

# Arguing with the City:

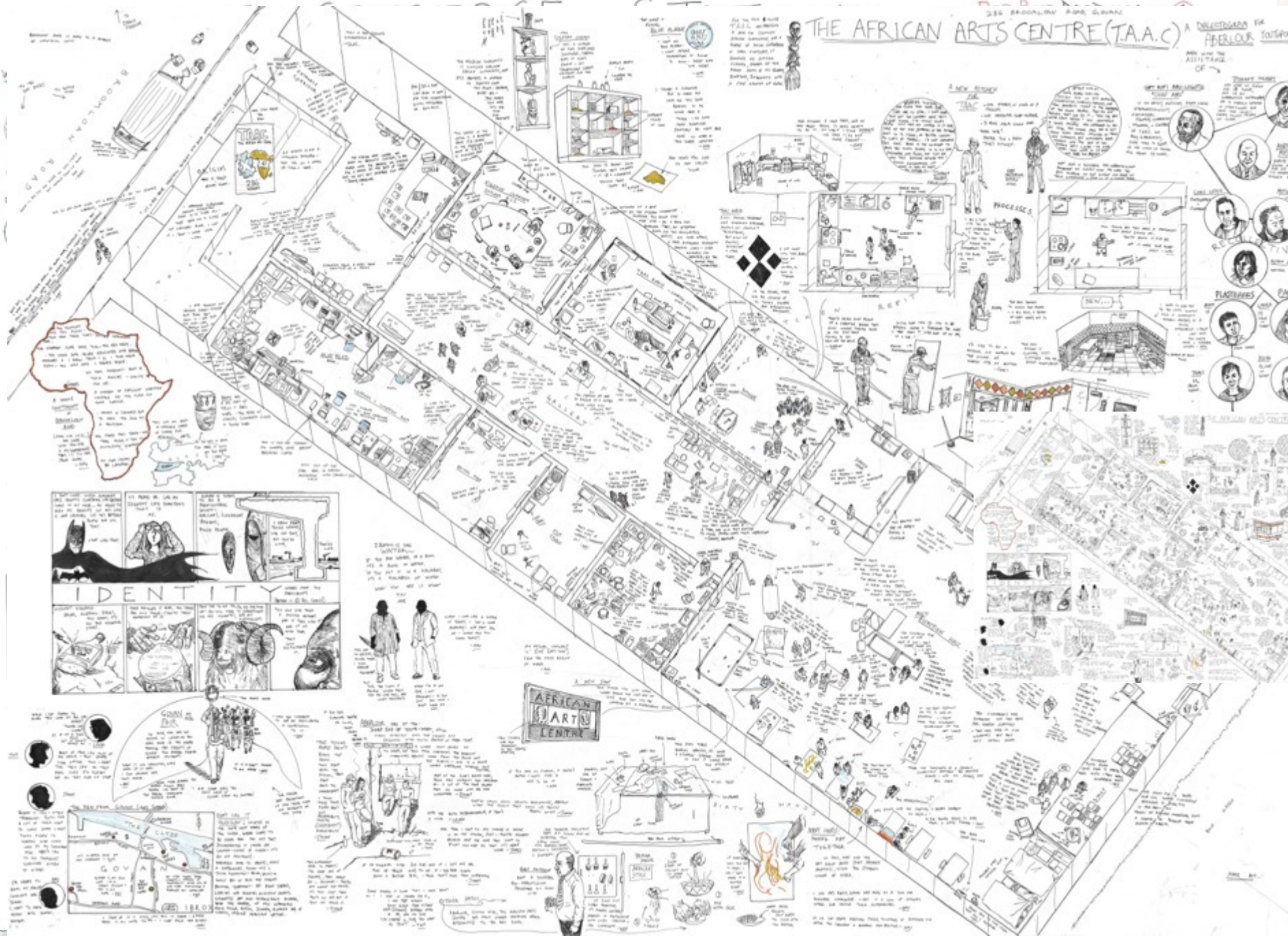
The Dialectogram as participatory artwork and site of debate

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**Recollective**

# THE AFRICAN ARTS CENTRE (T.A.A.C.)

WELLSBORO ST. HEBERLOU TOWNSPON  
AND THE ASSISTANCE OF



### IDENTITY

This section consists of six small panels arranged in a 2x3 grid. Each panel contains a distinct illustration:

- Top-left: A stylized profile of a person's face.
- Top-middle: A traditional African mask or headdress.
- Top-right: A person in traditional attire.
- Bottom-left: A person in traditional dress.
- Bottom-middle: A close-up of a person's face.
- Bottom-right: A person in traditional dress.

### GOING BACK

This section features a map of a specific region in Africa, with several points of interest marked and labeled. To the right of the map is a small illustration of a person standing, and below it is a block of text.

A circular diagram containing several portraits of individuals, arranged in a circle. Each portrait is accompanied by a small name or title, though the text is difficult to read. This likely represents the staff or community members associated with the African Arts Centre.

# Dialectogram?

*Other illustrators taking on social or political themes in their practice have responded by depicting the issue with which they have aligned themselves. The goal is to shock and raise awareness [...] This form of practice can be associated more closely with journalism than the practices discussed in this article: it is inherently problem focused, rather than proposing an alternative or embodying an intervention.*

*Luise Vormittag, (2014) 'Making (the) subject matter: illustration as interactive, collaborative practice',  
Journal of illustration 1: 1, pp41-67*



# Glasgow 101

- ❑ Originally a settlement by the Molendinar burn in Cymric-speaking Strathclyde known as Cathures. Glasgow officially founded by St. Mungo in 6<sup>th</sup> C as an ecclesiastical centre.
- ❑ 16<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> Century – Reformation and city of Presbyterian entrepreneurs and merchants. Growth through the triangular trade (tobacco – sugar- slaves) into a major port.
- ❑ 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century – material and geographic opportunities create a perfect context for shipbuilding.



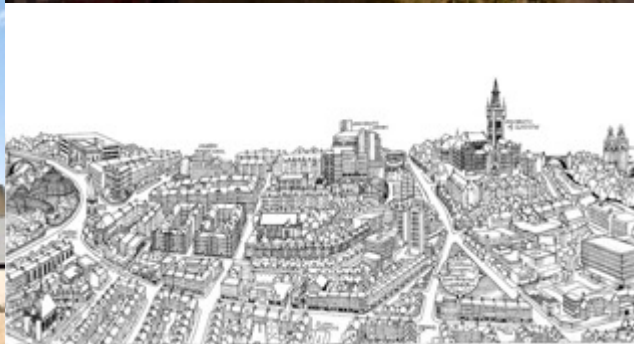
# Industrial Glasgow



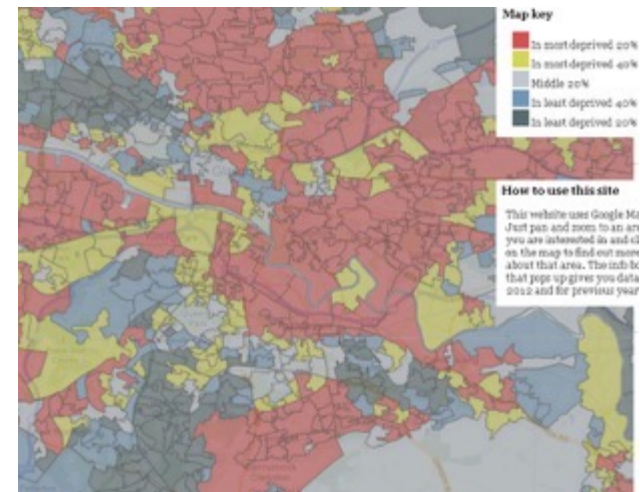
Glasgow c.1957

- Shipbuilding began 1712 at Greenock – but following the dredging of the Firth of Clyde mid 19<sup>th</sup> century became the ideal place to build ships – over 300 firms both sides of the Clyde by the 1880s. City swells to over 1m. Trade unions, radicalism – even insurrection.
- Irreversible decline from inter-war era – lingered until 1970s – then massive de-industrialisation during 1980s.
- City population now at – 598,830 (1,788,000 in metropolitan area) But still Scotland's most populous city.

# Post-industrial Glasgow



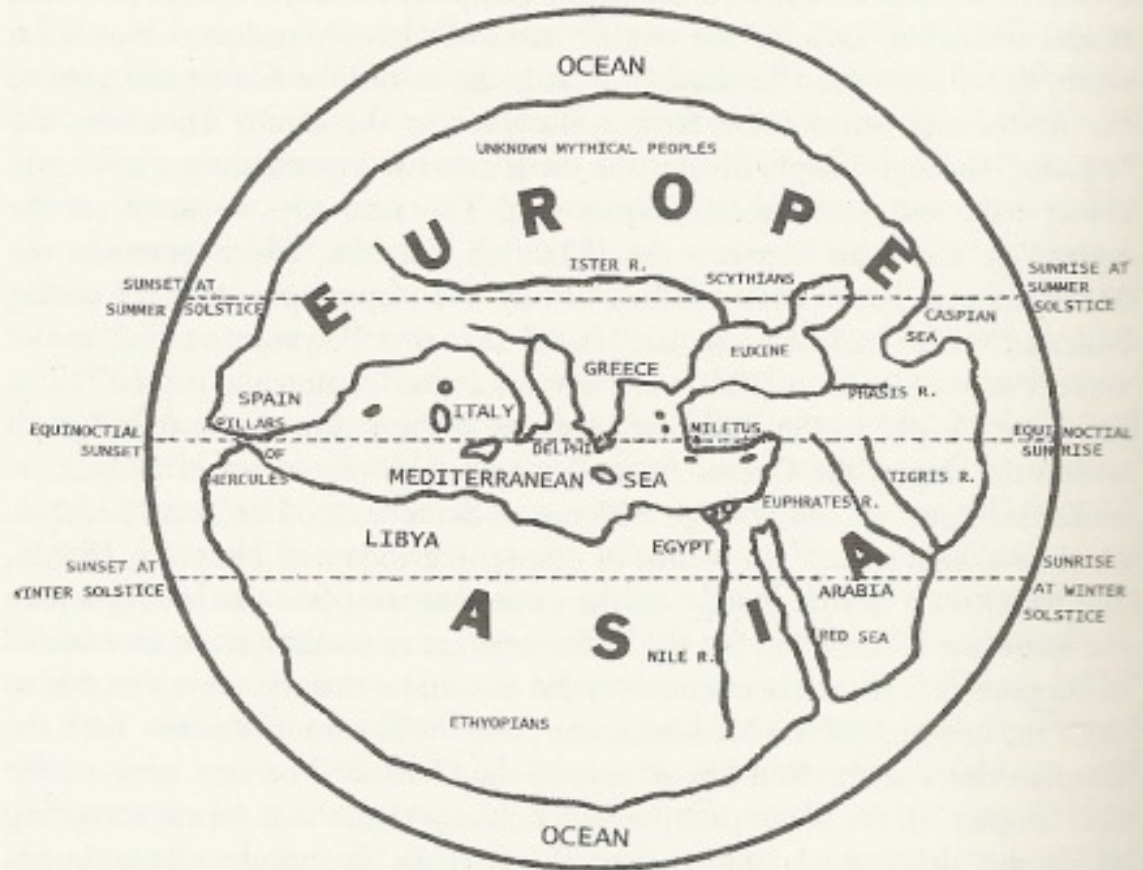
- City of Gapsites, of high rise...and Culture? Glasgow 1990, various Turner Prizes... 'Scotland with Style'?
- Vibrant Literary, Music and Art Scene – a Glasgow Miracle? OR, results of a long-standing D.I.Y culture with space to work.
- Ongoing regeneration and reinvention – mixture of introspection and financial speculation driving this agenda.
- Glasgow Effect: Premature deaths 30% higher than almost identical cities such as Liverpool or Manchester. Life expectancy in some parts of the East End is estimated at 57 years for men.



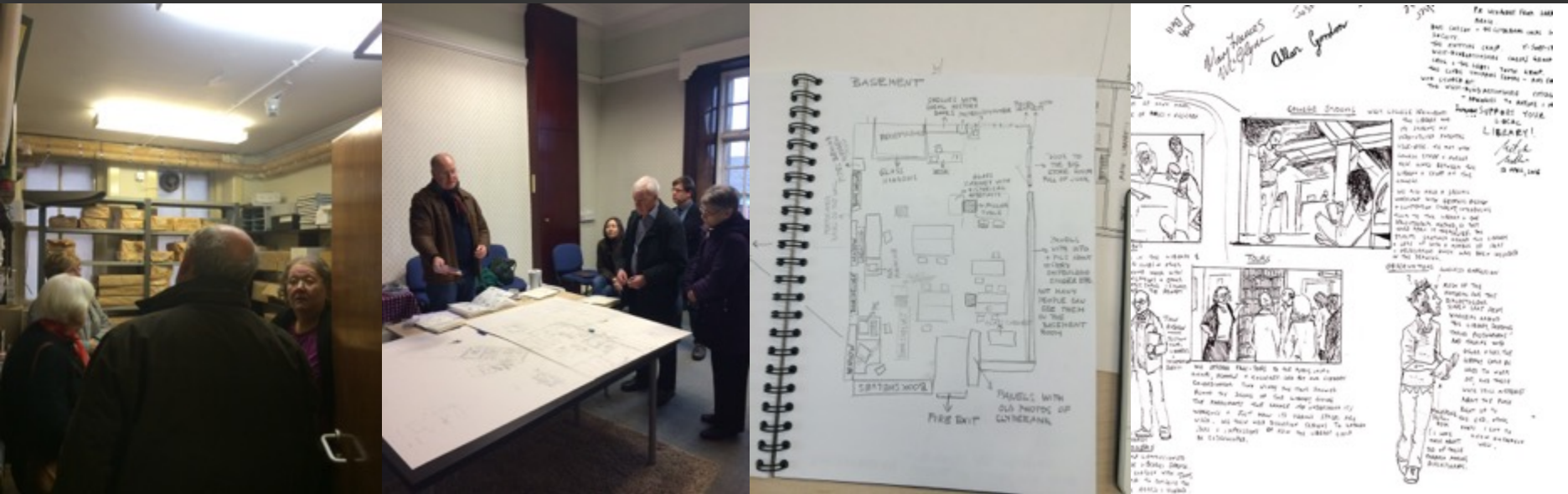
# The kinds of things they made in Miletus...



Anaximander of Miletus – 610-546 BCE



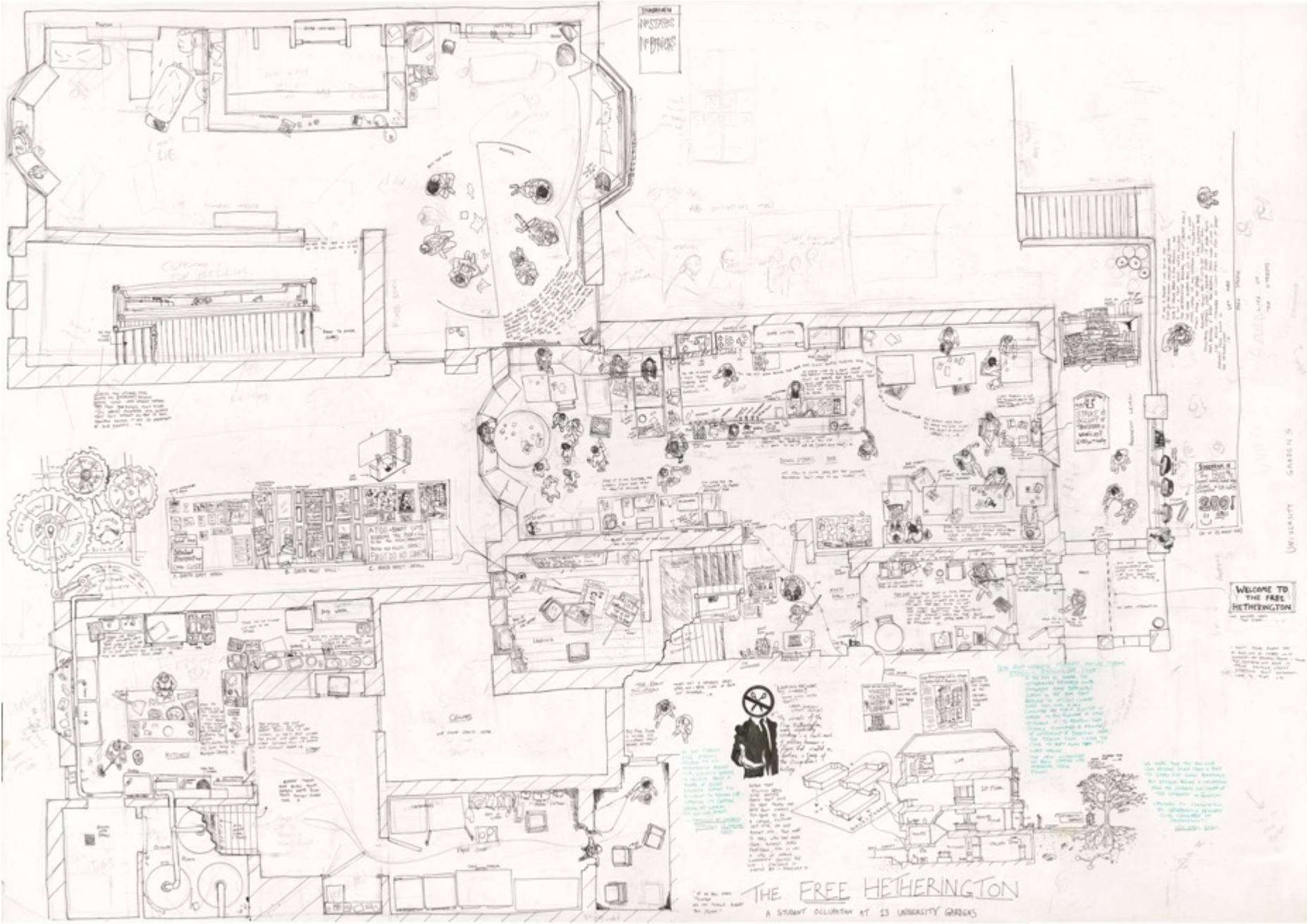
# With...not about



- Create artifacts and activities that are made with the context of the project – arising from its needs, mingling elements of both.
- This is done through creating ‘shared puzzles’ – how can we illustrate this context? What can that process of illustration do? What are our shared interests?
- Projects designed through ‘correspondence’ between what I know, and they know... (Tim Ingold and Caroline Gatt 2013)

*A characteristic of anthropology by means of design is the deliberate and reflexive interweaving of research and artefact production during fieldwork. (Ingold and Gatt, 2013: 139-158)*





# THE FREE HETHERINGTON

A STUDENT OCCUPATION AT 13 UNIVERSITY GARDENS

WELCOME TO THE FREE HETHERINGTON

UNIVERSITY GARDENS 13

STATION 2  
 13 UNIVERSITY GARDENS  
 LONDON W14 8EJ  
 TEL: 0181 871 1111  
 FAX: 0181 871 1112  
 WWW: www.freehetherington.org

...with the fact that the building is a Grade II listed building and that the council are trying to sell it to a private developer. We are trying to raise money to buy the building and to run it as a student union. We are also trying to get the council to stop the sale of the building. We are also trying to get the council to stop the sale of the building. We are also trying to get the council to stop the sale of the building.

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*Long before designating an object thrown out of the political sphere and standing there objectively and independently, the Ding or Thing has for many centuries meant the issue that brings people together because it divides them...*

*(Latour, 2005:13)*

*Social innovations can be products or services just like any innovation, but they can also be a principle, an idea, a piece of legislation, a social movement, an intervention, or some combination of them. The key aspect is its capacity to simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relations.*

*(Björgvinsson et al, 2010:3)*







# Glasgow: Showland's capital

# East End: Regeneration or Clearance?

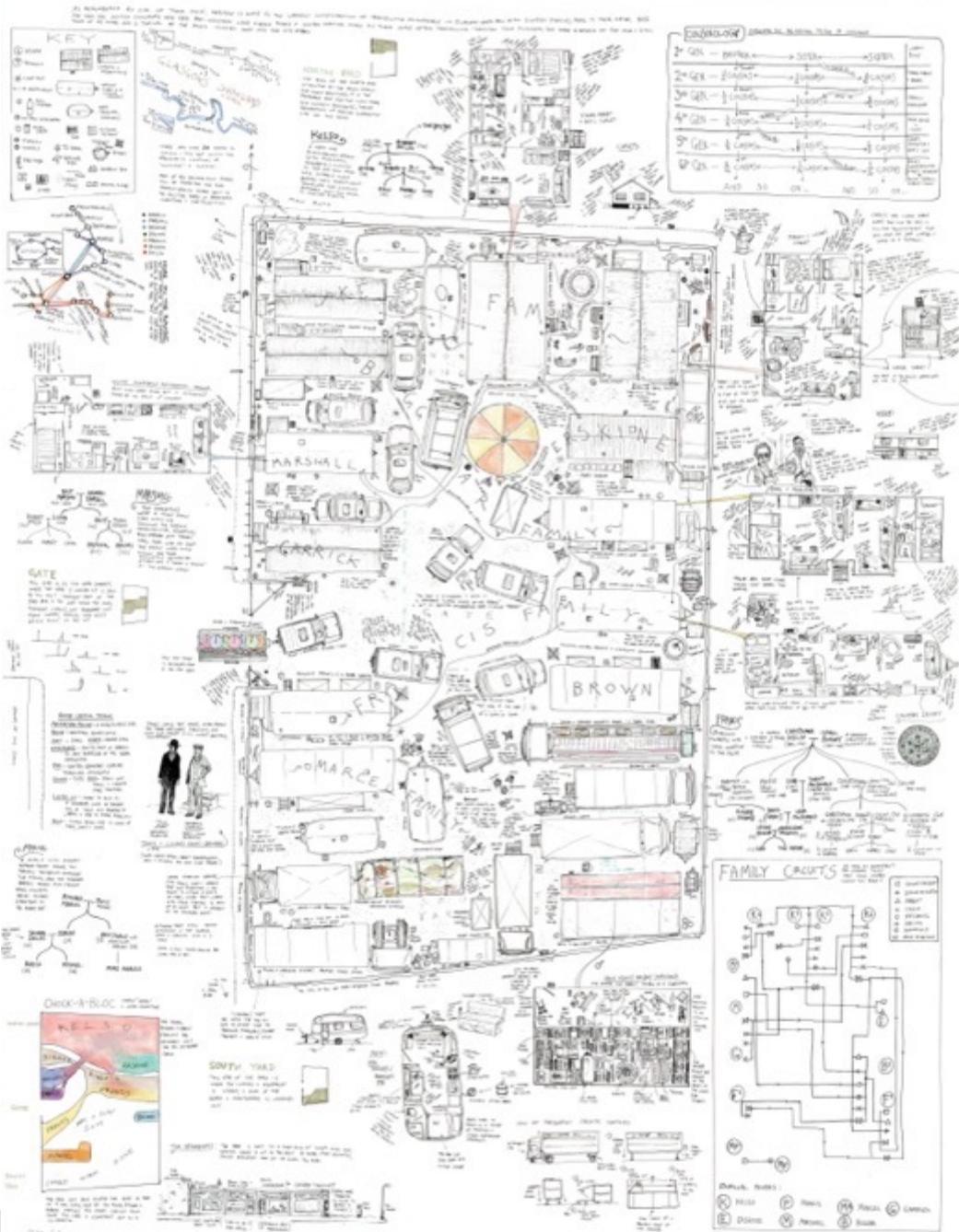


# A Showman's Yard in Glasgow's East End



- A community on the margins?
- C6,000 people in Glasgow, mostly living on sites or yards.
- Despite nearly 200 years of co-existence, the press treated relocation as some new incursion – as 'encampments'.
- Reports of overt and covert racism in public meetings, from representatives of major developers – Showpeople generally left out of the 'legacy' discussions, or even BBC documentaries.

# A SHOWMAN'S YARD IN THE EAST-END









## Palaces on Wheels



The Carter Family Wagon on display inside the Stranmillis Museum.

*My father made us a caravan, for me and the brother...we thought we were living in a palace man! It was only ten foot...*

Chris Miller, Showman

*We lived in four foot, by twelve, five of us...but it didn't make any difference to us, because we knew it no other.*

Chris Miller, Showman

A Showman's wagon was home for the entire year. These four examples of early 20th century wagons were built for the road, travelling with a family between fairs during the summer then back to their "winter yard" in Glasgow.

The same principles of mobility and adaptability can be found in the Carter Wagon on display inside the museum, and in the modern charter buses of showpeople today.

Melvin Thomas and Brian McLisley's Ashkison wagons show the tremendous pride showpeople have for their homes. Everything, from the water cans on the steps to the fixtures and fittings inside, were adapted for a life on the move.

HANLEY'S  
AMUSEMENTS

MODERN  
AMUSEMENTS

HANLEY





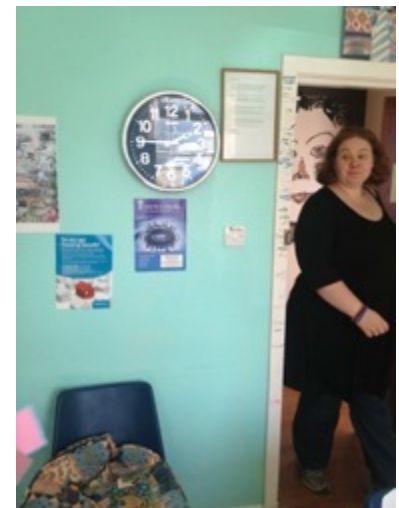
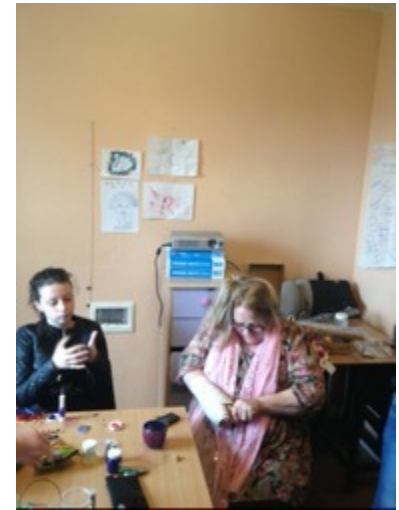
# We created...

- A record, and document of a culture...
- ...but also inspired direct participation and ownership of cultural representations, including multiple knowledge exchanges...
- ...engaged with Intangible Cultural Heritage...
- ...and sparked off debate and discussion about the role and future of these yards within Glasgow.
- Other media spin offs – BBC Scotland documentary, official and unofficial work partnerships.



# Piershill Community Flat (PCF)

- Located in a working class area of Edinburgh – mixed population.
- Run by the NHS – but not a clinic.
- Promotes social model of health and to tackle health inequalities by tackling community problems.
- Emphasis on resolving individual and community issues.
- Strong grassroots involvement and organisation – but also centred around and driven by a single person.



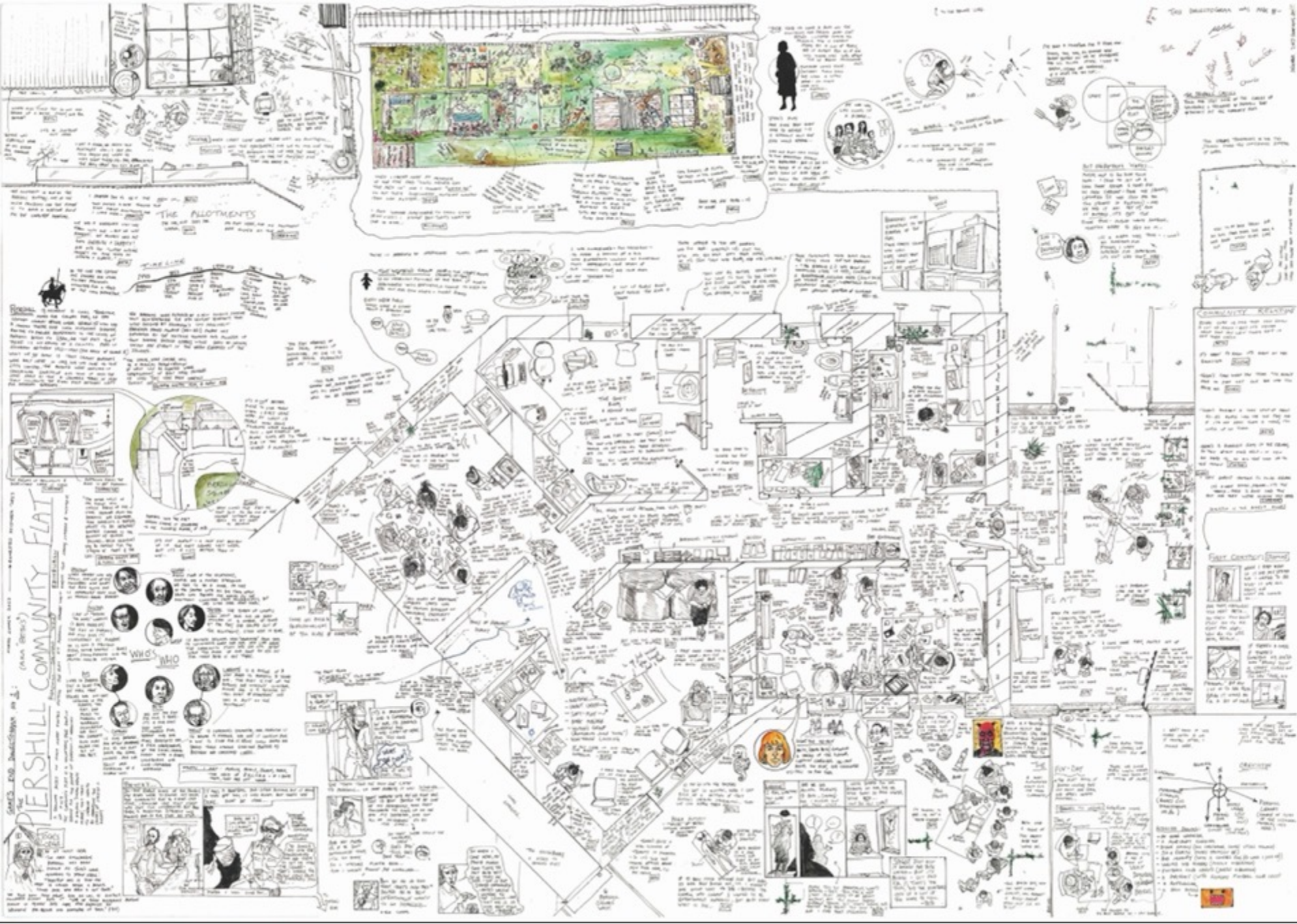
# Reaching agreements



- Embedded ethics model (Meskell & Pels 2005: 8)
- We worked to identify the narratives – and relevant topography – that mattered.
- Mixture of illustrations and live activities – not just the ones I wanted to make!
- Tools and facilitation through images/image making processes.
- Both my output and activity offered up shapes and formats for future practices.



# PIERSHILL COMMUNITY FLAT



## THE PLOTS



COMMUNITY MEETING  
The meeting was held in the hall of the flat on the 15th of June. It was attended by 12 people, including the architect, the residents, and the local council. The meeting was very successful and resulted in a number of important decisions being made. The residents agreed to the proposed design for the flat and to the terms of the lease. The architect agreed to make some minor changes to the design to better suit the needs of the residents. The local council agreed to provide the necessary support and resources for the development of the flat.

For the 1st floor the flat is to be used as a community room. It will be used for meetings, social events, and as a place for residents to relax and socialize. The flat will be furnished with a sofa, coffee table, and television. There will also be a kitchen and a bathroom. The flat will be available for use from the 1st of September 2000.

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# Outcomes?

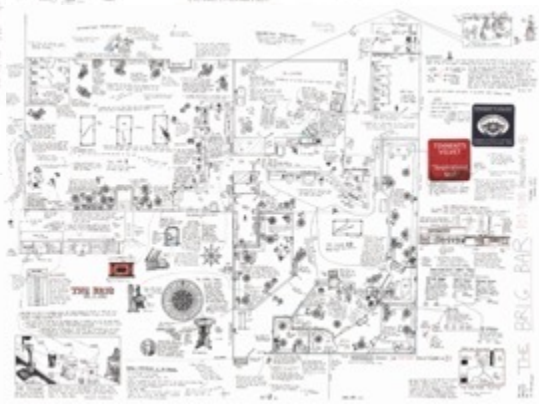
- Artefact bequeathed to the community
- Piece of work that communicates ideas of the place, and encourages exploration – and debate...
- ...but also outcomes from the process itself i.e. a refocus on encouraging male participation – and staff changes.
- Not so much about presenting a given solution – as helping to inform and drive questioning processes.



# Arguing with the city...

- Glasgow has a reputation for art that interrogates its past and present - dialectograms attempt to honour that...
- ...while bringing in fresh ideas and perspectives – i.e Nordic design traditions.
- Art and design can play a role in conversations over city spaces – but needs to be independent, critical, and have space to manoeuvre.
- Interventions work best through co-creation and careful negotiation.





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See also [www.recollective.org.uk](http://www.recollective.org.uk)

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