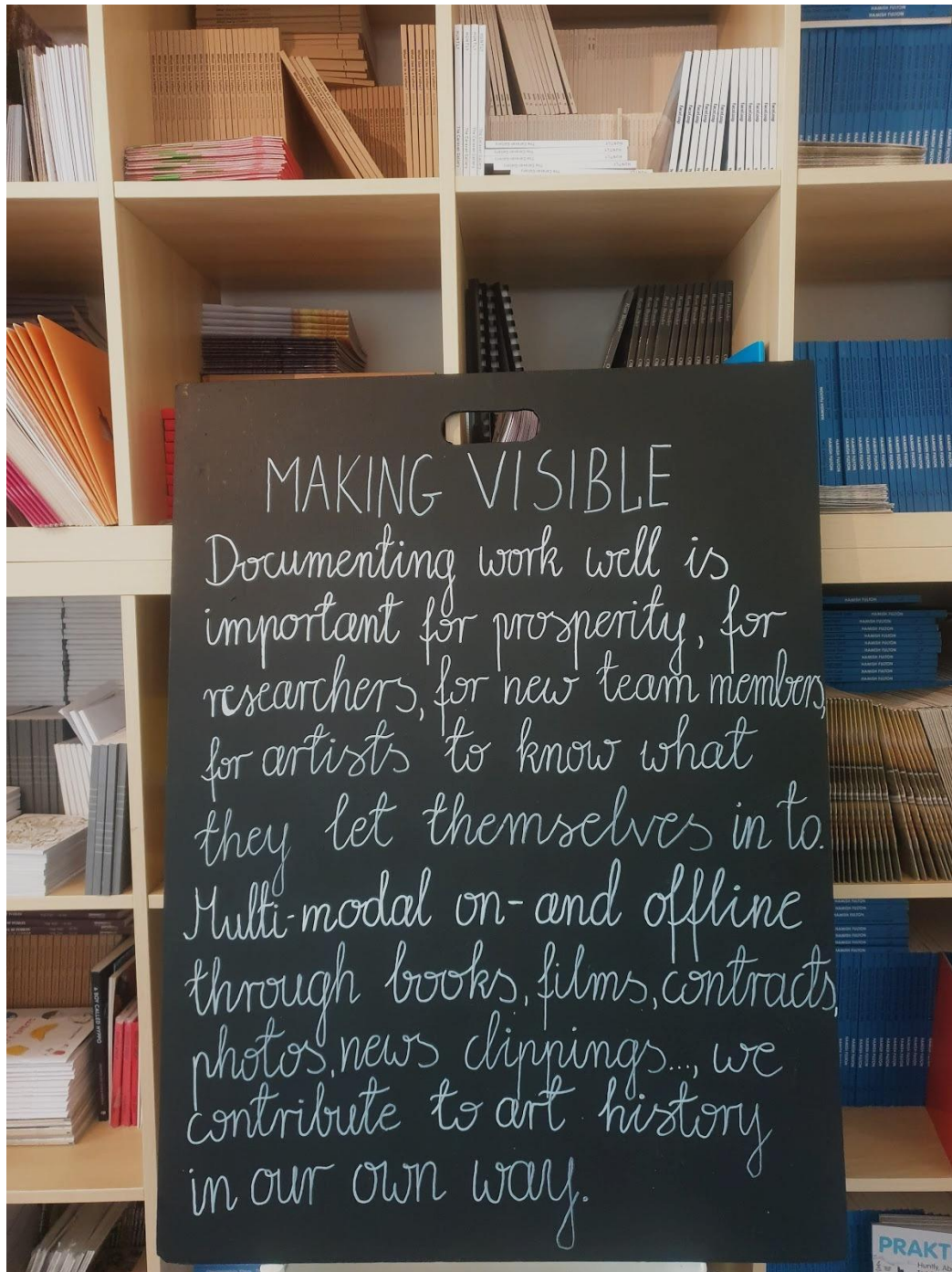


Figure 24: PRINCIPLE 16 – Making Visible

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY

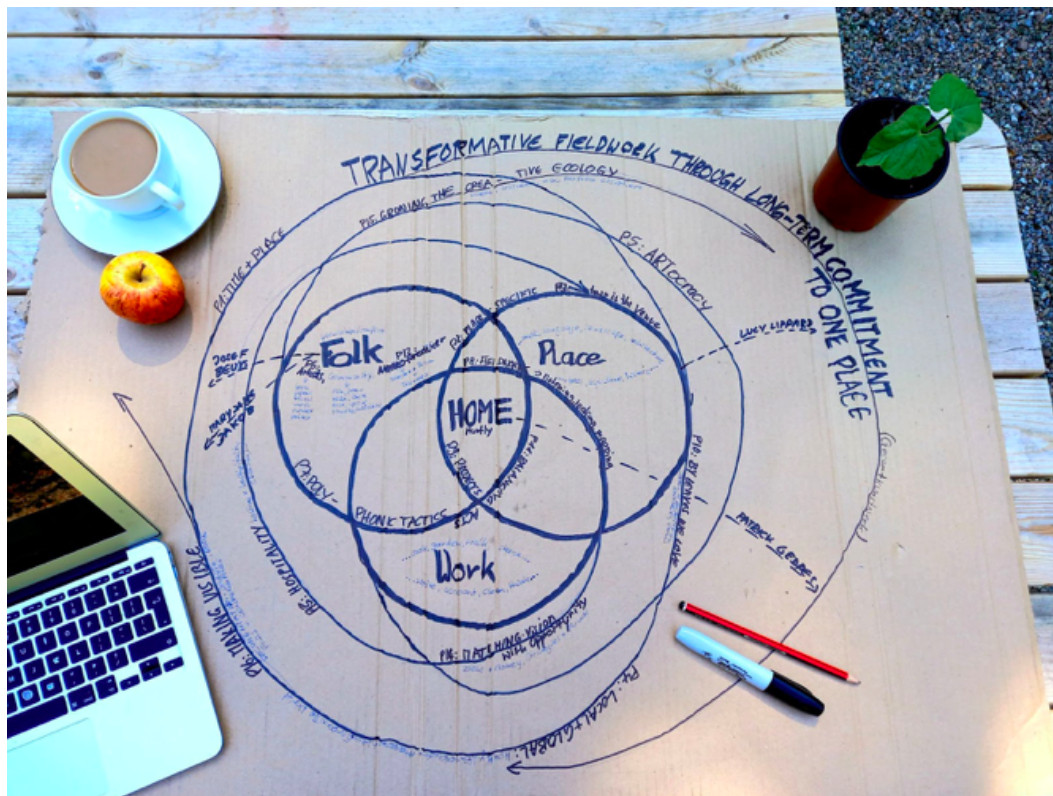


Figure 25: Transformational Fieldwork Mindmap

Through my auto-ethnographic study, I showed how Deveron Projects' way of continued art making is based on the premise of 'Transformational Fieldwork' through 'long-term commitment to one place' over the past 25 years. Bringing together people and their experiences, this method combining participant observation with effective cultural management is exemplified through our work in the rural market town of Huntly in the North-East of Scotland.

Our starting point was the simple premise of making this place a better one for our community and ourselves. By collaborating with visiting artists through *participatory* processes, we have been seeking to enrich and boost community life and welfare for us all.

We have worked here through a **balancing approach** - artists with community, home with away and hospitality with criticality. Probing Patrick Geddes' 'thinking machine' helps us to understand the interlinking between people, place and their activities as an embedded prototype for today's communities.

Our work was grounded in the unique identity, history, geography and environmental **place-specificities** of Huntly, while acknowledging current socio-political and cultural influences. This provides the source for our year-round **fieldwork**, akin to traditional participant observation methods that combine deep looking/listening with long-term presence in the place. Drawing on anthropological sensibilities we unearth the topic themes for our projects through continuous mapping of our local findings. Those themes can be related to health, politics, environment, or other topics and provide the starting point for our **projects** ensuring community interest and buy-in.

All the projects were done 'in correspondence' with both, community and artists through participative practices that we have developed over the years. They always have a **local as well as a global** dimension, acknowledging that whatever we do has an influence elsewhere in the world.

To allow for transformational processes – as evidenced in the four case examples *HOME*, *Room to Roam*, *White Wood* and *Slow Marathon* – we work through a wide range of **cultural processes** that contribute to the wellbeing of the town. Those include making as well as vernacular practices such as cooking, gardening, eating and especially walking together.

Organised around linked strategies, laid out in 16 interwoven cultural/artistic as well as administrative/organisational **principles**, we work through an elaborate 'meshwork' of art making designed for the remote/rural context. With creating friendship at heart, our work has **hospitality** at its core, always acknowledging our own boundaries. Using **polyphonic tactics**, where everybody can contribute to a place, we resist grouping people into demographic boxes, a possibility that is specific to the rural situation – distant from urban centres.

Instead of an art centre or gallery - the common 'city' format for contemporary art - we have developed this work under **the town is the venue** umbrella. In place of dedicated art venues we use existing/found spaces, using resources and knowledges that are readily available through a **small is beautiful** approach. This cost-effective and flexible way of working is the foundation for **ARTocracy**, 'the creative work method we use within the *town is the venue* framework' (DEVERON PROJECTS 2017). It suggests that everybody has creative power, which takes a Beuysian approach of 'everyone is an artist'<sup>68</sup>, by empowering

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<sup>68</sup> Beuys himself stresses 'that what we have here is an anthropological concept rather than the traditional middle-class concept of art' (Harlan: 2004, p.12)



people to use their creative abilities. It also allows us to react to current socio-political situations, unforeseen in conventional strategic planning.

The many visiting **artists** come from our locality or across the globe. While they come in and out for temporary assignments, we as curators and producers both live and work here. We therefore provide the constant in this work, which combines the role of the administrator, the field researcher and the art producer. I call this the **Anthro-Producer** who is responsible for developing sustainable strategies of **matching vision with opportunities** (financial and other). This also includes **growing the creative ecology** of the *town is the venue* method beyond the boundaries of Huntly. We do this through having a range of dedicated training opportunities for young people from Scotland and further afield. Good **documentation** assists us with making this work visible to people whom never visit Huntly and those who live beyond our times.

Deveron Projects' long-term continuity rests with its cultural ecology combining vision and management that bring together curatorial and administrative decisions on an ongoing, daily basis. Specific to the rural/remote small town context, transformational fieldwork can bring people together from different demographics, ages, and walks of life through new ideas that are implemented in collaboration between the community, visiting artists and ourselves. In a plea for sustainable continuity they include everything from environmental issues to identity building to health, from economy to education to socio-political concerns.



Figure 26: Deveron Projects 21st Birthday Celebration

Photo: Jaak Coetzer



## **Appendix 1: SIXTEEN CURATORIAL PRINCIPLES**

### **A tool kit for the rural small-town context**

#### **1. TIME + PLACE**

The foundational principle of Deveron Projects is the long-term commitment to one place. Creating friendships to explore the continuously changing relationship between outside and inside - host & guest - inhabitant & visitor - local & foreign.

#### **2. PLACE-SPECIFIC**

Every town, every place has a unique identity, history and environment that is constantly being pushed and pulled through external forces (environmental, social and political). The Hinterland location creates the opportunity to explore the periphery and borderland spaces beyond major metropolitan or cultural centres.

#### **3. TOWN IS THE VENUE**

Our town is the venue - rather than a gallery, museum or art centre. Through this mantra we have been intervening and corresponding with 'found' places in the town and its hinterland. The locations range from the local church to a WW2 pillbox, schools, train station and rural sheep mart... Instead of attracting audiences, this means we can work from where people are already and contribute to the regeneration of underutilised spaces.

#### **4. LOCAL + GLOBAL**

Whatever we do, it has an effect somewhere else in the world. Working in our hometown starts by making connections between the local and global context, acknowledging the process of how our local actions impact the lives of others.

## **5. ARTOCRACY**

All people have the capacity to be creative. DP's *town is the venue* mantra makes art visible as a lived and transformative practice. Artists are agents for cultural and attitudinal change, they can play a significant part in challenging assumptions, defusing conflict and opening new possibilities for lasting friendships.

## **6. OUR ARTISTS**

The artists that Huntly hosts can be performers, writers, curators and other social visionaries from all over the world. What they have in common is a participatory approach to making work. Invited to live and work here, we form together a plan that is responsive to the people, places and socio-political situations. This creates unexpected outcomes that can challenge prevailing assumptions and habitual practices.

## **7. POLYPHONIC TACTICS**

Civic life today often separates people into many boxes. We resist social stratification by avoiding dividing people into demographic groups. Instead we find ways to bring people together from different spheres of life. For this we seek beyond disciplinary boundaries and see art in everyday cultural practices inclusive of music, literature, and visual arts, as well as cooking, walking, gardening, drawing upon aesthetic experience.

## **8. FIELDWORK**

Drawing on anthropological sensibility, our approach uses participant observation and deep listening/deep looking techniques to be in correspondence with the communities we work with. As 'we live where we work and work where we live', we become part of the town: the butcher, the baker, the artist, and the curator.

## **9. OUR PROJECTS**

The concerns/needs of the community are our starting point. As such our projects pay close attention to how we jointly develop a sense of place and shape our environment, identity and collective future.

They are responsive to the ever-changing socio-political context, recognising that climate crisis, coronavirus and other threats know no borders.

## **10. BY LEAVES WE LOVE**

Environmental and socio-political emergencies are inextricably linked. We are guided by two core ideas: E.F. Schumacher's *'Small is Beautiful'* proposes that we work with the things we already have. Complemented by Geddes's *By Leaves we Live* allows us to explore ways to work *with* limited resources - the food our land can produce, the knowledges and skills that town's folk have, the materials that are available to us.

## **11. BALANCING ACTS**

A 50/50 principle guides us to balance artistic endeavour with everyday life. Artist/community, hospitality/criticality, local/global, are some of the conundrums that make Deveron Projects tick through all of its operations. This relates to writing accessible for all, guiding the team, thinking of the event participants, establishing the constellation of our board. 50/50 always allows us to think of the 'otherwise'.

## **12. THE ANTHRO-PRODUCER**

The work of the Deveron Projects curator/producer combines that of an administrator, a creative thinker and an anthropologist. Always in a team, never alone.

By inviting 'Shadow Curators' we embrace criticism that puts us in a stronger position through a check and balance system.

## **13. HOSPITALITY MATTERS**



HOSPITALITY is written in big letters on our mental wall, serving our artists, our community and ourselves. Beyond the domestic, hospitality frames a state of acting and being.

Being a good host requires being aware of one's limits. Derrida's portmanteau 'hostipitality', helps us to discuss the complex relationships of generosity.

#### **14. SUSTAINABILITY- MATCHING NEEDS & VISION**

A 'mixed economy', where public funding is matched with private and earned income is crucial to sustainability. These practical economic considerations rest in matching vision with opportunism. Fundraising can be fun, triggering and shaping one's ideas.

While art funding is limited, since changing our name, other resources can be located from fields that address poverty, social justice, heritage, education or climate - which can contribute to working in the community context.

#### **15. GROWING THE CREATIVE ECOLOGY**

Investing in young arts workers bears fruits beyond the walls of our town. Interns from across the globe, school pupils and university students take our messages and techniques forward to other places.

#### **16. MAKING VISIBLE**

Documenting work well is important for prosperity, for researchers, for new team members, for artists to know what they let themselves in to.

Multi-modal on- and offline through books, films, contracts, photos, news clippings ..., we contribute to art history in our very own way.

## Appendix 2 - 5: PROJECTS

### Appendix 2: HOME (Case Study)

A year round support program that links the organisation and its artists with the community and its seasonal calendar. (since 2013)

Artists: Norma Hunter (2012-13), Catrin Jeans (2013-15), Rachael Disbury (2015-17), Elisabetta Rattalino (2017-18), Petra Pennington (2018-20), Jess Carnegie (from Oct 2020)

### The What and the Why?

Supported by an artist who is taking on the Art & Community Worker role, the *HOME* Programme is where all of Deveron Projects' principles are woven together.

As outlined in [Appendix 6: History of Deveron Arts/Projects](#), we have been slowly and intuitively developing [PRINCIPLE 5: ARTocracy](#) as our creative work method, where artists are agents for cultural and attitudinal change. ARTocracy forms the basis of the [PRINCIPLE 3: Town is the Venue](#) framework, which suggests that all people have creative power, reaching far beyond the walls of a gallery or art centre. But Deveron Arts/Projects grew, and with it steadily the bureaucracy and red tape and demands of a developing organisation. I myself found it challenging to be on the streets a lot, while also assuring the advancement of the organisation artistically and financially [PRINCIPLE 14. Sustainability - Matching Needs & Vision](#). There was also a growing desire to pass on the methodologies that we developed to others.

In response to these needs we set up a project called *Cultural Health Visitor* first with Norma Hunter and then with Catrin Jeans, leaning on the idea of the NHS Community Health Visitor, unique to the UK. But those were received with a lot of scepticism by the local Huntly Health Service who refused to work with us until we changed the job title. In fact the dispute went so far that they hinted to take legal action, as they felt the Health Visitor title was protected and only to be used by people with a certain education. But unlike 'Doctor' they realised this was not the case. Instead they decided to blank us out. In a small town like ours, where everybody knows everybody, where you never know who you meet or need next, it is simply not wise to dig one's heels in. Our decisions are often guided by [PRINCIPLE 11: Balancing Acts](#) bringing artistic endeavour in some form of

equilibrium with everyday life. This forced us to track change and give the project a more conventional art worker title. Wholly embedded in the rest of the team, we settled for *Art & Community Worker*, which best describes the work of those artists engaged (Rachael Disbury/Elisabetta Rattalino/Petra Pennington/Jess Carnegie).



Figure 27: Deveron Projects adapted Place/Work/Folk Thinking Machine

The HOME programme that the Art & Community Worker has under their wing is rooted in Geddes' Place/Work/Folk triptych for community planning. We adopted it for our purposes of working in the small-town context of Huntly.

PLACE we interpret through nature/culture not as a binary dialectic, but on the premise and understanding that nature and culture are in a continuous biotic relationship with each other, where we build with our natural resources and what the land can offer to us. **PRINCIPLE 10: By Leaves we Love**

To WORK we added Play, meaning all forms of activities: cooking, gardening, walking, dancing and so on, as well as working as in having a job.

FOLK really is at the centre of our work through creating friendships but acknowledging and not shying away from conflict (Schrag:2016). **PRINCIPLE 11: Balancing Acts**

In the middle of it all is HOME. Like 'family', it is a central Geddesian concept that we today translate into 'friendship' bringing the diversity of all kinds of people together. Based on this interwoven conundrum of concepts, we can build



a loose and continuously adaptable framework of actions that is firmly rooted in **PRINCIPLE 13: Hospitality Matters**, which in and beyond the domestic, frames a state of acting and being.

‘Empathy moves us to care’ says Mary Jane Jacob (Jacob:2018, page 127). Both words - ‘empathy’ and ‘care’ (which is also the epistemological root of curating) - have become rather ubiquitous in art circuits in recent times, accelerated by the pandemic and other global events, which left many people in a socially precarious situation. Under ‘empathy’ we understand a form of responsiveness, an ability to understand others in their situation, avoiding making assumptions from one’s own perspectives. Care ethics, for me, are a state of mind that in the case of Deveron Projects allows us to think through the relationship between our art and fieldwork practices and the socio-political situations we are facing.

**PRINCIPLE 6: Our Artists** can be from our locality like Rachel Ashton of the *Walking without Walls* project (**Appendix 5**), or come from all over the world. Over the years we had artists coming from China, Cuba, India, Congo, Morocco, Canada and of course Europe, England and Scotland. For them the context and place is new, bringing an inherent curiosity to want to meet and talk to people in the town. These connections are of course at the core of our existence. But making them durable is a continuous balancing act and it is our job to ensure that the community gets not exhausted or that the artists do not end up talking to more or less the same people one after the other. In the past 10 years we had between 4 and 8 artists per annum residing in Huntly (see **Appendix 13: Project Grid**). People need to feel they get something back, or to use Tim Ingold’s words they need to feel that they are in ‘correspondence’ with the artists (Ingold 2021 p.6). The HOME programme has therefore the key function to embed our work into regular community life. **PRINCIPLE 2: Place-Specific** ensures that we day-by-day build with this work on our unique culture, environment and history.

## **The Task**

Building on the conceptual application of the Place/Work/Folk triptych, the HOME programme consists of two tightly interwoven strands:

The first one is delivering a year-round programme that ties in with the local and seasonal calendar of events and festivities in Huntly.

The other one is linking the incoming artists in residence with the community.

The first one feeds the second one through field research, and the second one supplies the first one with new ideas, contacts and methods.

Key questions are: What are our year round contributions to community wellbeing and town regeneration? How does this help us unearth vital information to identify and develop the projects? How do we link our daily presence with the incoming artists who are in Huntly on a temporary basis?

### **The Processes**

The artists engaged for the Art & Community worker position are chosen through an open selection process. However, in reality all of the above-mentioned individuals (with the exception of Norma Hunter and Petra Pennington who have been long-term volunteers and participants) have gone through the internship programme. This fact meant that the artists appointed were well prepared in what they let themselves in for.

Like for the rest of the Anthro-Curatorial/Producer team, they adopted a diverse range of negotiation skills rooted in anthropological fieldwork. It also meant that they committed to live in Huntly to enable them to engage with the many groups and communities to deliver **PRINCIPLE 8: Fieldwork**, thereby becoming part of the town. The candidates also needed good interpersonal skills with a creative ability to turn problems into possibilities. With our ageing community demography it needs a specific up-and-do-it-yourself attitude in particular for young people to find their own living and working space here. For artists who come from the city, where art/culture provision is in abundance one needs to find a new way of satisfying this need: i.e. 'do it yourself!' This survival strategy worked for me, when I moved to the town in my early thirties. And this is how I tried to encourage new, incoming artists who came to stay, to undertake Art & Community work. Based on **PRINCIPLE 15: Growing the Creative Ecology** having gone through initial work forms such as volunteering and internships, ensured the ability and enthusiasm for those artists to work in Huntly as the key connector between artist, community and ourselves, i.e. **PRINCIPLE 12: The ANTHRO-Producer**.

In response to the first key aim of the HOME programme, we have set up some ongoing year-round programmes and regular events that connect with Huntly its culture, history and environment as well as of course its people. This includes the Huntly FC annual fair, the annual Hairst Food and Farming Festival, the

attending of the Town Team<sup>69</sup> meetings, the school prize giving and so on. It essentially deals with the field research that we are undertaking on an ongoing basis, which gives us community buy-in in return. Complementing such interventions at local institutions we run regular events ourselves, such as monthly cooking sessions bringing migrants with locals together or one-off events, a café-style stall on the monthly farmer's market, and a range of events such as workshops or community discussions. To illustrate some of these many processes I now will talk about two of those methodological tasks: Friday Lunch and the Town Collection.

Friday Lunch - is a weekly communal lunch, where somebody from our community is invited to talk about some point of interest stemming from their life and work. This can range from somebody's travel story, explaining the new curriculum by the school rector; the chairperson of the swift group talking about swifts in Huntly to the current artist giving a talk of their practice. The point of this is to first of all bring people together who are in need of a hearty meal. The other good reason for Friday Lunch is to show the wealth of interest and knowledge there is in a small community. And to learn from them. **PRINCIPLE 13: Hospitality Matters**, applies here - or as Dewey says: 'They start with food and end up with politics. Change starts with face-to-face communication. Such simple acts of communication are a human right, a form of freedom to be guarded in a democracy' (Dewey in: Jacob 2018 p. 96).

Friday Lunches are attended by a wide range of people: teachers, school pupils, elderly folk that may be alone. They are always busy and convivial<sup>70</sup>. Food is a great leveller as a conduit for such conversations. Some time ago, I thought we will run out of speakers, as the curatorial concept was strictly adhering to inviting speakers who live/work in town only<sup>71</sup>. But this never happened. With all of us living/working here you just need to look around. **PRINCIPLE 5: ARTocracy** adopts Beuys' 'Everyone is an artist' mantra. For us this means everyone has something interesting to tell. Whenever we meet somebody - in the pub, at one of the public meetings, the sports club - we listen, to find out what they know, what skills or profession they have, what makes them tick? One just needs to

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<sup>69</sup> Huntly Town Team came out of the *Room to Thrive* strategy. It is a collaboration between groups such as the Huntly Development Trust, Huntly Community Council, Network of Wellbeing and many more who meet regularly to think about progress for the town. Deveron Projects plays an important role in this through the implementation of numerous projects the Town Team works on.

<sup>70</sup> During the Covid restrictions, Friday Lunches were highly missed in Huntly. We decided to keep going and invited local speakers online, sharing our food virtually.

<sup>71</sup> The only exception was when we invited somebody living in the wider North-East Scotland area who clearly could contribute to one of our artist projects.

look and then to listen as a way of life. This is our **PRINCIPLE 8: Fieldwork**. And then we invite them to talk at Friday lunch, where they can connect to others.

The new knowledge gained often also helps establish the topics for the artists to engage in future. One such example was inviting Pat Scott. Pat lives with her husband Sandy at Dukewells just 2 miles outside Huntly, where he manages the family farm. Aberdeenshire is historically well known for its rich farming land, both for crops and for cattle rearing, especially Aberdeen Angus. With the introduction of large-scale machinery however, farm work has become almost redundant and is today no longer a significant employment source. This means that farmers are working largely on their own, which creates a lot of isolation and loneliness among them.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that the machinery is very costly. A combined harvester can quickly cost about £750,000 and a tractor £135,000, Pat said. In other countries this need would be addressed through cooperatives who share the costs of such machineries. But in Scotland with the unpredictable fast changing weather everybody would need the equipment at the same time in the harvest season. Such investments are enormous and can risk bankruptcy among farming families if they face a poor season.

In Pat's case they were forced to invest in a wash installation, to ensure the best price for their cattle, which is only given to freshly washed and cleaned animals at the Thainstone slaughterhouse in Inverurie. The other thing Pat told us is the alienation from the product. Farmers today can not slaughter and eat their own meat. A conundrum of cumbersome regulations force them to bring the animals to the abattoir from where they are sent to the supermarkets. Many farmers today are forced to diversify, substituting their income through holiday accommodation or subsidies such as wood planting.

Another project, which finds its home in the HOME programme is the Town Collection. We have invited artists to live and work in Huntly since the mid-1990s. Often the artists gave me a present at the end and I was not really sure what to do with it. Keeping it myself felt not right, but without a building to house a collection there was no real place for those works. So, quite a long time ago, already back in 2000 when Paul Carter gave me his framed work *Miracle over Huntly Castle*, I asked the Huntly Hotel, where the artist hung out a lot, whether they would like to house it. And so they did. And this is how the Town Collection



was born. Since then, with each residency, the artists have contributed artworks, memorabilia and other artefacts to an expanding living archive.

Like all our work outlined in **PRINCIPLE 3: The Town is the Venue**, these works are not held in one place, gallery or museum, but are uniquely hosted in local shops, businesses, public buildings, hidden pathways and local landmarks across Huntly and its hinterlands. The location is not chosen randomly, but either has a conceptual link with the project theme, or a historic link with the artist. 'With some 80 works in the collection, they reflect the diversity, interest and character of the local residents as much as they do the artists who have worked here'.<sup>72</sup> From our three case examples (**Appendix 2/3/4**) we can find: brown *Room to Roam* road signs at the entry to the town on the A96 trunk road; the *White Wood* itself at its site in the Bin Forest; a Slow Marathon painting made with shoe laces by Mihret Kebede in a shoe shop; the Gaza/Huntly *Walking without Walls* bilingual (arabic/english) herbarium framed in the 'Elturative' ethical gift shop on Duke Street.

Organising a town collection work requires a tight and sensitive collaboration with the hosts of the work. Therefore, today the need to leave a piece behind is written in the artist's contract right from the onset. This forms one of the multiple opportunities for artists to hook in early in their time in Huntly with some of the potential hosts of their work. No real value is expected from the work; that choice is left to the artist to suggest in negotiation with us. Sometimes they are valuable art works such as Kenny Hunter's sculpture *Where-in?/Where-At?* in the Brander library on the town square. Sometimes it is just memorabilia, such as two painted Matchbox cars at the local garage on Gordon Street as a reminder of Jelka Plate's boy-racer focused work *MONO*. Others can be public signs, like for example Anthony Schrag's WELCOME HOME sign at Huntly station, which has been produced by Scotrail in its own brand colours.

The Town Collection has various functions. First of all it adds to the visitor offer for people coming to Huntly. People with an interest in art or just a curiosity in a place (this is where the anthropological sensibility comes in) can walk around with their brochure and map in hand and self-guide themselves. This allows them to go to places that they would otherwise never visit, such as maybe the Café India, where the daring work of Priya Ravish Mera hangs, or the church

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<sup>72</sup> Wording on Deveron Projects website (with interactive map): <https://www.deveron-projects.com/town-collection/>; the print pdf map can be downloaded here: [https://www.deveron-projects.com/site\\_media/uploads/towncollectionmaponlinepdf.pdf](https://www.deveron-projects.com/site_media/uploads/towncollectionmaponlinepdf.pdf). (Accessed 6 January 2022).

corridors, which houses the musical scores of Huntly's composer Ronald Centre, unearthed by violinist Emily White. This to some extent also gives the opportunity for some small extra business. I myself have witnessed our former Creative Scotland arts officer buying a rug at the Carpet Shop on the Square, while trying to visit Hamish Fulton's teapot stain drawing. The Town Collection is also a great educational tool. We have many visits from art schools across Scotland who are often offered a tour on arrival. Also for our local Gordon Schools, the town collection offers a sheer endless resource, not only for art but also looking at history, music, politics or whatever subject matter the work provides. But above all the Town Collection maintains vital connections in the community with shop owners, ministers, Nursery/Health Centre/Scotrail/Townhall and other local workers.

Running the Town Collection can be wearing at times. It is rather labour-intensive to do it well - and it is never good enough when applying conventional/professional collection standards. Some hosts love their work and treasure it dearly, others have given it back to us. Some complain about it, but still hang on to it. Sometimes you come to see it and they refurbished the shop, and you may find it again in some basement. Two of the collection items<sup>73</sup> have gone missing for good. But all in all, the Town Collection is still a very worthwhile tool as a medium to connect with towns folk, as a way of installing community pride and a form of conversation between us the ANTHRO-Producers and the variety of hosts. As one of our interns once said to me: 'it's like the town itself, some people are happy, others are not'.

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<sup>73</sup> The first one was the highly loved and treasured Roadkill by David Blyth which had its home in Marshall Garage. There was a time where a lot of metal was stolen in the area (from churches, railway tracks etc) where this bronze work has gone missing. The other one was Roderick Buchanan's ARTcup football - signed by all the 26 artists who took part. This ironically was kept in the trophy cabinet of Huntly FC's VIP room. However, on one of our annual inspections it was gone.

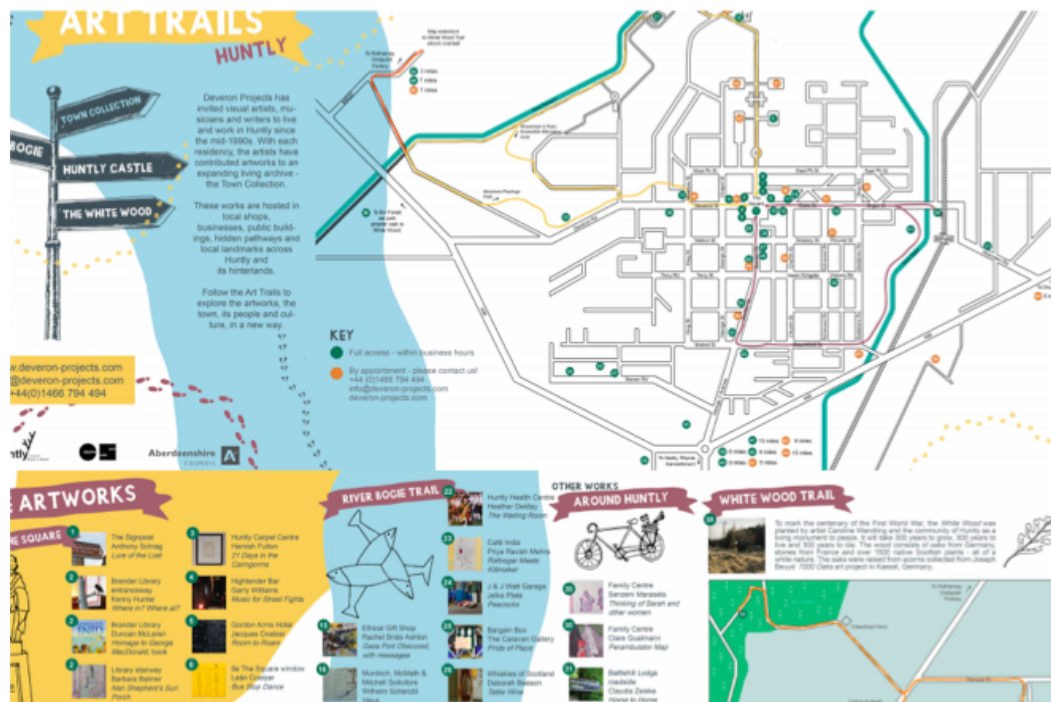


Figure 28: The Town Collection Map with suggested trails

The other, second main purpose of the HOME programme is linking the incoming artists in residence with the community. In a normal year, Deveron Projects was running between four to six (up to eight in some years) residency projects, for which the artists come for an average of three months at a time. Many of them stay in a block, but some come in and out. Artists that come from our area often stretch their project over the period of a year; see also [PRINCIPLE 6: Our Artists](#).

Through the HOME programme underpinned by the participatory fieldwork we bind them to our community. We introduce them to essential places and to people they could work with. This is where the 'songlines' come in, like directions of travel where the itinerant works out and finds their destination. When an artist arrives, often the first thing we take them to is the weekly Coffee Morning in the Stewarts Hall. This amazing institution is run every Saturday by another group, school or charity. It is booked out years in advance and brings together hundreds of people over a cup of coffee and an Aberdeenshire buttery<sup>74</sup> every week. Often we help out spontaneously with the serving or cleaning, as here it is where you can meet everyone.

<sup>74</sup> In Aberdeenshire they are called 'Rowies'; they are a fusion between a roll and a croissant and made with layers of pastry and butter or lard. <https://scottishscan.com/butteries-recipe>; accessed 15 July 2022

Next we set up a series of meetings well in advance of the arrival of the artist. Meaning they can hit the ground running. So, for example with the *White Wood* (Appendix 4) we started with introducing Caroline Wendling to Steve Brown a tree lover and retired forester, who now grows his own wood. We also set up a meeting with the forestry commission, connected her to the local crafters and negotiated a desk in the library. From here she could set up a mini tea-room to talk to people about their ideas around the Sound of Peace. We then connected her to the history teacher in the school, who was about to take a group to the battlefields in France and Belgium, adding to PRINCIPLE 4: Local+Global throughout the process. We also linked her through the Episcopalian Church group with people who for physical reasons could never visit the wood. Instead, they embroidered peace flags on white linen – one for each oak. PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Tactics means everybody must be able to get involved. All of those, forester, librarian, teacher, mister, crafter would have given a Friday Lunch talk at some point.

No opportunity must be dismissed. Let's say we are invited to a WRI meeting to talk about Deveron Projects, we take an artist along. I remember Jaak Coetzer and I judging dressed up bottles in tartan at the Largie<sup>75</sup> WRI. This may not directly relate to the artists' project, but meeting people at their own places, means next time they come to our projects, or we might be able to use their place for our events. This is really what PRINCIPLE 3: Town is the Venue is about. Facilitated through the HOME programme and our long-term commitment step by step, one by one, we gain the trust of people. We help them and next time they help us. It's a simple human gift exchange<sup>76</sup>.

Thinking of the various *Slow Marathon* Projects: when Mihret Kebede first came from Ethiopia, we set up weekly walking groups to help people to get fit. 5k, 7k, 10k, every week a bit longer, always looking for a new local place of interest en route. Then we linked her with the various activity groups following PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Tactics to make sure everybody could get involved. The local care home took on the challenge, as well as the primary school, our MSP and many other individuals. The Aberdeenshire Council Road Department worker offered a metre counter to measure stretches around our town. For example, walking 7 times around the town square added up to a mile. People could do this during

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<sup>75</sup> Largie is a hamlet ca 7 miles from Huntly. Deveron Projects geographic reach is the Gordon Schools catchment area.

<sup>76</sup> The notion of the gift has been extensively interrogated in anthropological discourse since Marcel Mauss' seminal essay 'The Gift' (Mauss 1925). Roger Sansi's book *Art, Anthropology and the Gift* expands on this concept (Sansi 2006).



their lunch time, training up for the big day, while keeping fit during their normal working hours. Others simply added their miles over the three months project period. To identify a marathon route can take many weeks and months of walking and re-walking the route. **PRINCIPLE 1: Time + Place** It has to be safe and interesting and add up to the full 42km no less, no more. This takes a lot of negotiations on the route with farmers and other people that live on the way. Rather than simply ask for permission, we try to get them involved - always with a good pinch of **PRINCIPLE 13: Hospitality Matters** in mind. One family set up a baking stall, a farmer showed off his cow stable, a woman living in a cottage on the Ba'Hill offered her loo, a musician played the saxophone, a local distillery manager offered whisky nosing and tasting and so on.

None of this could happen if we came in cold on the day. All of those people we bring with us all along, long before the artist visits the town. It takes a lot of dedicated interest in people that is only possible if you live and work here at the same time. Some may find this taxing, but this is where the anthropological sensibility and passion comes in. Only by being here, always having one's ear on the ground, whether at work or not, can we make those long-term personal connections. Those in turn allow us to develop sustainable ways of connecting by making step-by-step changes that lead to small transformations.

With May Murad and Rachel Ashton's (long before this became a ubiquitous form through Covid induced restrictions) digitally linked residence we connected them to a local amateur botanist, helping with identifying common flowers between Gaza and Huntly on the routes created. This led to a beautiful herbarium pamphlet. **PRINCIPLE 16: Making Visible** is important for prosperity, for researchers, for new team members, for artists to know what they let themselves in to. But also for the community members who got involved. Bringing both sides together in Arabic and English **PRINCIPLE 4: Local + Global** this was helped by Peter, a local man who lived a long time as a TEFL teacher in Palestine. We met him when he came for a Friday Lunch with his sister one day. Later we asked him to give a talk himself about his time in Ramallah. And now he helped us with translation - both during digital linking and the making of the pamphlet. The booklet, which is now framed, found its home in the Ethical gift shop as part of the Town Collection.

The route from Dufftown led over the border from Moray, a point where we set up discussion over the arbitrariness of borders. Like with all *Slow Marathons* many different residents on the route are involved often through offering

hospitality and/or talking points. A church group in Botriphnie based near here offered tea and cakes and showed the commonwealth war graves, two of them linking to soldiers fallen in WW1<sup>77</sup>. Priscilla Gordon-Duff - whom we met through a previous project led by Ross Sinclair inviting her to a lunch with people called Gordon only - facilitated a lot of these connections. Jim and Pippy McEwen who live at Audinachie Castle, showed us their walled garden, which featured ample botanical connections to the Middle East. Meanwhile off grid people living in Bin forest made a temporary tea room in their yurt, while passing the *White Wood*, artist Katie Johnston (who also was in residence at the time) offered tea from herbs on the route from the community crockery she made during her stay. **PRINCIPLE 13: Hospitality Matters** is in full swing when organising a Slow Marathon. There is no way we could do this through short artist's visits only.

In a small place like Huntly we would run the danger of 'using' the same people all the time. If we were in an urban place however, we could not access such a range of people from different ages and other backgrounds. Instead we would be bound by the demography of the area which might be wealthy or poor, suburbia, or an area full of tourists, or art lovers. Bringing people of all backgrounds together we firmly believe is the key to developing friendship through shared community in a Deweyan sense. Many funds today pocket people into 'hard to reach groups', but only working with those groups furthers isolation and compartmentalisation. On the other side of the spectrum we have relatively wealthy oil workers commuting to Aberdeen who are often rather isolated from the rest of the community. They may be able to offer other support from their knowledge, background and interest, but normally they are not 'targeted'. Slow Marathon is an excellent method of bringing such diverse people together through a walk and the many picnics and interest points on the way.

Iman Tajik's project was more difficult at first, when we realised that Covid regulations would not allow for our 'traditional' *Slow Marathon*. Following an online rethink, we came up with the idea to walk from Huntly around the world and back. Many local people got involved, doing the long walk alone, but also together. This created a sense of community through a specially set up webpage

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<sup>77</sup> The project indirectly linked with our WW1 commemorations that started with the White Wood Oaks and Amity project in 2014 and finished with this one hundred years after the end of the war in 2018. <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/search-results/?CemeteryExact=true&Cemetery=BOTRIPHNE%20PARISH%20CHURCHYARD>. (Accessed 4 December 2021).

and a dedicated facebook page<sup>78</sup> where people could post their daily walking stories, their sky images and other thoughts. Various activities were organised, such as sending flowers from the walks to the refugees detained in Dungavel removal centre and other such places. Pat Scott (also the farmer's wife above) from the Huntly Express was crucial here. Weekly she published the progress and told local folks where we got to: Istanbul, Teheran, Indonesia... Huntly of New Zealand at the other end of the world was half way point, the community there got also involved. **PRINCIPLE 4: Local + Global** is not only a mantra, but also an important method of installing community pride. I, in the meantime started my own personal *5 Mile Rules* project<sup>79</sup>, looking at new paths for people to walk within a 5 mile circuit of Huntly. *All under One Sky* made us all feel we are not alone in this, it made us part of one world. Where the virus knows no borders. But Huntly is the starting point, from where it all happens. At one point – when lockdown eased - we made a distance walk accumulating one marathon. Some 20 people, well distanced, with a specially designed mask walked 14 times around the town Square. Together they added another marathon or 26 miles to the distance around the world.



Figures 29 a/b: Socially distanced walk during *All Under One Sky* Project

a. Distancing defence flag walk developed by artist Norma Hunter

b. Group gathering for instructions to walk around Huntly Square

### Outcomes/Reflection

While our case examples below are of a more long-term nature, Deveron Projects has developed many projects that lasted around three months, with a clear beginning and end. The transformational legacy is therefore not the result of an ongoing project, but an accumulated range of ideas and thoughts that may

<sup>78</sup> The Slow Marathon: Under One Sky Facebook group rapidly gathered 650 members and is active till today. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/935350213595424>. (Accessed 2 June 2022).

<sup>79</sup> This project resulted in a bi-monthly column in the Huntly Express, which I am still running till today.

result in some visible change, or simply remain in people's memories. Always allowing people to look at new possibilities they add to the 'Gesamtkunstwerk', the 'library of ideas', or the 'meshwork' of what makes up Deveron Projects.

Many art organisations have a professional involved who links their artistic endeavours through what is often called audience development or organised under the heading of 'learning'<sup>80</sup>. Generally for them, the building is the starting point, from where the artist and the exhibition/project is scheduled. The learning programme is then developed from there. Meanwhile for us, the HOME programme is the heart throb of Deveron Projects, nested deeply in the inner workings of the organisation. It brings all the Principles together. While it is partly facilitated by the Arts and Community Worker, we are all in it through every day participatory observational involvement: **PRINCIPLE 8: Fieldwork** - i.e. listening to whomever we meet, going to community meetings, identifying local venues resources, going to local events, a.s.o. Then synthesising the listening to enable the mapping of ideas that lead to the projects and their topics and to the appointment of the artists. After this - like a donut - our work rounds back to the community enabling the transformative processes for us all.

As such – based on our continuous presence in town - we have arranged a *Perfect Fathers Day* (Anthony Schrag) looking at what family means today; created a *Community Crockery* (Katie Johnston) as a resource for everybody to borrow; *Health and Safety effects* (David Sherry) looked at how bureaucracy restricts society today; female identity (*Partnerlook!*); parenting (Nancy Mteki); historic connections of our missionaries (Sanaa Gateja/Xenzon Zniya from Uganda and Utopia Group from China); looked at friendship in the age of Facebook (Celia-Yunior); local growing (Joss Allan). See **Appendix 13 Project Grid** for much more. **PRINCIPLE 9: Our Projects** always have the concerns/needs of our community as the starting point. The HOME programme connects all those artists with the many different people, interests and professions in our town. This way the artist becomes like the butcher, the plumber, the teacher and the baker an important and integral – albeit short-term – part of the community **PRINCIPLE 5: ARTocracy**, while our role rests with the field research that lead to the projects and the linking of it all through our long-term connections with the place **PRINCIPLE 12: ANTHRO-Producer**.

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<sup>80</sup> Examples of this are the engagement programme of the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh: <https://www.fruitmarket.co.uk/learn/>; or BALTIC in Newcastle: <https://baltic.art/learn>. (accessed 29 May 2022).



The HOME programme is funded from Creative Scotland and Big Lottery as well as a number of smaller local funds that provide an operational budget. Those included in the past the Marr Area Partnership, Huntly Community Council, Aberdeenshire Mental Health fund. To achieve regular funding through social inclusion funds for this was made much easier after we changed our name from Deveron Arts to Deveron Project, meaning we can achieve sustainability for the programme through **PRINCIPLE 14: Sustainability - Matching Needs & Vision.**

### Appendix 3: Room to Roam (Case Study)

- a new brand for Huntly (2008)

Artist: Jaak Coetzer



Figure 30: Room to Roam launch at the Gordon Schools



Figure 31: *Room to Roam* road sign on A96 near Huntly roundabout

### The Why and the Task

Branding exercises to attract tourists and new people to towns and cities are common all over the UK and beyond. Often, these are expensive operations, employing a PR or design company, where a slogan or logo is created alongside a marketing plan. The brown sign at the entrance of our neighbouring town says: *Keith the Friendly Town*. The *Glasgow: Scotland with Style* brand was replaced by *People Make Glasgow HOME*. Recently I passed through Musselburgh near Edinburgh, which is called *The Honest Town*. Meanwhile Aberdeenshire brands itself from *Mountain to the Sea* (which arguably could be applied to most 'Shires' in Scotland). As a result of such an exercise, in the early 1990's Huntly was branded as 'Huntly the Family Town'. Many in Huntly however - we realised - felt that the town has much more to offer than being a good place for families to live in. The reality was that those who passed through with a family were disappointed that there were not more attractive, iconic play parks, those without a family did not feel it is for them in the first place, and locally it gave the place a rather negative connotation<sup>81</sup>.

Having decided to undertake a new branding exercise, the key question was what exactly is it that makes this space special for us? How do we then unearth the essence of Huntly's communal identity? And how can this be translated into a widely acceptable branding for all in the community? In applying **PRINCIPLE**

<sup>81</sup> I was told on a number of occasions, that colloquially, Huntly was branded by neighbouring towns the 'Incest Town' following the *Family Town* branding exercise.

9: Our Projects, we needed to pay close attention to how we jointly develop a sense of place and shape our environment, identity and collective future. It was important that there was wide community buy-in, so that people would be comfortable to live with the branding but also adopt it for their own purposes to promote our town. That it would be empowering for people to take pride in their place.

## The Processes

Huntly Development Trust (then called ATP<sup>82</sup>) approached Deveron Projects to collaborate in developing a new branding for the town based on its identity. To make sure that everybody is happy with the selection of the artist, we arranged for an international callout and invited a number of town stakeholders in the appointment process<sup>83</sup>. South African artist Jaak Coetzer applied next to a wide range of other artists. He was encouraged by Nuno Sacramento, who was our Shadow Curator at the time and who had undertaken a studio visit during a curatorial visit to the Southern African region. Jaak's conceptual approach fuses traditional and new media with social engagement being a key part of his practice. In Huntly he was selected for his clear understanding of the context and his bold and colourful design-driven and often risk taking ideas. He came to live and work in Huntly with his wife Lèan and small children Jan and Juliana who both attended the local primary school during their stay. **PRINCIPLE 13: Hospitality Matters** was vital here, to establish links with the schools from the onset.

A useful strategy was to blend into town life along with my whole family. Here the school and its associated networks were helpful. Following your advice I learnt that schools are very important hubs in rural communities. In years to come, I would employ this knowledge in other projects.

Jaak Coetzer<sup>84</sup>

Jaak as well as ourselves, we all were adamant that the branding should derive from Huntly specific characteristics. Applying **PRINCIPLE 2: Place-Specific** it had

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<sup>82</sup> ATP Aberdeen Town Partnership was set up by Aberdeenshire Council with Scottish Government finance to breathe new life into the town. After two years it has been replaced by the Huntly Development Trust, whose aim it is to create a resilient, enterprising community. Deveron Projects has been a long standing partner through multiple projects with HDT: <https://www.huntlydt.org/>. [Accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>83</sup> Les Allen, Area Manager/Aberdeenshire Council, Donald Boyd Director of Aberdeenshire Town Partnership/Huntly, Council Official, John Swan, Rector of Gordon Schools and myself made out the selection panel.

<sup>84</sup> Quote taken from a letter to Claudia Zeiske by Jaak Coetzer. See **Appendix 11: Conversations/Letters/Guestbook**.

to be sourced from its unique identity, history and environment in a constantly changing world. The project therefore explored how branding can change, reinforce or even influence a place's sense of identity, taking into account what we already have rather than explore what we could be through the application of **PRINCIPLE 10: By Leaves we Love?** Based on introductions by ourselves, he/we went on to research all facets of the town and its people through one-to-one meetings, community consultations and conversations at various social meetings, such as the monthly farmer's market and other public gatherings. **PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Tactics** were applied in full swing, bringing people together from different ages, communities and spheres of life.

Jaak Coetzer writes in the accompanying publication (Coetzer 2008):

'With the first impressions we embarked on an ambitious effort to engage with the community, a process thankfully accelerated by a very tight agenda of one-to-one meetings arranged for me with some colourful local personalities. We soon find ourselves in a hectic schedule of Huntly social events like going on rambles with the local walking society, chatting at charity coffee mornings, attending ceilidhs, folk evenings, quiz nights, council meetings, business association gatherings, church services, a local eco awareness campaign and the odd visit to the pub. We are warmly welcomed by most people we meet, even strangers on the street, especially after an introductory article on the front page of the local newspaper. But most sobering, the more people we meet from the town and district's different social spheres, the more apparent it becomes that it would be very presumptuous that one can come in from the cold, just like that, and think up an identity that would truly represent the abundant spectrum that describes the people of Huntly.'

No group was left out. Everybody had a chance to give their views about the good, the bad and the ugly of Huntly: school children, church groups, community council, Strathbogie Ramblers, care home residents, TESCO shoppers, Huntly Health Service workers – the list is too long to name – were invited through different creative methods to contribute. **PRINCIPLE 8: Fieldwork** was applied and the artist became like us part of the community: the butcher, the baker, the artist.

The fact that I (as part of DP) wasn't coming in cold certainly made my job much easier. Quickly learning how complicated small town politics can be, I guess this is a hugely important point for an arts organisation to behold: To find the balance between challenging the status quo and keeping trust intact.

Jaak Coetzer<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Quote taken from a letter to Claudia Zeiske by Jaak Coetzer. See [Appendix 11: Conversations/Letters/Guestbook](#).



Taking all this looking and listening into account **PRINCIPLE 8: Fieldwork**, Jaak in discussion with us, identified a number of elements that were characteristic of Huntly. The town had still many historic architectural references, counterbalanced by newer developments from the sixties onwards; work ranges from traditional farm workers to oil executives. Huntly has a very strong rural feel, surrounded by rolling hills with farmland with an abundance of space. **PRINCIPLE 2: Place Specific** threw up a range of things including music and poetry that play an important part in the town's socio-cultural life, he identified when looking deeply at what Huntly carries under its skin.

This last aspect became central to the project after discovering the link between George MacDonald<sup>86</sup> (a Victorian writer from Huntly) and The Waterboys (a contemporary Scottish pop band). Jaak decided to make *Room to Roam* (one of MacDonald's poems, that also was the title of a Waterboys' album) the main theme for the project and impending brand slogan. Jaak in his introduction to the Huntly Room-to-Roam booklet (Deveron Projects 2008) says:

'All those loose ends that have been forming in my head are neatly tied together by MacDonald's words: The open, real landscape, the space for individual identity and the sense of journeying towards a common destination'.

We invited the Waterboys' lead singer Mike Scott<sup>87</sup> to rehearse his tune with local musicians, singers and Huntly lovers - appropriating *Room to Roam* as Huntly's new anthem. Bringing Mike to the project was a little trick to bring many of Huntly's musical talents on board. Together they practised once a week, to get ready for the big launch day.

Next to the development of the *Room to Roam* anthem, Jaak also designed a new logo based on the traditional antler theme, and an updated coat of arms that was featured on brand merchandise such as mugs, t-shirts and stickers. The visual negotiation between the traditional antlers and a network of points (starting with the 'family' then expanding to community, geography, local politics and

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<sup>86</sup> George MacDonald was born in Huntly in 1824. He died in Bordighera/Italy in 1905. MacDonald was a writer known as a writer for his Christian and fantasy literature. His work influenced C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Much of his writing was based on childhood experiences in Huntly. He wrote the book *Phantastes* in 1958, which includes the poem *Room to Roam*.

<sup>87</sup> Mike Scott is the lead singer of the Scottish rock band The Waterboys and has recorded many albums and international hit singles. In 1990 he set the word of the poem *Room to Roam* to music, recording it as the title track of an album released that same year. In 2008 he gifted the song to the folk of Huntly. The reader can listen to the Huntly performance of the song here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_L5CSzcdudc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_L5CSzcdudc). (Accessed 22 May 2022).

people) became a play on the unique Scottish Everyman's Right to wander free, granted under Scottish law of 'right to roam'.<sup>88</sup>

## Room to Roam

An identity for Huntly

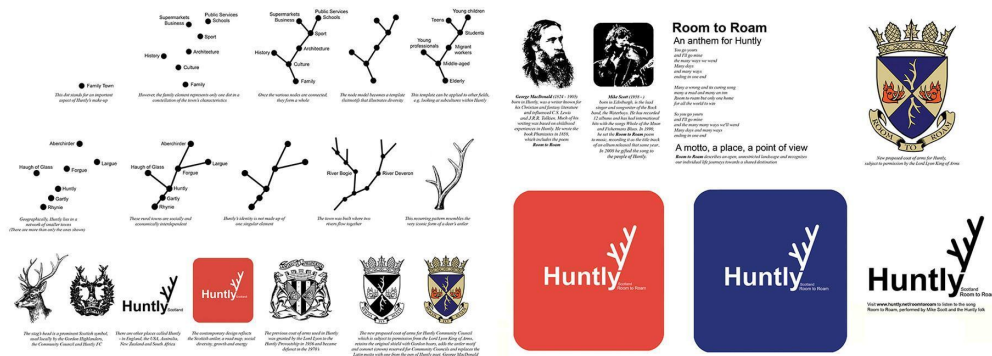


Figure 32: Framed Poster of *Room to Roam* process; in 80 places around town

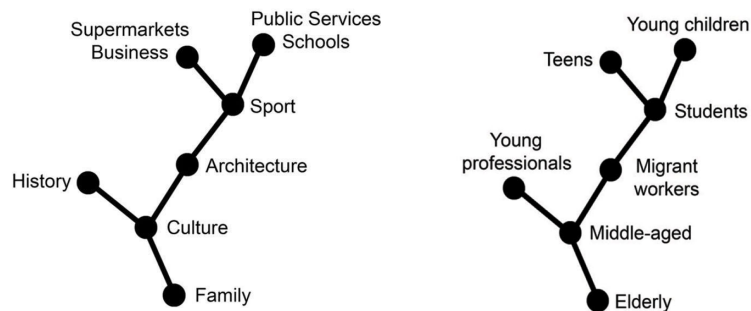


Figure 33 a and b: Expanded Graphs starting with Family

Our starting point was that Huntly's identity is not made up of one singular element. Once the various nodes are connected, they form a whole branch. The template could be applied to other fields, e.g. looking at subcultures within Huntly: architecture, sport, culture... But also the different kinds of people: young people, older people, single folks, migrants... They all are important, beyond the idea and concept of the family, which in our Geddesian way of thinking translates into community.

<sup>88</sup> Scotland's public access legislation to the outdoors has seen a transformation under the Scottish Parliament, with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 establishing a statutory framework of public access rights to most land and inland water. Guidance on these responsibilities is set out in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/act-and-access-code/land-reform-act/land-reform-act-legal>. (Accessed 22 May 2022).

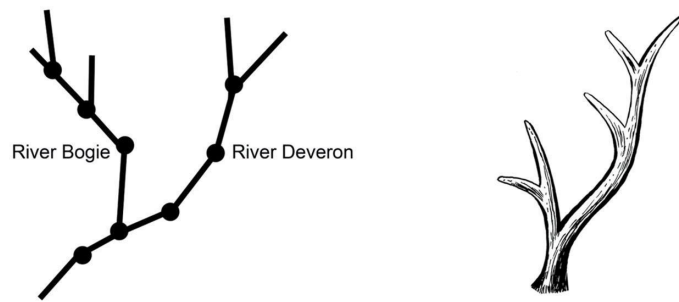


Figure 34: Expanded Graphs with Rivers

Showing that the town is also rooted geographically - built where the two rivers – the Bogie and the Deveron - flow together.

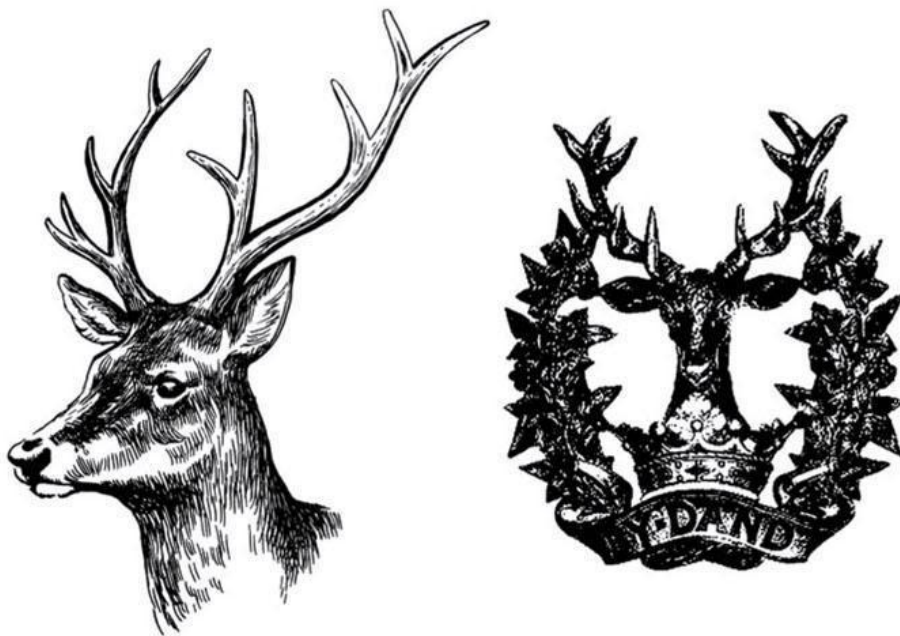


Figure 35: Deer Antlers and Bydand Emblem

The recurring pattern resembles the iconic deer's antler, which featured in the The Gordon Highlanders regiment (who have their home in Huntly) 'Bydand' motto (meaning in Doric 'to stand fast and endure').



Figure 36: New Huntly Logo

The contemporary new design created by the artist reflects the Scottish antler, a road map, social diversity, growth and energy within our town.

It would be wrong to pretend that all this listening, looking and talking always comes easy. It can take a long time and many tricks to gain trust among some town folks. 'Of course it is not all sweetness and light in Huntly, or in life in general. *Room to Roam* acknowledges this and offers hope and redemption in the telling phrase. '*Many a wrong and its curing song, many a road and many an inn*' says Donald Boyd, Director of Huntly Development Trust (Boyd 2008).

The then chairperson of the Huntly Community Council for example, was somewhat suspicious all along the project. This was down to the *Room to Room* choir's appearance at an annual music festival, which she organised with great passion. There was a worry that internationally renowned musician Mike Scott would steal the show from the otherwise homegrown performers of the day.



While this resentment persevered for some time, putting a spanner into the works, it was resolved in the Community Council (see photo on Figure 67) taking over the code of arms and therewith adopting the motto, the logo and the anthem with the same passion as the festival.

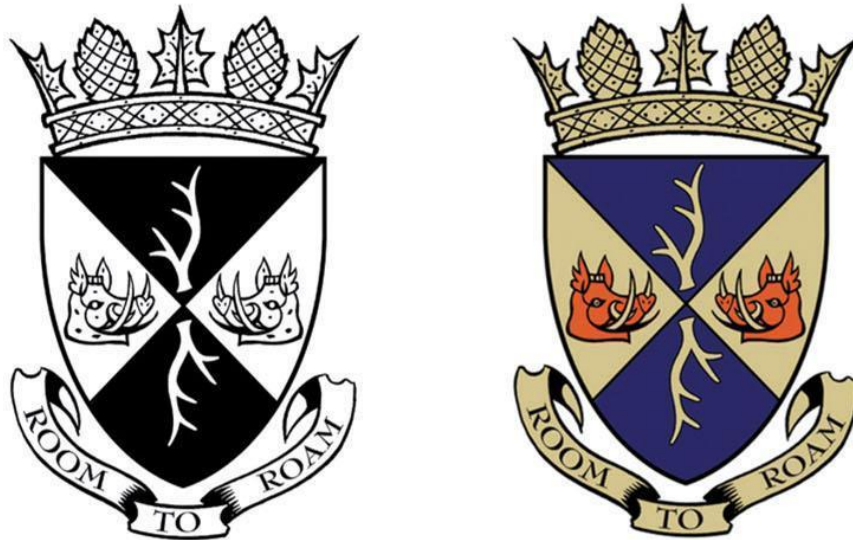


Figure 37: Old and new Coat of Arms

The previous coat of arms used in Huntly was granted by the Lord Lyon to the Huntly Provostship in 1936 and became defunct in the 1970's when the local councils were introduced (then Gordon District as part of Grampian Region; since 1996 Aberdeenshire Council). The new coat of arms for Huntly Community council was inaugurated by the Lord Lyon King of Arms,. It retains the original shield with Gordon boars, adds the antler motif and coronet (crown) reserved for Community Councils and replaces the Latin motto with one from the pen of Huntly poet George MacDonald.

### **The Outcome(s)**

*Room to Roam* applied this right and opportunity to roam in both, a physical/geographical as well as in an emotional/intellectual sense.

Both logo and anthem were first presented and publicly performed by the newly formed *Room to Roam* Choir at the annual 'Music on the Square' festival. Since then the town has adopted the anthem and logo within their coat of arms. The anthem is sung at important community events, such as the annual music festival, the school prize giving etc.

The slogan/logo can be seen on/in/at many places, most prominently on the large-scale brown road signs when entering the town from both ends of the A96

trunk road. It has also provided popular merchandise including t-shirts and enamel camping mugs. The *Room to Roam* process poster today hangs framed in around 80 offices, institutions, shops and other public places. This, and a small booklet with texts by Donald Boyd (then: Huntly Town Coordinator, now: Director Huntly Development Trust), Jaak Coetzer, Mike Scott and myself ensured **PRINCIPLE 16: Making Visible** through documentation of the project. The process of how we arrived at the town branding has been highlighted at many other national platforms such as Scotland's Town Partnership. However, I am not aware of anybody adopting the approach till to date.

Important for us was celebrating on various levels. A *Room to Roam* ceilidh, with a specially created new set, which towns folk - including all the pupils - had to learn took place in the Gordon Schools. The coat of arms was inaugurated with a great community feast by the Lord Lyon from Edinburgh Castle. It is now prominently hanging above the stage on Huntly's Stewarts Hall forming part of Deveron Projects' town collection.



Figure 38: *Room to Roam* Choir  
(with Mike Scott at front; Jaak Coetzer at back)

## Reflection

*Room to Roam* was funded by the Aberdeenshire Town Partnership and developed in close collaboration with the Huntly Development Trust, the Huntly and District Tourism Action Group, the Huntly Community Council and numerous other local partners. The project forms a great example on how to match opportunities with artistic vision, explained through **PRINCIPLE 14: Sustainability - matching Needs & Vision**.

By the time Jaak Coetzer had come to Huntly to co-create a new town branding, we had already been working here for over 10 years. This timespan allowed us to develop confidence within the community to trust us with both money and faith to undertake a job that has to have a lot of people's buy-in. Clearly, without our continuous presence in the town, it would have been very difficult for the artist to make meaningful connections with such a wide range of community members and stakeholders.

But I remember vividly the day - after about a month into the residency - when we had scheduled a review. Jaak, me and my then rather small team and Donald Boyd the then Town Coordinator got together to discuss progress and the way ahead. 'Claudia, Donald' Jaak kicked off the meeting 'I am afraid, there is nothing special about your town...' Donald and I looked at each other in fear. What about all this money that we give to the artist? What if we come up with no solution? What will people think? '...but this is what is special: you have *Room to Roam*.' is what he said, explaining the link to George MacDonald's poem. 'You can do what you like here'.

After the initial shock, we soon turned in love with the new idea for our town branding and identity. Donald Boyd (Boyd 2008) writes:

'To me, 'Room to Roam' describes a positive state of mind. 'Room to Roam' is about being confident in yourself, your background and what you choose to do in life, whilst being tolerant and respectful of the choices and views of others. Room to Roam acknowledges and welcomes diversity. 'Room to Roam' encourages us to explore places and ideas to fulfil our own potential. 'Room to Roam' is about keeping an open and inquisitive mind as we make our way through life. Hence, although written 150 years ago, George MacDonald's Room to Roam is very much a poem for our time. In an ever-shrinking world where people of different nations, cultures and faiths increasingly come into contact with each other, there is an urgent need for Room to Roam spirit.'

Interesting to note is that the code of arms celebrations were organised completely independently by the Huntly Community Council. While I guided the

design process with Jaak and Charles Burnett, Esq. (the Ross Herald<sup>89</sup>) and brought the community council officials in touch with the relevant officials from Edinburgh Castle, in the end we at Deveron Projects were just punters to the spectacle like everybody else. An important aspect to follow from this process is to have the ability to let loose. A lot of art is bound up with taking credit. But when your work aims to be transformative, enabling true change in the community, one needs to give up ownership. It can be painful at times, but once we recognise this as the true success, then it is very rewarding.

The road signs on the A96 trunk road, the ca 80 framed posters all over town offices and the code of arms in the Stewarts Hall form together part of the Town Collection. There is also still the blackboard with the song in the Gordon Arms Hotel, where the choir practised and produced the film which was later purchased by Aberdeen Art Gallery. One day it had disappeared from the foyer at the reception. But it was found again in the basement, restored by the new owners and put back in a prominent place.

What is particularly noteworthy about this 'letting loose' exemplified through the widely adopted *Room to Roam* project and brand, is that the wording has taken on many directions. Today you find a 'Room to Run'<sup>90</sup> half marathon event, a 'Room to Thrive' community regeneration strategy<sup>91</sup>, a 'Room to Knit' group and many more. The logo is also now to be found on the recently introduced 'Experience Huntly' app<sup>92</sup>. Those long-term adaptations have reached far beyond our initial intentions to develop a widely accepted brand. Sometimes we look at it from afar with a cringe, but most of the time with some little pride.

It is likely that this project gave Deveron Projects and Huntly the credentials for the Creative Place awards<sup>93</sup>, which in turn gave me the 'Citizen of the Year' accolade, with my name now firmly engraved in golden letters in the Steward town hall's entrance board. While at first being rather ambivalent if not embarrassed about this honour - it gave me many years of ongoing community trust and buy-in.

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<sup>89</sup> Ross Herald of Arms Extraordinary is a Scottish herald of arms Extraordinary of the Court of the Lord Lyon. See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ross\\_Herald](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ross_Herald). (Accessed 21 May 2022)

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.roomtorun.uk/>. (Accessed 21 May 2022)

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.huntly.town/2018-strategy>. (Accessed March 2022)

<sup>92</sup> <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/experience-huntly/id1536747043>. (Accessed 4 March 2022)

<sup>93</sup> Issued by Creative Scotland, Huntly through the work of Deveron Projects won in 2012 the Special Award and in 2013 the main Creative Place Award for 'the international creative links and artistic community initiatives'. <https://www.creativescotland.com/what-we-do/latest-news/archive/2013/01/winners-of-the-2013-creative-place-awards-announced>; (Accessed 22 May 2022)



We continued to work with Jaak Coetzer on other projects. Most importantly around articulating the vision building of our own organisation through ARTocracy and the many other intertwined concepts, now explained through the 16 Principles. Thanks to an intensive time with Jaak, which allowed me to be in residence with him in a small town in the Cape, we were able to illustrate the Deveron Projects brochure. A lot of its content forms the basis of this thesis.<sup>94</sup>

# Room to Roam

## An anthem for Huntly

*You go yours  
and I'll go mine  
the many ways we wend  
Many days  
and many ways  
ending in one end*

*Many a wrong and its curing song  
many a road and many an inn  
Room to roam but only one home  
for all the world to win*

*So you go yours  
and I'll go mine  
and the many many ways we'll wend  
Many days and many ways  
ending in one end*

Figure 39: Room to Roam song (text)

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<sup>94</sup> The brochure design also is reflected in the basic layout of the Deveron Projects website. The brochure can be presented on request.

#### **Appendix 4: White Wood (Case Study)** a living monument to peace (2014/15-ongoing)

Artist: Caroline Wendling



Figure 40: White Wood Planting

Figure 41: White Wood Opening

#### **The Why and the Task**

During the period of 2014-2018, Britain as well as other European countries commemorated WW1. This manifested itself through multiple large-scale research sponsored and commissioned through such bodies as the Heritage Lottery Fund or the Imperial War Museum. It also triggered artistic interventions, most notably Paul Cummins' *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, which saw the moat of the Tower of London filled with thousands of ceramic poppies.

As the home of the Gordon Highlanders regiment, Huntly has a deep connection with the military, manifested in its iconic castle on one end and the war memorial at the other end of Castle Avenue. It provides us with a socio-historic communal setting, into which we can feed through **PRINCIPLE 2: Place-Specific** in multi-dimensional ways.

Coming from Germany, a country twice at war with Britain in the last century, I for a long time wanted to identify ways of coming together by inviting nations – once enemies - to the table.

So I asked myself - What can be my personal contribution to celebrate peace and friendship between nations once at war? How can we mark the WW1 centenary respectfully, while questioning notions of 'Great War'? How can we think about a sustainable, peaceful future, while dutifully remembering our

past? What is the role of ecology and art in creating sustainable peace? How can we through **PRINCIPLE 12: ANTHRO-Producer** make a contribution to this difficult dialogue through art, bringing communities from different sides of the debate together?

### **The Processes**

In the summer of 2012, I visited Documenta13 in Kassel with US curator Mary Jane Jacob. One morning we took a break from the art circus and wandered around the once war torn city. I always wanted to see and experience one of my most admired art works, 7000 Oaks initiated by artist Joseph Beuys. What we found was the oaks, today well integrated in the city both ecologically as well as socially. 'Beuys' combined artistic, social and ecological idea of the work is insoluble and omni-visible till today '(Stockmeier 2018, p.8).

During our visit we saw that many of the oaks had produced offspring in the 30 years since the first planting. So we collected a bag full of the acorns that had spread over the town's pavement.

On return we planted them in the Brander garden in the centre of Huntly. Those emerged as small oak saplings the following spring. **PRINCIPLE 10: By Leaves we Love**

We started our project in autumn 2014, which saw the UK reflecting through massive commemoration parades and a plenty of poppies. The word 'hero' was abundant. But what about the others? The soldiers and their families? Those who died? and those who objected? How can **PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Tactics** be applied to such a complex project that brings multiple layers of people, interests, histories and nations together grounded in ecologically sustainable reinvestment in the world around us.

To start with, we organised *Oaks & Amity*, an international artist call-out. Realising that ecological and peace concerns are inextricably linked, our aim was to find an artist who could sensitively identify ways in collaboration with us of contributing to the WW1 commemorations, while making some meaningful use of the Beuys oak saplings. The selection group included Steve Brown, an experienced local forester, to assure the appropriate handling of the trees; and Christine Sell, a local primary school teacher to assure the future integration of the project into the community. Artist Caroline Wendling, originally from Lorraine/Lothringen in France (which was part of Germany before WW1)

proposed to create a wood as a site of reflection and living memory to peace. To start with, she came for a period of time, to research the practicalities of her proposal and in particular the stories of Huntly's conscientious objectors (COs or consbies). When inviting an artist that we don't know well for an important long-lasting project it is vital to anticipate and eliminate any risks attached. Applying **PRINCIPLE 6: Our Artists** we need to ask ourselves, how will they get on in the community? How will the people get on with them? Allowing the artist to spend some time to research their ideas and get to know the place and its people illuminates the potential pitfalls or if need allows each side to pull out before it is too late.

Only when all the loose ends - ecological/artistic/social/political - were tied up, we committed to this long-term project together.

To gain community buy in, the planting project was accompanied by a wide range of workshops, talks, walking actions and communal meals, often facilitated through one of us, or in collaboration with the Art and Community Worker<sup>95</sup> through the HOME programme. There were so many elements to consider: the site, the oaks, the town's heritage, the sustainability, the long-term management, the learning, the international aspects and the different communities in our community. Next to numerous other events, Caroline with an invested school teacher identified (through research at the Kew National Archive) all the houses in Huntly where those conscripts who never came back lived. Almost running the gauntlet, we undertook a community walk around the town walking from house to house putting little posies of white oak leaves into their postbox as a way of commemorating those individuals. One small posy was taken to the sea of plastic poppy wreaths by an 'unknown member' at the war memorial on Remembrance Day 2014, a day full of pipe band, church, military, scouts and others paying their tribute. The posy created a discussion point till today.

'Working with you and DP was a learning curve. You got me to think big: international, but also small: local. I think that way of working is very relevant in a rural place. I have worked with many rural organisations. They all want to do the 'International' thing and forget the richness of what lies near them. During my residencies at DP, I have met so many people in their kitchen! More brilliant minds than what I meet in Cambridge or London. That does say something about the work of the director (your work) and DP pull. I have enjoyed the diversity of the voices and the far-reaching work you do. I have admired how you draw on the local talents and richness and how over the years you gave chances to people.

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<sup>95</sup> Rachael Disbury was the Art and Community Worker at the time.



Chances to make work but also chances to be and have a curatorial framework with the critique necessary to the development of the artist.'

Caroline Wendling, Letter to Claudia Zeiske, March 2022

To identify an appropriate site for the peace wood, we worked with the Forestry Commission and Steve the forester and tree lover, highly respected in our community. We looked at many different sites and in the end settled on a sunny spot – once used for growing flax for Huntly's linen industry - at the edge of the Bin Forest, easily to be reached by foot from the town, a 'found' space that links with **PRINCIPLE 3: Town is the Venue** in the most appropriate way. For the oaks to mature it became clear, they needed other shorter-lived companions. Referencing Beuys' spiritual interest in the number 7, we decided on planting  $7 \times 7 = 49$  oaklings in spiralling circles together with some other 1700 native trees, shrubs and wild flowers. All of them are displaying an element of white, the colour that often references notions of peace (e.g. flags of surrender, white feather) to foster our **PRINCIPLE 10: By Leaves we Love** of working sustainably within our environment.

The planting of the *White Wood* took place with over 150 community members. School children and ex-army people, office workers and ecologists, members from our just arrived Syrian New Scots community and many others from our town, those that opposed the military and those that have deep connections with it - they all took part in their very own way. **PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonics Tactics** was in full swing with so many hands, so many voices, so many ideas contributing. In Huntly alone some 180 people died in the 'Great War'. But there were also some – we found the record of three, rarely spoken about - conscientious objectors. The stories of those were unearthed through the project's multiple events, workshops and discussions in the run up to the planting when the White Feather became our Red Poppy.

Complex projects like this are never easy and are prone to some hiccups. One of the stresses was related to the many different constraints and rules by the Forestry Commission. Just a week before the planting, they almost pulled out, as the stones that arrived from France were some 10cm wider than originally stipulated. A lot of combined diplomacy and charm coming from both Steve and Caroline persuaded them round in the end and the planting could go ahead with a management plan for the first 10 years. Another local upset was with the history teacher. A group of pupils from our Gordon Schools has travelled to France and Belgium that spring to visit the battlefields of WW1. Caroline had

arranged that they would pick up a pebble stone each from the Lochnagar Crater<sup>96</sup>, to be placed with the oaks. This all worked well, the visit, the collecting of the stones, and their planting. But then the Huntly Express only reported about the large stones coming from France. This upset the history teacher so much that he wanted to pull out from the opening ceremony. Only when we managed to bring in BBC television who interviewed the children, all of this was forgotten and everyone took part in the celebrations.

## The Outcome

Linking with other European communities, the *White Wood* was created with oaks from Germany, stones from France and Scottish soil which pays tribute to our **PRINCIPLE 4: Local + Global**. Joseph Beuys paired black basalt stones with each oak, which - with time - would slowly sink into the ground. Caroline by contrast with the help of some local strong men set white stones taken from the Somme/Lorraine area deep in the soil next to the oaks. Only in about 300 years, when the oaks mature, will they slowly push up the stones, and the artwork will be fully visible in its form.

As the oaks take 1000 years to grow, mature and die, the legacy of the wood will greatly surpass us and any future we can imagine today. The *White Wood* is therefore also a deeply ecological project that challenges our ability to think sustainably especially with respect to art. Mary Jane Jacob comments on developing woods through art: 'The duration required to grow a forest suggests it is worth investing in the future, expressing the hope that humanity will survive another hundred years and more, while satisfying our longing to communicate beyond our allotted time' (Jacob 2018 p.44).

## Reflection

*White Wood* has been funded partly by our core funding from Creative Scotland and was match funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and environment related grants from Aberdeenshire Council, Forestry Commission Scotland and Grow Wild **PRINCIPLE 14: Sustainability - Matching Needs and Vision**.

Following the planting, the 'Friends of the *White Wood*' have been formed to look after the wood and its future to ensure that it will survive ecologically, artistically

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<sup>96</sup> Lochnagar Crater is based in the Somme area in France. More on: <https://lochnagarcrafter.org/>. (Accessed 17 May 2022).

and socially, which relates to our **PRINCIPLE 5: ARTocracy**, allowing all people to be creative, caring and responsible for their place. This set-up provides a long-term continuity and buy-in, long beyond our and the artists' ability to commit. Today, if a white feather lies next to the poppy wreaths in November at the war memorial, this is not a strange feature in Huntly, a town with a strong military background. It allows people to think of all those who have suffered the 'Great War', including those that opposed it. As a site of contemplation the *White Wood* has found its place in the fabric of the town, most directly observable when during recent war beginnings in Eastern Europe, the wood was visited for a spontaneous vigil by locals hoping on the day of the onset of the war in the hope for peace to come.

Growing trees facilitated through an art project is of course not unique. Deveron Projects itself has engaged in other tree planting actions. To name are in particular Future Fruit, a community orchard facilitated through Geddesian ideas by artist couple Jonathan Baxter and Sarah Gittins. Another project is the *Brexit Tree*, facilitated with Berlin based artist Clemens Wilhelm, for which a Weeping Willow was planted with the Huntly community on the day that Britain left the European Union. Controversial from the onset, it forms an opportunity for reflection, discussion and contemplation on notions of nationalism, imperialism and borders.

Although also taken from Beuys' Kassel acorns, a very different long-term project is Ackroyd and Harvey's *Beuys' Acorns*. The saplings have been taken on road tours around French and British Galleries, including the Royal Academy of Arts, Southbank Centre and many more. Last year 100 of the young trees were installed in the TATE modern courtyard<sup>97</sup>. The motivation for such planting is very different from Caroline Wendling's project: the trees spending their lives in pots serve their existence as aesthetic discussion points in gallery settings. Unlike the White Wood, little is known where their life expectancy ends.

Other art woods to name are in particular Agnes Denes' gigantic *Tree Mountain* planted in a gravel pit near Helsinki, which was commissioned as Finland's contribution to the Rio Earth Summit<sup>98</sup>.

Also Katie Patterson's *Framtidsbiblioteket/Future Library* project<sup>99</sup> near Oslo, which started in 2014 and aims to collect annually one new writing by an author

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<sup>97</sup> For a timeline of the different gallery displays: <https://www.ackroydandharvey.com/beuys-acorns-timeline-2007-ongoing/>. (Accessed 17 May 2022).

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/works4.html>, 1992-96 (Accessed 4 May 2022).

for one centenary. The thousand specially planted trees will provide the paper for the 100 manuscripts in 2114. What we need to question however in both those large-scale projects is the involvement and long-term commitment of the constituent communities where they are based.

What distinguishes the *White Wood* from those monumental works, is the bringing of peace and ecology together through a project of endurance at heart. As Alan MacPherson commented in the *White Wood* book: 'Rather than elevate the apparent tensions Caroline's work speaks instead to an awareness of the fragility of peace, and the complexity inherent in achieving and sustaining it' (McPherson 2016, p. 25). 'It is a statement in the future perfect, to a future to come: "the wood will be" as Beuys remarked, to plant trees that create a better environment beyond the planter's lifetime is none other than an act of love' (MacPherson 2016, p.30). Personally I see it as both, an act of love to our community and an act of love of the community to future generations, both here in Huntly and elsewhere in the world where peace is undermined.

**PRINCIPLE 16: Making Visible** - the project was documented through a book which included a conversation between myself and Caroline Wendling and essays by Lottie Poulet, local archaeologist Colin Shephard and art writer Alan McPherson next to imagery. To safeguard the artistic integrity of the project, *Oaks & Amity/White Wood* was accompanied by Shadow Curator Lottie Poulet<sup>100</sup> who kept a critical eye on our way of working **PRINCIPLE 12: ANTHRO-Producer**.

<https://www.deveron-projects.com/caroline-wendling/>

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<sup>99</sup> <https://www.futurelibrary.no/>, 2014- ongoing. (Accessed 4 May 2022).

<sup>100</sup> Lottie worked at the time at Wysing Arts in Cambridgeshire where Caroline Wendling had her studio.





Figure 42: 7000 Oaks Planting in Kassel

Joseph Beuys' planting the first of 7000 oaks with the community of Kassel/Germany. Image taken from: <https://allartisquiteuseful.wordpress.com/2012/10/02/jospeh-beuys-7000-oaks/>. (Accessed 18 April 2022).

## **Appendix 5: Slow Marathon (Case Study)**

annual walking marathon, arranged around political themes

(2012-2021)

Artists: Mihret Kebede, May Murad/Rachel Ashton, Iman Tajik

### **Background/Walking Institute**

Deveron Projects has a long-lasting track record of integrating walking as a creative method for bringing people together. A lot of this is grounded in my own passion for walking. Walking and the outdoors have given me life-long physical as well as mental strength through ever renewed inspiration and friendships combined with creative methods of exploring places. I am a qualified walking leader with a keen interest to introduce and encourage others to come and see what their locality and the wider world has to offer above and under its surface. Over the past 10 years I have developed a special interest in personal pilgrimages that link places important to ourselves with political, historic or anecdotal sites as well as art and creative intentions. My specific interest relates to path mapping and interpretation from a variety of political, social, historic and environmental angles.

Enthusiasm for this started in my late teens when I crossed the Alps from Bavaria to Venice with only a tent in my rucksack. Since then I criss-crossed on foot in many places, near and far, ranging from the Atlas mountains to the contested Tigray Hills in Ethiopia; from the disputed olive tree terraces around Ramallah to the now non-permissible Sinai desert. However, at the same time I thrive on discovering my own very turf. I bagged all the munros<sup>101</sup> in Scotland and during the Covid restrictions, I made it my task to walk every single path within 5 miles of my house, which led to a long-running walking column in the Huntly Express.

Peace, borders and human rights play an important part in establishing my personal walks. 2013 saw me walking along the contested Uganda-Congo border in the Rwenzori Mountains in the footsteps of Alexander McKay a Scottish missionary, originally from Rhynie near Huntly. This led to a return walk in collaboration with Ugandan artist Sanaa Gateja, bringing the beliefs back

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<sup>101</sup> Mountains in Scotland over 3000 feet in height

home over the Aberdeenshire hills. In 2018 I walked the Sentiero della Pace – the much fought over WW1 border between Austria and the Italian dolomites. In 2019 I undertook a three-country peace related walk in the ‘Accursed Mountains’ of Albania/Montenegro/Kosovo.

My most significant walking project so far was *Home to Home*, a Brexit-considered 1800km+/90day walk linking my hometown of Huntly in Aberdeenshire with my childhood place near Munich where my mother still lives (2017) in a quest of what home means to me now.

Back in 2012 we established The Walking Institute, which ‘explores, researches and celebrates the human pace. It does this by bringing walking activities together with arts and other cultural disciplines and people from all walks of life’<sup>102</sup>. The Walking Institute’s activities range from short thematic walks in our vicinity to long-distance walks, such as *The Lure of the Lost*, a walk from Huntly to Venice by artist Anthony Schrag questioning why Venice/the art world is still important to us. Instead of performative action it focuses on how artists can engage communities in the practice of walking through social engagement and community collaboration that inform different project themes. ‘Through the local act of walking’ Blake Morris writes, ‘the Walking Institute works to make visible the relationship between the rural space of Huntly and the larger global landscape. In doing so, it creates new paths in, around, and out of Huntly and expands beyond the confines of the town to create new links, both physical and imaginary, to a broad global community’ (Morris: 2020, page 107). Walking events of all sorts are today firmly nested in Deveron Projects’ ongoing thematic programme - **PRINCIPLE 9: Our Projects**.

## **The Task**

In 2011 I was persuaded to undertake a marathon (in Berlin). As I don’t like running, I decided to join the power-walkers. Managing a marathon I experienced as an empowering feeling. However, at the same time I experienced this day as one of the most estranged, capitalist and senseless thing I had ever done. Walking among some other 40000 runners (+4000 walkers), nobody talking to you all day is boring, frustrating and alienating. After about two thirds of the course, I started overtaking the slower runners, many of them totally exhausted.

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<sup>102</sup> <https://www.deveron-projects.com/the-walking-institute/>. (Accessed 12 November 2021)

What were they competing for? Against whom? Just against themselves? With those questions in my head is how the idea of Slow Marathon was born.

As a reaction to the increasing need for people to compete against each other or even against themselves, manifested through the intensifying industry of competitive outdoor sporting events, my idea was to establish a marathon length long-distance round walk for Huntly. No time keeping, no pressure to win with mental and physical health in mind the slowest of them all gets the medal  
**PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Tactics.**

The questions we asked us are: How can appreciation and curiosity of one's place be brought together with mental and physical health? How can we bring people together without competing against each other? How can personal achievement be matched with a mindful lifestyle for people and the planet? How can we reach people within our catchment area who are based in very remote hinterlands? How can walking as a cultural practice contribute to our project themes? For the case examples below: What is the role of borders in walking as political activism? **PRINCIPLE 5: ARTocracy** applies throughout by opening new possibilities for lasting friendships.

### **The Processes/Outcomes**

People liked walking in and around Huntly, but with the A96 trunk road bordering the town, it quickly felt like a dead end. This is where we could help with mapping new routes that lead not only around but also to the town; adhering to **PRINCIPLE 2: Place-Specific**, environmental, social and political.

Each of the Slow Marathons we created had a political theme, which was curated through the interventions en route, and a discussion event the day before or after the walk.

One of the themes we explored on three of those occasions rested around borders and migration.

#### Shoelace Slow Marathon

<https://www.deveron-projects.com/mihret-kebede/>

The first one was with Addis Ababa based artist Mihret Kebede, who I met when travelling round Ethiopia to find the right artist for this marathon project. Ethiopia is well-known for its marathon runners and Mihret had a walking practice



involving shoe laces. Her idea was to walk to Huntly from her Addis home, but border restrictions as well as environmental hazards would prevent this idea. To walk the 5850 miles, she needed 258 people to do a marathon each. On arrival in Huntly it became quickly clear that there is too little time to train people up in the short 3-month residency framework.

It soon became obvious that we don't have enough people in our town that could do the whole 42k in a day, so we gave folks three months to donate miles, which were logged on our website. This way everybody could take part. The primary school accumulated 3 marathons, in the local care home people walked daily round their room often with zimmer frames, accumulating to one marathon between them. Some people walked 7 times around the square to reach a mile; others collected them on their evening walks. **PRINCIPLE 7: Polyphonic Tactics** ensured that all got involved. On the day itself, about 100 people turned up to do the newly created walk. The same weekend another 100 people connected to the Huntly walkers through swapped shoelaces, in Addis Ababa, which gave Mihret totalling 16960 miles - enough to 'walk' back home.

The locally omnipresently known vernacular poem – formed the template for the 42k route encompassing the three hills that circumnavigate the town.

***The Ba'Hill, The Battlehill and the Bin***  
***they a' form a circle***  
***and Huntly lies within***

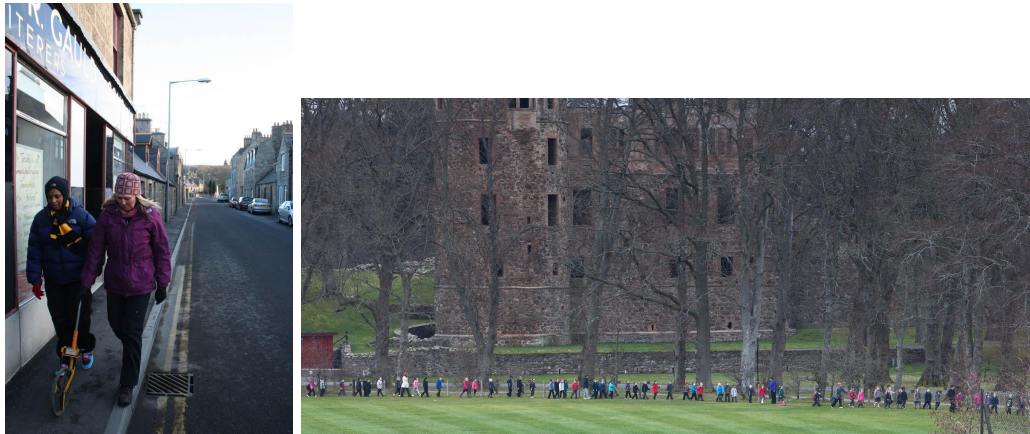


Figure 43: Mihret Kebede measuring town with Art Worker Norma Hunter

Figure 44: Slow Marathon training (primary school)

This Slow Marathon linked to the contemporary context in the lead-up to the 2012 London Olympics, based on Mihret's own practices (the shoe laces, her interest in borders and boundaries and her home in Ethiopia). 'Akin to the objects of relational aesthetics the shoelaces functioned as vehicles of relation between participants and created a physical connection between the two sets of walkers' says Blake Morris in his Slow Marathon chapter of his *Walking Networks* book (Morris 2020. p. 109). Kebede, he goes on linked 'global spaces for a new geographical imagery and highlights the distance, interrelatedness, and differing mobilities of residents within those global populations. It embraces international and intercultural exchange while also bringing attention to the structures that control the conditions of mobility and tensions around freedom of movement' (Morris 2020. p. 111) **PRINCIPLE 4: Local + Global.**

Internationally renowned curator Tessa Jackson who worked at the time for INIVA/Institute of International Visual Arts, was Shadow Curator for the first edition of Slow Marathon (**PRINCIPLE 12: ANTHRO-Producer**) which ensured a professional link between artistic criticality addressing international tensions and boundaries, and community involvement.



Figure 45: Huntly Slow Marathon walkers with Mihret Kebede



Figure 46: Addis Ababa Slow Marathon walkers



## Walking without Walls

<https://www.deveron-projects.com/walking-without-walls/>

Following the first Slow Marathon, we continued annually with another topic and another walking route.

However, the walking for Freedom of Movement topic prevailed. During the Middle Eastern refugee crisis in 2016-18 we were wondering, how can we work with artists that could never come to Scotland? We established a Friday Lunch<sup>103</sup> series that invited artists living in war zones to talk about their work. From those we selected May Murad, a painter from Gaza who we linked with a locally based painter Rachel Ashton. Working with painters for the first time in DP's history, the pair took each other for walks for the period of a year. Linked through whatsapp and other digital means, they were to paint only each other's and never their own landscape. This challenge for the artists who were both 'traditional' landscape painters resulted in a new body of work that was shown online, long before Covid made digital working prolific. See [Appendix 11](#) for interviews with the two artists.<sup>104</sup>

You started to communicate with me. I gave you many, many other people to contact. But you just wanted to work with me. So in the end I did it. For me this was so important. You just believed in me. I had to engage with the war. There was a small window to communicate with the outside world. I could show my art, and started to communicate through video and other means. It was a cultural exchange between Gaza and Scotland. That is the main thing. This project broke all the borders, crossing all the cultures through art. That is so important to show the art, breaking the political walls.

May Murad<sup>105</sup>

It's a funny one, walking. I didn't know about it as an art practice particularly before the project and it was just through Deveron Projects that I had thought about it as a cultural practice. Walks can be so different, whether solitary, when I think I am most present in my surroundings or with other people, when walking often becomes about communication and connection with the other person/people instead of the environment and digitally, is another thing altogether... It's definitely a good way of bringing people together, through a stimulating activity and sensory experience...

Rachel Ashton<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Friday Lunches normally were only organised with speakers from the locality. But at a time with high crisis and war presence (Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine) especially in the Middle East and increasing fear of terrorism, we asked ourselves how can we hear from people that could never visit? Therefore for the period of one year, a monthly speaker 'who could never visit' was invited as an exception to the Friday lunch rule. More on Friday Lunch see [Appendix 2: HOME Case Study](#)

<sup>104</sup> Deveron Projects webpage with short movie on the project created by Alix Rothnie: <https://www.deveron-projects.com/walking-without-walls/>. (Accessed 4 May 2022).

<sup>105</sup> Interview May Murad with Claudia Zeiske: [Appendix 11: Conversations/Letters/Guestbook](#)

<sup>106</sup> Interview Rachel Ashton with Claudia Zeiske: [Appendix 11: Conversations/Letters/Guestbook](#)



The two Slow Marathons created were taking place in tandem between the routes prepared during the year-long walking meetings of the artists in both Huntly and Gaza with digitally linked after-parties in both locations. Always applying **PRINCIPLE 4: Local + Global**. The lead-up time to making the route consumed 100s of hours/miles of walking the stretch, criss-crossing the Moray/Aberdeenshire boundaries: talking to landowners, farmers, vicars, cafes, forestry officers on the way. It allowed us to set up no less than ten stations en route that included a coffee morning at the Bitrophnie church common-wealth graveyard, tea and scones at a privately owned Castle in Ruthven, sweeties and water in a council estate in Keith, guitar music near the White Wood... and much more. But such a moving research does not come without obstacles. A long planned stretch along the river Isla turned impossible when it emerged that the lambing season here was just imminent. The farmer however, was most accommodating in showing us alternative, however more obstructed routes.

The programme of events included a discussion on the Balfour agreement, 100 years after its declaration, a series of herbal walks with school children and the general public. Three conferences on the *Movement of Freedom* were held. One in Huntly and one in the form of a Friday Lunch at TATE Modern, for which both artists and experts from Human Rights movements were invited next to the walkers from both places<sup>107</sup>. Another one during the Edinburgh Arts festival at the RSA.

Walking through the Scottish landscape, I shaped my own story, while simultaneously immersed in the stories of Murad, Ashton and my fellow marathoners. As I talked and walked, I shared my experience not just with those whom I walked locally, but with the international cohort of walkers in Gaza as well. My experience of Gaza is generally dominated by media-driven narratives of the conflict, and though unlikely I will ever be able to visit myself, the shared experience of walking the Slow Marathon offered me a different entry to Gaza—more personal, more human, more jubilant. This story is a counter-point to conflict, one on which future action can be built.

Blake Morris, Walking Artist<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Speakers included: walking artist Blake Morris talking about walking as a political artistic gesture and Mick Napier of Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign on: *Walking in Palestine and in and out of the Gaza Strip*. <https://www.deveron-projects.com/events/walking-without-walls-pathmakers-gathering/>. (Accessed 23 May 2022).

<sup>108</sup> [https://www.deveron-projects.com/site\\_media/uploads/slow\\_marathon\\_-\\_2018\\_-\\_walking\\_without\\_walls\\_\(revision\).pdf](https://www.deveron-projects.com/site_media/uploads/slow_marathon_-_2018_-_walking_without_walls_(revision).pdf). (Accessed 17 May 2022).

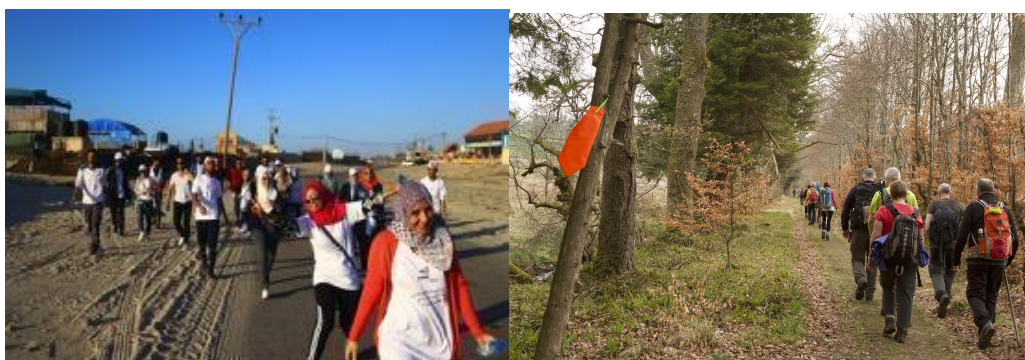


Figure 47: Walking without Walls - Gaza Slow Marathon

Figure 48: Parallel Huntly Slow Marathon

### Under One Sky

<https://www.deveron-projects.com/under-one-sky/>

In 2019 we planned *Bordered Miles*, with artist Iman Tajik, a Glasgow based artist/photographer originally from Iran. The movement of freedom is his key subject matter, influenced by his own experience of crossing borders and navigating the asylum system of coming into our country. Intention was to organise a parallel Slow Marathon. One from the centre of Glasgow to the Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre and another one from the Cabrach to Huntly, where there is a lot of uninhabited space due to modern land clearances. For this we linked with inhabitants in both places.

But Covid restrictions came along and we needed to rethink. A group walk was not possible. Instead we created the *Under One Sky* world-wide walk, which resulted in over 1000 marathons shared by 362 people from our locality and from all over the world, paying tribute to our **PRINCIPLE 4: Local + Global**. Those met online through a dedicated facebook page and collated their miles on our website over the period of 3 months by when the 40075 km distance around the circumference of our earth was completed.

‘You know Iran is a country that is very separated from others. That made me always angry and sad. If we acted globally then we would never have borders. In my art work I try to show that we are all human, that we are not different. There is this poem from Saadi Shirazi:

بنی آدم اعضای یک پیکرند که در آفرینش ز یک گوهرند / Human beings are members of a whole, since in their creation they are of one essence.

The poem shows that human beings are members of a whole. Since they are all of the same creation. The interesting thing about the pandemic was that the virus was affecting people globally. With this virus we all had to go the same journey. We were all affected the same way. This for me was the chance to talk about this fact that we are all the same, that we are all human. We all look at the same sky'. (PRINCIPLE 4: Local + Global)

Anywhere in the world the sky is the same. In Iran we say that 'we are all under one roof'.

Iman Tajik in conversation with Claudia Zeiske<sup>109</sup>

Throughout the 3 month process we initiated events and discussion that kept the individual walkers together and motivated as well as linked to the topic. Those included for example sending a flower from your walk on refugee day, a discussion on the asylum system in the UK, a distanced life walk around Huntly's square.

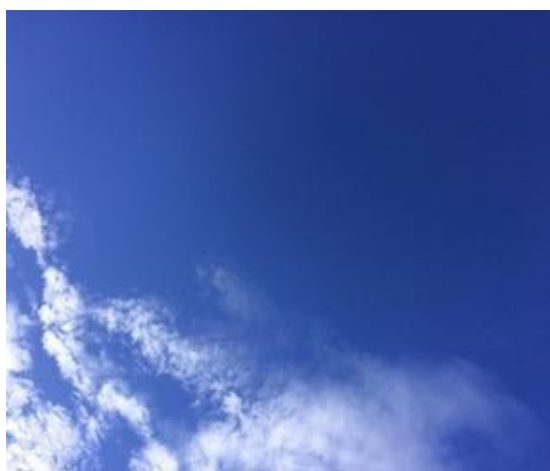


Figure 49: Advertisement for Global Slow Marathon

Figure 50a: One of over 1000 sky images sent by participants

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<sup>109</sup> Appendix 11: Conversations/Letters/Guestbook

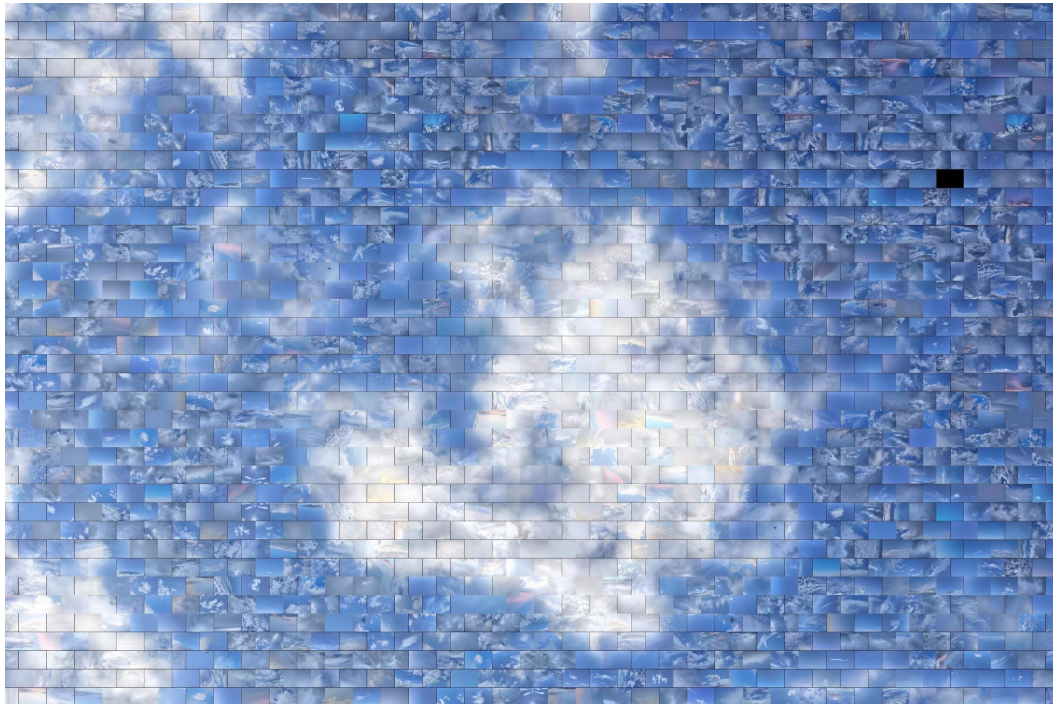


Figure 50b: Over a thousand skies sent by participants

### Output/Reflection

Slow Marathon has been funded from Deveron Projects' core programme (Creative Scotland/Aberdeenshire Council) and Paths for All which promotes walking. The individual thematic walks have been funded by a variety of funds including the Corra foundation and Scottish Refugee Council. It receives regular in kind support from hospitality companies such as Deans of Huntly and various distilleries (ANCNOC whisky in Knock, Teachers in Kennethmont) that are based on the paths, **PRINCIPLE 14: Sustainability - matching Needs & Vision.**

Walking in Art has a deep history. Most renowned in this field are 'Walking's accepted forefathers' (Morris 2020 p. 5). Richard Long and Hamish Fulton who undertake solitary long distance walks. While for Long the art is made by walking, for Fulton the walk is the art. At the other end of the walking artist spectrum are urban artists who find new ways to investigate and interpret the city through performative action.<sup>110</sup> As Grant Kester however has discussed in relation to his category of dialogical aesthetics, these works do not depend on the concept of the 'performer' as the expressive locus of work' (Kester 2004 p.90) instead the mode of art making is specific to the experience of going for a walk.

<sup>110</sup> For more information on walking art visit the Walking Artists network, of which I am an active member: <https://www.walkingartistsnetwork.org/>. (Accessed 5 May 2022).



On reflection, I object to the term 'Walking Art' for our work. For me walking is just another cultural method of bringing people together as part of a larger art work in the community context. Instead of an artistic action on or across the landscape the Slow Marathon walks show, as Blake Morris says 'the walk as a web'. 'Each project', he says, 'creates impact through an assemblage of approaches designed to link the community, the individual, and the landscape through the central act of walking (Morris 2020 p. 124).

Deveron Projects/The Walking Institute, guided by my own interest in walking as an artistic form has carved out a niche in this spectrum through its focus on the rural landscape and by trying to bring people together to initiate political debate. *Slow Marathon* is therefore a somewhat unique anomaly in the 'walking art' circuit. Designed to connect with and make friends in a low-fi way through a topic of socio-political concern it is deliberately rural as well as convivial. It encourages a healthy life-style for body and soul, combining environmental, geological and cultural understanding of the place walked with food, performance and other cultural interventions en route, applying **PRINCIPLE 5: Artocracy** through creating lasting friendships. Unlike many other - often urban - 'walking art' projects, ours are not based on a culture of performative walks. Instead our aim is to encourage artists to engage the community in the creation of new paths through the landscape. With Slow Marathon, intention is to spiral our work out geographically from Huntly, thereby physically connecting our processes to places in the town's hinterland and making visible the 50/50 - **Principle 11: Balancing Acts** - approach on which our work is based.

Following the high local take-up and interest of the first Slow Marathon, an annual thematic walking event was instigated: always in collaboration with an artist, always relating to a current socio-political theme. **PRINCIPLE 9: Our Projects** respond to the ever changing socio-political context, which means with Slow Marathon we always combine collaboration with people on the route and those who are interested in the topic. Those routes over the years came from all directions: Portsoy on the Moray coast walking along the former railway line 50 years after the Beeching cuts (Stuart McAdam), the Cabrach where we looked at land ownership, Glenkindie in the footsteps of poet Nan Shephard (Simone Kenyon), Tillathrowie/Correen Hills investigating old and new energy uses

(Andrea Geile). Over seven years we created seven new marathon length routes, all leading to Huntly, our place<sup>111</sup>.

A wide range of people from all walks of life were taking part in the Slow Marathon. The youngest being 11 and the oldest in her mid seventies, they range from school children to council workers, oil executives to dinner ladies. Creating friendship is our goal, and we are aware of at least one marriage attributed to the Slow Marathons. A lot of work goes into mapping the route to ensure **PRINCIPLE 2: PLACE Specific** with a great degree of love and respect for the surrounding environment **PRINCIPLE 10: By Leaves we Love** and other factors (such as local cultural interest, safety, avoiding tarmac). In doing this, we often come across obstacles of adverse land ownership or red tape. Most of this can be overcome through the combined creative skills of ourselves and the artists. For example, when it emerged that the Forestry Commission had forgotten to tell us that there is an annual car rally scheduled in the Balloch forest on the planned date of *Walking without Walls*, we had to swap our walking day and our gathering day round at very short notice. When a farmer was reluctant to let us go through the field because of the new arrival of a bull, we brought special food for the bull who then tracked into another direction the morning of the walk.

But importantly all this is complemented through creative hospitality, which in a unique way involves inhabitants of very isolated places on the stretch **PRINCIPLE 13: Hospitality Matters**.

The documentation varied for the three different projects. The first edition with Mihret Kebede had a limited edition book with texts by local walkers. *Walking without Walls* had a documentary film made as well as a small booklet produced in English and Arabic based on the wild plants gathered on both Huntly and Gaza routes<sup>112</sup>. *Under one Sky* Project had a small publication featuring 1000s of the skyes submitted by participants, which was also turned into a limited edition print. **PRINCIPLE 16: Making Visible** for those publications aimed to be both an aesthetic reminder of the project as well as a path description for people who want to do these walks on their own accord.

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<sup>111</sup> Slow Marathon 2012-2020 list: <https://www.deveron-projects.com/about/slow-marathon/>. (Accessed 4 May 2022).

<sup>112</sup> This book was inspired by the botanical collections of German pacifist Rosa Luxemburg undertaken while in prison; as the artists were mapping out their routes by drawing inspiration from the wild plants they found in their respective places.

## Appendix 6: History of Deveron Arts/Projects

### The first 5 years: 1995-2000

Three of us, Annette Gisselbaek, Jean Longley and myself had come together for a cup of tea that turned into a bottle of red wine – to discuss what we could do about getting some more art around us. We had all come from cities – Annette from Copenhagen, Jean from London and I had just moved from the ancient University town of Leiden to the North-East Scottish town of Huntly.

We were all used to the ready-made provision – cinema, theatre, galleries, concerts – as consumers of art.

‘An Arts Centre is what we need!’ we all said. And this is how Deveron Projects (then called Deveron Arts) was born on one dull, rainy Aberdeenshire afternoon in 1995.

In its natal years, Deveron Arts ran several summer schools, workshops, and small exhibitions, with the intention of finding a venue to house their projects. This was also the time when the National Lottery and its funds were created and we were encouraged to go for a feasibility study for this art centre of ours. We engaged Brian Beattie as a consultant, and the study said: ‘it’s not feasible’: too costly, too little/too conservative an audience, too small a place. We were disappointed of course, but this message was in the end the key to our long-term working: *the town is the venue*. In comparison to an urban environment, the potential audience was limited by geographical reach and the town lacked an established gallery-going audience likely to attend events. The financial costs of acquiring a building for a venue were unlikely to ever generate a return. Today I believe an arts venue might actually have alienated local residents who may not have embraced a model designed for cosmopolitan urban trendy tastes.

But despite this backthrow we went ahead. Almost against the odds. At first it was a rather traditional way of working, common to rural community arts organisations. A concert, a visit of a touring theatre group, the Travelling Gallery came. Essentially we were programming other producer’s art, often coming from urban centres.

But then we visited the degree show at Gray’s School of Art in Aberdeen. We got into conversation with some of the artists and offered them a place to stay and continue to create work. No money exchanged hands. We offered the space - they offered the show of a body of work created in our place.

This made us feel that we are part of the process.

The next year we went to the degree show again. We had a little cheque in our hands. £500 given by the Gordon Forum for the Arts went for a prize plus the residency in our homes. The artist David Blyth was chosen. His interest lay in the relationship between people and animals. While in Huntly he engaged with people and their pets, as well as wild animals: hunting traditions, road kills... He created an exhibition called *Fish out of Water* at Battlehill Lodge, my home, where many artists lived over the 25 years.

Many people came, the house was mobbed. David sold a lot of work and some of it is still here.

The year after we had a bit more money - £700 from the Scottish Arts Council. The artist was Julia Douglas, a textile artist interested in domesticity and the everyday. She collaborated with the former workers of the textile mill that closed its doors in 1992. Her exhibition took place in the Brander museum, as interventions to the existing textile display. We had a write up in the regional paper P+J. We had our foot in the door. But there was also another 'opportunity'. Sustrans was being set up and they had budgets for cycle path side art works. Julia made a beautiful wire dress for a pregnant woman. It looked like a large expecting angle. Sustrans suggested a site, and we placed the wired angle on the bank of the river Deveron somewhere near Turriff with some sparkling wine to celebrate it all. But what about the community? Nobody was asked, nobody consulted. The next day the angle was driven over, probably by a large 4x4 farming vehicle. This made it clear for me: never do this again, working without the people that are affected by art is 'not working'. I myself would have found it an insult to have a large artwork placed in front of my house just like that. The sculpture was repaired at the Scottish Sculpture Workshop and Annette Gisselbaek took it into her garden for good long-time care.

And so it went, we had an idea of what we wanted to do. And also an idea of what we should not do. And from then on every year another artist came.

### **The second 10 years: 2000 – 2010**

People started asking 'who is your next artist?'

Edinburgh based artist Paul Carter came in 2000, followed by Jonathan Claxton, a self-trained sculptor. In 2002 we had Palestinian artist Leena Nammari for her project *Belonging* in the middle of Israel's second intifada. That year we



persuaded Aberdeenshire Leisure Service to give us a little studio room in the Brander Library Building in the heart of the town. Also that year the performance group Dudendance came in residence; they still live here today.

In 2004 we had the first international artist Eva Merz from Denmark, reacting to the relentless closure of local retail outlets with *Empty Shop*. Soon after Umesh Maddanahalli from India and French artist Colonel who did a kind of Scottish identity testing. 'How Scottish are you?' He asked some 250 local folks, who needed to answer on prison-mug-shot style paper in percentage terms. From then onwards we had more than one artist and therefore also more than one project every year. We saw the need to establish ourselves more formally. We needed an extended board and a fundraising strategy, a database and a series of policies. Our volunteer capacity was exhausted. We needed a worker. I decided to work two days a week, alongside my other commitments. We also got another assistant, Lindy Young who worked 2 days a week. Soon we had 4, 5, 6 projects a year, they were roughly clustered into identity building, historic connections, environment, health and wellbeing. Renowned Scottish artists came to Huntly, to include Dalziel + Scullion who worked on the emerging wind farm debate, Roderick Buchanan with *ARTCUP* produced a response to the lack of football success during the 2006 World Cup, Nuno Sacramento came in as a Shadow Curator. This method became an institution that provided a continuous critical angle to our work.

The fact that we had no building, no art centre was working to our advantage. The organisation was light at foot and good value for money. *The town is the venue* strapline was born – which gave us a branding unique in the Scottish and international art context. Somehow I feel like one of the women in Percy Adlon's film Bagdad Cafe. Everything was possible in the most unlikely place, as long as you believed in it.

Throughout those years the organisation grew in size, output and financial turnover. We started engaging people. I gave up my work at Glenfiddich (where I set up an international artist in residence centre), and became the Director supported by a Project Manager that assisted handling the ever-growing administration of the organisation. Expected policies were put into place and we started receiving more reliable funding from Creative Scotland matched by a wide range of other art and non-art funders.

The continued presence gained trust in the community and people collected money to commission an artist to lead on the rebranding of the town. South African artist Jaak Coetzer was chosen, which led to the new brand 'Room to Roam' based on a poem of Huntly born writer George MacDonald and appropriated further by the Scottish band the Waterboys. This slogan and town anthem is still fully alive today with brown signs on the town entrances and re-appropriations like *Room to Run*, *Room to Read* and *Room to Thrive* – a new strategy for the town's regeneration. I need to also acknowledge that this leitmotiv has influenced our way of curating and shaping Deveron Projects. *Room to Roam* allowed us to think out of the box in our place and in our ever changing political situation.

In 2009 we ran the PRAKTIKA workshop with David Harding. It brought together 13 artists to peer critique their socially engaged practice, which firmly set us up to be the spear-header of participative art in the context of place in Scotland. The outcome was a clear need for hospitality complementing criticality in this/our form of working **PRINCIPLE 13: Hospitality Matters**.

*I firmly believe that for the time art dealt mostly with inanimate objects one could deploy criticality alone, but now that it consistently involves people this has to be counter-balanced with hospitality. In a basic sense people must have a reason for wanting to be involved.*

Nuno Sacramento (Sacramento 2010)

Throughout this period the 50/50 approach was our guiding principle. 50/50 meant a balance between artistic quality and community engagement, hospitality and criticality, local and global. This conundrum is what made Deveron Arts tick, which was then articulated in the curatorial handbook ARTocracy (JOVIS, 2010) – the core idea of which was 'what would happen if the world was ruled by art?' Expanding the Beuysian 'Everyman is an Artist' approach, I have been arguing and lobbying that – to overcome compartmentalisation of interrelated emergencies - every institution from health to road, from parliament to social work should have an artist at its core of working.

### **The last 10 years: 2010-2020**

Around 2010 we were given a small annual grant from Aberdeenshire Council as well as the free use of the 2 more rooms in the old caretaker's flat, which allowed us to set up a community kitchen. And somewhere around 2015 we were

granted regular funding from Creative Scotland (today called RFO status), which really gave us a more stable platform to work from as well as a boost in confidence.

Also in those years, following a walking residency with Hamish Fulton, we set up the Walking Institute<sup>113</sup>. Thanks to a grant from the Leader EU fund we experimented for a number of years with walking and art, led by a small committee which included walking artist Prof Dee Heddon and Prof Tim Ingold who at the time was concentrating his research on the act of walking.

The annual number of projects raised sharply in number and depth. While our website shows about 50 projects in the first 15 years, we ran almost 80 in the last 10 years. Many of them lasted much longer than the average 3 months. Some of them, like the White Wood and the Weeping Willow, will surpass our generation.

During this period we also honed in on what else is happening in the world and around us. Credit Crunch, fall in retail outlets, new supermarkets, internet shopping, decline of the oil industry, war in different places, Brexit and finally Covid are only a few of the more global themes we honed into from a local perspective.

In 2013 I took up full time employment, supported by a full-time Project Manager. During that year we were awarded the Creative Place Award. This gave us a lot of community buy-in as well as £100000. Half of this was spent on the set up of the Walking Institute (now nested in all programming of Deveron Projects). The other half contributed to the making of a local cultural fund, where 40 individuals and groups could claim £1000 each to do something creative for the town. The entries ranged from setting up a bike festival, to the creation of a 2<sup>nd</sup> hand bookshop, a mass piping event to a business plan for the local crafters...<sup>114</sup>

That year I was also voted by town folks the 'Citizen of the Year for Huntly' (my name now engraved for eternity in golden letters on a board in the Stewarts Hall!).

Soon after we brought in our former intern Catrin Jeans as Cultural Health Worker (now Art & Community Worker), supported by a 5 year grant from Big Lottery to facilitate the HOME programme; allowing me and the Project Manager to deal better with the steadily increasing demands of reporting.

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<sup>113</sup> [www.walking-institute.com](http://www.walking-institute.com)

<sup>114</sup> For the full list see: [https://www.deveron-projects.com/site\\_media/uploads/hcf\\_awards.pdf](https://www.deveron-projects.com/site_media/uploads/hcf_awards.pdf)

With the Creative Scotland funding base we were able to bring in larger amounts from European Funds, Forestry Commission, Heritage Lottery fund and many other smaller and bigger funds.

It allowed us to react to pressing social, environmental and political situations. 2014-16 saw the creation of the White Wood, a living monument to peace. 2016 was also the year that British people voted to leave the EU. Why?

Having talked about the steady growth in both artistic as well as organisational terms a time of visioning and reflection has come. Where do we want to be as an organisation? What is our vision? Where is our place in the world? That was hard. There was pressure from the main funders. I spent a year with consultants to articulate this, but it was not good enough. In my desperation I went to see artist Jaak Coetzer at his home in Cape Town. We spent 10 days incognito. I talked, Jaak drew. Our vision, our mission, our wonderful brochure was born.

We celebrated our 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, and they all came. The artists, the locals, the funders, the journalists, our families and us. Now we could write our business plan at last.

But it was tiring. I was exhausted. 'You need a break' my board said 'why don't you be an artist for a while? Come up with a project for 3 months'. And so I did. I was fraught by Brexit and its consequences. For me, my family, the young people in Britain. I did not know where my Home is any longer. So I decided to walk home to Unterpfaenhofen near Munich, where I was brought up and my mother still lives. 1800 km and 90 days I walked and thought.

Climate Challenge Funding in 2017 gave us 3-year support to set up the 'town is the garden' programme, for which former intern Joss Allen brought in a team of gardeners and thinkers. Amongst the weeds and compost heaps, they explored what it might mean to *think with* the garden. Joss is now the co-director of ATLAS ART on the Isle of Skye. I am very proud of this.

Meanwhile Huntly, the town looked run-down. The remaining three banks closed, the tourist information hub, and an old department store too. The oil industry is in decline and little is replacing it. We joined forces and decided to bring our town centre into community ownership. HDDT bought the old bank. The Scottish Land Fund gave us money to buy the old Square Deal shop and house, a listed building that was empty for the past 10 or so years. Now we own a building, but what about the 'town is the venue'? I was determined to stick to our mantra, our



strap line that served us well over the many years. I don't want an art centre, a gallery, or such like. This would be the end for Deveron Projects.

2019 saw Brexit and its restrictive format decided. We talked to others across Europe about what they think. A little film was made of the day we linked with 12 artists and other art workers across the continent with their own Brexit newspapers in hand. On 31 January 2020 the day the decisions were triggered, we planted a Weeping Willow with Clemens Wilhelm at the shores of our river Deveron. Richard Demarco gave us a hand for this. This little tree had to be replaced a number of times by now. We don't know whether this is caused by drunkenness or anti-European feelings? Or maybe by both? But luckily we have the 'Friends of the Brexit Tree' looking after it now.

After that day, I started thinking, it might be that my time is up. Times have changed and sometimes I feel 'oldy'. Not by my colleagues - I want to underline - they were all tirelessly brilliant. But by myself, I am questioning more and more why we need to do so many things that have nothing to do with art, little to do with community, little to do with bettering our society, our place. I was working non-stop. Like a hamster on a wheel. Also my colleagues, I exasperated them too. The regulations around the building worsened the situation. Planning permissions and building warrants don't talk to each other and are – it seems – not my thing. I exhaust myself and others with my way. I read 'Bullshit Jobs' by David Graeber. Am I doing a bullshit job now? I still think that my work was important. Not like the work of a doctor, or a train driver, or teacher. I felt it was important to allow people to imagine new and alternative forms of thinking about how we can live together in our surroundings. That is not bullshit. But a lot of bullshit jobs have crept in over the years. I think my business plan had something like 21 appendices. Individually they are not bullshit, but seen as a whole I was taken away from doing what I was meant to do. What I wanted to do, in order to do those many other things.

So I told my board: It's time to phase out.

But Covid and its restrictions came. We worked all from home, and our beloved Slow Marathon turned into a world-wide walk around the 40000+km of our wonderful yet jeopardised world. Hundreds of people from across the globe joined our local walkers, all walking jointly on and from their very own turf.

We also needed bread, and we set up a bakery. Kate the baker supplied us with wonderful bread. Petra supplied folks with colourful masks. I floraged around

gardens and fields and created an emergency floristry. Suddenly it felt like we had a use in town. This was acknowledged through the Calouste Gulbenkian Award for Civic Arts Organisations 2021 recommendation. Sadly we did not win!

We celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday online. What a feast it was. Robyn and Jess, they were magic in getting it off the ground: digitally, administratively, visually – it all worked perfectly. And Kate and Kawther with the cooking and baking. Parcels were sent all over to our party guests, who came from Huntly to Edinburgh and London, from Battlehill to Berlin and Paris, from Gartly to Cape Town and Auckland. Music was played at the joint dinner, speeches held, a comedy act from David Sherry. Zoom arranged for the seating tables assuring a fine mix between our team, local Huntly-ites, our artists, our stakeholders, press and many others.

Then I handed the baton of the 24/7 fun over to the wonderful Natalia Palombo, our new Director.

Now I am writing it all up. With the time to reflect and the knowledge gained, some things I would do differently. But many I would do the same. I miss them all dearly and wished I could do it all over again.



Figure 51: Team Huntly at Creative Place Awards (2013)

## Appendix 7: Context - Huntly

### Place

Huntly is an 18th century market town situated within the confluence of the rivers Bogie and Deveron nestling between the Aberdeenshire farmland and the hilly grouse and moor lands of the Cabrach and Speyside. The Clashmach Hill rises on its outskirts, from where one can see north to the Moray Firth and south to the Cairngorm Mountains. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Huntly was developed as a planned town with grid-iron streets; now given preservation status.

Life in Huntly – we described on the Deveron Projects website ‘circumnavigates around its historic square, with approximately 175 clubs and societies’ identified from the Cultural Audit **PRINCIPLE 8: Fieldwork** (Sacramento and Zeiske 2010) and various sporting facilities, including a swimming pool, a football, tennis, bowling and cricket club/pitch, a golf course, and a Nordic ski centre. Huntly - like many smaller towns of its size in Scotland - also features a library, a primary and secondary school, Ex-Service Men's Club, a FreeMasons Lodge and its historic Huntly Castle (ruined). It has various cafés, B&Bs, 2 hotels, a range of shops (some occupied, some empty) and no less than 9 licensed premises. Many of those premises are underutilised and therefore use for meetings, events and other interventions can be negotiated for our events and projects.

*Room to Roam* is Huntly's motto, a brand developed with South African artist Jaak Coetzer (in residence in 2008). Taking inspiration from the great Victorian Huntly born writer George MacDonald, it is an articulation of Huntly's setting, identity and circumstance: our ordinary town provides us with plenty of geographical and mental space in which to roam.

Deveron Projects' research, backed up by the community consultation *Room to Thrive*, identified as key regeneration factors the appearance and functionality of the town centre. Today the newly created town team decided to take its fate in its own hand and bring the town centre into community ownership. Three prominent declining town square properties have been purchased by Deveron Projects and Huntly Development Trust. One of them has become a community bakery and artist accommodation in my time, the other a community bookshop run entirely by volunteers, the third one is currently being developed as a remakery centre.

Huntly has a multitude of buildings and outdoor spaces where people gather either by choice or by necessity. Those offer an opportunity to work with found venues, which led to our *town is the venue* strategy. **PRINCIPLE 3: The Town is the Venue**

## **Work**

Once a traditional market town, Huntly has been a place of farmers, crafts people and shop keepers. Its largest employers are an ice cream and a shortbread factory next to the local Gordon Schools and the cottage hospital and health care centre. A small but due to better wages not insignificant number of people and subsidiary businesses have been affiliated to the oil industry in Aberdeen.

But the town has been hit hard by globalisation trends in recent years. With a decline in agriculture and the oil sector and a steady reduction in local business, Huntly is showing signs of economic instability, evidenced by the numerous empty shops in the town centre and an increase in reliance on the local food bank. Increased internet shopping and the development of two supermarkets at the outskirts of the town resulted in the closure of over 50% of the retail outlets over the past 15 years (estimate mine). Unemployment rate is 4% compared to 2% in Aberdeenshire and the average (median) household income is £24,860 compared to £36,889 in overall Aberdeenshire. Challenges in wider education and skills provision are amplified by the difficulty of accessing further education.<sup>115</sup>

## **Folk**

Today there are approx. 4500 people living in Huntly, serving a hinterland of further 4500 people. However the population is steadily declining.

Originally called Strathbogie, Huntly's history goes back to pictish times. The name changed with the arrival of the powerful Gordon Clan. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century it was developed as a planned market town and an adjunct to the Gordon's palace (Huntly Castle) when the Gordon Highlanders regiment was raised, which traditionally recruited soldiers throughout the North-East of Scotland. Many

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<sup>115</sup> Information sourced from Huntly Town Profile.  
<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/24584/huntlytownprofile.pdf>. (Accessed 25 November 2022)

merchants and artisans were serving the surrounding countryside, while becoming a centre of flax and linen production. Huntly gained commercial importance and significant demographic growth due to the building of the railway links to Aberdeen, Inverness and the Moray coast establishment coupled with a shift from croft farming to capitalist agriculture. In 1936 all town property and feus as well as surrounding farmland was sold at auction to pay death duties on the ducal estates.

Huntly is not a wealthy place, with a still relatively small multicultural base, its culture is based on values relating to farming and small-scale economies. There is no art audience to speak of as can be found in larger urban centres. This was giving us the opportunity to try out new ways of working and build new opportunities for people to look at themselves with fresh eyes.

Noteworthy people from Huntly's past are the Victorian writer George MacDonald, the composer Ronald Centre and the philosopher and missionary to China James Legge, 17<sup>th</sup> Cent. Cartographer James Gordon as well as missionary to Uganda Alexander McKay. All of their legacies were highlighted through different local-global activities at Deveron Projects.

More recently the town has proudly brought forward 4 Olympic Nordic Skiers performing in Vancouver, Sochi, Seoul and Beijing; the 2021 Darts World Cup Winner John Henderson, Jo Pitt an equestrian Paralympian and the gold medal shooting winner Sheila Sharp.

Huntly has a strong Scottish pipe and folk music tradition, with many Bothy Ballads originating from the town and the Doric language still widely spoken. The unique cultural tapestry ranges from traditional skills and crafts, traditional and contemporary dancing, to the collaboration with artists from across the globe through Deveron Projects. Instigated in collaboration with the Huntly Development Trust, Huntly has been recognised as the most creative place in Scotland for its size in Creative Scotland's 2013 Creative Place Awards. This resulted in the election of myself as the Citizen of the Year.

Huntly's population size has stayed roughly the same in the last century. However, the demographics have been changing in the last two decades. Over 27% of Huntly's population is 65 years old or over, well above the Scottish (18%) average; 9.1% are over 80 years old. 11% of the population is income deprived and this number is growing. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones show that 4 out of 5 zones within the town are amongst 20% of the



most income deprived areas in Aberdeenshire; three of these are amongst 20% of the most deprived areas in terms of health, education, and housing. Only the other one data zone to the east of the town square enjoys an above average income.

While at first sight, it appears as predominantly 'White Scottish/British', the town has a sizeable number of people from other European and non-European backgrounds. The 2011 census showed that 9% of the population speaks Doric/Scots, while about 3% speak another language than English at home. This number likely has increased in recent years.



Figure 52: Huntly as seen from Clashmach Hill

## Appendix 8: Terminology

### Around Participatory Art

There are many different ways of calling the kind of arts practise that Deveron Projects has been dealing with: community art, participatory art, co-creation, socially engaged art, collaborative art and so on. With the extended team we had a lot of discussions around the terminology and how we best define our work. Colloquially we just called it socially engaged art most of the time, as we felt this is best understood by stakeholders and community. During the process of writing the ARTocracy handbook, Nuno Sacramento and I decided on 'collaborative art'. While for us it referred to artists and communities closely working together, this terminology I now believe refers more to the collaboration between different art practitioners and other formal partners.

Although never entirely satisfied with the definition, I settled for 'participation' in this thesis, which encompasses all of the above forms. What distinguishes our practice from many others, is that it is long-term and place specific. Many artists engage in a socially engaged/participatory manner, but their practice often takes place in widely different venues and geographic places. Instead – and this is rather unique in the cultural landscape - our work has become durational, through the long-term commitment to Huntly, involving a wide range of artists in this practice. My specific way of working I therefore call transformative fieldwork informed by participant observation.

Related art forms and their definitions are:

**'Socially engaged practice'** according to the TATE's definition<sup>116</sup> is 'also referred to as social practice or socially engaged art, can include any artform, which involves people and communities in debate, collaboration or social interaction.' This definition of socially engaged art, involves people as the 'medium or material of the work'. Instead of using people as actors, in Huntly we see them as collaborators that are as important to the project as the artists or us the producers.

**Co-Creation** – according to an Arts Council of England commissioned report – 'is both a process and a methodology'. It is a practice where an artist or art

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<sup>116</sup> TATE website: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/socially-engaged-practice>. (Accessed 8 November 2021).

organisation 'actively shares their decision-making power with a (non-establishment) community, that is equitable and non-tokenistic, in which process is prioritised over product, and which inspires a change in traditional power structures.'

'As a methodology' the report claims 'it aims towards the shared creation (including devising, planning, negotiating, disseminating, evaluating) of an artwork, project or activity. As a process it explores a collective creative response to a situation which may be initiated by an individual but has the views and ideas of others represented and incorporated throughout from design to production to reflection and evaluation. It is any artistic process in which creative responsibility, authority and agency are shared. Through shared authorship a creative project, where each party plays an equal role is shifting agency and power. Each party has creative agency throughout the development and production of the creative work or project.' (Heart of Glass/Battersea Art Centre 2021, p.18)

**Relational Aesthetics** is a terminology coined by Nicolas Bourriaud. The term defines the trend of making art based on human relations and their social context. In *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud 1998) he explains it as: 'A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space'. Bourriaud therefore 'saw artists as facilitators rather than makers and regarded art as information exchange between the artist and the viewers. The artist, in this sense, gives audiences access to power and the means to change the world'<sup>117</sup>.

**Community Art** is usually referred to as art engaging people, often defined as underprivileged, 'hard to reach' or otherwise distinguished by age, gender or class through activities such as art workshops, art therapy, etc.

**Public Art** is often referred to as art work situated in the public realm; often taking the form of sculptures, monuments or murals in public spaces. Those have at times been criticised as 'plonk art' used to beautify peripheral spaces.

**Site-specific art** reacts to a specific site or place; traditionally large-scale sculpture. Miwon Kwon argues that site-specific work is a point of departure to address the site as a 'social' rather than formal framework for placing permanent art (Kwon 2014).

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<sup>117</sup> TATE website: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/r/relational-aesthetics>. (Accessed 9 June 2022).

**New Genre Public Art** is a term introduced by American artist Suzanne Lacy (Lacy 1995). It refers to art practices that - unlike those traditional of public art (i.e. sculptures in public spaces) - they focus on the engagement of artists with communities/audiences to connect with pressing socio-political issues.

**Dialogical Art** term introduced by Grant Kester as a dialogue-based socially-engaged creative practice (Kester 2004).

**Activist Art** according to TATE 'describes art that is grounded in action addressing political or social issues'. 'The aim of activist artists is to create art that is a form of political or social currency, actively addressing cultural power structures rather than representing them or simply describing them'<sup>118</sup>.

**Social Turn** is a term coined by Claire Bishop's essay *The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents* (Bishop 2006); describing art that is collaborative, often participatory and involves people as the medium or material of the work.

**Artist Placement** has been initiated by The Artist Placement Group conceived by Barbara Steveni and John Latham in 1966. Aiming to situate art beyond the gallery context, they were attaching artists to businesses or governmental institutions for a period of time to infiltrate the work environment. (note: Barbara Steveni was a Shadow Curator to *Lure of the Lost*, one of our projects with Anthony Schrag).

**Town Artist** is a term coined through David Harding's residency at the Scottish town of Glenrothes.

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<sup>118</sup> TATE website: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/activist-art>. (Accessed 9 June 2022).

## Around Anthropology

### **Art and Anthropology**

Since the early 1990s there has been a proliferation of writing and talking about the relationship between art and anthropology. Hal Foster following the writings of Clifford (Clifford 1988) was one of the first to raise the question of (mis-)understanding between artists and anthropologists in his classic, much quoted formative essay 'The Artist as Ethnographer' (Foster 1995). Calling this relationship the 'Ethnographic Turn', he alerts readers to the idea that certain approaches of socially engaged/participatory work is only quasi ethnographic, coming out of and serving mainly the purposes of the mercantile system (social outreach, economic development, etc.). He sees it as an emerging trend since the 'neoliberal turn' of the 1990s, where artists (often white middle class, university trained) are talking on behalf of other, often marginalised groups for the purpose of collecting people's experiences. His warnings address art organisations who may support 'pseudo' anthropological work, which is superficially turning people into a kind of – one could say - art or museum collectibles. Likewise, he argues this trend is also precarious for art and artists, as they lose the link and connection to why art matters in the first place. A number of anthropologists – especially Arndt Schneider/Christopher Wright, Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov and Tim Ingold - to name just a few - have commented on this through different conceptual frameworks.

Anthropologists Schneider & Wright for example do acknowledge that a lot can be learned from the open-ended 'incomplete' procedures of the arts (Schneider and Wright 2010 p. 19). Their examples however rest with artists rather than curators or indeed durational experiences. In their introduction, they emphasise the non-text possibilities that art can bring to anthropological research. They ponder how the many other visual and non-visual possibilities could open up the rather strict traditional trajectory of proposal/field-research/publication. One could say they are looking for a new/alternative anthropological practice with artists (and conversely of artists with anthropologists). I question their reference to Kosuth's writing however, 'Because the anthropologist is outside of the culture which he studies he is not a part of the community... Whereas the artist, as anthropologist, is operating within the same socio-cultural context from which he evolved'. This is seldom the case in today's nomadic residency and biennial world. Very few artists work in their own terrain, and if they do so, they are rarely



recognized within the art-world-circus. Instead, this is where the double role of the ANTHRO-producer comes in, who is the constant in the field research and the facilitation for the intended transformation of the artist's output.

Likewise, Roger Sansi in *Art, Anthropology and the Gift* has concentrated his writing on artists and projects associated with participatory practice whose work is site-specific and involved in activity similar to fieldwork in anthropology (e.g. Superflex's *Internet TV station*, Jeremy Deller's *Social Parade*) for whom, Sansi says, the objective of their events and interventions is not necessarily to generate change, 'but to create unexpected situations, building unforeseen relations, unconventional and unprecedented associations and communities in a particular location – local, specific changes' (Sansi 2016 p. 2). Essentially, the art is the social relations those artists create through their projects. It is the definition of 'relational aesthetics' that Sansi explores along with others.

In his more recent, edited book *The Anthropologist as Curator* Sansi investigates/focuses on the role of the curator (Sansi 2021). While he acknowledges that the curator today may have a multitude of artistic/aesthetic, administrative/organisational roles, both examples and theories he offers are largely relating to curators acting on behalf of a gallery, museum or similar commissioning or collecting institution. The role of the curator in community settings is almost entirely absent, and only some minor references to durational approaches are given (Sansi 2021 p. 4).

For Deveron Projects, the anthropological work lies not in the work of the artist, but in the durational fieldwork of the curator/producer, i.e. the ANTHRO-Producer collaborating with the artists. The 'turn' that Foster is speaking of therefore mainly addresses artists' collaboration with museums and galleries, i.e. a trend of using anthropology through participatory methods in art institutions where few of the 'subjects' would go.

Alfred Gell in *Art and Agency* (Gell 1998) paved the way for thinking of a more dynamic social way to art, viewing it as a system of social action rather than as a system of aesthetic forms. Through this he offers some definition of the agency of art and its possibilities for social transformation. But I wonder, is the work of the artist (as opposed to the artwork itself) not the key transformer by applying aesthetic in combination with social processes? Tim Ingold's notion where artistic research is 'a way of living curiously' is more aligned with Deveron Projects' way of long-term commitment to place.

**Ethnography** according to Tim Ingold in its simplest form means ‘writing about people’<sup>119</sup>, normally based on participant observation through field research.

Ethnographic fieldwork is the method that defines Social Anthropology. While Anthropology according to the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology is an academic discipline that ‘constructs its intellectual imaginings upon empirical-based knowledge about human worlds’, - Ethnography is the practice developed in order to bring about that knowledge according to certain methodological principles, the most important of which is participant-observation ethnographic fieldwork.<sup>120</sup>

**Participant Observation** has been the key research tool of anthropologists. Through extended involvement in a group of people and participation in its day-to-day activities they gain understanding normally over a long period of time. This can be a geographic community or a specific group such as a work place, an age group, an ethnic minority or a group of interest, with whom the anthropologist aims to gain a close connection in their specific cultural environment.

**Auto-Ethnography** refers to the use of personal narrative in ethnographic writing, placing the self of the researcher within a social context. According to Oxford Bibliographies it refers to works ‘that provoke questions about the nature of ethnographic knowledge by troubling the persistent dichotomies of insider versus outsider, distance and familiarity, objective observer versus participant, and individual versus culture. Autoethnography, broadly conceived, stands at the intersection of three genres of narration and critical reflection that may overlap in any particular work. These include portraits of a social group the author-anthropologist is affiliated with; life writing or other autobiographical acts that incorporate ethnographic description of their social group; and anthropological writing that includes reflexive descriptions of research experiences during ethnographic fieldwork’ (Oxford Bibliographies 2022). My thesis – I believe – is based on such writings that combine my personal reflections, my work with the people in Huntly and anthropological sensibilities based on extended (originally unintended) fieldwork.

**Collaborative Anthropology** is the collaboration between and among researchers and research participants. All Anthropology is in a sense collaborative by its very nature. For us this term is interesting, as it allows for the

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<sup>119</sup> Taken from a ZOOM conversation with Tim Ingold, January 2022.

<sup>120</sup> <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/ethnography>

polyphonic approach between myself and my team as the constant in collaboration with the artists and the community.

**Action Anthropology** 'is an approach that seeks to develop the understanding of social and cultural life while helping communities address the challenges they face. In contrast to applied anthropology, when seeking to help the communities with whom they work, action anthropologists facilitate the communities' own decision making about what actions should be taken to address those challenges rather than implementing decisions made outside of the community or for the community by the anthropologist' (Rubinstein 2018).

**Visual Anthropology** belongs to the wider field of Social Anthropology that is concerned with ethnographic photography, film and digitally based new media. Some of Deveron Projects' work could be said falls under this category. For example the *Room to Roam* film (now part of Aberdeen Art Gallery collection) or the *Walking without Walls* film made by Alix Rothnie. See [Appendix 2/4: Case Examples](#).

**Ethnographic Conceptualism** is a term framed by Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov as a way of thinking about meeting points between art and anthropology.

**Ethnographic Turn** is a much quoted term associated with the writings of Hal Foster (Foster 1995) following James Clifford to define art practice, which has similarities with ethnography. This in its focus on issues of socio-political change and the representation of cultural difference. My interest relates here mainly to art and artists that engage with participatory art.

## Geddesophilia

*By Leaves with Live*, has at Deveron Projects underpinned our desire to look deeply at our natural environment and how we can contribute to our and our communities' lives through such activities as growing trees and food. It has influenced the creation of the White Wood and the *Weeping Willow/Brexit Tree*, as well as the set-up of a multi-year *Town is the Garden* programme not only as environmental activities and assets, but also as conduits for conversation that bring together peace, environment, food security, sustainability, and of course art. Like Beuys, with his socio-ecological work *7000 Oaks*, which are now well integrated in the city of Kassel and people's relationship to the trees and their wellbeing, Geddes was a harbinger for the ecological catastrophe that we are facing today. **PRINCIPLE 10: By Leaves we Love**

*Think Global - Act Local* is a phrase widely attributed to Geddes. It acknowledges that whatever we do, can have an effect somewhere else in the world. At DP, we therefore extended the sentence with 'start here'. Think Global – Act Local – Start Here! There have been many, many examples that illustrate how we made those links. The three different examples given in the Slow Marathons linked with Ethiopia through the Addis walkers and their shoelaces, with Gaza (Walking without Walls) through the painting of each others landscapes and with the rest of the world (Under One Sky) through the joint walking of the circumference of the world. The *White Wood* project was only meaningful through the links created with the sites in eastern France and the town of Kassel in Germany, where Joseph Beuys planted his 7000 oaks, which provided the acorns for our wood to grow. **PRINCIPLE 4: Local + Global**

The *Outlook Tower* is/was both a concept as well as a real building linking to Geddes' local-global way of thinking. It was a building on Edinburgh's Royal Mile<sup>121</sup>, purchased and refurbished by Geddes in 1892, who transformed it into a 'place of outlook and a type-museum as a key to a better understanding of Edinburgh and its region, but also to help people get a clear idea of its relation to the world at large'<sup>122</sup>. The purpose of the observation deck and camera obscura at the top of the Outlook Tower was to give inhabitants a view of their neighbourhood; beneath it – in descending order – were exhibition spaces relating to their city, the nation, and the English speaking world, the world at

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<sup>121</sup> Today it is the site of Edinburgh's Camera Obscura: <https://www.camera-obscura.co.uk/>

<sup>122</sup> Geddes Institute, Dundee University: <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/geddesinstitute/outlooktower/>. (Accessed 1 February 2022).

large. The purpose of the Outlook Tower was to put the view from the top in relation to this expanding context of knowledge<sup>123</sup>. 'Being a community is to be both situated locally and exist beyond through the resonances and affinities your place has with our communities' (Jacob in: Jacob and Zeiske 2014 p.11). Geddes's ideal was for each community to have an Outlook Tower. With contemporary telecommunications, they could be networked to create a world community of Outlook Towers, based on knowledge, which would have the potential to replace current systems of governance and potentially nation states and national borders.

*By Living we Learn* is another such Geddesian mantra, allowing us to give time to experiment; to try things out, where the process of the art we engage with is more important than the finished outcome. 'A garden', Geddes says, 'takes years and years to grow—ideas also take time to grow, and while a sower knows when his [sic] corn will ripen, the sowing of ideas is, as yet a far less certain affair'<sup>124</sup>. This translates directly into DP's concept of being a slowly growing 'library of ideas', where people can dip in and out, take ideas on board, or leave them behind in their memories. Where its sustainability rests not in the individual projects, but in the fluid tapestry of its interconnected activities. The concept also underpins my own learning while living in Huntly, which unfolded my long-term work and now the writing of this auto-ethnographic dissertation. **PRINCIPLE 15: Growing the Creative Ecology**

*By creating with think* – allows us to take time to make things, to collaborate and to celebrate – thereby furthering our work and continuous reflection. This catch phrase has been hailed 'as the most important of Geddes' phrases for Deveron Arts (now Deveron Projects) by Prof Murdo MacDonald, which in his view 'captures its achievements most'<sup>125</sup>.

*A city is more than a place in space, it is a drama in time.* A sentence that can be applied to a town situation as much as a city. In Huntly there is so much going on, it just 'depends on what you're looking for' (Lippard 1999 p.12).

*The Valley Section* is one more set of conceptual drawings, which in simple ways shows us the socio-economic interdependence between our town and its hinterlands along the river (Deveron) towards both the mountains and the sea. In

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<sup>123</sup> A thought lent from Lorens Holm, generated from an email exchange 7 April 2022.

<sup>124</sup> Farewell Lecture to his Dundee students: <https://murdomacdonald.wordpress.com/patrick-geddes-farewell-lecture-to-his-dundee-students-1919>. (Accessed 18 December 2021).

<sup>125</sup> Murdo MacDonald: Unpublished Lecture notes from Deveron Projects AGM, 20 September 2016



Huntly, traditionally we could have applied this to shepherding and hunting activities of the land to the south, the use of the rivers and the farming towards the other direction. Today – with the prevalence of commuting - of course new forms of work/economy apply. ‘This is not a mere image ....on a flat map but a geographer’s region and an anthropologist’s region and also the region of the evolutionary economist’ (Geddes 1923 p. 2). Talking about the idea of the common weal, he says ‘From an understanding of our regions and cities’ (i.e. places), ‘we cannot but come to vitalizing and evolving them in place, work and people; and with every case their own people creating the best from their own place. Thus Holland has made the Dutch and the Dutch made Holland...’ (Geddes 1923 p.6).<sup>126</sup>

*PLACE / WORK / FOLK* is a triptych that inspired how we were looking at our HOME by informing our project themes. Bringing geography, economy and anthropology together in one conceptual framework, which underpins a wide range of Deveron Projects’ thinking and visioning. Starting from the needs of an individual person, this three-pronged requirement for a balanced life of individuals as outlined in much literature around psychology and related disciplines can be translated into ‘happy (extended?) families’, and therefore the wellbeing of a community. Ultimately if all those – individuals, families, communities - are satisfied with their work, their place and their relationships in balance we would have a world that is in a positive equilibrium. **PRINCIPLE 11: Balancing Act**

### **Around Curating**

**Curating** is normally seen within contemporary arts as ‘a range of professional practices associated with making an exhibition (Project management, hanging, PR, text, etc). **Curation** is what happens in the exhibition; the knowledge produced by the event (Jean-Paul Martinon, *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, 2015)<sup>127</sup>.

**Culture** - For our understanding of culture we take both inspiration and instruction from Lucy Lippard who understands culture to be ‘what defines place

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<sup>126</sup> During the time of writing this thesis I have taken space to literally walk a Valley Section from Mountain to Sea in Aberdeenshire. Walking from Ben MacDui to Peterhead, I aimed to discover people’s occupations within their natural surrounding during the Covid pandemic. This way I wanted to test the viability of Geddes’ Valley Section beyond the economic conditions, by including other interests and needs. More: <https://www.rememberingtogether.scot/aberdeenshire/meet-the-artist-48s98> (Accessed 30 August 2022)

<sup>127</sup> Text taken from a slide by Dr Jon Blackwood lecture on curating.

and meaning to people. But where place equally defines culture' (Lippard 1997, p. 11).

### **Around Place**

**Placemaking** has become a popular term in recent years within urban regeneration programming<sup>128</sup>. It is referred to as an approach to the planning/design/management of public spaces with the aim of creating public places that promote people's health and well-being. At Deveron Projects we have been involved with placemaking long before the term became in vogue. However, we feel that we can not 'make a place' - the place is already there - we can only 'contribute to a place'. Patrick Geddes' Place/Work/Folk model helps us with this thinking.

**Cultural Audit** is a kind of both mental as well as physical grid we carry out at Deveron Projects to identify both topics and groups we want to work with. It establishes a range of facts relating to our community from statistical figures to more subjective interpretations. More on Cultural Audit has been written in the ARTocracy book (Sacramento and Zeiske 2010, p. 59).

**Deep Listening** is a term that has a range of different understandings. In music, it is referred to exploring the relationship between different kinds of sounds (natural, digital, instrumental, voice etc). Deep Listening, as described by the Centre of Deep Listening<sup>129</sup> 'explores the difference between the involuntary nature of hearing and the voluntary, selective nature of listening'.

I – in this thesis - understand deep listening as a form of showing genuine interest in people's interests, worries and concerns. It is a way of listening closely to whoever one meets – groups or individuals. This method 'of talking to people we would normally not talk to' allows us to extract and map valuable information that can inform our project themes, the partnerships and the methods of working with artists and communities.

**Deep Looking** is related to deep listening, allowing us to look actively round for people or opportunities to listen to. It is a form of conscious 'people watching'.

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<sup>128</sup> See for example <https://www.placestandard.scot> Scottish Town Partnership Toolkit: [https://www.scotlandstowns.org/town\\_centre\\_toolkit](https://www.scotlandstowns.org/town_centre_toolkit); 20 Minute Neighbourhood scheme: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2021/march/20-minute-neighbourhoods/>

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.deeplisting.rpi.edu/deep-listening/>

**Deep Mapping** relates to mapping that goes beyond two-dimensional geographic/geological mapping. Deep mapping unearthes information that relates to the politics, social, art, songs and stories of a place. 'To get an understanding of an actual place' - according to Sacramento and Bloom – 'one must inhabit its multiple overlapping contradictory stories simultaneously' (Sacramento and Bloom 2017 end cover page).

**Slow Mapping** allows us to continuously build on the information, new insights and strategies for local engagement that comes from Deep Mapping. Beyond detailed recording, it allows to take time to make use and re-evaluate the findings on an ongoing basis<sup>130</sup>.

**The Commons** is 'neither market nor state, capitalism nor communism, but it consists of three main elements: a particular resource; a particular community that manages that resource; and the rules and negotiations the community develops to manage it ... A common can't be sold, it can't be given away, and its benefits are shared equally among the members of the community' (Monbiot 2019). According to the International Organisation of the Study of the Commons (IOSC 2022), "the original meaning of the term 'commons' comes from the way communities managed land that was held 'in common' in mediaeval Europe".

For Deveron Projects this means the common use of the physical, environmental and cultural assets of the town. It is the foundation of *the town is the venue* methodology.

### **Around Research**

**Action Research** is a social science research methodology that aims for transformative change through the tandem process of doing research, while taking action. With its transformative goals, many of Deveron Project's projects could fall under this category. Good examples of this are the Weeping Willow/Brexit Tree which was planted on the Day that the UK left the EU. Or the *White Wood*, which was a planting combining peace and ecology in reaction to the nation wide WW1 celebrations based One example is the White Wood, which was planted as a commemoration to WW1.

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<sup>130</sup> Slow Mapping is a term that came about through my mentoring conversations with Julie Griffiths from SnailSpace in Donegal.

**Practice** (German: Praktik) is defined as ‘a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several interconnected elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. A practice – a way of cooking, of consuming, of working, of investigating, of taking care of oneself or of others, etc.’ (Reckwitz 2005, p. 251). In art this term often refers to the particular individual making practice an artist has that accompanies their career. For Deveron Project we normally worked with artists that have a participatory (or socially engaged) art practice.

### **And the Other**

**Duration** has a well rehearsed discourse, starting with thoughts from French philosopher Henri Bergson, who through his ‘Longue Durée’ philosophy understood the possibility of innovation as a result of undetermined and unforeseeable creativity/creation, based on full mobility and freedom as opposed to the predetermined result of mechanistic forces. Duration I define as a passage of life rather than merely a quantitative accumulation of time.

**Hospitality** is written in big letters on Deveron Projects’ mental wall serving our artists, our community and ourselves. Beyond the domestic it counterbalances criticality applied to art relating to why people should have a reason to want to get involved. In practice it can be food and comfort coming from female traditions, but it can also be beyond the domestic like giving people time, warmth, access to facilities, sharing resources, creation of opportunities... or simply listening to them, trying to take an interest in their lives.

**Songlines** are intertwined paths across Australia. Known as Dreamtime, they feature widely in indigenous creation mythology. They are both guides through the land as well as sources of advice on how to live in it. Songlines have been most beautifully described in the like-named book by Bruce Chatwin (Chatwin 1988). The Songline metaphor serves in the thinking of the entangled approaches and principles that make up the fluid cultural infrastructure or should I better say ecology of Deveron Projects.

**Sustainability** is a loaded word, which needs to encompass everything from environment to health, from economy to migration, from community planning to education. In relation to citizenship – according to Tim Ingold – it is the ‘work of the commoning’ – ‘the imaginative act of casting your experience forward, along

ways that join with others in carrying on a life together' (Ingold 2022 p.336). For Deveron Projects I prefer to talk about continuity as a more appropriate word for art development in a sustainable way.

**Wellbeing** is normally a term addressing individuals' state of happiness, health and prosperity. The New Economics Foundation in their short handbook (NEF 2012) - also adopted by the Mental Health Foundation<sup>131</sup> states that 'Well-being can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole'.

For us at Deveron Projects we are less working with individuals, but our concern lies with the town and its community as a whole. The term therefore for us refers to the avocation of a healthy, happy community that takes care of its people (FOLK), their economy (WORK), their culture and their environment (PLACE).

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<sup>131</sup> For a definition: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/what-wellbeing-how-can-we-measure-it-and-how-can-we-support-people-improve-it>



## **Appendix 9: Participatory Art Practice**

### **Artists/Organisations/Festivals with examples of work**

#### Socially Engaged Art Organisations (selection):

Urban:

**CASCO, Utrecht:** working for the commons is the guiding imperative for all

Casco operations. [www.casco.art](http://www.casco.art)

**Artangel, London:** <https://www.artangel.org.uk>

**TakeApart, Plymouth:** <https://takeapart.org.uk/about-us>

Rural:

**GRIZEDALE ARTS, Coniston/Lake District:** Grizedale Arts is the only arts organisation that I have come across that has been working for a longer period of time in a rural setting through social engagement. However, what differs is the demographic situation. While Huntly has a severe income gap featuring severe social deprivation without any art audience, Coniston is a wealthy place based in the Lake District almost entirely dependent on tourism. <https://www.grizedale.org/>; (Accessed 3 January 2022)

**INLAND:** arts collective dedicated to agricultural, social and cultural production, and a collaborative agency (based in Spain, but Europe wide). <https://inland.org/>

**BISHAN COMMUNITY:** A radical rural experiment in China. Sadly this 'utopia' was closed down by the government after 5 years in 2016 <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-15-5795-8>

**SNAILSPACE:** a new and emerging initiative by artist Julie Griffith, based on art and slowness in Donegal, Ireland.

#### Commissioning Agencies:

**SITUATIONS** (now ceased) was dedicated to producing and commissioning arts projects in the public realm and unconventional locations. Their work began with the site, situation, people, circumstance, history, or untold story of a place, taking us to many different cities, towns and villages across the UK and overseas. <https://www.situations.org.uk/about/>

**SKOR, NL** (closed in 2015): <https://www.facebook.com/SKOR-Foundation-Art-and-Public-Space-298764842084/>

**Nouveau Commanditaires:** <http://www.nouveauxcommanditaires.eu/en/>

**Artist Placement Group:** 'Context is half of the work' maxim placing artists in companies and other institutions. APG Manifesto:

[http://www.darkmatterarchives.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/FINAL\\_Manifesto\\_APG.pdf](http://www.darkmatterarchives.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/FINAL_Manifesto_APG.pdf)

#### Artists Working in a Participatory Way

- Santiago Serra: 160 cm Line Tattooed on 4 People ... Four prostitutes addicted to heroin hired for the price of a shot of heroin to give their consent to be tattooed.
- Francis Alÿs: *When Faith Moves Mountains*; 2002. Working in Lima shifting a dune at the sea for about 1m with 500 students.
- David Harding: *Town Artist*, Glenrothes; 1968-78; <https://www.davidharding.net/>
- Jeanne van Heeswijk: *De Strip*, turning a condemned shopping centre in Rotterdam into a cultural centre for the local residents; 2001-2004
- Federico Guzmán: *Insideout: Garden of Barter*, 2001. Building of a network of reciprocity in the Fundació Tàpies in Barcelona; where a colono (older rural immigrants) was allowed to turn the patio of the foundation into a garden and then swap the vegetable for other objects.
- Temporary Services: Brett Bloom and Marc Fischer produce exhibitions, events, projects, and publications where 'the distinction between art practice and other creative human endeavours is irrelevant'. Example project: Prisoner inventions. <https://temporaryservices.org/served/>, Temporary Services: *Construction Site*, improvised neighbourhood environment in an empty lot in Echo Park, Los Angeles; 2005
- Thomas Hirschhorn: *Bataille Monument (2002)* with unemployed people in Kassel; *24 hour Foucault*; *Musée Précaire Albinet*, both 2004; always pays people – never uses volunteers for art practice
- Alexandra Mir: *Cinema for the Unemployed*, Storgarten/Moss; 1998; <https://www.aleksandramir.info/projects/cinema-for-the-unemployed/>

- Sophie Calle: *The Hotel Room*, disguised as a chambermaid, she followed the occupants of one room. In her work (for example she stalks people in New York), the people subject to her projects often don't know about their collaboration.
- Carsten Höller: *The Baudouin Experiment*, a large-Scale Group Experiment taking inspiration from King Baudouin 1 day abdication to avoid the passing of an abortion law; 2001
- Tom Piper: *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* was a public art installation created in the moat of the Tower of London; July - November 2014.
- Walker and Bromwich:  
<https://www.walkerandbromwich.org.uk/work#/encampment-of-eternal-hope/>
- Agnes Denes: *Wheatfield* produced in the centre of New York <http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/works7.html>; *Tree Mountain*: large scale tree planting on a man made hill outside Helsinki. <http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/works4.html>, 1992-96; accessed 04/05/2022
- Rirkrit Tiravanija: *Pad Thai project*, Cooking a Thai meal at MOMA/NY; 1992
- SUPERFLEX: *INTERNET TV STATION* for elderly residents of a Liverpool housing project (*Tenantspin*, 1999)
- Annika Eriksson: *Do you want an audience?* inviting groups and individuals to communicate their ideas and skills at the Frieze Art Fair; 2003
- Jeremy Deller: *Social Parade* for more than twenty social organisations in San Sebastián (2004); *The Battle of Orgreave*; organised the reenactment of a key event from the English miners' strike of 1984—a violent clash between miners and the police in the village of Orgreave in Yorkshire; 2001
- Lincoln Tobier: *Radio Ld'A*, training local residents in Aubervilliers, northeast Paris, to produce half-hour radio programs; 2002
- Atelier Van Lieshout: *A-Portable* floating abortion clinic; 2001
- Lucy Orta: *Nexus Architecture*, workshops in Johannesburg (and elsewhere) to teach unemployed people new fashion skills and discuss collective solidarity; 1995–

- Pawel Althamer: *Bad Kids*; sending a group of “difficult” teenagers from Warsaw’s working-class Bródno district to hang out at his retrospective in Maastricht; 2004
- Jens Haaning: *The Refugee Calendar* producing a calendar that features black-and-white photographic portraits of refugees in Finland awaiting the outcome of their asylum applications; 2002
- Phil Collins: *they shoot horses*; disco-dancing marathon for teenagers in Ramallah, which he recorded to produce the two-channel video installation; 2004
- Artur Zmijewski: *The Singing Lesson I*, video project for which a group of deaf students filmed singing the Kyrie to Jan Maklakiewicz’s 1944 *Polish Mass* in a Warsaw church; 2001

#### Curated Projects and Festivals

- *Culture in Action*. 1993. Curated by Mary Jane Jacob, Chicago
- *Places With a Past* (1991) and *Places With a Future* (2005), curated by Mary Jane Jacob, Charleston
- *B-Side Festival*, Isle of Portland (ongoing)

#### Longer Term Projects

- **Edgware Road Project**, Serpentine Gallery/London - establishing the *Centre for Possible Studies* that functions as a meeting place, research centre, artists’ residency and workshop space; 2009-12
- **Blue House Project**, Rotterdam/NL – one house within a housing block became community space where artists, activists, and scholars lived communally and invited residents to coproduce a range of works, many around ideas of hospitality and social space; 2004-2009
- **Oda Projesi**, 3 female artists worked through a three-room apartment in the Galata district of Istanbul, providing a space for collaborations and cooperations with their neighbours; 1997-2005, <http://odaprojesi.blogspot.com/>
- **Trekoner Art Plan**, Aarhus/Denmark – Kerstin Bergendal developed over 12 years in parallel with an urban development plan bringing artists into the planning process but it also ‘counterfed the strategic urban planning process allowing for unplanned artistic interventions’; 2001-13

- **Beyond**, Utrecht – Tom van Gestel commissioned temporary and permanent works by dozens of artists, architects, urbanists and writers in conjunction with the urban renewal of the Leidsche Rijn area; 1999-2009
- **Manual Labour**, London - A long term practice-based research project with Sophie Hope and Jenny Richards exploring physical and emotional relationships to work. It reconsiders current time-based structures of work (when does work start and end?) and reasserts the significance of the physical (manual) aspect of immaterial, affective and emotional labour. Research included a 9 mile walk to work, meetings with co-workers, film screenings and eating together during a Public Lunch Hour. Project continues. <https://sophiehope.org.uk/projects/>
- **Creative Egremont**, Grizedale Art, Cumbria - Egremont is a West Cumbrian town close to the Sellafield nuclear processing site. Suffering economic decline since the demise of mining and other traditional industries. In 2005 Grizedale Arts was commissioned to create an evolving programme of temporary public art projects celebrating local culture, that would provide a platform for future cultural growth.
- **One Day Sculpture**, organised by *Situations*, was a year-long project of 20 one-day-only interventions in various locations in New Zealand. <https://www.situations.org.uk/projects/one-day-sculpture/>



## **Appendix 10: Evidence of Peer Esteem**

### **Publications, Press, Talks/Lectures, Presentations, Awards**

#### **OWN PUBLICATIONS AND WRITINGS**

SACRAMENTO, N. and ZEISKE, C., 2010

*ARTocracy: a handbook for collaborative practice*, Berlin, JOVIS.

JACOB, M.J. and ZEISKE, C., 2013. *Fernweh: A Travelling Curator's Project*.

Berlin

ZEISKE, C., 2011. *The town is the venue*, University of Lapland publication:

COOL

[https://lauda.ulapland.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/62112/COOL\\_Applied%20Visual%20Arts%20in%20the%20North\\_verkkoon.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y](https://lauda.ulapland.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/62112/COOL_Applied%20Visual%20Arts%20in%20the%20North_verkkoon.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y)

ZEISKE, C., 2018. *Brexit and Beyond* in: Steadman, G. and van Lente, S., eds.,

*Its not just the Economy stupid!*, Berlin, Humboldt University.

<https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/25665/1/Brexit%20and%20the%20Cultural%20Sector.pdf>

In addition I edited over 20 publications published by Deveron Projects on projects with various artists. Those can be found on the Deveron Projects website: <https://www.deveron-projects.com/shop/catalogue/>

#### **ART MAGAZINES REFERENCING CLAUDIA ZEISKE AND/OR DEVERON PROJECTS:**

ART MONTHLY: Review of ARTocracy book by Jennifer Thatcher/Folkestone

Triennial

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/92c0f482c4434de2721d475007721fe0/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=106011>

ART AFRICA MAGAZINE: Article on *the town is the venue* working with African artists.

<https://artafricamagazine.org/the-town-is-the-venue-a-walk-and-talk-with-claudia-zeiske-in-simon-s-town/>

SENZA CORNICE: Article on *Walking without Walls* project: Italian/English language art magazine: <https://rivista.senzacornice.org/#!/articolo/163>.

FRIEZE: Article on *Freedom of Movement* project:  
<https://www.frieze.com/article/its-catastrophic-how-uks-immigration-demands-hurt-art-world>

AN: Review of PRAKTIKA with David Harding: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/reviews/praktika-huntly-aberdeenshire-socially-engaged-art-practice/>

AN: Review of ARTocracy book: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/resource/chasing-the-shadow/>

AN: Review of *Why are artists poor?* event: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/resource/why-are-artists-poor-1/>

AN: Review of Faceloop: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/perfect-hosts-residency-brings-social-media/>

DAVID STEVENSON and RACHEL BLANCHE (Queen Margaret University/Edinburgh)

*The town is the venue: "Place-making" at the heart of cultural policy.* In: Hristova, S., Dragičević Šešić, M. & Duxbury, N. Culture and Sustainability in European Cities: Imagining Europolis. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 178-190, 2015

BLAKE MORRIS: *The Walking Institute: a reflexive approach to tourism.* International Journal of Tourism Cities.  
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJTC-11-2017-0060/full/html>

JO VERGUNST/ANNA VERMEHREN

Berghahn Journals NY/Oxford: The art of slow sociality

<https://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/cja/30/1/ca300111.xml>

<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA396325820&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=03057674&p=AONE&sw=w&userGroupName=anon%7Eef3cf64d>

ALAN MCPHERSON (2018): Duke University Press

Art, Trees, and the Enchantment of the Anthropocene: Caroline

Wendling's *White Wood*; Environmental Humanities (2018) 10 (1): 241–256.

Tim Ingold (2021): essay based on a lecture written for the White Wood opening in his most recent book *Imagining for Real*:

<https://www.routledge.com/Imagining-for-Real-Essays-on-Creation-Attention-and-Correspondence/Ingold/p/book/9780367775117>

TIM INGOLD (2020): *Shelter*. Essay on Tim Knowles' Project *Exploration Aids* in *Correspondences*.

Neil Mulholland (2016), University of Edinburgh: *PRAKTIKA II: 21 years of the Town is the Venue*; Available at:

[https://www.pure.ed.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/36572445/PRAKTIKA\\_2\\_Neil\\_Mulholland.pdf](https://www.pure.ed.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/36572445/PRAKTIKA_2_Neil_Mulholland.pdf)

AMY SHARROCKS/CLARE QUALMAN, University of East London

Walking Women: <https://www.mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-11th-july-2016-er-outdoors-2/>

BLAKE MORRIS (2020): Walking Networks (Chapter on Walking Institute)

[https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=cuXaDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Claudia+Zeiske&ots=MJ8x8AD0-Q&sig=BAIOJeKucV9pA\\_LrEEiH9AQN\\_IY&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Claudia%20Zeiske&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=cuXaDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Claudia+Zeiske&ots=MJ8x8AD0-Q&sig=BAIOJeKucV9pA_LrEEiH9AQN_IY&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Claudia%20Zeiske&f=false)

INSTITUTO MESA, Brazil; Text on *Fernweh* curators travel event

<http://institutomesa.org/projects/fernweh-a-project-about-travel-hospitality-and-art-in-the-public-realm/?lang=en>

## **AWARDS**

DEVERON PROJECT Creative Place special award 2012

DEVERON ARTS Creative Place award (main) 2013

GULBENKIAN Award nomination 2021:

<https://www.creativescotland.com/what-we-do/latest-news/archive/2021/01/deveron-projects-shortlisted-for-civic-arts-award>

White Wood: SALTIRE Awards nominee: [https://www.deveron-projects.com/site\\_media/uploads/arts.pdf](https://www.deveron-projects.com/site_media/uploads/arts.pdf)

White Wood: WOODLANDS Award (p20-22):

<https://livingwoodsmagazine.co.uk/files/2021/12/LW61-Winter-2021-FINAL.pdf>

## **PRESENTATION ON CONFERENCES and other talks**

### **University talks:**

RGU/Gray's School of Art, several occasions since ca 2008

Edinburgh College of Art, 2016/2017

Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, 2014

Glasgow School of Art, 2012

University of Highlands and Island (UHI), 2015, 2019

University of Aberdeen, Visual Culture, annually 2015-20

Perth College, 2017

Chelsea School of Arts, 2012

St Martin School of Arts, 2016

Oxford Brooks University, 2015

Birkbeck College, annually between 2014-18

Plymouth University, Dartmoor conference, May 2019

Limerick School of Arts, Eire, March 2015

Humboldt University, Germany, Nov 2017

Auckland University, NZ, March 2020

Auckland School of Arts, NZ, March 2020  
Huntly College, NZ, February 2020  
Glasgow University, Art+Walking conference with Dee Heddon, Oct 2015  
Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman Women's University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia,  
January 2020  
Addis Ababa University School of Fine Art, Ethiopia, Nov 2013  
Bolzano University, Italy, March 2019  
ARTSAFRICA, Cape Town, September 2016

**Conferences and other talks:**

CULTURE ACTION EUROPE *Culture Crops Europe* conference talk, Oct 2019:  
<https://www.cae-bto.org/culture-crops-program>

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN SCOTLAND, March 2020:  
[https://www.ads.org.uk/pscf2020\\_deveronarts/](https://www.ads.org.uk/pscf2020_deveronarts/)

MUSEUM OF NONVISIBLE ARTS, Yale University, Dec 2015:  
<https://museumofnonvisibleart.com/interviews/claudia-zeiske/>

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF FINE ART/AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE, Berlin:  
*Fragile Affinities* conference on culture in a time of rising nationalism in Europe,  
Dec 2017:  
[https://igbk.de/images/projekt\\_fragile\\_affinities/Fragile-Affinities\\_Focus-UK.pdf](https://igbk.de/images/projekt_fragile_affinities/Fragile-Affinities_Focus-UK.pdf)

SCOTLAND'S TOWN PARTNERSHIP talk:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dY8jINfgOec>

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH: *Steep Trail* conference: June 2013:  
<https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/publications/steep-trail-conference-collaboration-improving-the-model>

*The Art of Dwelling* conference, Birmingham, 21 April 2015:  
<https://publicartonline.org.uk/whatsnew/trainingevents/article.php/The+Art+of+Dwelling.html>



RIOT Sligo, Ireland, March 2020: <https://www.riotsligo.ie/>

DG Kunstraum, Munich, Oct 2017: <https://www.dg-kunstraum.de/>

Edinburgh City Art Gallery/Edinburgh Art Festival, August 2018: in conversation with David Harding

Stills Gallery, August 2019: Movement of Freedom conference

ARTWALKPorty, Portobello, conducted art walk, Sept 2019

ARTWALKPorty, Portobello, conducted art walk, chaired Art/Environment symposium, Sept 2021

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH, *Cultivator* Conference, Scilly Isles, Cornwall, May 2019: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/esif-funded-projects/cultivator>

MERZ Barn, Littoral, Cumbria, Free University of Liverpool, June 2012: <https://merzbarlangdale.wordpress.com/project-development/the-merz-barn-project-2012-14/>

CENTRALA, Art from Eastern Europe, April 2021: <http://centrala-space.org.uk/event/art-and-brexit---music-industry-2>

GOVET BREWSTER GALLERY, Plymouth, New Zealand, March 2021: <https://govetbrewster.com/>

BRITISH COUNCIL Saudi Arabia, Riyadh, Jan 2020

CORBUSIER HAUS, Berlin, Oct 2019

NAFASI ART CENTRE, Dar-es-Salaam, British Council East Africa (full day curated walk), Jan 2018

9<sup>TH</sup> MERCOSUL BIENNIAL, Brazil, Sept 2013  
<https://www.newmuseum.org/blog/view/city-as-curriculum-the-9th-mercotel-biennial>

NITEROI MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, Brazil, Sept 2013  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niter%C3%B3i\\_Contemporary\\_Art\\_Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niter%C3%B3i_Contemporary_Art_Museum)

RES ARTIS, Amsterdam, Dec 2020

LANDMADE, Strohne/Brandenburg, Germany, Aug 2019

SCOTLAND + VENICE, *Lure of the Lost* symposium, Italy, Oct 2016

UNIDEE, Fondazione Pistoletti, Biella, Italy, Sept 2020: <https://unidee2020.hotglue.me/?start/>

TATE Gallery, conducted a Friday lunch (collaboration with Counterpoint Arts), Sept 2018

CENTRO WILFREDO LAM, Havana Biennial, Cuba, Aug 2012  
[www.wlam.cult.cu/cacwifredolam.html](http://www.wlam.cult.cu/cacwifredolam.html)

32 DEGREE EAST, Kampala, Uganda, Sept 2013 <https://ugandanartstrust.org/>

WALKON Conference, University of Sunderland

<https://issuu.com/stereographic/docs/walkonconference>; published 26 September 2014; accessed 7 June 2022

## GENERAL PRESS

### Deveron Projects/Claudia Zeiske general

THE NATIONAL: <https://www.thenational.scot/news/19125039.north-east-town-became-international-leader-socially-engaged-art/>

SCOTTISH ARTS NEWS:

[https://www.flemingcollection.com/scottish\\_art\\_news/news-press/room-to-roam](https://www.flemingcollection.com/scottish_art_news/news-press/room-to-roam)

THE HERALD: <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18918883.galleries-woman-put-art-towns-heart/>

ZEISKE, C., mention in Scottish Parliament: <https://www.deveron-projects.com/news/>

THE SCOTSMAN: <https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/art/claudia-zeiske-25-years-running-deveron-arts-huntly-we-invented-idea-town-venue-3085489>

BRINKWIRE: [https://www.deveron-projects.com/site\\_media/uploads/04012021\\_-\\_the\\_woman\\_who\\_took\\_art\\_to\\_the\\_heart\\_of\\_the\\_town.pdf](https://www.deveron-projects.com/site_media/uploads/04012021_-_the_woman_who_took_art_to_the_heart_of_the_town.pdf)

THE TIMES:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/these-are-the-arts-organisations-that-managed-to-defy-the-pandemic-r75bwqswb>

STV (talking with Jaak Coetzer on 21st Birthday):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfjWBcSB2il>

THE HERALD:

[https://www.heraldsotland.com/life\\_style/arts\\_ents/15039625.huntly-good-place-21-years-deveron-arts-marked-founder-looks-future/](https://www.heraldsotland.com/life_style/arts_ents/15039625.huntly-good-place-21-years-deveron-arts-marked-founder-looks-future/)

THE HERALD:

Divine, C., The Art of the Slow Marathon, *Herald Scotland*, 13 April 2013.

## **White Wood**

BBC:

Caroline Wendling interview: <https://vimeo.com/119238230>

STV News: <https://vimeo.com/173601579>

SOURCE/Common Wheel: <https://sourcenews.scot/stewart-smith-how-the-white-wood-a-living-monument-for-peace-is-bringing-a-community-together/>

## **Other**

Ensemble Eòrpa (2021):

<https://www.scotsman.com/whats-on/arts-and-entertainment/album-reviews-ensemble-eorpa-rhiannon-giddens-declan-orourke-dinorsaur-jr-3200865>

Home to Home walk (2017) various press: <https://www.deveron-projects.com/home-to-home/>

Anthony Schrag walk (2016) to Venice various press: <https://www.deveron-projects.com/lure-lost-contemporary-pilgrimage/>  
<https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/venice-2015-walking-in-the-footsteps-of-pilgrims-from-scotland-to-the-biennale/>

## **ART WORK produced in Huntly shown elsewhere**

Exhibitions:

David Blyth: *Knockturne* shown at Aberdeen Art Gallery

David Blyth: *Bridle Suite* shown at National Trust for Scotland  
Nancy Mteki: Mbereko shown at Zimbabwe National Gallery of Art  
Christine Borland: FLAX shown at Inverleith House, Edinburgh  
Sanaa Gateja: Framer Framed Gallery, Amsterdam, <https://framerframed.nl/en/>  
Eva Merz: Space/Retail/Magic in Stavanger  
Stuart MacAdam: Lines Lost shown at RSA, Edinburgh

Other Representations:

Clemens Wilhelm: The Brexit Tree Film at Alchemy Film Festival;  
<https://alchemyfilmmandarts.org.uk/continue-watching-the-brexit-tree>;  
Jaak Coetzer: *Room to Roam* choir dvd purchased by Aberdeen Art Gallery  
Jacqueline Donachie: *Slow Down* at Gi/Glasgow, 2012; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2013

**OTHER**

Interview with Richard Demarco <https://www.deveron-projects.com/white-wood/>  
Various interviews: <https://www.deveron-projects.com/artists/> also in Deveron Projects newsletters

## **Appendix 11: Conversations, letters and guestbook**

**Rachael Disbury in conversation with Claudia Zeiske**

**ZOOM from our homes in Hawick and Huntly: 19 Jan 2022**

**Rachael Disbury worked between 2014 and 2018 at Deveron Projects. She started as an Intern, then became the Shadow Curator Intern, moved on to the Local Programmer post and later to the Art & Community Worker position where she developed the HOME programme. For her last year with Deveron Projects she was the Project Manager, responsible for a large portfolio of administrative and curatorial tasks. She is now Co-Director of Alchemy Film and Arts in the Borders town of Hawick.**

CZ: Hello Rachael, thank you for joining me today.

(I go on to explain how the PhD by Public Output works, which case studies - Room to Roam, Slow Marathon, White Wood and the HOME programme – I use)  
The Home programme is important, as you have been establishing the position following other similar positions jobs, like Catrin Jeans/Health Visitor and Norma Hunter/Art Visitor.

Cab you remember how you got in touch in the first place?

RD: I was on a Master's course. We were instructed to read ARTocracy. Being on a course on the theory of curating. I was already busy doing projects. When I found the book, I looked at the Deveron Arts website and found out that you can actually join it. I applied and started a few weeks after hearing about it. Now that I look back, I left a course that I was on. I was purely working at Deveron Projects and left an institutional course. I got the qualification, but this internship offered something that was lacking within the system.

We went straight into Anthony Schrag's walking project *Lure of the Lost*. Now I run my own organisation, working with my own trainees. What were my experiences? A good approach, I remember talking to you about, was that the experience could be shaped to what the intern wanted to do and was interested in. That is worth exploring for you. How did you know the ones that could take on more responsibilities? It could be quite a gamble, to give a lot of responsibilities, when they are relatively inexperienced. How do you know what somebody is



capable of? I think about this a lot now in my own team in terms of delegation. How can I make room for them to try things?

I arrived in January and worked consistently until we went to Venice together for the end of the walk and the presentation. This was a great opportunity and created a lasting bond with the organisation and the artist involved. I was a production assistant/assisting curator, if I trace back to where I started.

I got a chance to meet Anthony and felt star struck. You encouraged people to join at the table. People can access the different levels of hierarchy, and this is what is unusual that nobody is above making the coffee as well. These things are practical, but they seep into a wider value system. Even somebody like Anthony comes in to make the tea. That is upon him, but it has been signalled to him when he is in the office, that he is able to do that and make himself at home. This is already touching on the HOME idea. People just came in, and you would give them like even an hour – like somebody from the community. It was just part of the work. People felt comfortable there.

I was there for less than a year and became the local programmer. Which was a continuation of the cultural health worker: 3 month project intern; 6 month SC intern; 9 months local programmer; 1 year art and community worker; 1 year Project manager.

In total 4 years with 5 job descriptions!

CZ: That's funny!

RD: It was unique to see every side of an organisation.

CZ: I think it has happened to a few of the people we worked with. It has to do with the opportunities that come up at the right time. But I also think, one sees opportunities and you create them.

RD: Yes, but there needs to be a certain environment where somebody at the bottom could feel to stay.

Even very early on, I was asked to join a meeting with the Forestry Commission. I had no clue what I was doing. You were there, and this proximity. You always took an intern with you. You asked, who should I take? Even when I was Project

Manager, I made sure that somebody went with you, that they had a chance for formal training, that they managed to come along to the city at some point. This started to form the structure of traineeships.

CZ: Do you have interns now?

RD: Yes, we have 3 trainees, all are working on different projects. One lives in Dumfries, one in Glasgow, another in Edinburgh. They are all digital. What they want most is shadowing. We can offer that.

There is something of a really high turnover of people. And there is retention, with people like me or Joss staying. How do people retain control and take on autonomy as well?

CZ: One thing that has come up in my own thinking not only for the interns but also for the artists, is that they are 'nice' (a very subjective thing of course) and fit into the community and that they fit into the team. Same for the board, and the artists. With the internships you almost test people out and you find out who you like to work with.

RD: You know, if you have a broom, and you replace the brush and then you replace the stick. But is it still the same afterwards? It is strange to think of being there with very different people now. It is stored in memory as a nostalgic thought.

Home means place (like in Newcastle), it means rooted. It is not necessarily domestic.

Some people felt uncomfortable with that. But I felt ok. It's easy to talk about the flowers, the kitchen and the coffee. Maybe it is just another word for Place.

I liked the term Syrian New Scots, the title means 'you should be here'.

CZ: Interesting the gendered thing. I never got to grips with it. I just wanted to do it like this. Maybe, because I have seen so many unhomely offices. They are either very functional or they are unconsidered. I was glad to see your office at Alchemy – it certainly felt homely.

This brings me to the Work-Life thing. We had a few rubbings, did we not? Some things I would do differently. Now that I have taken time to read Patrick Geddes. He resists the compartmentalization of life. I always wanted to find a way where

people do not split work from life. That it is the same for them. But I realise now with the distance, that you can not expect that from everybody. Also in hindsight it became too much for myself. So the HOME, the homely office I found important. But I am reconsidering this. I am not sure how I would do things differently... Maybe I would just talk about it more.

RD: As curatorial activists, in order to get meaning and self-worth and achievement and that is a totally embodied commitment. We also like to see ourselves as anti-capitalist. This is what I am worth, this is what I can give and in return I get commitment. And we go between those different holes. Somewhere in the middle it meets. Even if I stop at 5pm it does not mean that it does not seep into life.

Like we at Alchemy don't have whatsapp groups. It is hard with home working. The *work where you live* is interesting. We decided to live here and invest in here. When people say you are not from here, - I say no, but I have settled here and I am committed to the place. But I am not expecting this from everybody. People of colour or who are queer, I cant really tell them that they will find a community here.

CZ: *Work where you live and live where we work*. You were there when we coined it, right?

RD: Yes.

CZ: My recollection is that people wanted that acknowledged. But it could be seen that people are forced to live here.

RD: Yes, that is how it was.

CZ: If everybody would commute, you would run the organisation differently.

RD: Yes, because it is so place based. That's also why it is like this.

We did interviews recently and some people think they can work from Glasgow. In most jobs there is an expectation to be there. I don't think it is too big a thing to ask, I think.

CZ: If you live in Aberdeen with a family, then it is a big thing to ask. You see, I worked for Duff House in Banff. And I was very committed to that job but I did not care the same way about the people of Banff as I did with the people of Huntly.

RD: Maybe it has to do about the project. The Banff job was not set up in working with the community in the same way.

CZ: Yes, I had to admit that to myself that I cared for the job, but not that much for the community.

RD: So maybe it is more about the role. When we talk about home and away...

CZ: You are the Director of another art organisation, in Hawick, another town in a similar context of size and distance from the centre. How did the work that you did here in Huntly influence you? Or how would it have been if you had worked in an urban art place for example the CCA or the DCA?

RD: Most important is the on the ground practicalities with keeping relationships. That is the big lesson. The partnership working, the realities of 'live where you work' public funding, etc in a place which has not a real framework of institutional culture. Here in Hawick it is different. We have only one medium: film. We work Borders-wide. So, it's different enough that it means I am not doing just the same thing.

We also had the pandemic of course. Most of our work has been around digital resilience work. Art is just the method, the means to discuss something else. It is not the product. This is the main difference between places like Alchemy, Stove, Deveron Projects and places like the CCA. It is a value system, I guess a definition of what art is.

CZ: Yes, in my readings I come across this a lot. Even within the Art and Anthropology discourse, we always end up with the gallery.

RD: There are also practical things. Like the benefits of a good board, partnerships with non-arts groups.

CZ: Do you think working in the rural area is different from the urban?

RD: Yes, why is this? I think it is maybe what is available. In urban space there is so much, you can have everything. But in the rural you need to work with the resources you have. We had to look at our constitution to ask ourselves whether this is still art. In cities you have delineations between services. If you are invested in social change, maybe you are better in a rural space.

CZ: The advantage is also that you can test things out more. Not so many colleagues look over your shoulder. One is less shoehorned into what you do.

RD: In Hawick we are more urban than in Huntly. It is not that rural.

CZ: I am talking about the small town context. How do you like to call yourself?

RD: Curator is best in art circles. But I prefer Art Worker. It's more democratic.

CZ: It includes all the many things we do. Less elitist.

RD: Maybe it's another practice that I learned from Huntly. Curation can not happen in isolation of context and production. You have to think about the context you are in, the people, the context. We do this a lot with the trainees.

CZ: It gets you back to Place/Work/Folk.

RD: Yes, it could be there.

CZ: The other question: at some point you said there is a kind of –ism in this. What do you think?

RD: It is hard to answer. Its like education. Things getting thrown at you. People get dropped at the deep end. Like Black Mountain College, they must have a language to describe these things. Deveron Projects created something like a school. Art workers, interns and artists are immersed in a bootcamp of methods, scenarios, challenges and engagement practices - every day learning something



new. People like myself and others who are now running rural organisations, adapting and developing methods of social practice in a range of contexts beyond Huntly, are the evidence of that.

CZ: I know I am quite scary. I am aware of that. Which scary moments do you particularly remember?

RD: It can be. For example the Old Road cottage was taken at times without respect. One day we went in and it was such a mess. We had to sort it. It was not nice. You got so upset. You give the opportunities, but people don't always think the same way about HOME.

CZ: Yes, it was the day when Trump took over and we wanted to have a chatting day, and instead we were just cleaning. And we had May Murad talking on the Friday lunch talking from Gaza.

Tracing her trajectory is very interesting.

She said that 'you did not listen. You just wanted me.'

That brings us back here in the personality that you trust.

RD: Interesting that she can articulate that now.

What was also scary as a Programmer, tasked with 50 events a year. Cooking and all this, it's quite daunting. It is very constant.

CZ: Yes, that I would do differently now. I sometimes don't know how I managed myself. Really.

At the time I was on a hamster wheel. I got excited about things and said let's do that, and so we did. And something like Friday Lunch - it just grew exponentially from a team lunch to every week events. Today I would do less programming, that is definite.

Remember the *White Wood*, it was totally over the top for such a small thing.

RD: That was magic Claudia. It was my favourite thing.

CZ: Similarly crazy was our 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

RD: Those events were working well, but all the constants that is a lot!

CZ: The HOME programme is one of my case examples. It does not feature on the website.

RD: It was retroactive. It was already happening. To give Friday Lunch and *Food Exchange* a platform.

CZ: For example *Food Chain* was a reaction to do something about ethnic minorities. It would bring different ethnic people together. Similar Friday Lunch is a continuous research and gives you the basis for the artists as a resource.

Same with the Farmers Market.

You are always connecting with the community through this research.

The other part was when the artist came you could draw on them.

RD: It is a methodology that facilitates all the other projects.

CZ: Yes, it is. You are right. Rachael, thanks so much for talking to me. You are just wonderful and I am very proud of what you are doing now.

**Jo Vergunst in conversation with Claudia Zeiske**

**Aberdeen Art Gallery Café**

**1 March 2022**

**Jo Vergunst is Senior Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Aberdeen. His research is about people's relationships with their environments.**

CZ: I am so glad we managed to meet Jo. As you know, I always wanted to bring in an anthropologist to Deveron Projects, but somehow it never worked out.

JV: It is somewhat problematic bringing in anthropologists beyond projects. More important is to be looking at the organisation as a whole.

CZ: I am now looking at the idea of auto-ethnography. As I never intended to study or write this, but with the experiences in my back I want to undertake this research work retroactively.

JV: You were always the right person to do that work. You are now one step removed, with a bit of distance, which you really need to do this work. I am so glad you are doing that. It's great to know. But it must be difficult to sum up such a big body of work. Normally in anthropology you are going for a year to do fieldwork.

CZ: It is 25 years exactly. In that period I have done about 130 projects.

JV: You have very good documentation in the Deveron Projects archive, which is an amazing resource.

CZ: Yes, we kept a consistent archive in the office, which is mirrored on the website.

JV: When I talk to students, I tell them you may take all those notes, but you always have stuff in your body. Remembering stuff is such a wealth of material.

CZ: It's almost all coming from memory.

JV: You have that relationship between what you have written, then the archive, photos etc, but then your own experiences. Your memories.

What's interesting about your situation is that it is so huge. What does the memory do to that record?

Looking back to it you might feel different about things that you have done.

CZ: It is good taking the time out. I wished I had the chance to take a sabbatical.

Some things would be done differently now. Not much, but some yes.

Sometimes people ask you what you would have done differently educating your children. It's just the small things.

JV: It is about hindsight.

CZ: Things have become so much more bureaucratic. Younger people embrace it much more than I can.

JV: That would be so interesting to log the changes. What was different to now in terms of bureaucracy, but also methodology, projects, etc.

Srivinas – an ethnography of a village in India called The Remembered Village.

All his field notes were caught in a fire and so he had to reconstruct the whole thing from memory. He talks much more about meaning and representation rather than facts.

Likewise, you did research on one level, but you were not taking field notes every day. Sense of memory and hindsight is an interesting process in what you are doing.

CZ: In the end I would like to write a book. For example a graphic novel, where you can also describe the conflicts that you have.

JV: Reflecting on your practice through your lenses – it will be very interesting to contextualise all the different things that you were doing. How did you learn from other things that were happening?

CZ: Where I am sitting unusually in all those discourses is duration. In the Art and Anthropology discourse they (Schneider, Sansi, etc) hardly touch the role of the curator. The curator is also an anthropologist in my case. I have the double function. The Anthropologist likes to be as neutral as possible, where else I was deliberately looking for transformation.

A normal art organisation has a building, then they think of the artist, then the community comes at the end.

Where else I started with the community, then the artist, then the venue.

It was very handy not to have a gallery.

Then there is the focus on the rural/small town context, which has only one secondary school.

I have always been reluctant to do socially engaged art with poverty niches. This avoids segregation.

JV: The time I started to better understand that was when I was following what Jacqui Donachie was doing. Anna Vermehren was there. I did speak to Jacqui. But when Anna and I wrote it up we did not focus on Jacqui that much. We talked more about the process of being in the town.

That is what she could do as an artist, be a bit provocative, ripple things a bit. And your curation was feeding into this.

CZ: What is not so much seen from the outside is, that it can take a very long time; even a year or two to decide on a project and then locate the right artist. Then we develop the project together.

JV: Yes, I was there for the cycle route. She told me that she had seen the image of the bicycles leaving traces, but then saw that this image was not real. She wanted to create that with real people. She was making the people do this. Me and Anna wrote that up. This went into a book and a journal.

CZ: That will be great to get again. Thanks for sending this to me.

JV: Anna was very good with this.



It was a nice example for me. Because I had a sense of the significance of the organisation. You should say that. Normally the talk is about the importance of the artist. This continuous drive is much bigger than just the ideas of the artist.

CZ: Yes, but I also think we are all equally important.

JV: Demonstrating those social relations is classic anthropology. People do have to have relations with each other. The art world is aware on one level about this. But in your work you have the unique chance to demonstrate this. The problems as well as the opportunities.

CZ: I am new to the art and anthropology discourse. I need to understand that and identify how to fit in. But their case examples always end up with the gallery.

JV: This is what Tim Ingold has been talking about for a long time. The classic thing of appreciation of the art historian who examines the object, trying to read it backwards. Instead, Tim said we should pay attention to the process and the life of the thing as it develops and what relationships it has with people.

We have an option course on 'art and anthropology'. We came to the gallery at the start of course. From there we do stuff and look at artists who do stuff. That is really building on Tim's critique on the focus of the final objects. Of course there is an outcome like Jacqui's book. But the main thing was the process.

CZ: Why can the work not be critiqued by people – eg Bill Viola – who are actually affected?

When I studied anthropology it was people like Malinowski, Evans Pritchard, looking at people in exotic locations. Do people today still go out into the field to study one place?

JV: Yes of course they do. Today they have more choices. One student spent a year living on the Isle of Coull. She knew the place already. She did classic ethnography through the pandemic.

Another student was meant to go to Japan, and it did not work out.

Anthropologists more than in the past do not necessarily find one place. But even if they are for example in Coull, they still are connected all the time with

social media, etc. Before it was more a mapping of a place, but with globalisation this has changed.

CZ: Do they mainly work with topics rather than communities?

JV: Interesting. Most of them work with networks of communities, a kind of mix.

CZ: I was alerted to auto-ethnography.

JV: I am a bit sceptical of auto-ethnography. What do you mean by that? Your situation is probably more convincing than others. Any ethnography should include a sense of the researcher. Therefore all ethnography is auto-ethnography.

CZ: I accept this. Tim Ingold (who alerted me to this) also said that he was against it. But in my case it is the only way of doing it, he thought, as I am doing it retroactively

JV: You need to reflect on this research tradition.

There is also material on auto-biography that might be of interest.

CZ: I feel reluctant to call it ethnography. Because I did not go out to do fieldwork.

JV: I think it is not really a problem. Look at traditions you can draw on. You don't need to say that 'I am asserting myself as an ethnographer, or auto-ethnographer'. But there is interesting literature that you can draw on. I would expect that you read some of the stuff. You need to say:

I am reflecting on my career, as a curator/leader of an art organisation. To do that I draw on traditions of ethnography and auto-ethnography; to help reflect on what I have done and how to analyse this.

I would be really interested in hearing your thoughts on different partners, audiences, funders, and how they find significance. And how you bring this all together. What for some is very unclear, others will find very clear.

In the case of Jacqui Donachie, it showed that the nature of the problem is that things are different to some people than to others.

JV: I was there for the Patrick Geddes event in the orchard. It was really lovely.

CZ: Place/Work/Folk thinking machines are a main focus for me looking through his lens. And building on ARTocracy.

JV: Oh yes, you need to build on that.

CZ: I have my principles that make it sustainable. This is the next step to follow on from that. Geddes is very helpful here.

JV: I read his book: Cities in Evolution. It's in the special collection at Queen Mother library.

CZ: I am also hosting a PG day at the Botanics. A walk and a talk.

JV: Oh, wow. We had a fabulous time with Joss at the Geddes conference walking around weeds in Dundee.

I have seen the outlook tower. I used to go as a kid. Now it's a museum of optical illusions – visitor attraction. They did have an exhibition on Geddes. There is a big white table and your eyes get used to it, it was absolutely amazing.

CZ: I have no idea how Patrick packed all this into his one life.

JV: I would love to see the PhD writing some time. Please send it when you need comments. I would love to do that.

CZ: Remember we do the Shadow Curator thing. I like having questions that I can use as Shadow Curator questions that I can then answer. I would like to crowdsource the questions.

**Skype Conversation Claudia Zeiske(CZ) with Rachel Ashton (RA)**  
**Huntly/Dundee 14 December 2021**

Claudia 10:54

Good Morning Rachel, so nice to meet you at long last again.

Today I wanted to chat to you about the work we did together around the project *Walking without Walls* back in 2018. Maybe you could start with reflecting on your memories of the project, briefly summarise your processes and activities.

Rachel 10:56

Morning Claudia! Lovely to hear from you.

So, you approached me and introduced the idea and then introduced me to Palestinian Artist May Murad in Gaza. It was to be a sort of digital residency where I would be physically present and May would only be digitally here. We started communication by WhatsApp.

I remember lots of nice messaging with May, awkward and tentative to start with, introducing each other to our families and getting to know each other as much as we could from our great distance. All this through the means of WhatsApp.

Taking each other on digital walks, or sending little videos, because often it was impossible to see and communicate with the weak signal in both Gaza and the Scottish countryside.

We began painting each other's landscapes from these walks and videos and we also documented the wild plants along the way.

The whole project culminated in a walking marathon, simultaneously in Gaza and Huntly. This is a very quick summary! There was lots more to it of course.

Claudia 11:06

Thank you for this synopsis of the many things that unfolded over the period of - how long was it actually that we worked together?

For Deveron Projects it was always important to work with artists that have a rapport with the community. I had known you for quite a while before as an artist working in and around Huntly. I always loved your paintings, but as an organisation that specialises in socially engaged arts, linking with current political issues, it is difficult to work with artists that have largely a solitary studio practice. So the idea came up to link you with another painter with a studio practice from a

very different socio-political and geographic setting, that we would like to work with.

What I am really interested in, is the tension that was there at the beginning, as you said. Can you maybe talk about this a bit?

Rachel 11:11

It was a year. I think we started around Easter in 2017 and finished around Easter 2018.

It was a completely new experience for me working like this and it was for May too.

There were language difficulties to begin with, but this got easier. There were also quite easy feelings of connection, companionship, and compassion I would say between us from the start and some anxiety and sadness.

It was a strange time for me, we were rebuilding our house after a fire burnt my home and everything I owned, just a few months earlier. I was pretty lost.

Meeting May put my suffering into perspective because I realised, on hearing of her limited, difficult, and often frightening circumstances in Gaza, that despite losing our shelter and our possessions, we still had so much that May didn't.

I think we were both very tentative at the start because we didn't completely know what was expected of us and were maybe a little afraid of what to ask each other, maybe scared of asking/saying the wrong thing and causing offence. We were very polite and respectful to each other, and I suppose the digital communication difficulties, the language difficulties, the cultural differences and the geographic distance, could have meant that there was always this gulf between us, and I did feel that to some extent, but we also got quite close really, because we shared so much over a long period, there was maybe a point when it felt almost as though May had physically been here with me and that I had visited her family in Gaza and certainly I think of her as a friend still.

Claudia 11:21

You both did so much: the digital connections, the paintings, the collection of the plants, the herbarium... I am very aware that we took you both somewhat out of your comfort zone. Were you aware of the situation in Gaza before the project?

Rachel 11:24



Yes, the comfort zone thing, that's a good way of putting it. I was really only a little aware of the Palestinian situation before the project, so obviously I did a good bit of reading up about it all before first talking to May.

I had attended some other international artist talks organised through Deveron Projects before we started our project too. I learned quite a lot about the Palestinian situation through May and another Palestinian speaker and other artists who got in touch with me online who had Palestinian connections and through my own research. But I learned more specifically about Gaza through May. Things I wouldn't have understood properly through online research, I think. It was hard to understand. Sometimes it seemed like her life looked quite normal and free, and then she would say or describe something which reminded me it wasn't normal or free at all.

Claudia 11:31

I feel the comfort zone thing was challenged on many levels. Personally, politically, artistically. How did you feel having to paint a landscape that is not yours, a landscape that you only saw through Whatsapp or other digital means on a joint walk with your partner?

Rachel 11:33

That was a really interesting experience. I definitely had to find a sort of new creative language in terms of painting, but I found it quite exciting, as I think May did too.

It was also limiting and frustrating in some sense though. I could never see behind May's camera and the signal often broke up and delivered only pixelated or burnt out looking images. When I think about that now, I could have played on this more, worked with it. I did paint the play button symbol from a WhatsApp video screen in the middle of a tree-ed scene from May's grandparents garden at one stage and the WhatsApp frame around it.

May continued this visual idea, bringing many more digital elements into her paintings.

We both had very different colours and textures, buildings and foliage and different lighting to deal with. Well, for me anyway as I had painted mostly the very green Aberdeenshire landscape before that,

That was exciting for me, like painting on holiday, maybe.

I wish now that I'd tried different media though, not just painting. Looking back, I think the restrictions in communication made me feel restricted in my creative responses too. Everything felt a bit squashed and limited, by the screen I suppose. It's like my methods of visual expression were restricted in the same way our communication was restricted. May later used the words 'no signal' as seen on her laptop screen, in her paintings, about the project, which I think sums up quite well the difficulties we both felt. Sometimes there was just no signal!

Claudia 11:42

What is interesting for me, is that you both moved on in very different directions, artistically and geographically since then. Can you talk a bit about that, and how the residency has influenced you artistically.

Rachel 11:45

Yes we have! I am at art school in Dundee now, as you know. I applied at the end of the year in which the project with you ended. And the residency definitely played a part in that.

I occasionally felt a little on the verge of being out of my depth during the project, when being called on to talk about it or answer questions on it. This usually turned out to be my own confidence issues, as I think I generally did ok on the whole, but many times I felt I wished I had an arts degree to better equip me in just these situations. As I had wanted many times over the years. *Walking Without Walls*, combined with my children growing up, my son applying to art school and some big changes in my life, including our house fire, led me also to apply to art school. The residency with Deveron Projects helped equip me for my application and may have been instrumental in helping me being selected also. Certainly, some of my tutors have commented since on what an interesting project it was. Despite being a reasonably successful painter within my local area, for 20 years, I always felt I lacked critical context in terms of my work, and the time to research the kind of subjects I wanted my work to tackle.

Ha ha this is a lot, but I have a little more to say on this...

I had also started working with music, sound, spoken word and video just before my residency and prior to this I had known I wanted to bring my painting and these other elements together, it was through the *Walking Without Walls* project and having my working methods challenged, that I slowly started seeing that art

school could be an opportunity to help me bring these disparate ways of working together and try out new media. I have never been short of ideas, but I just lacked maybe the environment or reason to realise them. The fact that you approached me about the residency Claudia, definitely gave me a boost and helped me feel I had things to say which may be worthwhile listening to, but it made me see that I wasn't completely able to articulate them, and that art school might help me do that, and it definitely has, I really feel I have found my artistic voice!

Claudia 11:55

That is of course very interesting for me, as the one who was choosing the artists most of the time. I always wanted to link more with local artists, and in many cases we did, however often more with musicians or crafts people. The project was challenging ourselves as well therefore. It had so many new elements. Now, with Covid in the last two years, we are all used to working through digital means, but in 2018, it was still a novelty, right?

The other thing that interested me is how you/we brought the community together. Here locally through for example the walk and also with the community in Gaza. Can you reflect on this?

Rachel 11:57

It was a novelty back then absolutely! And it's funny but the technical difficulties we had back then have been just the same all through Covid, despite all the new communication platforms! Now everyone feels restricted and squished in a little screen and like they have no signal a lot of the time!

And yes, I feel I personally engaged with the community best through my plant activities. Walks, plant journaling workshops, plant drawing and mapping workshops in schools. Also, through the meeting of people whose land we would cross on the marathon. Lots of local people came on the marathon and were very interested in the whole project, and some of them came on our various training walks and I shared some details of my conversations with May and pointed out plants and their properties and talked about plants May had found in Gaza.

I hosted a music event around the theme of peace too, which was well attended. Bringing music into the project was nice, and we had a couple of local musicians playing on our walk and this happened in Gaza too.

May was worried they wouldn't be allowed to have many people walk in Gaza, with the restrictions, they had to apply for a permit. But they got a surprising number in the end. I can't remember how many, can you?

And that wonderful song they all sang together at the end, the French protest song, they sent us a video and it's used in the film that was made about the project, remember?

Claudia 12:04

Yes, there are so many beautiful elements. What do you think of walking as a medium? As a cultural practice?

Rachel 12:07

It's a funny one, walking. I didn't know about it as an art practice particularly before the project and it was through Deveron Projects that I had thought about it as a cultural practice. Walks can be so different, whether solitary - when I think I am most present in my surroundings or with other people when walking often becomes about communication and connection with the other person/people instead of the environment and then digitally is a another thing altogether... I realise I was thinking there of what I felt of walking as a multicultural practice, but you actually said cultural. It's definitely a good way of bringing people together, through a stimulating activity and sensory experience...I am not sure if I am answering your question here ha ha, or just musing...

Claudia 12:15

Yes, of course you have. It is interesting that you moved the notion of walking as a cultural practice to a multi-cultural practice for this project. So it was bringing people together on multiple levels: people that live on the route through the making of the route between Dufftown and Huntly, the two of you through the painting walks of each other landscapes, the people who walked the walk in the 2 locations on the SM day, and the two communities in Huntly and Gaza through the Slow Marathon engagement. Could one say that?

Rachel 12:17

Yes, you could. It really was multi-level. I often can't remember how many levels there were in the project for this reason.

So many different groupings of people. And all intertwined through digital connection, and with very little oil fuelled geographical movement, mostly just our feet!

Claudia 12:22

Haha, yes. That is right. Rachel, I thank you for this conversation. It was lovely to talk to you again and reflect on all that happened. I hope we can go for a walk again soon.

Rachel 12:23

Yes it was! Thanks Claudia, I've enjoyed it too. I hope we can!

**May Murad (MM) Skype Conversation with Claudia Zeiske (CZ)**

**The conversation took place in both English and French (translation: mine)**

**10 January 2022**

CZ: Hello May, lovely to meet you again after such a long time. How long ago was it when we did the project?

CZ: Lovely to meet you too. Yes, it was 4 years ago. What are your memories?

MM: Well, this is one of the most important projects in my life. It's so important to me personally. I was in a very poor psychological condition, I was very sad at that time. Because of the war and the many problems that my society had. I decided to live alone at that time. I was very isolated. I was just doing my paintings, and nothing else.

You started to communicate with me. Talking about doing a project, and you were talking about the Slow Marathon. I gave you many, many other people to contact. But you just wanted to work with me. So in the end I did it. For me this was so important. You just believed in me.

I had to engage with the war. That was a small window to communicate with the outside world. I could show my art, started to communicate through the video and other means.

It was a cultural exchange between Gaza and Scotland. That is the main thing. This project broke all the borders, crossing all the cultures through art. That is so important to show the art, breaking the political walls.

CZ: Tell what you did for somebody who never heard of it.

MM: At the beginning I made a video on whats app, just showing how we live, politically, culturally, my family and then the streetscape, etc. Just showing how I live with all those complications. I worked with Rachel Ashton, who also sent videos on how she lives with her family and what she does with her life. She is singing, and I met her husband and children and we were sharing food and videos.

We were also sharing the plants from Scotland and the plants from Gaza that we were collecting on the way.

CZ: Yes, you made a herbarium with all those plants you collected.



MM: Yes, all this was helping us to break down the barriers between our cultures which are informed by politics. Gaza is the largest prison in the world, with 2 mio inhabitants on a small space of 42km long and only 2km wide.

This project opened many opportunities for me. It gave me many chances.

CZ: How did this project influence what you are doing now? At the time, I was kind of hooked on working with you. We had a series of Friday lunch talks, inviting an artist who could never visit. You and an artist from Iraq and one from Syria and so on. We had 12 speakers. But I chose you to work with. Most of the others were men. Of course, it was not that we were explicitly looking for a woman. I remember sitting there after the talk with the other guests. And we discussed that we normally don't work with painters. Somehow the idea came up to match you with somebody. And I immediately thought of Rachel. I felt there was a strong synergy.

At the time, WhatsApp and Skype were a real novelty. Artistically and communication.

MM: Yes, I agree.

CZ: I then talked to Rachel about it. She was also quite nervous. As she was always painting, and singing. And this was such a different thing. I am not sure if she knew where Gaza was.

MM: Yes, many people don't know. Here in France too, even at University.

CZ: I was interested in her personality more than the art. We felt we could help with the art. And as we do the Slow Marathon every year, this presented an opportunity. Especially since Gaza is about 40 km long, this fitted so well.

How long did it take again?

MM: The project took a whole year.

CZ: Yes, amazing, you went through all the seasons. How did you communicate with the other people in your neighbourhood?

MM: Yes, I was working with other people, in particular Sami. He helped me a lot, especially with English. It was also so difficult to get permission. They find this kind of thing unacceptable. It is dangerous. I needed permission to walk in the street from morning to night. I communicated with my cousin who knows someone in the government who knows somebody else. I would not have gone

there alone. They are not kind people, you know. My cousin helped me, and I did it with my friends and family. I needed to be with the people I trusted and knew. We did it together the whole time. We started in Beit Lahia in the north until the Rafah border with Egypt. Sami helped with the translation. And my family was so important.

CZ: How many people came in the end?

MM: 25 I think.

CZ: And you had a party afterwards?

MM: Yes, I wanted to create an ambiance. So I invited a number of artists who could play the guitar and sing. One of them I saw recently in Paris for the first time again. He now also managed to leave Gaza.

CZ: What I would like to know is how this changed your work, and your life? As an artist and as a person?

MM: Personally, this work is very connected to my life. This project helped me very much to make this decision to leave Gaza. It opened many chances and opportunities. After the Walking without Walls project I applied for a residency in Paris with the Qatan foundation, which I then got. I tried to do many things to leave Gaza. I was obliged to leave via Erez Crossing, because the other one was closed at the time. I had to sign a paper that said, if you want to leave this way, you could not come back. So, I signed the paper, left for Jordan, where I stayed for 4 months. Then I went to Paris, where I stayed for 5 months at the Cité Internationale des Arts. I was then offered another year there. Then I obtained an artist residency at the Foundation Dufraine of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris for a year, which helped me to also become involved with French artists. Then we had the Covid pandemic. I stayed with French artists. And then I started to make paintings that were inspired by our project. I started to add the WhatsApp icons in the middle of the paintings. I started to reflect on my situation in Gaza, where there is little electricity, internet is very feeble. It was cutting out all the time. I could only make screen shots. But this concept helped me to find my new way of working, through those icons. I could show this situation like this.

But it was important to me, that this was not just my own problem in this confinement. I could talk through this work also about other people. During the

quarantine period, everyone had to learn to share this experience - the experience of isolation, loneliness and disconnection from family and loved ones, and the experience has turned from a personal to a general experience that affects all people across the world, which transferred the idea from the local to a globalised sphere.

CZ: You mean you could help other people that are also isolated in this way.

MM: I mean to send a message that can touch all people, especially through the messages that I try to transmit through those digital messages written on the paintings, which I often write in a spontaneous or poetic way that can address people in their depths.

I have a very small studio flat now. Only 22 square metres as I am studying at the Sorbonne now. So, I am only making drawings now, as I have no studio. I show you one here, but I need to add the computer to frame it (shows room).

CZ: What was interesting about Covid, is that suddenly everybody no matter which country was affected in the same way.

MM: Of course, we are human beings, and we are affected in the same way, the only idea is that Gazans are used to this confinement. We are accustomed to work, produce and innovate under harsh conditions, but this does not mean that this situation is normal. It is a kind of resistance in order to live.

CZ: I am delighted about this. Can you work now?

MM: I have applied for asylum, and I got it quite quickly. Already in 2019. I arrived in France in December 2018. And did it a year later. Many people wait much longer. I am very lucky that I got it so fast, it gives me a lot of stability. The state gives me money to live, and I can study. I can also travel in Europe. And also other countries. Everywhere but not Gaza or Palestine. Only when I have French nationality can I go. I need to wait another 2 or 3 years. Then I can see my family again. I miss my family a lot. But we talk every day on WhatsApp.

CZ: Finally, if you could turn the clock back? Is there something you would do differently in your projects?

MM: Yes, I feel more mature now. If I go back in time in 2018, then I think I would do it better. I would like to share more with my family. Making them more involved. The people that are not used to making this, I would like to make them more involved. It could change their mentality, you know.

I would have liked to highlight the Palestinian issue more as well - so that people understand better what is happening in Palestine, about the injustice inflicted on the Palestinians. But I also did not have enough experience at the time.

CZ: That is very interesting. But here we learned a lot from you and your life. The film was very important, it summed up the project well. Last question: how did the Slow Marathon act as a conduit to make art?

MM: This is a very difficult question. I was not sure if it was art. But it brought the group together and it allowed for breaking the idea of war and borders. Above all in Palestine, where the wall is everywhere surrounding us – enforced by the Israelis. Till today they built so many walls. The marathon gave the idea to break those walls.

CZ: Thank you very much May.

MM: I hope I have been able to give you some insight. I do now believe that I succeeded to do this and break all those borders through art.

CZ: You have done a fantastic job, May. What do you study now?

MM: I am studying geo-politics of Art and Culture, where I address in my research project the changing political geography of Palestine and its impact on Palestinian art, which is often classified as a resistant and committed art. It is now my job next to art. I am doing a Master's which takes 2 years. Thank you again. And hopefully we meet soon. Inshallah!

**Anthony Schrag in Conversation with Claudia Zeiske**

**Elm Café, Elm Road, Edinburgh**

**15 March 2022**

**Anthony Schrag is Senior Lecturer of Arts Management and Cultural Policy at Queen Margaret University. He is a practising artist and researcher who has worked nationally and internationally in a participatory manner. Central to his practice is a discussion about the place of art in a social context.**

CZ: Thanks Anthony for meeting me. I know how busy you are.

Now: one of the dilemmas I have, is what should I call myself. I am simply not happy with the term Curator. It's pretentious.

AS: Curator comes with a baggage of aesthetic decisions. Where else Producer is about delivery.

Curator, you need to touch on theory: Perhaps it's worth delving into that.

CZ: I wished I had the time to read while I was working at Deveron Projects.

Doing the PhD really shifted my practice. But now that I have left, I have little chance to apply this.

AS: The question is: How could we stop this endless cycle of production? The idea of sabbatical ties in with this. We need to come back to understand where we fail and where we succeed. I think you did do that in micro with your Friday lunch, and the walking meetings. Not many organisations do that.

CZ: I also had my long walk. Which was very important.

AS: It felt like there was a shift in Deveron Projects after the walk. There was a different kind of pace.

CZ: We had longer time projects. 3 months projects don't commit to more than a splash. But on the other hand, long time projects - if they don't continue - can leave a vacuum.

AS: I can see you need parallel strands; when you are half-way in with one project, you start the next one. Eg. *Town is the Garden*, then the Bakery. The strands go up and the next one down, then the next one up again. And there are smaller projects in between.

CZ: When I left, we could have had *Town is the Garden* instead of *Town is the Venue*. But thank you for pointing out the producer thing. I will think about this more.

I have established the 25 principles. Some of them are very practical, others obvious. Both aesthetic/curatorial and administrative aspects are equally important.

They become a thinking machine. Similar to Place/Work/Folk concept. You said it is all about “cultural management”...

AS: I think so: Yes. This also needs to include Cultural Leadership!

CZ: I talked to Mary Jane Jacob, who insisted on writing about my own experience.

AS: Yes, you need to reference that, but remember within the PhD, the insight is coming from YOU. What you don't want to do is to go the other way, without any theory. You need theory to underpin your practical insights.

CZ: Lucy Lippard, Beuys, Geddes are the main ones. Then the Art and Anthropology discourse.

AS: I suggest you look at the book/article on collaborative anthropology by Kivin Strong. *When Anthropology Meets Contemporary Art*. Here, we can be thinking about Anthropology WITH Art.

CZ: The constant is the curator/producer, hardly mentioned in the art and anthropology literature.

AS: Participatory art can be likened to anthropology in the sense they are both practices that “work with other people.” A new development within Anthropology that helps me think through this is “Collaborative Anthropology” that presents



new ways to think about how we engage with people. It is far more collaborative and co-authors. People should be able to decide what the output is; how they are represented; which story they are telling. It is about working together. When it was working best, this is what Deveron Projects did.

CZ: I only have memory and archives. Traditional Anthropologists try to be objective. But we went out to change things.

AS: That is Action Research, which is cyclical. In this way of research, one looks at a problem again and again. You make some sort of 'intervention' alongside a community, and then sense-check if something has got better or improved, and in solving the problem something emerged. In some ways you can say that the 'problem' you were exploring was 'Huntly'. But of course Huntly is not a problem. It is just a town.

The action research you did was this cyclical, anthropological fieldwork.

Do you need to write about methodology? If so, it would be good to clarify how you did it. We are talking about YOU as a practitioner and you came from anthropology, so its important to reference this.

CZ: Yes I needed to write a trajectory how it all went. My key points are:

- The duration.
- The small town context. (it can't easily be transferred to city)
- The collaboration with the artists who have participatory practice. It is for the betterment of the place and not of the people.

AS: Chantal Mouffe would say it is the distinction between politics and the political.

Politics – I aim to make the world in the form of specific politics: Tory, Leftist, Green, etc... it's about creating a specific way of the world

Whereas if we look at the 'Political' then suggests we need to look at how the world is organised: what are its power structures, And, to some extent, I feel this is what you set out to do in Huntly. (Although, it is clear I think to anyone what your politics are – eg, your views on Brexit, on Migration, etc)

CZ: What do you think about DP, where is it different?

AS: The distinction lies certainly in the longevity and the duration. The insights that I got the most are that you were the holders of the artists.

Ok, I have this talk about the infrastructure in the cultural sector in contemporary art. I compare two projects: One project in England, and Deveron Projects in Huntly. In this talk, I look at the projects step by step and compare how they worked in regards to infrastructure.

For example:

- Contract: I wrote it together with DP; The project in England was prewritten, I had no input.
- Contact: At Deveron Projects we met regularly, all the time talking, lunch, etc. Always somebody to turn to. At the other project, I had one meeting with the director every two weeks. Otherwise, I was left alone.
- Hosting: DP: I was very much hosted, with a house and a community. In the other project, I slept in somebody's house for 3 weeks.

It's the small things that are important and if you break down the entire infrastructure you can see where the infrastructure supports a project and when it becomes a hindrance.

It is because of the infrastructure you set up, that I – as an artist - could develop at Deveron Projects a much deeper engagement with a project and the local community. It's the infrastructure that combines effective management with hospitality that allows it to happen, where you set up a system that is both functional and effective. Your main contribution to knowledge is therefore your style of cultural management, based on the infrastructure which underpins the 'effective' running of an art organisation.

Partly because of your style of management. You need to take credit for this: not many are as organised as you.

Other cultural organisations approach participatory work as they would approach a project in a gallery. There is nothing philosophically 'wrong' about this, but they have not shifted the infrastructure to be more suited to a community context; to be more porous and flexible to the context of the people. They come in and out. The infrastructure is important.

CZ: It's interesting that you call it infrastructure.

AS: It's the infrastructure that allows any work to happen. It's like a train system. If it works, everyone can work. For example, at Deveron Projects I said: 'I want to speak to the school'. And very quickly – instantly – there was a contact, and a relationship that meant I could very easily be introduced to the teachers at the school. But if I go to another place, an organisation might say: "Well, have you looked at the website to check out who the head teacher is and have you contacted them?"

The infrastructure that you set up just works. Not many organisations have that.

CZ: One of the artists said once in our reflection session: 'In the morning I mumble - I would like to talk to a farmer. At lunch time I get a call: the farmer is waiting for you in the Brander. It can be stressful'.

AS: That is an effectiveness! This can be frightening for artists sometimes. But it is the effectiveness that is really important. That this is an insight to cultural management and not to bigger, grander schemes. The idea of really good cultural management.

CZ: The other thing is the hospitality. We end up with the domestic thing. Cooking, coffee, chatting.

AS: A more cynical person would read that as manipulative. The point of hospitality is that it is a relational practice, which means that you have to build up relations and be kind to each other.

CZ: The danger is that we are always ending in the domestic domain.

AS: Why is this bad?? There are 2 critical things. First, Huntly in some ways is a HOME: you live there. Your children go to school there. Why should it NOT be domestic? Secondly, we need to eat together. This is where anthropology is grounded. Every human cultural will have rituals that ask 'come eat with me. Sit at my table and eat with me'. It is an anthropological concern. It is about humans.

CZ: It's scary that I end up being a domestic hostess. But when I saw art writing about hospitality, it is so difficult to read, almost impenetrable, which made me think it is almost inhospitable.

AS: If the audience are other academics then that is fine. But if the domain is of public arts, then you don't want to be exclusive with your language.

CZ: Why can't it be both? This has been very important for me, to choose a language that we all can share.

AS: It is Important. If you sit down with someone for a meal then it is more than just a meal. Greetings, etc. You would not say: you can eat with us, but I make you sit on a chair with spikes. Or, we will talk in a different language that you don't understand.

This is about human exchange. About care. My PhD student is looking at this. Role of care within management. You talk about care in the town.

CZ: Care is in vogue; I am careful. I need to give you an example from a CARE conference in Amsterdam I spoke at, where the key Curator at the end said they learned so much – for example putting a pint of milk and some bread into the fridge of the artist in residence space before the artist arrives. We do this all the time: its not 'management' but just part of our life!

AS: This ties back to the infrastructure. Infrastructure means that I can have a coffee in the morning and then just start. I don't have to work first out: where is the shop?

It's a caring infrastructure, where you set up a system that is both functional and effective.

CZ: Why would you not think about this if you run a residency?

AS: This is what is so good about writing this very PhD. For you it is obvious, but "daaahhh, it's not obvious for everybody!" Again, I would argue: your main contribution to knowledge is the infrastructure which underpins your style of cultural management. Many 'how to' texts talk about money, partnership, etc. But what you can not find elsewhere is how to make an 'effective' running art organisation.

CZ: I hope that this is what the principles try to do.

AS: Are they practical or are they theoretical?

CZ: They are not that theoretical, they are practical essentially. They try to provide a tool kit. A 'how to?'

AS: You can say; be hospitable, but what does this mean? What does it mean being hospitable in that context: e.g. meeting people off the train station, having a meal on arrival, etc.

## **Letter Correspondence with Caroline Wendling**

**Caroline Wendling was the artist who created the White Wood with Deveron Projects.**

Bourne, 1 April 2022

Dear Claudia,

Thank you For including White Wood in your PhD. My response to your letter took much longer than anticipated. I had a few very intense months finalising a community project in Bedford with Bedford Creative Arts and The Higgins. My studio is presently full of 'stuff' for the install tomorrow.

In many ways this project is a legacy to all I learnt when I was artist in residence at Deveron Project during my Oaks and Amity residency.

When I applied to your open call, I knew I wanted the commission and I gave it time and consideration. My husband, Andrew Hunter, kept saying to me that I needed to do something about where I came from in France; about the complexity of la Lorraine, the people, the land and its history. I will explain a little about the complexity of that art of France:

- My mother for instance spoke patois as well as French and German. She would often start a sentence in one language and then use patois before converting back to French. My maternal grandmother only spoke patois with me, I would reply in French, I don't know why but I did. My Father came from unoccupied France and spoke French only; he had some understanding of English. He learned to speak patois living in the village with my mother. My parents addressed me in French and I responded in French. Some of my school friends barely spoke French when they started school. Now only the 'elders' speak the Patois language.

- I am not sure that I was really aware of how important on a personal level the project was and will become. I guess it's looking into the family photograph album once more in France just before the wood's planting



that gave me a clue. A particular photograph taken after WW2 of my mother's family home in ruins with some of her sisters and one of the sister's children standing, posing there seems to be relevant to the project. My mother told me that 'they got out of the cellar and saw the sky', a skeleton of what had been the house. It happened in January 1945 as the Americans were chasing the Germans out of France. No one knew who destroyed the house: was it the Germans?...was it the Americans? All was lost, I never heard anyone blaming one or the other country; they blamed the war.

- The landscape is undulated with many dark forests and, close to the village, orchards are still producing fruit for families. The remains of a Roman villa sit outside the village. There is also a darker side to the landscape; the Maginot line goes through the village and fields. You can never forget about the conflicts, the landscape reminds you of it.
- Lorraine's borders have changed through its history. It is said to have had an important role in transforming all of European history. It was designated an independent Duchy in 862 within the Roman Empire. Louis XIV annexed it in 1766. With the Napoleonic wars and later the Prussian Empire, Lorraine went back and forth from France to Germany. The village now lies a few kilometres from Germany; it is easy to drive into Germany without noticing. As a child I never crossed the border locally but I was sent to Munich in two consecutive summers for a month to polish my German. I loved Munich and the people there. I discovered Dürer and never looked back.

It is in the context of being from a land that was contested over centuries, millenia, that I applied to the call. I was also very interested in Joseph Beuys' legacy as a pacifist and an ecologist. When I was studying in Strasbourg Art College in the early 1980's Beuys was an artist we all admired and respected. There was a good fit with the brief, not only in a geographical and historical context but also personally. I had just taken a studio in a rural art centre, Wysing Arts Centre, and was discovering the benefits of walking through fields and a small wood to get to my studio. The daily walk through the wood, I believe, was a huge influence on how the project evolved.

The response to my proposal was slow, very slow. I was invited to meet the staff and you in Huntly late 2013. You told me later that you wanted to check if I fitted with Deveron Projects ethos and staff. So, I was there on trial! It was scary, but you gave me a chance to write a proposal informed by my visit. This doesn't happen often; my experience working with other art organisations has never been as generous as with DP. And that walk Claudia, other artists told me that they too did that walk with you! So lovely but we were on trial and we knew it!

I fell in love with the town and the staff immediately. It wasn't that difficult to give more thought to the proposal. I understood that you wanted to know how I would include and cooperate with the citizens of Huntly. I needed to see Huntly to be there for me to get a better idea. There was a generosity that struck me as soon as I came to Huntly and worked with Deveron Projects. You seem to be truly interested in people. I couldn't have found a better fit: I am passionate about people.

What you did differently was that there was that farmer's market thing where Deveron Projects has a presence. It's DP's way of giving the public the chance to catch up, have a chat and meet the new artists appointed. They were not always easy, as I wasn't given a long time to think of something that would be attractive to the community. Of course I got plenty of support from the staff. Talking about the different ways you engaged with the public something struck me and something stayed with me. You always said: 'keep it simple'. For someone like me, who has a tendency to complicate things, it was gold dust. I remember for instance offering a very simple activity early on in the old bank building on the Square during a pre-Christmas craft fair. I invited visitors to sit down and draw an oak leaf. I made oak gall ink, I still have a bottle in my studio! People loved it! I had over 88 drawings by such a cross section of the population, everyone wanted to have a go at it: babies, mothers, elderly, young people, etc... so many drew and so many stories were told.

During my time at Deveron Projects many powerful public events did happen. They were often the outcome of the way you wanted to touch people. You wanted to give people from a variety of backgrounds a voice. You wanted a debate, a conversation. Possibly the debate shared by an army colonel, who had

been in charge of many important peace talks, and pupils of the Gordon School was a very memorable evening. We discussed the pros and cons of disarmament for the UK. It was perfectly timed, a day before the planting.

It was difficult for me to be constantly engaging with communities or thinking about public engagements. At times I wanted to be able to sit and make. The *Oaks and Amity* project took me out of a long period of walking and making. I resolved a lot of my work by simply being in nature and/or by working through materials. The project taught me that there was a place for process and a place for community engagement. I like to combine long periods of incubation with the repetitive action of making. Through repetition, I discover ideas and concepts for the projects I work on.

Walking has been an important development of my practice; walking as a process but also walking as a way to perform and involve communities. We both relished the idea of White Wood being within walking distance from Deveron Projects and the town centre of Huntly. The Walking Institute is an important part of DP. The geographical position of White Wood was both a strategic and an ecological decision.

- The Bin was a governmental scheme to replant forest after WW1, so many trees had gone from UK soil to help the war machine.
- The Bin is a recreational site for the community of Huntly
- The Forestry and Land Scotland offered their land, we chose from 31 sites
- The site has archaeological and historical importance
- The site had the right exposure and soil for the growth of the oaks

Since its planting, my new signage residency with Deveron Projects concluded with the design of bronze way markers as a way to signpost a green route from Huntly Station to the Wood. Bringing together ideas of inclusivity and health. For the signage residency the idea of not adding to the infrastructure of a town by placing small copper circles in the ground was paramount to ideas of ecology.

Working with you and DP was a learning curve. You got me to think big: international, but also small: local. I think that way of working is very relevant in a rural place. I have worked with many rural organisations. They all want to do the 'International' thing and forget the richness of what lies near them. During

my residencies at DP, I have met so many people in their kitchen! More brilliant minds than what I meet in Cambridge or London. That does say something about the work of the director (your work) and DP pull. I have enjoyed the diversity of the voices and the far-reaching work you do. I have admired how you draw on the local talents and richness and how over the years you gave chances to people. Chances to make work but also chances to be and have a curatorial framework with the critique necessary to the development of the artist.

Some say: all is political. Can an art centre embrace political views? I recently saw Ai Weiwei's exhibition at Kettle's Yard in Cambridge. His work might be political but it is activism for humanitarian causes for the quest of Freedom. I want to stop on this note as I think you might want me to respond more in depth on some of the elements of this letter.

Caroline XX

## Letter Correspondence with Elisabetta Rattalino

Elisabetta Rattalino is an art historian whose research engages with artistic practices, with a focus on rural environments and landscapes, particularly in Italy. Elisabetta is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Free University of Bolzano. Since 2010, she has been collaborating with socially-engaged artists and arts organisations in both Italy (BAU, Bolzano; Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella; Kaninchenhaus, Turin). She started at Deveron Arts in 2012 with a Shadow Curator Internship and worked later as Art & Community worker following her PhD at St Andrews University.

Bolzano-Bozen, 09/04/2022

Dear Claudia,

In October, it will be ten years since I first visited Huntly. You came to pick me up at the train station and welcomed me into your home. I still remember dragging my uselessly cumbersome luggage along your driveway and entering your kitchen. Battlehill looked intimidating and gloomy in the dark and the rain of that autumn evening. Still, your undemanding and kind hospitality made the tiredness of a thirteen-hour journey from Italy vanish. I moved to Keith and Pam Cockburn's home a few days later. Five years after my first visit to Huntly, I moved back to Keith and Pam's house. It was October 2017, and I started working as Art and Community Worker. Keith was no longer with us, and their house was a hostel for us working at Deveron Projects.

Working with Deveron Arts first and, then, with Deveron Projects has influenced my scholarly, curatorial and pedagogical practice. But I have never reflected on how it did so. So thank you for making me think about it.

There are several aspects of Deveron Arts/Projects whose influence I can feel embedded in my work today. Still, I wish to focus on two: the interdisciplinarity of the projects and the importance of creating an organisation whose relationship with the town transcends the presence of "artists in residence". But before I delve a little bit into these two aspects, I wish to clarify how I conceive the two moments I spent in Huntly.

My internship at Deveron Arts and the position I held at Deveron Projects were two different experiences. Not only had I acquired new professional qualifications in the five years that separated one from the other, but the organisation had changed – not only its name. It had grown: the team had

expanded, and the program had started integrating long-term projects. Yet, I believe the two experiences of mine and the two phases of Deveron Arts/Projects are challenging to separate: One grew out of the other. Therefore, in framing the work that all of Deveron Arts/Projects's teams did, I will try not to forget the organisation's temporal dimension, how it evolved over time and how its transformation depended on the experience accumulated and stratified by its members. Also, I believe this temporal depth should also find a place in how we think about the people living locally and their responses to the program. After all, if we acknowledge that mountains change over time, why should we consider organisations immutable and crystallised?

Beuys's motto "everyone is an artist" was at the roots of Deveron Arts, whilst Geddes' appreciation for artists and their role in society permeated the vision of Deveron Projects.

But working at Deveron Arts/Projects, one had to unlearn all institutionalised knowledge about art or art objects first, and then embrace practices of different disciplines. At Deveron Arts and during the early phases of Deveron Projects, whether what we were doing was art or not was conceived as an uninteresting question. However, it was still relevant: I remember discussing it with you during one of your "Walking Lunches", and then again with Joss concerning "The Town is the Garden". Thanks to your anthropological approach, I believe we explored arts and curating as practices of enquiry into specific topics and contexts, learning to wave different disciplines and non-formalised knowledge together. Let's think about *Walking without Walls* (but also about the Hielan Ways Symposium, one of the best conferences I have ever participated in): we had so many research directions unfolding at once stemming from Rachel's and May's digital exchange...! For instance, we experienced limits and possibilities of digital landscapes with Rachel's and May's paintings. We took botanising, plant journaling and herbalism as means to encounter one's land and to learn about its nourishing and healing properties, both in Huntly and in Gaza; We explored the politics of land through the *Slow Marathon*, both in Scotland and in Palestine. We could have developed each of these research directions further. Yet, we did our best in the time frame, and with the resources we had, privileging horizontal exploration of possibilities over vertical depth. In retrospect, I wonder: can we suggest that Deveron Arts and Deveron Projects participated in and were influenced by the potential offered by visual arts' transition from socially engaged art practices (Bourriaud, Lippard, Bishop, Kester, Jacob, etc) to practices of artistic research (Rogoff, 2018)?

The second aspect I wish to consider is how Deveron Projects dwells in the arts system and in Huntly. Before the pandemic (and I wonder if digitalisation is not changing this aspect), the challenges of living in a rural village, and thus with a degree of isolation from access to facilities and wider audiences, created alternative conditions of sociality, less rigid rituals of conviviality, and interstices of experimentation. Far from the rural idyll expressed by the pastoral *topos*, proximity in small communities



appears to open the possibility of less volatile dialogues and exchanges beyond the logic of institutional hierarchies.

When I write about Deveron Projects's way of dwelling in Huntly, I mean that its presence makes it a local actor with a specific political stand embedded in its origin and its very nature of arts/cultural organisation. Deveron Arts and then Deveron Projects actively engaged with the different communities of people living locally, beyond the time when artists and other professionals were temporarily parachuted into town for the period of a residency [This, instead, was partially the case, for instance, at Cittadellarte (Biella, Italy) in 2012, where short-term artists' projects mainly fostered the organisation's relationship with the town of Biella.] Why and how did that happen? At Deveron Arts, I think pairing an artist living locally with an artist from elsewhere (be it Edinburgh or Harare) was a suitable method to ease the processes of connection with the town. Later, when the Arts and Community Worker position was introduced, the relationship with different communities living locally developed and changed. I feel the Art and Community Worker role that I held for a few months was more than that of a cultural mediator, more than that of a public program curator, more than that of a producer, and more than that of a PR. It should be a recognised presence in the many communities living and working locally (and I am not sure I was one). It should be someone who can find ways to articulate global issues locally and local issues locally - this I think I could do - I think the talk I organised on international women's day with Pat Scott from the *Huntly Express* – one of the pilasters of Huntly – telling about Huntly's women is a good example. But I wonder: Can we think of Deveron Arts/Projects as a team whose members play this very (Art and Community Worker) role at all times? Is this why the job, at times, felt demanding? Is blurring lines between life and work sustainable for people working in the organisation?

I am unsure if I provided you with anything interesting, but maybe this is a way to start a conversation. And I am happy to develop these ideas further.

All the best for now,  
Elisabetta

## **Letter Correspondence with Jaak Coetzer**

**Jaak Coetzer was the artist that created the Room to Roam branding for Huntly in collaboration with the community.**

Capetown, 2022-04-20

Dear Claudia,

Thank you for your letter. Here at last are some of my thoughts about our long-standing collaboration.

### **Searching for common ground, finding room to roam.**

I sit here at my desk writing underneath a large group portrait of the Huntly Room to Roam choir. Some of the people in the photograph have passed away since the photo was taken in 2008. The photo captured a moment of us all in full song, a kind of holy moment when all the choir members got swept away by the song, like swimming down a river together. In this case the river was provided by the words of George MacDonald, carried by the melodious undercurrent of the Waterboys' music.

The task to help find a collective identity for the people of Huntly was laid on me by you, Deveron Projects and the Aberdeenshire Town Partnership and I thought from the onset that it was a brave move to ask an artist to do this sort of thing. But, given free reign like this was perhaps the most energising factor for me. Precisely because I was trusted with such a big thing (finding the soul of a strange place) made me want to work really hard at it.

From the onset of the project you made it clear that the art was going to be to get everyone involved. This approach was very refreshing for me, because up to then I was used to playing Lone Ranger with my art; being a kind of outsider; making social commentary from the periphery. Your approach was to catapult me right into the center of town life. An advert in the Huntly Express newspaper

and a tight schedule to meet all the various social groups and clubs of the town ensured this. Learning the art of making conversation and listening. Connecting dots.

From my engagements with the historical society, right through to the walker's club and musical crowd of the folk evenings, I could tell that over the years, Deveron Projects had built up a good track record in the community. The fact that I (as part of DP) wasn't coming in cold certainly made my job much easier. Quickly learning how complicated small town politics can be, I guess this is a hugely important point for an arts organisation to behold: To find the balance between challenging the status quo and keeping trust intact.

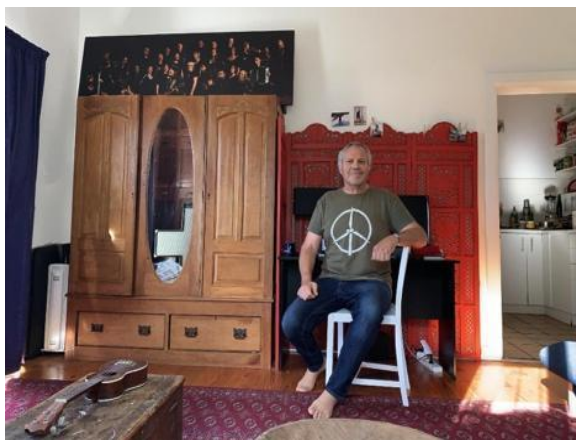
Another useful strategy was to blend into town life along with my whole family. Here the school and its associated networks were helpful. Following your advice I learnt that schools are very important hubs in rural communities. In years to come, I would employ this knowledge in other projects.

The artist has a job in society, just like the butcher or the baker does. This is perhaps the most important thing I learnt from working with you in Huntly, Claudia. It helped shape my sense of belonging to a larger societal picture, which in turn gave me new hope for being an artist. I have long been a doubter of the rock star pedestal and aloofness that is central to being an artist in the gallery scene. Also our shared love for Beuys and his view of everyone being artists helped me understand the shared nature of creativity and being part of a social sculpture, as he put it. What Beuys and our *town is the venue* projects in Huntly also taught me was that art reaches far beyond the walls of the white cube and the museum. It's way more real, way more fun!

Deveron Projects has always been a gathering place of kindred souls from all over the world. There in Huntly I have been inspired by the work modes of other artists, have made friendships and have built a network that spans all over the world. Your role as connector of people and your pragmatic approach has always been grounding in this regard. I remember how useful your Praktika sessions were, where amongst peers, we could present and discuss our socially engaged work.

The discovery of Geddes and his Local and Global perspective as well as the Place / Work / Folk model came after the Room to Roam project, but his multi disciplined approach as polymath seemed to organically fit in with your work mode at Deveron Projects. I have always been impressed by how you somehow manage to formulate your wide range of work principles in simple, understandable terms. (50 / 50, Shadow Curator, Town is the Venue and many more) This ability has certainly helped to highlight and validate the worth of art projects in society, to give Deveron Projects credibility and very importantly, to procure funding.

Small is Beautiful has also become a personal mantra since you introduced me to E. F. Schumacher during the Room to Roam project. Artistic aspirations appropriately scaled to fit the small town can turn out to be surprisingly satisfying. What started as modest musical get-togethers in our studio-turned-band-room later evolved into the Room to Roam ethos, which has continued in the town for 14 years now, in various forms. (Room to Reinvent, Room to Run, etc.)



MacDonald's proposition that there is enough space so that "you can go your way and I can go my way" is also a very sound principle when working in the field of socially engaged art. Instead of striving for an identity that is convergent to one mere thing, the possibilities of a Room to Roam

approach are open, respectful, tolerant and full of promise. The way our world should be.

Thank you, Claudia. Let's do more stuff together!

Yours in art.

Jaak

## **Letter conversation with Ron Brander**

**Ron Brander is a local historian and citizen of Huntly.**

30 June 2022

Dear Claudia,

I hope you are both well and adjusting positively ... if indeed you will ever retire?... and to the strangeness of place that is not-Huntly! I'm sure you are already immersed in numerous and various, and probably haven't had much time to consider whether or to what extent you miss the town.

I can't speak for anyone else, but I know that I have often recently looked out of my sitting room window in the evenings, along the length of the garden, eyes drawn toward Battlehill, and your old house. I would see it clearly if it weren't concealed by those lovely mature trees which surround it. And on those very occasions I regret not having made more effort more often to pick up the phone, or send an email or just pull my shoes on and walk down the road for a chat or an impromptu cuppie or glass of wine. You and Nick never hesitated to offer warm hospitality and open door over the years and I wish I had taken more advantage for friendly and stimulating conversation while it was available. I guess it is easy for me to use my exotic transatlantic lifestyle as justification, ....only half a life in Huntly per year, and the other half within walking distance of the frequently-on-edge political centre of the Western World. Well....walking distance for someone such as you or I, but not for everyone! But excuses for inaction often come too easily in life, and we/I should resist them more.

Anyway I am just writing to say that I miss your presence in Huntly. Which at times over the years seemed almost pervasive! The organisation continues of course, but I just personally feel more "space" in the socio-cultural calendar insofar as it ever impacted me, a bit more silence.

Of course there can be several explanations for that. Firstly, I am not immune to the ageing process while those involved in Deveron Projects seem to be! There has been a big transition in the organisation over the past year, and therefore disruption. And a meaningful part of your legacy has been your finale....the acquisition by the organisation of significant property interests in the town centre, which must inevitably impact on their current and future focus and programming. I assume at least some of this will be driven by the need to....or at least the opportunity to....utilise the building space and resources. It must inevitably give Deveron Projects an altered Sense of Place compared to what you maybe sensed or experienced when you set out with your aspiration a quarter century ago.

And of course it is not just me who has aged. There must be many others who engaged with you and your projects over the years to greater or lesser degree who have moved on or are no longer able to participate to the same extent as previously, if at all. So it is not just the crew who change, but the caste and the audience as well. Times change and we with them. And the community as well. It

will be interesting to observe how your former project adapts and adjusts to new management, new participants, and an evolving townscape.

I just realised that the extent to which members of the community can/could engage with activities of the type presented by yourself in the past 25 years is determined so much by their personal circumstances – age, family, employment, social and leisure interests. I realise now that I personally have been very advantaged in my ability to engage and participate....retired early, fit, single for most of my Huntly-year as opposed to USA-year, a busy and enquiring mind. That same opportunity is simply not accessible to the bulk of the adult population with their work and family commitments, never mind whether they have any particular interest in the organisation's programming. All the more reason that I should have taken more advantage when available, I suppose! I guess it made your endeavour in the midst of this small catchment population feel that wee bit more Sisyphean!

So has your Deveron Arts / Projects been of benefit to the community of Huntly or its wider district? I don't know. I can't answer that. It's up to each member of the community to answer that for themselves. And if they never actively sought to or were never able to participate in or understand any of your projects then there is obviously diminished likelihood that they will have gained in any way.

Has it been of benefit to the myriad and diverse commissioned artists, and to the myriad young interns and employees? Undoubtedly. They were the primary beneficiaries and there have been many of them.

Has it been of benefit to me? That I do know. If I sit here considering the major components of my social and cultural experience in Huntly these last 20 and more years, the realisation dawns on me increasingly that you and your creative vision and energies have had a very real and major positive impact on me. That obviously wouldn't be true to the same extent if I hadn't made the effort myself to engage, but nevertheless the quality of my life has gained substantially from knowing you and knowing Deveron Arts.

I confess here that I felt more comfortable with the concept of Deveron 'Arts'....a comprehension, however vague at times maybe, of your mission....than I do with 'Projects'. I suspect it was a change of branding rather than of purpose, with the objective perhaps of accessing new funding streams and also maybe enabling a wider scope of activity. But my discomfort (an exaggeration) with the term is the notion that it maybe signalled a new aspiration to undertake, or even impose, more self-appointed social activism within this small and often vulnerable community in contrast with the more defined and purer arts activism that was previously implied and understood. If I try to pin it down it seems to me that "Projects" necessitates something more akin to a form of social contract with, or endorsement by, the people of the town.

There are many of your projects and commissions and events that I had no part in, and possibly not even aware of. But I find it really fascinating to try and recall all those which I did end up being exposed to, and all the really stimulating artists, thinkers and other individuals associated with them - local, national and international. The scope and diversity of subject matter, content and output has been a bit mind-boggling! And it is inconceivable that I would ever in a thousand years have had exposure to, and sometimes immersion in, such richness of



offering and such wealth of talent and inspiration in the absence of you and your practice. So the people of Huntly in many respects have been blessed with the cultural opportunity you bestowed over many years, while the quality of harvest reaped has inevitably been individual and subjective. But I have no idea whether any of the local public even noticed or care about such a distinction.

I have greatly enjoyed the curated trek through the surrounding landscape and through the cultural potential of the wide district that I have been permitted to share in. It has helped me better deal with my own innate shyness or reticence. It has better filled my long retirement years. It has opened my mind to new insights and given me many intellectual stimuli. And insofar as I have been able to contribute at all to any of the visiting artists I have found it very rewarding and it has cemented my own bond with this district, and nurtured and enhanced my own sense of place. And formed unexpected friendships.

I could not possibly have conceived a couple of decades ago that I would by now be able to claim that I had personally touched and been touched by, and spent quality time with even one artist of repute, never mind a whole diverse string of them. And often had fun with them, both within and outside the context of their projects. (Is there a collective noun for a bunch of artists?). I could not have conceived that I could develop the personal confidence to comfortably interact with them and to share and exchange observations and inspirations and experiences since my executive career in the oil industry was so seemingly opposite to theirs. It maybe even came as a bit of a revelation to learn that these creative people are generally 'normal'....just also generally more interesting and daring and lateral than the norm!

And it has been personally fascinating to have the privilege of observing at close hand talented people from early beginnings of a project through the sometimes opaque, sometimes transparent, often circuitous and usually passionate processes of filtering ideas and inputs and media into some unique and original expression or output. Which is generally not foreseen at the outset. And my own creative sensibility has grown as a result from a tiny seedling to....well, to a slightly less tiny seedling. And that is good.

Austrian, Cuban, French, South African, Romanian, Ugandan, Ethiopian, English, Scottish and more. Award winners and nominees, monument and memorial creators, lone wolves and social engineers, educators and social archivists, poets and sculptors, makers of masks, originators.

Textiles, trees, caravans, toponymics and contours, watercourses, treks, ruined buildings, music and song (traditional and contemporary), poetry, debate and discourse, food, gatherings, processions, celebrations, commemorations, investigations, exploration and discovery, friendships, planting, heritage, branding, learning, community, sharing, participation, exchange, contact. Often strange, never boring. Sometimes surreal.

Thank you Claudia. May the contact continue and our paths cross again.

And please be in touch if you are heading in this direction again at any time!

Fond memories and very best wishes.

Ron

## **Letter Conversation with Pat Scott**

**Pat Scott was Chief reporter at The Huntly Express from 1978 – June 2022**

Huntly, August 2022

Dear Claudia,

Thank you for your letter on the occasion of my retirement.

You asked me to give you my thoughts and recollections on Deveron Arts, now Deveron Projects from my perspective as reporter of the Huntly Express – almost a sounding board of the community – so where do I begin?

I do remember our first meeting when you and a friend from near Aberchirder mooted the idea that Huntly might have an art exhibition space – I think perhaps the old cinema, now replaced by flats, might have been a suggested venue.

Anyway, that idea was not taken forward and instead the Town is the Venue idea was developed and over the years a succession of different artists have come to Huntly and worked on projects.

Some had more impact than others, some were more memorable. Some artists seemed to easily slot into the community and get people engaged.

One of the projects, which comes to mind for engagement was the one which researched and documented the history of that very cinema which might have been an arts space. People of a demographic who might not normally have become engaged in art became enthralled by it. The artist, whose name escapes me, formed a very special relationship with the projectionist, now sadly deceased but he loved it and the presentation was attended by grey haired ladies who in their young days had been stewardesses.

This was a hugely successful project and earned Deveron Arts as it was respected in the town.

Artists came who made the town centre car free and everyone got on bikes to support them in what was another significant success in engagement.

Artist cooks worked with school pupils, Anthony Schrag took the town by storm with Parkour and a father's day project. Eva Merz's art was a protest about the loss of local shops.

We had artists whose art form was cookery and also successes in getting groups of local people involved in her work another was an amazing woman from India who sewed and darned and was interested in the history of the Paisley pattern.

These are just a few but what they all succeeded in getting local people whose experience of art was limited, and probably thought it related to paintings in a gallery, involved.

Huntly demonstrated that it is open to new and different ideas if presented in an attractive and appealing way.

I am no arts guru but I really enjoyed those projects for which you got people involved. More recently the projects seem to have become more for the artist than the community and I fear Deveron Projects as it is now known, is becoming more remote from the community in which it is grounded.

My views on 'art speak' are well known – artists and their agencies must develop the 'art' of plain speaking. Remember when you invited me to a workshop among arts writers, called 'who are we writing for?' That was a good step in the right direction.

Too often things are now couched in language which is well above the understanding of the ordinary folk – I sometimes think it's made deliberately complex to make a scheme seem more valid and meaningful than it actually is. The use of such complex language almost certainly alienates people.

It is beyond doubt that the work of Deveron Projects has put Huntly on the map internationally. Its very existence creates a buzz in the town and I like to think that those artists who have come here have taken a part of Huntly away in their heart and the memories of their time here will live with them forever.

I do hope that Deveron Projects continues to thrive in Huntly and bring artists from the UK and across the world to the town but it is, I believe, important that they engage as fully as possible with the local community so that residents see the relevance of the organisation to their lives.

Pat (Scott)

Chief reporter at The Huntly Express from 1978 – June 2022.

## **Letter Conversation with Donald Boyd**

### **Donald Boyd is the CEO of the Huntly Development Trust**

Huntly, September 2022

Dear Claudia,

Another one. And another one. And, oh, yet another one.

Sorting through the assembled contents of my house hoarded during the course of my life and that of my dear late wife Joanneke, I keep coming across reminders of our collaboration over the years. You with Deveron Projects (DP), and me first with the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership Huntly and then with Huntly Development Trust. By my reckoning we must have worked together for around 15 years (2005-2020) and the various publications I am encountering remind me that we covered a lot of ground together in that time.

Some of the first issues you were tackling as I started my time with ATP - supermarkets and wind turbines – remain relevant today. They proved to me early on in our collaboration that the arts can create a new lighter approach to engage a community and help discuss weighty subjects. Others, such as Music for Streetfights and Art Cup simply bring a smile to my face!

One of my favourite projects was the Huntly re-branding we worked on with Jacques Coetzer. A risk for all parties at the outset, the Room to Roam brand has stood the test of time and spawned numerous offshoots – Room to Run, Room to Ride, Room to Grow, Room to Thrive to mention but a few. Jacques' antler logo has also been widely adopted and is recognised as a strong Huntly brand. The work with Mike Scott and the Huntly Room to Roam choir is a special memory I'll cherish, involving among other friends three dear people who tragically left us far too soon: Keith Cockburn, Brian Nisbet and Joanneke.

Another really positive result of our working together was of course winning the Creative Scotland award for being the most creative place of our size in 2013. This of course resulted in the Huntly Cultural Fund, which spawned a whole range of further creative offshoots the following year.

None of this would of course have been possible without the creativity and energy of the artists DP brought to Huntly. This residency method meant that a new local, regional, national or international artist would join our teams in the Brander Building every 3 months. Almost without exception, they were hugely

refreshing, interesting and thought-provoking. Some of them remain friends to this day. However, the residency approach did mean that when DP and the artist “threw the latest ball in the air” invariably the community would get enthused about it only for there to be no one there to catch it when it dropped again. On occasions I found this a real shame and a missed opportunity. Clearly DP couldn’t and shouldn’t have been expected to ensure that every residency had a lasting local legacy but for me this is possibly a weakness of that approach.

Overwhelmingly though our work together was hugely positive, and as I follow the Mari Kondo method of tidying my house, which involves only keeping things that “spark joy”, I find that the various DP publications I’m encountering do just that and hence have earned themselves a section on my slimmed down bookshelves. That speaks volumes.

As I now return to my sorting, I wanted to close by thanking you, Claudia, for enriching cultural life in Huntly in general and my life in particular. Somehow, I don’t think we have seen the last of you in Huntly, nor do I think that our collaboration is over. I certainly hope not and look forward to renewing it very much.

All the best to you, Nick and your family,

Donald (Boyd)

General Manager, Huntly Development Trust

## Iman Tajik in Conversation with Claudia Zeiske

ZOOM Interview from our homes in Glasgow and Edinburgh: 27 May 2022

**Iman Tajik is a Glasgow based artist and photographer originally from Iran. The movement of freedom is his key subject matter, influenced by his own experience of crossing borders.**

**Through a variety of mediums, he 'performs the border' with participants from a range of backgrounds inspired by personal experiences of crossing geographical borders and socio-political barriers to insist on the right to freedom of movement.**

**In spring/summer of 2020 – during the Covid pandemic – he undertook with Deveron Projects the *Under One Sky* walking project.**

*CZ: Thank you for joining me today for a chat. I wanted to tell you a bit more about my PhD thesis, where I focus on some case examples. One of them is Slow Marathon and among the seven editions we had, one of them is your project Under one Sky.*

*As you remember we really had to think on our hoof, then in spring 2020 when the Covid restrictions came in and our previously planned project Bordered Miles had to be abandoned or postponed.*

*So now I am looking for some reflection on this time when we worked together.*

IT: For me it was important that you kept pushing at the time. I am not sure what I would have done. But that is what artists must do – respond to situations at the current time. This is what is strong and positive for me about the fact we did it right then as an artistic action. That we managed to create something. I found it difficult. It was such a stressful time. Other people may have had a different time. But I live alone. My family is far away. I was so stressed. I had to go for a run daily with the mask. I was scared of the illness, I was alone. It was so difficult. You don't do anything, you are anxious all the time. While it was difficult for me, this art took me out of this a bit. Instead of just being dressed, it kept my brain busy with something.

We acted very quickly. I tried to adjust and cope with the situation of the pandemic. But today I am so glad that we responded to the pandemic situation then. The society needed that at that time.

*CZ: Tell a bit how we approached the work. I remember you phoning me up saying I have an idea: 'Under one Sky' is the title.*

IT: You know Iran is a country that is very separated from others. That always made me angry and sad. If we acted globally then we would never have borders. In my art work I try to show that we are all human, that we are not different. There is this poem from Saadi Shirazi:

بنی آدم اعضای یک پیکرند که در آفرینش ز یک گوهرند

*Human beings are members of a whole, since in their creation they are of one essence.*

The poem shows that human beings are members of a whole. Since they are all of the same creation.

The interesting thing about the pandemic was that the virus was affecting people globally. With this virus we all had to go the same journey. We were all affected



the same way. This for me was the chance to talk about this fact that we are all the same, that we are all human. We all look at the same sky.

Anywhere in the world the sky is the same. In Iran we say that 'we are all under one roof'.

*CZ: That is very poetic. If we look at the ground, we have borders everywhere. Where else when you look up to the sky there are no borders anywhere.*

*So, we had a lot of stress to do the website so quickly. That created some friction. But we managed!*

*You also did the Under One Sky facebook page. Which is active till today.*

IT: For me the facebook page was very important. Both the website and facebook were great. But the website was only getting the facts, adding mileage, the numbers. But it is limited to facts only. There is little opportunity for conversation. Facebook allowed for conversation. It was less limiting. Through this we could create activities for people.

People could easily join us.

Social platforms are such an important thing these days. Especially during the lockdown. It was the right place to do this.

The nature of the social media platform, people follow each other.

*CZ: Yes, it gave us opportunities for activities.*

IT: We also had the Black Lives Matter situation at that time. My idea was if people go for their daily walk, they could think about some subject matter. The FB gave us some possibility to trigger and open the conversation.

For example during the time of the refugee week we had a film screening of my Calais film called Transit Zoom. We had a talk with Pinar, the activist.

On refugee day we asked people to show a picture of flowers.

*CZ: You also tried to involve Dungavel.*

IT: Yes, we tried but it was very difficult to get in touch with the actual inhabitants. We did correspond with the Friends of Dungavel. But the people there, are in such a difficult state. They worry that they could be sent back tomorrow.

We needed to do our approaches in a gentle way.

*CZ: What were the highlights for you?*

IT: It was all very good, Claudia. So nice that we could look every day how many more people walked, and how many more miles were reached.

*CZ: What about the methodology of walking? Was that new to you?*

IT: I used walking in my work before. But this was in a different way. For me the movement of the body from one point to the other is important.

I made a walking video for my degree show.

But I never looked at walking in itself as a methodology. I feel really inspired by working with you.

*CZ: What do you think about walking as an opportunity to bring people together?*

IT: It is a very welcoming way of making friendships. But for me I only think about the topic of 'freedom of movement'. I had not thought of this bringing people together. And then you open up the conversation.

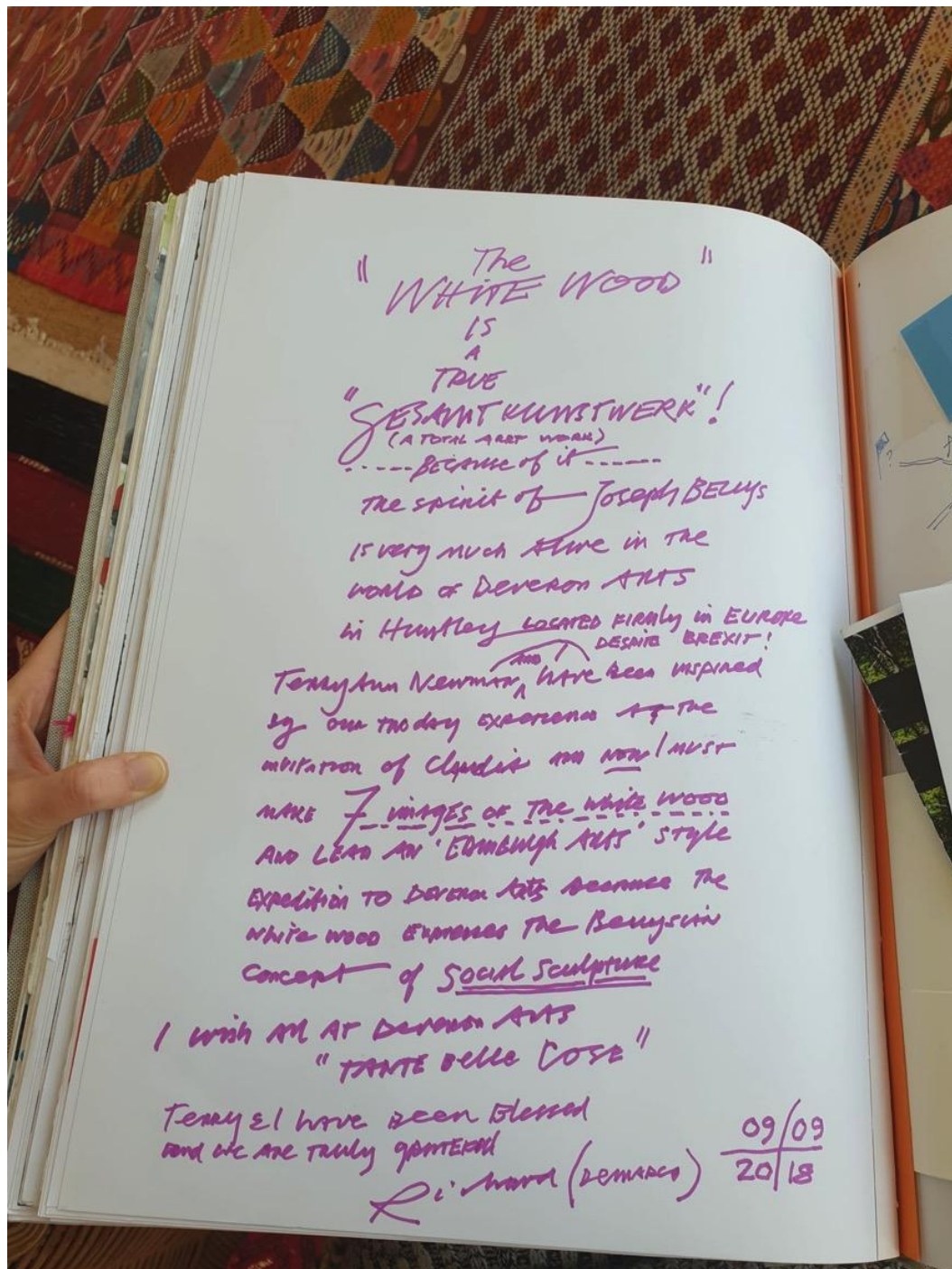
*CZ: I have a lot of food for thought now.*

IT: Yes, if I can think of something else I'll let you know!

*CZ: I thank you very much Iman. Let's meet up soon.*

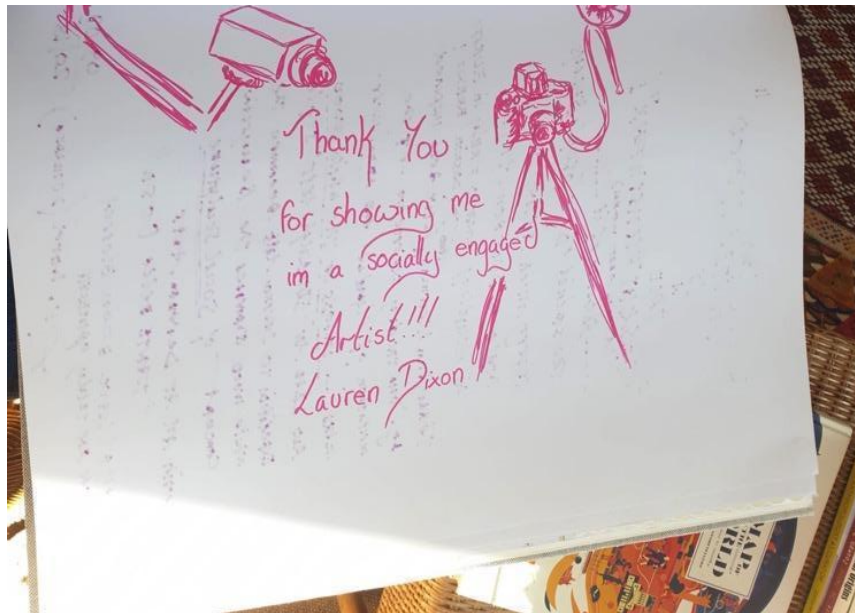
## Guestbook: Artists, intern, stakeholders, visitors

Figures 53 - 65: Selection of Entries from our Guestbook



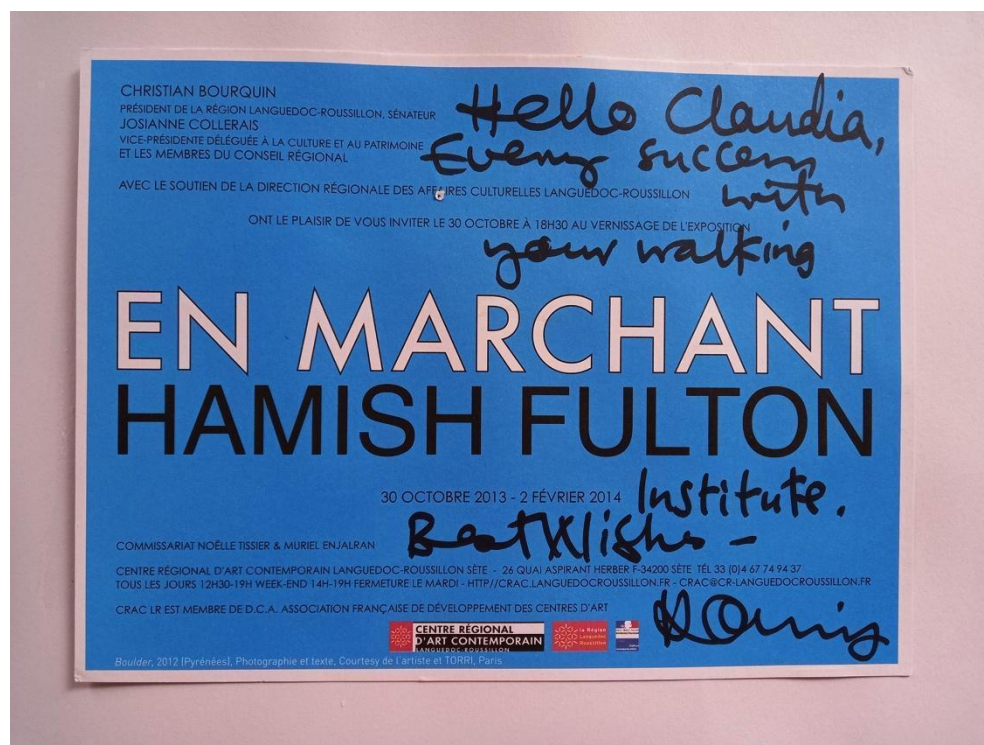
The White Wood is a GESAMTKUNSTWERK. Because of this the spirit of Joseph Beuys is very much alive in the work of Deveron Arts in Huntly, located firmly in Europe despite Brexit! Terry Ann Newman and I have been inspired by our two day experiences at the invitation of Claudia and now I must make 7 images of the White Wood And lead An Edinburgh Arts style expedition to Deveron Arts because the White Wood expresses the Beuysian concept of

Social Sculpture. I wish all at Deveron Arts 'Tante Belle Cose'. Terry and I have been blessed and we are truly grateful. Richard (Demarco) 09/09/2018.

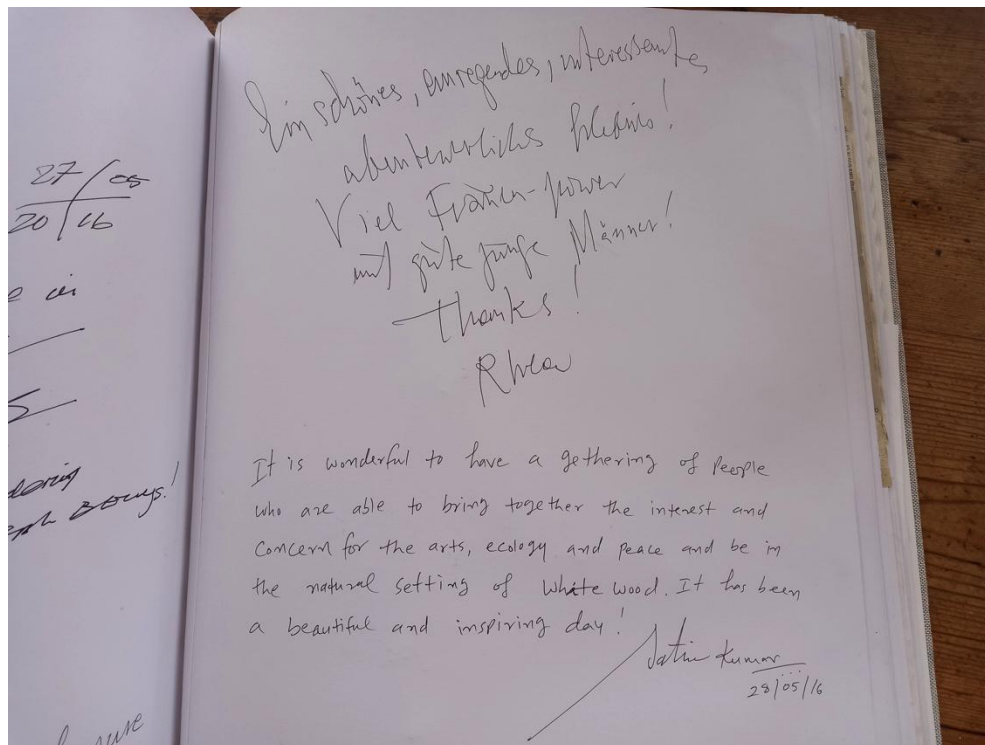


'Thank you for showing me im a socially engaged Artist!!!'

Lauren Dixon is a young woman from a working class background who came to Deveron Projects for a 3-month internship straight after her training at Gray's School of Art in 2019.



Hamish Fulton Guest Book entry



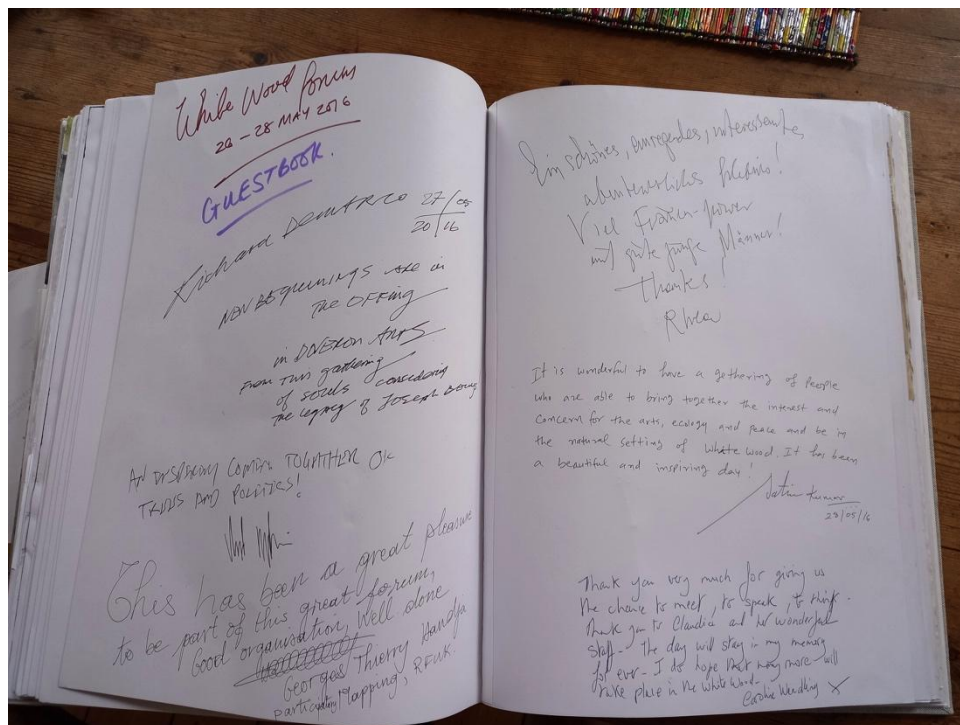
'Ein schönes, anregendes, interessantes, abenteuerliches Erlebnis!'

Thanks Rhea (Rhea Thönges-Stringaris – art historian and personal friend of Joseph Beuys).

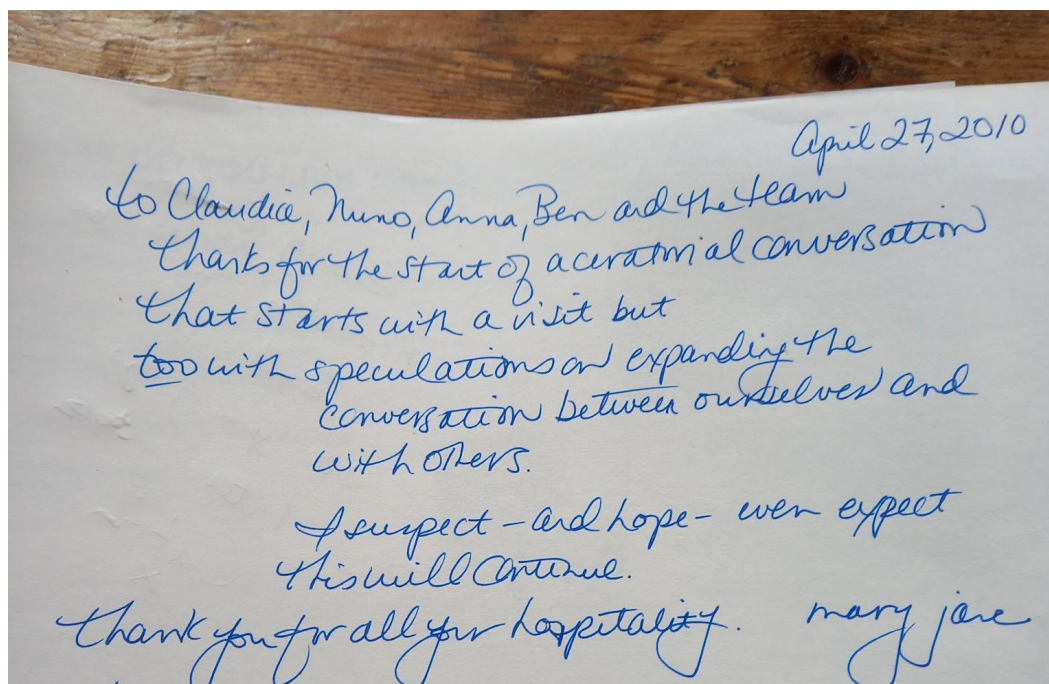
'It is wonderful to have a gathering of people who are able to bring together the interest and concern for the arts, ecology and peace and be in the natural setting of White Wood. It has been a beautiful and inspiring day!'

Satish Kumar 28/05/2016



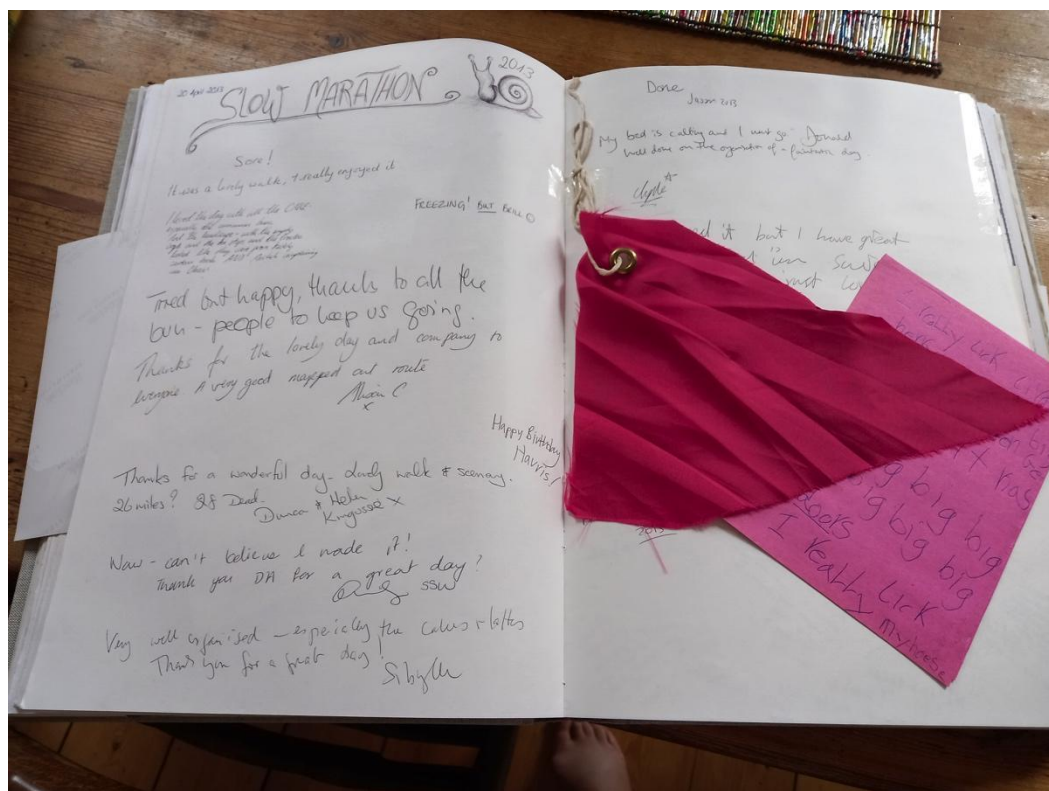
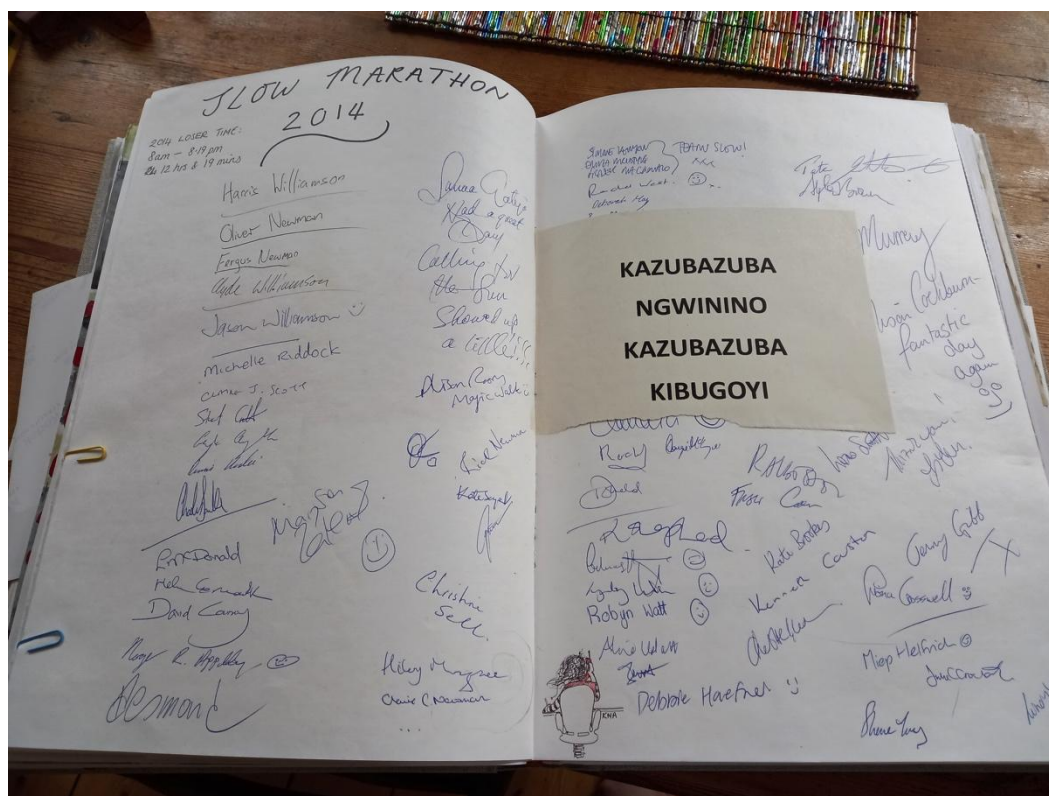


White Wood Opening Guest book entries.



Thanks for the start of a curatorial conversation that starts with a visit but too with a speculation and expanding the conversation between ourselves and with others. I suspect and hope even expect this will continue. Thank you for all your hospitality. Mary Jane (Jacob).





Slow Marathon guestbook entries

Whenever DP comes to my mind I do remember strong friendships between the team and the community. That reminds me one of the idiom in Turkish:

One cup of coffee establishes 40 years friendship/memories. -Bir kahve bir 40 yıl dostluk, vatan.

I had lots of coffee at DP :) Please accept this Turkish coffee cup as a mark of our friendship!

Thanks a lot to giving me chance to introduce my culture, and learn about yours! Being a part of this wonderful team and work was amazing!

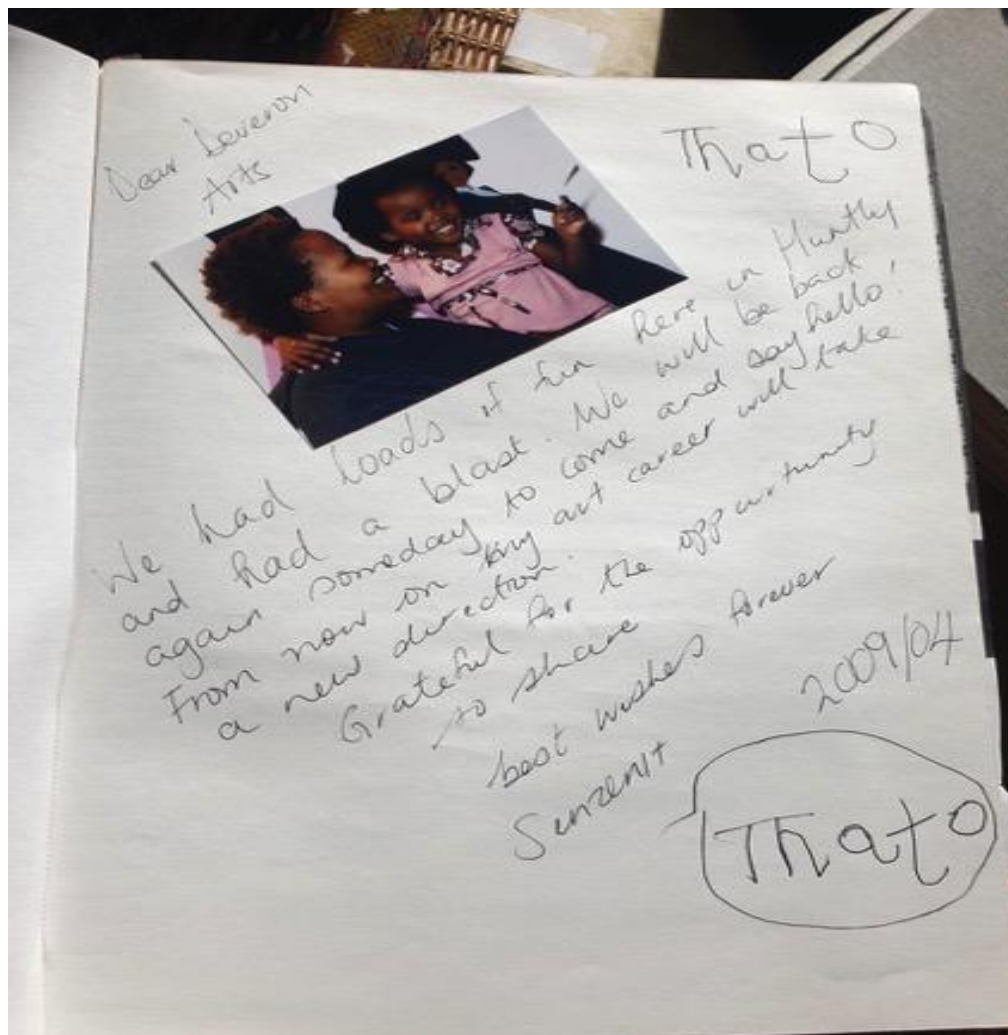


Please come to Turkey if you can and let me host and show you more about this lovely culture!

Zeynep

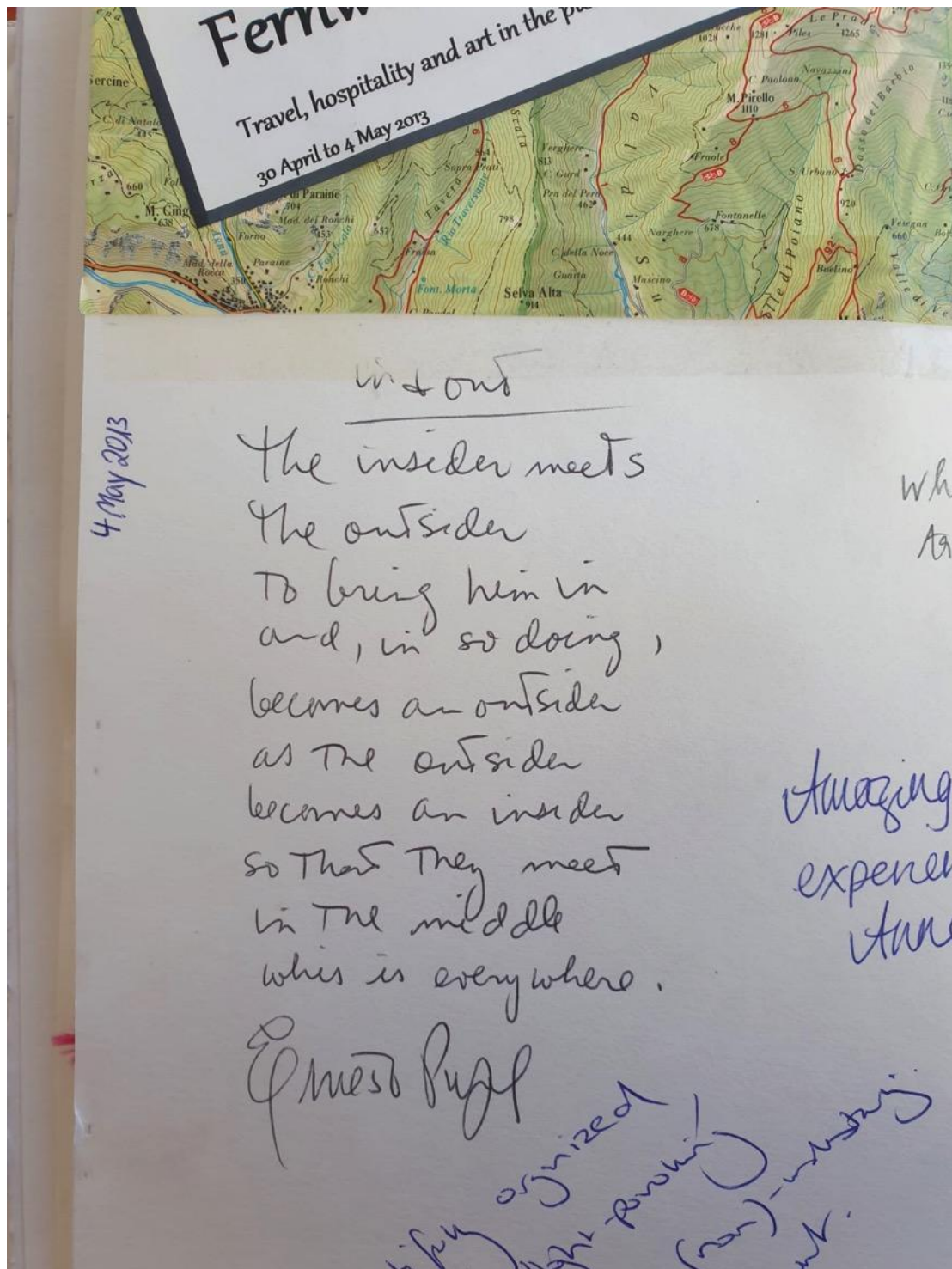
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'Whenever DP comes to my mind I remember strong friendships...'  
Zeynep 4/6/2019; Erasmus Intern (from Istanbul University)



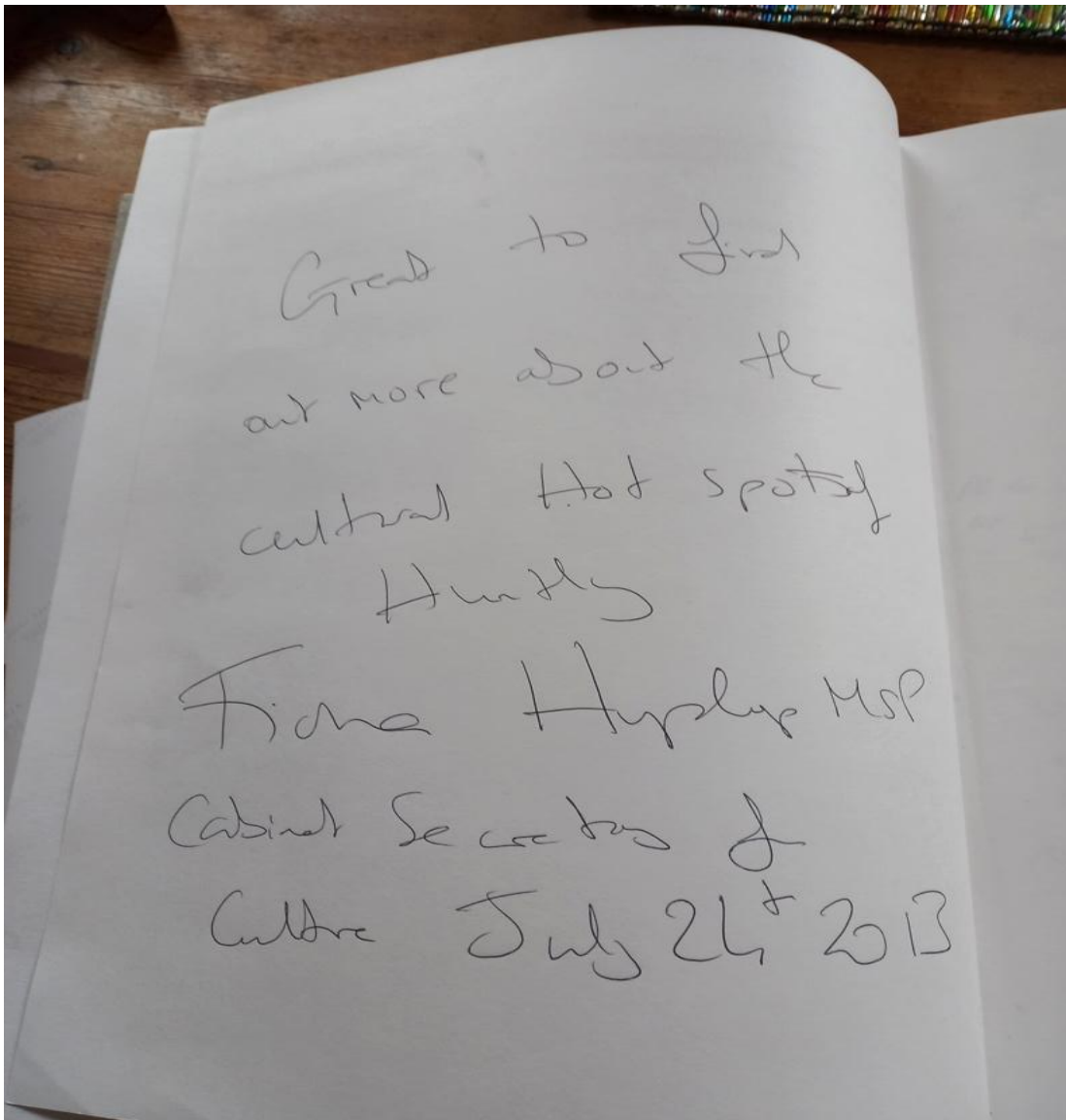
'We had loads of fun here in Huntly and had a blast. We will be back again someday to come and say hello! From now on my art career will take a new direction. Grateful for the opportunity to share. Best wishes for ever Senzeni and Thato'. South African Artist Senzeni Marasela with her daughter Thato 4/2009.





'The insider meets the outsider to bring him in and, in so doing, becomes an outsider as the outsider becomes an insider so that they meet in the middle, which is everywhere'.

Ernesto Pujol



'Great to find out more about the Cultural Hotspot of Huntly'.  
Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary of Culture. July 24th 2013



Figure 66 a and b: Fiona Hyslop visit to Huntly

## Appendix 12: Shadow Curator

At Deveron Projects we engaged so-called Shadow Curators that work alongside ourselves on different projects.

Shadow Curator is a critical methodology: the agonistic way – first introduced to us by Nuno Sacramento. ‘A Shadow Curator (like the Shadow Minister in parliament) acts as an embedded critic who scrutinises what we do and thereby brings constructive alternatives to our work process’ (Deveron Projects 2022)<sup>132</sup>.

Shadow Curators have for example have been:

[François Matarasso](#) + [Utopia Group](#), Palace of Puzzles

[Iain Irving](#) + [Gemuce](#), Credit Crunch

[Katie Nicoll](#) + [David Sherry](#), Health + Safety Effects

[Mary Jane Jacob](#) + [Hamish Fulton](#), 21 Days in the Cairngorms

[Jonathan Baxter](#) + [Stéfanie Bourne](#), Red Herring

[Dave Beech](#) + [Maidier López](#), How do you live this Place?

[Pauline Burmann](#) + [Baudouin Mouanda](#), SAPE:Swagger

[David Harding](#) + [Anthony Schrag](#), A Perfect Father Day

[Tessa Jackson](#) + [Mihret Kebede](#), Slow Marathon

[Christine Eyene](#) + [Nancy Mteki](#), MBEREKO

[Sarah Worden](#) + Sanaa Gateja/Xenxon Znija, The Lubare and the Boat

[Lotte Juul Petersen](#) + [Caroline Wendling](#), The White Wood

[Barbara Steveni](#) + [Anthony Schrag](#), Lure of the Lost

[Anthony Schrag](#) + [Claudia Zeiske](#), Home to Home

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<sup>132</sup> <https://www.deveron-projects.com/about/shadow-curator/> (Accessed 2 December 2021)



We also have been running a young Shadow Curator programme, where young practitioners were invited for 6 months at a time. The first three months, I shadow their work. The second three months, they are invited to critique my work.

Below is an attempt to think about the kind of questions a Shadow Curator might pose to me/us:

### **General**

**SC: Could this work not be done also in the urban context?**

DP Team: Our way of working was really focused *on rural* towns. In the ARTocracy book we said between 3000 and 7000 people, but now I am thinking the size is not that relevant. One good denominator is having only one Secondary School, which allows for all strata/classes of society attend. By contrast, if we worked in an urban place, we could still apply participatory art, but by nature it would be in more transitory communities and less diverse demographics.

**SC: Bringing in new artists year in-year out, does this not tire out the community?**

DP Team: Yes, that is a big consideration. That is why it is so important to have our ear on the ground all the time. New artists have to be introduced sensitively to new parts of the community, to avoid asking the same people over and over again.

**SC: Many of your artists came for three months? Does that not work against the principles of sustainability?**

DP Team: Each project will finish at some point. Importance is laid to the sustainability of Deveron Projects as a whole. I often call this the 'library of ideas'. People can pick up ideas or leave them, like in the local bib. A kind of Gesamtkunstwerk in a Beuysian sense.

**SC: Would it not be better to have an arts centre or a gallery to focus your work on?**

DP Team: The advantage of working with existing/found places is manifold. First of all, you can work in places where people are already; less need to spend time

on marketing and audience development. Secondly, compared to fixed venues who have to be programmed year round to justify their existence, it is cheap and flexible. Thirdly there are many places such as church halls, OAP halls, etc that are under utilised, our method assists with the maintenance and regeneration of such venues.

**SC: Do you really think that you reach everybody in Huntly?**

Of course not. That would be preposterous. But rather than working with older people, let's say, or people on low income, or arts audiences, we try to identify topics that many different people are interested in. So, throughout our projects, it is important that we open opportunities that allow everybody to come together. Its what Tim Ingold calls 'correspondence'.

**SC: Are you against galleries or art centres per se?**

DP Team: Not really, but the gallery system feels outdated at times. Through our work in Huntly it has become clear that they are not the best vehicle to work with a community in the rural context where there are little art or academic audiences. Working with what we have already has been a much more flexible, dynamic and cost-effective way.

**SC: You rarely choose artists through call outs and selection processes. Is that not rather undemocratic and working against conventions of equal opportunity?**

DP Team: Our artists are recruited through a steadily evolving network and chosen according to a set of criteria that are not easy to fit into a generic form. Key considerations are: how they would take our small town context into consideration, how they relate to the project's theme, how they understand our dialogical approach and also to how well they fit within our overall curatorial approach.

**SC: Do you really think you can 'make a place'?**

DP Team: Of course not. Place-making is a terminology that has become fashionable without interrogating its meaning. We can not make a place, but we can contribute to it.

## **HOME Programme**

**SC: Why do you call it the HOME programme? Is that not a bit associated with gendered ideas of cosy-ness and housewifery?**

DP Team: Creating a friendly hospitable atmosphere is the A and O of our working. We stand up to traditional female values, if asked in this way. But Place in conjunction with Hospitality is the Home, not cooking.

**SC: If you argue that you engage in participant observation, who decides what projects you undertake?**

DP: Our project subjects are chosen in a polyphonic kind of way, instead of using conventional democratic systems, such as shortlisting and voting. Only through the continuous and relentless form of deep/slow listening and looking at the community can we identify what really it is that is people's concern.

## **White Wood**

**SC: Is bringing in somebody from abroad appropriate to address such contentious topics as conscientious objectors, when commemorating the millions that have died?**

DP Team: Yes this was a bold and risky move. But it was prepared for a long time. We knew the nation-wide WW1 commemorations with their ubiquitous poppy symbols were coming, which gave us time to research Huntly's history in relation to war involvement and conscientious objection.

**SC: Do you really believe that the artwork will be there in 300 years time?**

DP Team: I hope so, but will never be able to prove it. It is now left for coming generations to ensure this. What we can do is put mechanisms in place, that people know and carry the story, so that in 300 years when the stones slowly will surface next to the oaks, that people recognise it as an artwork that people planted at a time of worry about our planet.

## **Room to Roam**

**SC: Would it not be better to bring an artist from the locality to undertake a branding exercise?**

DP: Team: Bringing in an artist from outwith the local context, allows the community to see itself with fresh eyes.

**SC: Maybe Huntly people are different, in that they accept working with an artist on their identity?**

DP Team: No, I believe this can be done in any rural town. You just need to find the right artist, then give it time to make the transformation happen.

### **Slow Marathon**

**SC: Is walking a marathon not another form of competition, largely driven by neoliberal values?**

DP: Team: A normal marathon is certainly associated with competing against others and against one self. However bringing in the notion of slowness into the game, puts the whole concept on its head. While undertaking a marathon is still a strong personal achievement, in the classical sense, our Slow Marathons emphasise making friendships, looking at landscape through the lens of socio-political circumstances.

**SC: What is the point of involving places outside Huntly to these projects?**

DP Team: Huntly is served historically through its farming hinterland. Deveron Projects acknowledges this role of the surrounding area by encompassing the whole of The Gordon Schools catchment area as its base of work. These connections between town and hinterland are beautifully illustrated and contextualised through Patrick Geddes' Valley sections.

**SC: Do you see Slow Marathon as a form of performance art?**

DP Team: No, not really. Walking is the medium that brings those people together for a project that relates to a socio-political theme. While I have concentrated in this thesis on the topic of Freedom of Movement with three different artists/projects, we have also used this form to interrogate gender in the landscape; lost transport systems, and other topics.

### Appendix 13: 25 Year Project Grid

This grid has been established to collate the statistical evidence of Deveron Projects' activity from its inception in 1995 until I left the organisation in March 2021.

Please visit this page for data analysis of all projects, artists and other details.

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1A2ojA95jWe-3K\\_rg2RmfMc\\_-6sTK69oy/edit?rtpof=true&sd=true#gid=1270301830](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1A2ojA95jWe-3K_rg2RmfMc_-6sTK69oy/edit?rtpof=true&sd=true#gid=1270301830)

Deveron Projects Artists/Projects Statistics											
	year	how long In months	First name	Second name	Project title	publica tion	age group	gend er	country	art form (detail)	art form general
	2020	3	Lizabett	Russo	Ensemble Eòrpa	x	20-30	f	Romania	singing	music
	2020			various	Deveron Projects' 25th Birthday		mix	group	n/a		
	2020	3	Jonathan	Baxter	Future Fruit	x	40-50	m	Scotland	social engagement	visual arts

2020	3	Sarah	Gittins	Future Fruit	x	30-40	f	Scotland	eco art	visual arts
2020	3	Christine	Borland	Flax		50-60	f	Scotland	multiple forms	visual arts
2020		Daniella	Turbin	Walking Huntly		20-30	f	England	walking	visual arts
2020	6		Drassana	The Square Deal		30-40	group	Spain	architecture and design	design
2020	3	Gabriele	Konsor	Partnerlook!	x	50-60	f	Germany	fashion	craft
2020	12	Kawther	Luay	Neep and Okra		20-30	f	Scotland/Iraq	food	cooking
2020	3	Iman	Tajik	Under One Sky	x	30-40	m	Scotland	participatory art	visual arts
2020	3	Iman	Tajik	Bordered Miles		30-40		Iran/Scotl.	participatory art	visual arts
2020	24	Kate	Taylor-Beale	Heritage Bakery		20-30	f	Scotland	baking	cooking
2019	3	Lauren	Campbell	People's Act: Room to React	x	20-30	f	England	writing	literature
2019	1		Many Studios	Movement of Freedom		30-40	group	Scotland	creative hub	visual arts
2019	6	Alix	Rothnie	Town Collection Curator	x	20-30	f	England	curating	curating
2019	3	David	Ward	B means B	x	80-90	m	Scotland	classical music - composer	music



2019	2	Jan	Martinec	Weeping Willow Film	x	30-40	m	Czech Republic	video	film
2019	3	Clemens	Wilhelm	Weeping Willow Tree		40-50	m	Germany	performance	visual arts
2019	24	Joss	Allen	Town is the Garden	x	30-40	group	mix	environmental art/gardening	gardening
2018	3	Rachel	Ashton	Walking Without Walls	x	40-50	f	Scotland	walking	visual arts
2018	3	May	Murad	Walking Without Walls		30-40	f	Gaza/Palestine	walking	visual arts
2018	3	Aya	Haidar	No 11 Cafe		30-40	f	England	remakery	visual arts
2018	3	Marc	Higgins	No 11 Café		30-40	m	Scotland	anthropologist	cooking
2018			various	Think Brexit		mix	group	n/a		
2018	3	Katie Rose	Johnson	The Community Crockery	x	20-30	f	Scotland	ceramics	craft
2018	3	Ela	Orleans	Lunar Odyssey	x	50-60	f	Scotland	music	music
2018	1	Hanna	Tuulikki	I Stand With Tiffy's Annie		30-40	f	Scotland	singing	music
2017	3	Jacques	Coetzer	Room to Reinvent		40-50		South Africa	social engagement	visual arts
2017		Claudia	Zeiske	Home to Home		50-60		Germany		

	2017	3	Andrea	Geile	Energised Landscape	x	40-50	f	Scotland	sculpture	visual arts
	2017	3	Manaf	Halbouni	What if?		30-40	m	Germany	performance	visual arts
	2016	3	Omar	Afif	Caravanserai		30-40	m	Morocco	cooking	cooking
	2016			various	21 Years of the Town is the Venue		mix	group	n/a		
		3	Anthony	Schrag	Lure of the Lost	x	40-50		Canada		
	2016	1		GÆG	How Humans Adapt		30-40	group	Germany	performance	visual arts
	2016	3	Ben	Macfadyen	300 Years to Grow	x	30-40	m	Scotland	storytelling	literature
	2015	3	Aidan	O'Rourke	Imprint/Abandon	x	30-40	m	Scotland	music	music
	2015	n/a		various	Hielan Ways Project and Conference		mix	group	mix	mix	mix
	2015	4	Caroline	Wendling	White Wood	x	40-50	f	France	participatory art	visual arts
	2015	1	Tim	Knowles	Urbanscape + Ruralsprawl		40-50	m	England	environmental art	visual arts
	2015	3	Ron	Brander	Over the Hills to Huntly (book)	x	60-70	m	Scotland	writing	literature

2014	6	Tim	Knowles	Exploration Aids	x	40-50	m	England	environmental art/walking	visual arts
2014	3	Alec	Finlay	Some Colour Trends	x	40-50	m	Scotland	writing	literature
2014	3	Sanaa	Gateja	The Lubare and the Boat		60-70	m	Uganda	jewellery	craft
	3	Xenson	Znja	The Lubare and the Boat		30-40	m	Uganda	performance	visual arts
2014	5	Simone	Kenyon	In the Footsteps of Nan Shepherd		30-40	f	England	walking art	visual arts
2014	3	Paul	Anderson	Hielan Symphony	x	40-50	m	Scotland	music	music
2014	2	Gayle Chong	Kwan	Wandering Waste		30-40	f	England	social engagement	visual arts
2014	3	Clare	Qualmann	Perambulator	x	30-40	f	England	performance	visual arts
2014	6		Rhynie Woman	Cooking the Landscape	x	50-60	group	Scotland	cooking	cooking
2014	3	Gill	Russell	Lorg-Coise: Footprints	x	50-60	f	Scotland	walking	visual arts
2008	24	Catrin	Jeans	Cultural Health Worker		20-30	f	Scotland	social engagement	visual arts
2013	1	Vivian	Caccuri	Caminhada Silenciosa (Silent Walk)		30-40	m	Brazil	walking art	visual arts

2013	3		Caravan Gallery	Pride of Place Project	x	40-50	group	England	photography	visual arts
2013	3		Celia - Yunior	Faceloop	x	30-40	group	Cuba	video	visual arts
2013	1	Mary Jane	Jacob	Fernweh	x	60-70	f	USA	curator	curating
2013	3	Jacques	Coetzer	Aberdeenshire Ways	x	40-50	m	South Africa	visual art	social engagement
2013	1	Jacques	Coetzer	MacKay of Uganda	x	40-50	m	South Africa	visual art	walking
2013	3	Stuart	McAdam	Line Lost	x	20-30	m	Scotland	walking art	visual arts
2013	3	Nancy	Mteki	Mbereko	x	20-30	f	Zimbabwe	photography	visual arts
2013	2	Anne	Murray	With and Against the flow	x	40-50	f	Scotland	ceramics	craft
2013	2	Jake	Williams	With and Against the Flow	x	60-70	m	Scotland	singing	music
2012	3	Rocca	Gutteridge	Walkingand... (Website)		20-30	f	England	cultural producer	curating
2012	1	Michael	Höpfner	Walking Off the Grid	x	40-50	m	Austria	walking art	visual arts
2012	12	Norma	Hunter	Arts Visitor		50-60	f	Scotland	social engagement	visual arts
2012	3	Mihret	Kebede	Slow Marathon	x	30-40	f	Ethiopia	walking	visual arts

	2012	3	Alan	McPherson	Minor Paths	x	40-50	m	Scotland	writing	literature
	2012	3	Simon	Preston	The Town is the Menu	x	30-40	m	Scotland	food consultant	cooking
	2012	1		Sambasupercol lider	Ceilidhamba		30-40	group	Brazil	drumming	music
	2012	3	Allysson	Velez	Nordeste/North East - Ceilidhcatu	x	30-40	m	Brazil	music	music
	2011	1	Rocca	Gutteridge	Walkachat					cultural producer	curating
	2011	1	Rocca	Gutteridge	UK Border Walk		20-30	f	England	cultural producer	curating
	2011	3	Amy	Fung	Huntly Review		40-50	f	Canada	writing	literature
	2011	2	Peter	Liversidge	Proposals for Huntly	x	30-40	m	England	writing	visual arts
	2011	3	Priya Ravish	Mehra	Making the Invisible Visible	x	50-60	f	India	textile	craft
	2011	3	Baudouin	Mouanda	Sape: SWAGGER	x	30-40	m	Republic of Congo	photography	visual arts
	2011	3	Anthony	Schrag	A perfect Father Day	x	40-50	m	Scotland	social engagement	visual arts
	2011	3	Roman	Signer	Transmissions from the River	x	60-70	m	Scotland	video	visual arts

	2011	3	Ross	Sinclair	Real Life Gordons of Huntly	x	40-50	m	Scotland	participatory art	visual arts
	2010	3	Stéfanie	Bourne	Red Herring	x	30-40	f	France	social engagement	visual arts
	2010	3	Shona	Donaldson	Short Nichts and Lang Kisses	x	20-30	f	Scotland	singing	music
	2010	2	Hamish	Fulton	21 Days in the Cairngorms	x	70-80	m	England	walking art	visual arts
	2010	3	Maiden	López	How do you live this place?	x	40-50	m	Spain	painter	visual arts
	2010	Throughout the years	Claudia	Zeiske	Walking Lunches	x	50-60	f	Germany	walking art	curating
	2010	3	David	Sherry	Health and Safety Effects	x	40-50	m	Scotland	performance	visual arts
	2009	1	Hans	Abbing	The Value of Art		60-70	m	Netherlands	writing	literature
	2009	1	Tim	Brennan	Deveron Manoeuvres	x	30-40	m	England	walking art	visual arts
	2009	1	Richard	Demarco	7000 Oaks		80-90	m	Scotland	writing	curating
	2009	3	Jacqueline	Donachie	Slow Down	x	50-60	f	Scotland	social engagement	visual arts
	2009	3	Gemuce/Po	Hilário	Money Crunch	x	40-50	m	Mozambique	sculpture	visual arts



			mpilio						ue		
	2009	3	Senzeni	Marasela	Jonga: Look at Me	x	30-40	f	South Africa	performance	visual arts
	2009	3	Catriona	McKay	Skimmerin'	x	40-50	f	Scotland	harp	music
	2009	3		Utopia Group	Palace of Puzzles	x	30-40	group	China	performance	visual arts
	2008	3	Lean	Coetzer	Maypole		40-50	f	South Africa	dance	dance
	2008	1	Sally	Garden	Center of Huntly		50-60	f	Scotland	singing	music
	2008	1	David	Harding	Praktika (event)	x	70-80	m	Scotland	curating	visual arts
	2008	3	Merlyn	Riggs	Feed the Five	x	50-60	f	Scotland	cooking	cooking
	2008	3	Emily	White	Center of Huntly	x	30-40	f	England	music	music
	2008	6	Jacques	Coetzer	Room to Roam	x	40-50	m	South Africa	social engagement	visual arts
	2008	3	Garry	Williams	Music for Street Fights	x	30-40	m	Scotland	performance	visual arts
	2007	3		Böller und Brot	Homemade	x	40-50	group	Germany	film	film
	2007	3	Duncan	Mclaren	George MacDonald Diary	x	30-40	m	Scotland	writing	literature
	2007	3	Bob	Pegg	Secret Doorways, Strange	x	70-80	m	England	music	music

					Worlds						
	2007	3	Nuno	Sacramento	Shadow Curator/EXPOSURE	x	40-50	m	Scotland	curating	curating
	2007	1	Paul	Shepherd	How to like everything	x	60-70	m	England	art criticism	literature
	2006	12	Deborah	Beeson	po(at)o HOM(E)age	x	40-50	f	Scotland	craft	visual arts
	2006	1	Roderick	Buchanan	Salon des Refusés: ARTCUP		40-50	m	Scotland	sculpture	visual arts
	2006	1	Dew	Harrisson	Action paintings		40-50	f	Scotland	digital media	visual arts
	2006	Part of town artist	David	Blyth	Scranky Black Farmer	x				music recording	visual arts
	2006	1	Elsebeth	Jørgensen	Cinemagic Tour II: Scenes from an Imaginary Place	x	40-50	f	Denmark	artistic documentation	visual arts
	2006	Part of town artist	David	Blyth	Bridle Suite		20-30			sculpture	visual arts
	2006	12	David	Blyth	Knockturne	x	20-30			visual art	visual arts
	2006	3	Jelka	Plate	MONO	x	30-40	f	Germany	performance art	visual arts
	2005	3	Donal	Brown	Huntly in Harmony		20-30	f	Scotland	music	music

	2005	6	David	Blyth	By Dandi	x	20-30		Scotland	cartoon	visual arts
	2005	12	David	Blyth	Town Artist		20-30		Scotland	visual art	visual arts
	2005	12	Deborah	Beeson	Artist for All Seasons		40-50	f	Scotland	craft	visual arts
	2005	3		Dalziel + Scullion	Breath Taking	x	40-50	group	Scotland	eco art	visual arts
	2005	3	Fabiana	Galante	¡La Pipeta!		30-40	f	Argentina	music	music
	2005	2	Kenny	Hunter	Where in? Where at?		40-50	m	Scotland	sculpture	visual arts
	2004	1	Eva	Merz	Country Living	x	30-40		Denmark	social engagement	visual arts
	2004	1	Eva	Merz	Space/Retail/Magic	x	30-40		Denmark	social engagement	visual arts
	2004	3	Paul	Anderson	Strathbogie Collection	x	30-40	m	Scotland	music	music
	2004	3	Colonel / Thierrey	Geoffrey	Made in Huntly	x	50-60	m	Denmark	video	visual arts
	2004	2	John	Kenny	Doric	x	50-60	m	Scotland	music	music
	2004	2	Chris	Wheeler	Doric		30-40	m	Scotland	DJ	music

	2003	3	Eva	Merz	Empty Shop	x	30-40	f	Denmark	social engagement	visual arts
	2003	3	Umesh	Maddanahalli	From Here to There	x	30-40	m	India	performance	visual arts
	2002	3	Cath	Whippie	Halloween Hairst Festival		30-40	f	Scotland	puppet making	craft
	2002	3		Dudendance	Café Bohemios	x	30-40	group	Scotland	performance	theatre
	2002	3	Leena	Nammari	Belonging	x	20-30	f	Scotland	printmaking	visual arts
	2001	3	Jonathan	Claxton	Groundwork		30-40	m	Scotland	land art	visual arts
	2000	3	Paul	Carter	Messiah 1/Chapel Barbarossa		30-40	m	Scotland	sculpture	visual arts
	2000	1	Wilhelm	Scherübl	Structure	x	40-50	m	Austria	eco art	visual arts
	1999	3	Julia	Douglas	Threadbare		20-30	f	Scotland	textile	visual arts
	1998	3	David	Blyth	Fish out of Water		20-30	m	Scotland	visual art	visual arts
	1997	3	Ewan	McClure	The Three Degrees		20-30	m	Scotland	painter	visual arts
	1996	n/a		various	one off events only		mix	group	Scotland	mix	mix
	1995	n/a		various	one off events only		mix	group	Scotland	mix	mix

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Inauguration of new  
Room to Roam  
coat of arms to  
Huntly town,  
September 2010

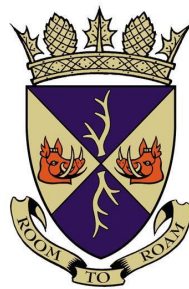


Figure 67: Coat of Arms Inauguration on Huntly Town Square