

Wendy Charlton

MA Fine Art | Art and Social Practice

Research Dossier

## The Farm : Narratives of Home

A Situated Practice on Broadwater Farm Estate



‘People do not only live in homes. They live in neighbourhoods and communities. They occupy buildings but also locations in a social fabric. A radical right to housing must affirm and protect this web of relations. It must propose new links between housing and other domains.’

Madden & Marcuse *The Residential Is Political* in Adler et al.  
(2017) *The Right to the City: A Verso Report*

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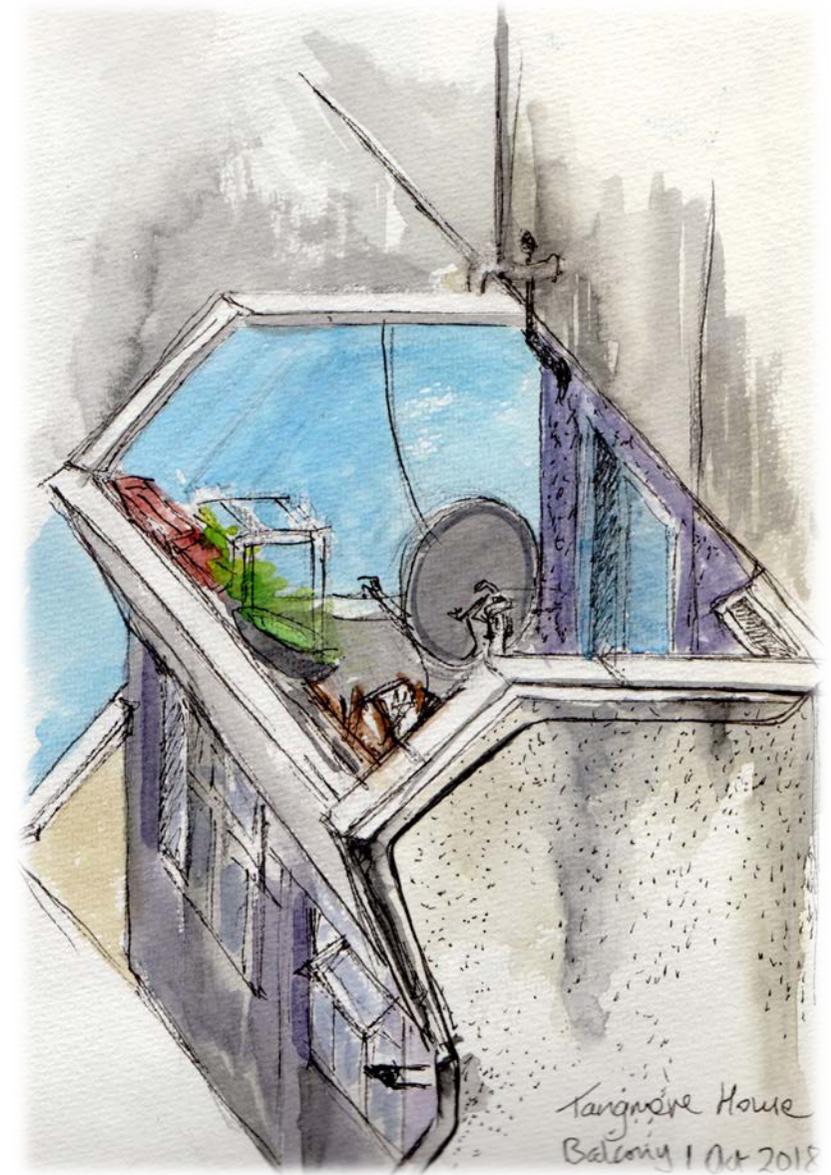
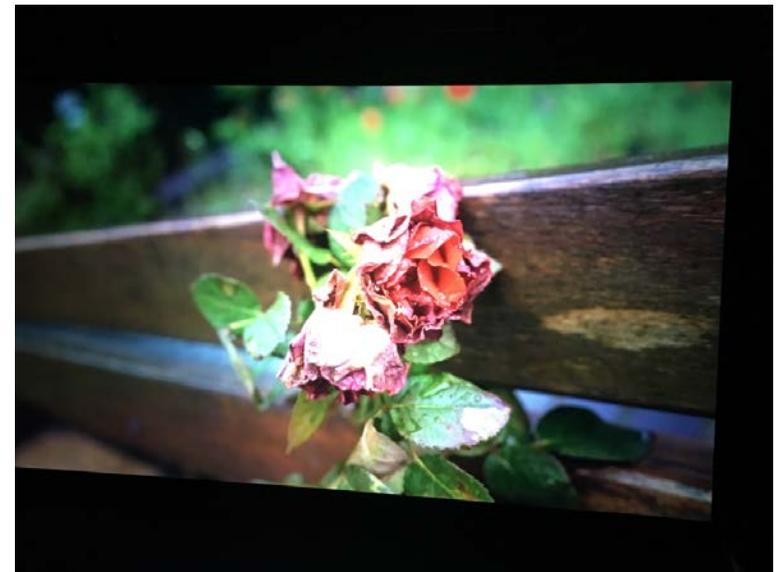


Fig 1. Tangmere House balcony sketch by Wendy Charlton 2018

## INTRODUCTION

I have an established 30year career managing and facilitating community arts projects which includes 8 years of teaching art in adult community learning. In 2017, I transferred from MA Artist Teacher and Contemporary Practice at Goldsmiths to Art and Social Practice at Middlesex. My passion and interests reside within communities of people, story sharing and cooperative ways of working. During the past two years whilst studying Art and Social Practice, I have focused my work on issues around rights to housing and narratives of home.

My major project *The Farm: Narratives of Home* (2019) has evolved from a 4year inquiry into a proposal to redevelop the Broadwater Farm area along with other estates in Tottenham and Wood Green. During the past two years, I have attended resident and housing activist community meetings, council lobbies and protests, facilitated a banner-making workshop with housing activists, documented the estate through drawings, photography, film, sound, made a short documentary film, facilitated a film and discussion event, presented at Right to Home conference (Brighton University), made a series of four short films in which resident's stories are narrated by a poet and organised a celebratory story sharing event with film projection and spoken word performance.



Figs 2-3 *The Farm: Narratives of Home* film stills (2019)

# ARTIST STATEMENT

## The Farm: Narratives of Home

### A Situated Practice on Broadwater Farm Estate

For the past four years I have been working with residents at Broadwater Farm. *SA63-Home* (2015) is a series of altered estate agent signs installed on public park land that had been targeted for development by the local council in partnership with a property developer. I then created *SA62-Home* (2017), an 'incident room' installation of drawings, photo-documentation and transcribed interviews with resident's responses to the redevelopment proposal. This was followed by *SA61-Home* (2018), a documentary film based on an elder resident's own experience.

Since the campaign against this development was won, I have focused instead on celebrating the people's lives and sense of community on the estate. *The Farm - Narratives of Home* (2019) is a story sharing project in collaboration with local spoken word artist Abe Gibson and residents who contributed narratives. It culminated in a film, sound piece and an evening event that involved live projection onto the side of a residential block, spoken word poetry and an 'open mic' opportunity. It was opened by Middlesex University Chancellor Dame Janet Ritterman, Deputy Leader of Haringey Council Zena Brabazon and attended by 50+ people.

Dialogue is central to my working process (Kester, 2010), realised both through attendance at resident meetings, as well as informal communication with individuals. This allows me to identify where artistic activity can be beneficial and develop appropriate creative strategies. My work is embedded in community activism and critiques of arts-led regeneration, and I have been much influenced by the work of Hannah Hull, Jessie Brennan and Laura Oldfield-Ford, whose work values the lived experience of residents.



Fig.4 *The Farm- Narrative of Home* (2019) Event

## RESEARCH CONTEXT

*The Farm – Narratives of Home* (2019) project is based on the sharing stories about the local histories and lived experiences of Broadwater Farm estate community. The media narrative often refers to anti-social behaviour and violence rather than BWF's community resilience and determination. This project is a story sharing device and a celebration of the positive sense of community shared by its local residents.

Historically, BWF estate is a contested space. Originally a working farm located on the edge of Lordship Rec, the estate was completed in 1973 and within ten years proposed for demolition. Tenancy empowerment and integration initiatives were launched, then further intensive regeneration began after riots in 1985. In 2015, a Freedom of Information request exposed plans for the demolition of BWF estate.

**'The association between post-war estates and deprivation is strong and is reflected by the frequent references politicians and media make to 'Sink-Estates' (Anna Minton 2017)**

The commodification of housing, loss of social housing stock and rising housing waiting lists has seen local authorities selling off public land and/or partnering with property developers using tactics of managed decline and redevelopment methods along with negative media portrayal. A climate of social cleansing is spreading across major cities around the world; a deliberate drive to move the poor out and the rich in.

### David Cameron vows to bulldoze 'sink estates where poverty and crime has become entrenched'

The Prime Minister pledged that "brutal high-rise towers" and "bleak" housing will be "torn down" in an effort to tackle drug abuse and gang culture

### Broadwater Farm: What's the future for Britain's most notorious housing estate?

#### Broadwater Farm, *Haringey*

An ill-famed housing estate situated between Lordship recreation ground and Bruce Grove in west Tottenham

#### Haringey set to demolish Ronan Point-style blocks on Broadwater Farm estate

20 JUNE, 2018 • BY ELLA JESSEL



Haringey Council is set to demolish two Ronan Point-style housing blocks on the Broadwater Farm estate due to concerns over their safety

#### The children dreading their summer holiday shut away inside Broadwater Farm estate

Fig.5 A selection of recent newspaper headlines from google search engine

**‘Estates all over London, from east to west and south to north, are tipped for demolition in a process that advocates describe as ‘estate regeneration’ and critics condemn as social cleansing’ (Anna Minton 2017).**

In 2016, The Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) a joint venture between Haringey Council and property developer Lendlease, proposed large-scale housing redevelopment which included Broadwater farm estate in the second phase.

A grassroots campaign *Stop HDV* (2017) was launched which challenged the council in The Royal Courts of Justice, organised protest, civil disobedience during council meetings at the civic centre and as time went on attracted widespread community resistance. The HDV scheme was abandoned in 2018 by Haringey Council.

During the *Stop HDV* campaign I became involved in housing activism, attending community and local council meetings alongside other housing activists and residents, leafleting estates which were being targeted by the HDV, facilitating a banner-making workshop and participating in protest. An embedded approach such as this provides the artist with an opportunity to observe the situation. It will become apparent at some point where we may be able to offer our services.

**‘It enables the artistic activity to become part of a movement towards change rather than standing outside of it.’ (Lorraine Leeson 2018)**



Figs.6-11 Banner-making workshop for Stop HDV protest (2018)

At the start of this MA course I also undertook a 6-month documentary film-making course at City Lit. My considerations for working in film with dialogue, sound and photography is based on its usefulness for social practice.

An ongoing discussion with one of the residents from BWF estate led to the making of *SA61-Home* in which she is the main character. Still shots of the resident's drawings illustrate the community in which she fondly describes and seems to really care about. It becomes apparent within the film's narrative that she is concerned that all of this will be lost if the HDV happens.

*SA* is an abbreviation for *Site Allocation*, a widespread practice used by developers to draw a red line around a proposed area for redevelopment. It is difficult to remove and leads to discriminate practice towards the community of people who live within it such as refusing access to loans or insurance.

*SA61-Home* (2018) was shown at The Ply gallery student interim exhibition, the Social Art Summit in Sheffield, a documentary film event which I facilitated at The Hub in Lordship Rec, The Cinema Museum and Lift-Off film festivals.

Inviting guest speakers and the public to film viewings can provide a discussion opportunity for audience who may or may not be familiar with the issues raised in the films. I also think it is important to consider who funds documentaries about social justice, the art-world is not unlike a corporate property developer.



Figs.12-14 Film stills from *SA61-Home* (2018-19)

*The Farm – Narratives of Home* (2019) project developed after Tangmere House and Northolt blocks were proposed for demolition due to structural issues with large panel systems and changes in housing policy since the Grenfell fire. Housing activists have questioned the council’s plans identifying a ‘ribbon of redevelopment’ across the estate, calling for a resident ballot on demolition in line with the Mayor’s requirement for estate regeneration.

I was invited by the Residents Association to attend meetings for residents affected these issues which enabled initial conversations to develop. Although most residents were pre-occupied with what was happening to their homes, I was able to recruit two residents who were being moved out of Tangmere.

The project consists of a 15min film, a sound piece and celebratory event. Poetry pieces were developed from conversations with residents, myself and local poetry artist Abe Gibson. The stories were audio recorded in the sound studio at University and used in dialogue with film to form a narrative.

I also recorded various sounds of the estate from inside and outside the blocks. The main narrative of the soundscape is the lift in Northolt block which creates a dialogue between other sounds of the estate as the doors open and close.

A celebratory site-situated event which is also documented through film involves live poetry performance and projected film visuals onto Hawkinge block. The event aim was to invite residents, locals and a wider audience to engage and participate in story sharing on BWF estate.

## The Farm: Narratives of Home

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> August 8.30pm- 10.30pm

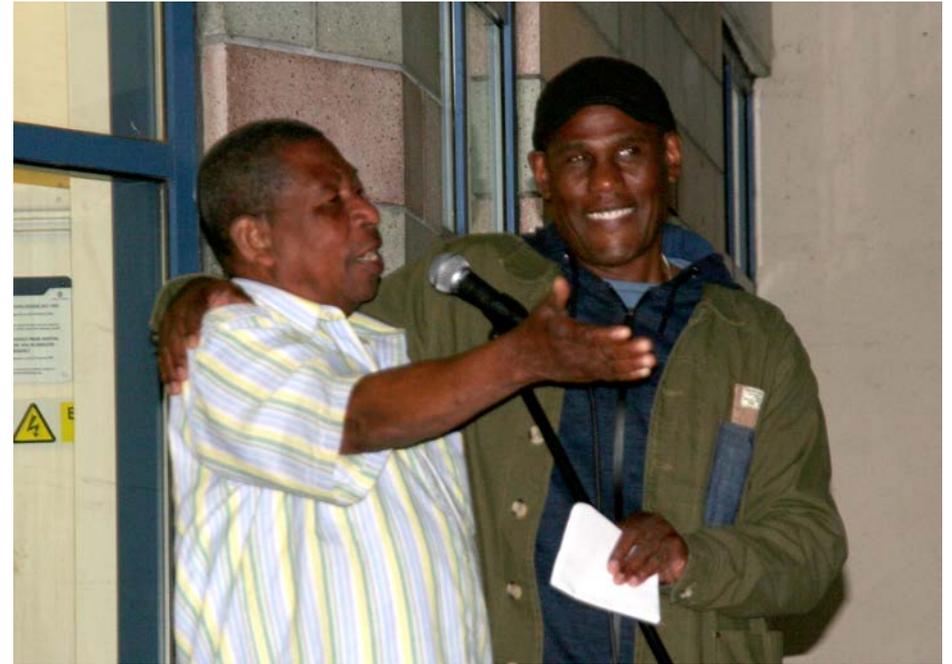
Outside Hawkinge block main entrance on  
Willan and Gloucester Road corner N17 6LP



A celebratory story sharing event on Broadwater Farm Estate  
with film projection and spoken word performance

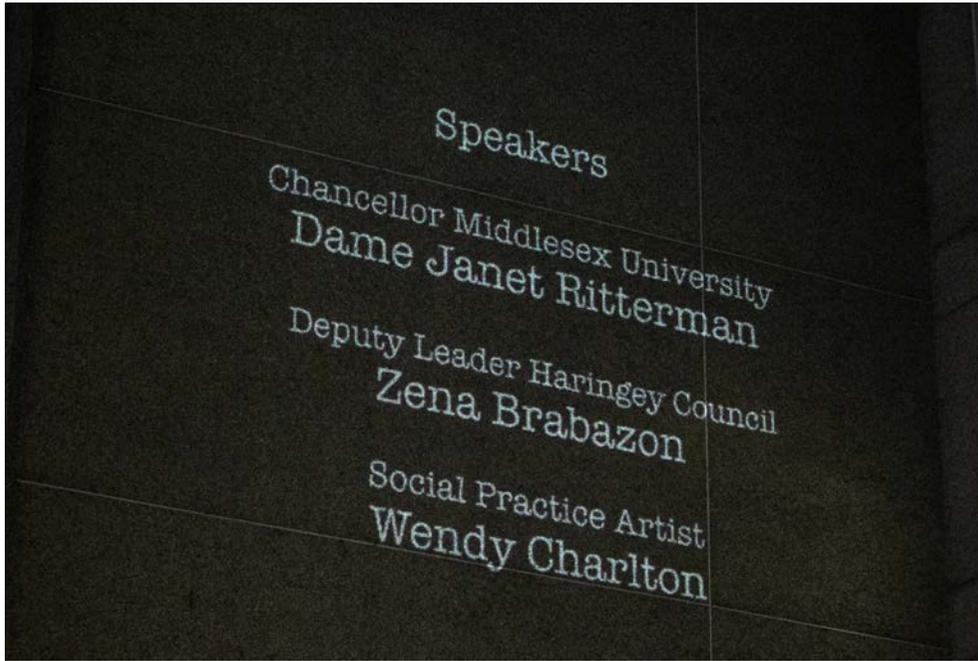
Fig. 15 *The Farm- Narratives of Home* (2019) event poster





Figs.16-24 *The Farm* event photos by Loraine Leeson 2019









Figs.25-40 *The Farm* event photos by Joe Culleton 2019

*The Farm - Narratives of Home* (2019) event involved collaborating with the BWF Residents Association, Urban Projections and spoken word artists Abe Gibson and Potent Whisper. Fundraising leading up to the event was achieved through crowdfunding, arts activities and donations. I managed to raise over £2000 which paid for the projection and spoken word artist's fee, also to pay a local young person to film the event. I felt it was necessary to fundraise through grassroots methods both morally and as a learning experience.

When planning the event, I liaised with Homes for Haringey who maintain the estate with regards to permission, sorting out location, timings and publicity. BWF Residents Association helped to find residents who would be involved in story sharing conversations with the poet and myself. I also worked with another film artist to shoot the drone footage. I contacted Potent Whisper having seen him perform at Stop HDV campaign gigs and read about his work. I had seen Urban Projections demonstrating their Light Cycle projector in Brick Lane so contacted them to discuss a price quote and booking.

Leading up to the event, publicity was considerably done through speaking directly with some of the residents and community leaders, targeted social media and posters on the estate. Main aim was for the audience to be combination of residents and local people. Approximately 50 people attended despite the initial rain and chilly temperature, residents living in surrounding blocks looked out of their windows and some came out to participate.

The Farm - celebratory film and poetry event

by Wendy Charlton in London, England, United Kingdom

The Farm - Clasford (work in progress)

A celebratory community event 10th August situated on Broadwater Farm estate involving film projection and spoken word performance.

✓ We did it

On 10th May 2019 we successfully raised £775 with 33 supporters in 28 days

Project Facebook Wendy Charlton Personal Causes

Share Tweet In Share

Overview Updates 0 Comments 12 Supporters 33 Contact project

This is a community event which aims to bring together Broadwater Farm residents and local people to engage and participate in celebrating Broadwater Farm estate. The event will take place on 10th August 2019. Performers will be local Tottenham poet Abe Gibson and special guest spoken word artist Potent Whisper. There will be open mic opportunities during the event encouraging local youth poets to perform. The event will be documented through film and photography. Funds raised here will help pay for street projection equipment. See links below for artists involved.

The Farm

by Wendy Charlton in London, England, United Kingdom

The Farm

A celebratory community event Sunday 18th August situated on Broadwater Farm estate involving film projection and spoken word performance

✓ We did it

On 19th July 2019 we successfully raised £325 with 11 supporters in 55 days

Project Facebook Wendy Charlton Personal Causes

Share Tweet In Share

Overview Updates 0 Comments 8 Supporters 11 Contact project

This is a community event which aims to bring together Broadwater Farm residents and local people to engage and participate in celebrating Broadwater Farm estate through story sharing. The event will take place on Sunday 18th August 2019 at 8.30-10.30pm. Spoken word performers will be local Tottenham poet Abe Gibson and special guest Potent Whisper. There will be open mic opportunities during the event encouraging 16-25 year old poets to perform. The event will be documented through film and photography. Funds raised will help to pay artists involved, previous crowdfunding has achieved £750 and a further £300 through fundraising activities. Thank you for your interest and support.

Figs. 41-42 Crowdfunding pages

## RESEARCH METHODS

My research methods address themes on social housing and regeneration politics in relation to the lived experience of residents. Working with a situated practice, I wanted to explore how artists can effectively engage audience in dialogue with these themes. I continued to research arts-led regeneration with housing and community activism throughout this project.

I employed *fieldwork* research methods such as *Direct Observation* with regular visits to the setting, recording observations, making notes, taking photos, filming and recording sounds. *Participant Observation* involved having a more in-depth and embedded understanding of the setting such as attending community events or meetings and developing the relationship with residents. *Qualitative Interviews* involved working alongside the Residents Association to invite residents to participate in structured or open-ended interviews and informal conversations with the artists.

During the process of making *The Farm - Narratives of Home*, the poet and I negotiated our roles by collectively observing the situated context. We developed the conversational audio pieces with residents and discussed live performance at the event as an eventual outcome. In *One Thousand Homes* (2016), artist and researcher Hannah Hull engaged in dialogue with residents and community groups on the Johnson Fold Estate in Bolton to identify the *need* for artistic activity. Hull negotiated the role of her project through dialogue with residents by identifying existing cultural values, artistic language and creativity.

**‘It is essential to have a certain awareness of how interpersonal scenarios emerge and how some of them can be negotiated by developing a better understanding of the needs and interests of the parties involved.’  
(Pablo Helguera 2011)**

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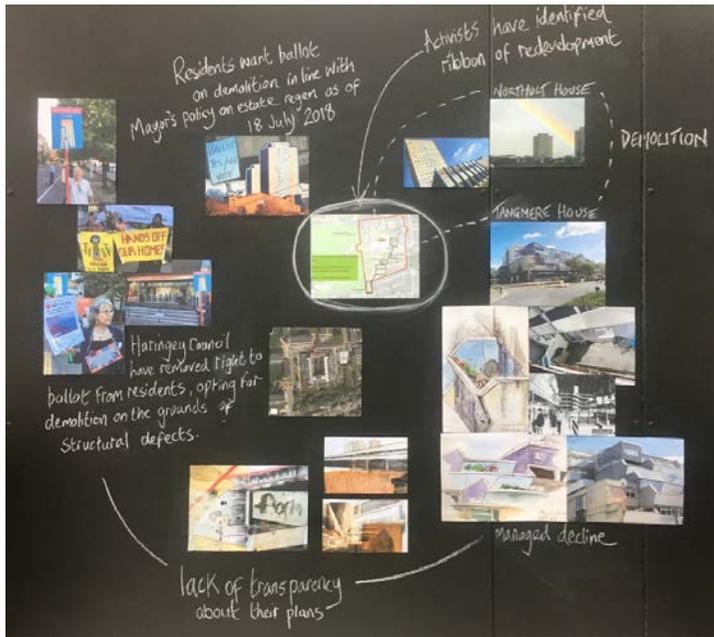
Through the dialogical process, artists and residents' conversations involved negotiating the option of anonymity. Artists negotiated the use of film in dialogue with a narrative read by the poet to respect the wishes of residents. Within the process of exchange, the artist integrity is challenged by personal perceptions of intentions and those of collaborators. Working with other artists has identified the need for regular exchange and support for each other through the process and duration of the project. The project has experienced difficulties with engaging residents, accessing parts of the estate, artists scheduling time to meet and discuss roles and responsibilities.

In *We Are Here* (2018) situated on the Pelican Estate in Peckham, artist Jessie Brennan engaged with residents to contribute a counter-narrative on the 'sink' estates concept and a wider audience. Collaborative working between housing activists, artists, residents etc. can assist in improving other people's perceptions of the estate. *The Farm-Narratives of Home* (2019) explores notions of home, community and local histories in the context of a public housing estate experiencing the ongoing threat of redevelopment. The conversational process helps create a framework. In *One Thousand Homes* (2016), Hull used a framework which stimulated dialogue around art which residents already accessed whilst enabling the art that was made to be retained by the community.

In Hull's *One Thousand Homes* (2016), the project enabled participants to showcase what they can do and in Brennan's *We Are Here* (2018), it enabled residents to share their lived experiences with a wider audience.

**'A given site or community is characterised by its own unique constellation of social and economic forces, personalities and traditions' (Grant Kester 2013)**

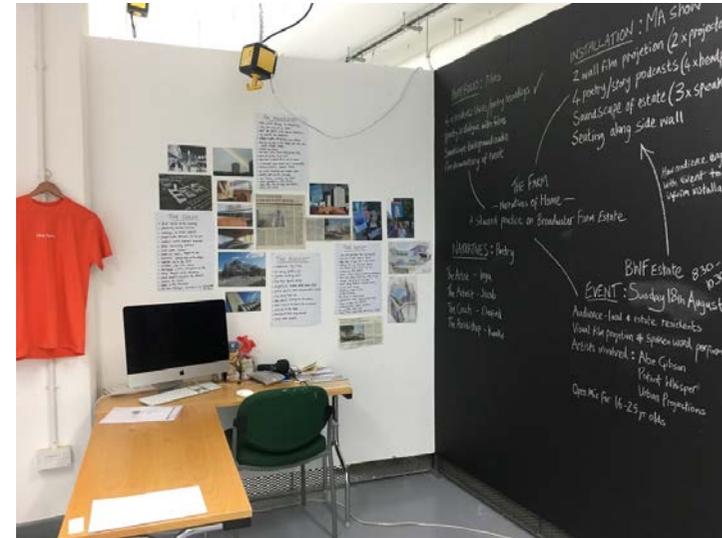
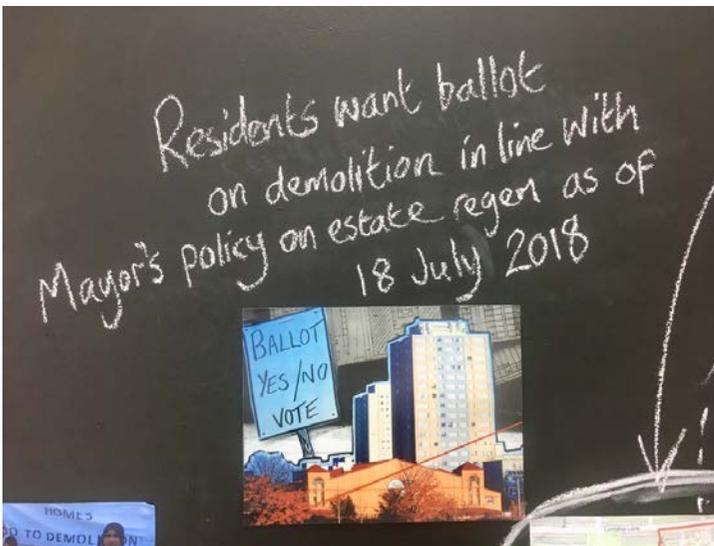




Figs. 49-50 Wall-mapping in the studio



Figs. 51-52 Wall-mapping in the studio (summer residency)



Figs. 49-50 Wall-mapping in the studio

Figs. 51-52 Wall-mapping in the studio (summer residency)

‘Most often place applies to our own “local” – entwined with personal memory, known or unknown histories, marks made in the land that provoke and evoke. Place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person’s life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there.’

Lucy Lippard (1997) *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentred Society*

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## PROJECTED RESEARCH

I am planning to take the skills, experience and knowledge learned throughout the MA course forwards into other projects. I will be researching opportunities to show my work at film festivals and arts/ housing related events. I will also be making funding applications and have started a peer mentoring application through Art Quest at Camden Arts Centre.

Whilst being involved in housing activism during this project, acquaintances have now become friends. On Northumberland Park estate I have started conversations with a Community Kitchen group. I've arranged to work with the poet again using the film and poetry storytelling format for another project.

During this past year I have also collaborated with a local primary school and litter picking group to produce a public artwork made from plastic waste. The artwork has succeeded in acting as a deterrent to potential fly-tippers. I would also like to collaborate with residents living in and around my own estate to improve areas which are targets for food and fly-tipping.

Based on inspiration from visiting Manifesta 12 in 2018, I am in discussion with fellow MA students and tutors from the University to write a proposal for a project at Manifesta 13 or 14 European Nomadic Biennial.

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