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Radical Urban Classrooms: Civic Pedagogies and Spaces of Learning on the Margins of Institutions

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Abstract: This paper investigates the relationship between "civic pedagogy" and institutions, through three case studies: the Live Works Castlegate Co-Production at the University of Sheffield; a Collective Design Pedagogy at Muktangan School, India; and the School for Civic Action at the Tate Exchange. The projects aim to build citizens' agency with transformative urban potential by engaging civic pedagogy using different scales, perspectives, and resources: as engagement with schools, higher education institutions, and art practices. Using Pelin Tan's definition of urgent pedagogies as a framework, this paper investigates the alternative alliances, trans-territorial solidarities, and transversal methodologies of each project, comparing and contrasting methods and techniques. We discuss the potential for a shared decentralisation of learning associated with institutions, by engaging with the urban environment and communities, and propose a series of codependent practices for the initiation and sustenance of civic pedagogy for geographers interested in urban learning and education.

Résumé: Cet article examine la relation entre la "pédagogie civique" et les institutions, à travers trois études de cas: Live Works Castlegate Co-Production à l'Université de Sheffield; Collective Design Pedagogy à l'école Muktangan, en Inde; et l'école pour l'action civique à la Tate Exchange. Les projets visent à renforcer l'action des citoyens et le potentiel de transformation des villes en engageant une pédagogie civique à différentes échelles, dans différentes perspectives et avec différentes ressources: l'engagement avec les écoles, les établissements d'enseignement supérieur et les pratiques artistiques. En utilisant la définition des pédagogies urgentes de Pelin Tan comme cadre, cet article étudie les alliances alternatives, les solidarités trans-territoriales et les méthodologies transversales de chaque projet, en comparant et en opposant les méthodes et les techniques. Nous discutons du potentiel de décentralisation partagée de l'apprentissage associé aux institutions, en nous engageant avec l'environnement urbain et les communautés, et nous proposons une série de pratiques codépendantes pour l'initiation et le maintien de la pédagogie civique pour les géographes qui s'intéressent à l'apprentissage et à l'éducation en milieu urbain.

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Keywords: civic pedagogy, situated learning, live projects, critical pedagogy, communities of practice, transversality

Introduction

Recently, civic pedagogies that produce decentralised learning in urban contexts and challenge existing dominant cultural narratives and institutions have been growing in number and evolving as practices across fields of urban design, education, and geography. We understand the term civic pedagogy to mean the design of a structure for learning, both formal and informal, specific and incidental, for the urban realm. The ultimate aim of a civic pedagogy is to empower participants to take transformative action over their built environment, using the city or physical environment as the site and place of learning (Perez Martinez 2019, cited in Morrow et al. 2020:196). Here, we focus on civic pedagogies and institutions, aiming to contribute to the work around civic pedagogy in the fields of urban studies (Bhan et al. 2018; Frediani et al. 2019) and radical geography (McFarlane 2011; McLaren 2008; Rouhani 2012) for geographers interested in education and urban studies. We aim to investigate the meaning of "civic pedagogy" by presenting three case studies: the Live Works Castlegate Co-Production at the University of Sheffield; a Collective Design Pedagogy (CDP) at Muktangan School, India; and the School for Civic Action (SCA) at the Tate Exchange. The projects all aim to build agency in citizens with transformative potential for the city by engaging civic pedagogy in different circumstances and with different perspectives: as engagement of higher education institutions, as engagement with schools, and as engagement with the arts. We compare the three case studies that have differing relationships with institutions and operate at different scales in very different contexts. We chose these case studies owing to the similarities of the activist-researchers' roles and experiences, despite geographical, economic, social, and institutional project differences, and the limits of this approach. Further, colonial histories continue to have enduring effects in all three sites of study. We have chosen to analyse their components and practices using art historian, sociologist, and educator Pelin Tan's (2021) definition of "decolonising learning" (in other words decentralising or democratising) as an "urgent pedagogy", before then exploring the wider implications of such pedagogies. We ask: What is a civic pedagogy and how can it disrupt the hierarchies of formal education through alternative alliances? How can it support communities of learners sustainably in transversal and trans-local ways? What can we learn from these case studies in terms of a set of practices for civic pedagogies of the future?

Civic Pedagogy: On the Periphery of Institutions, on the Borders of Urban Practice

A civic pedagogy is a type of intentional learning that is concerned with the urban environment. It is an emergent field of education derived from critical

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pedagogy (Freire 1970, 1974; Giroux 2010), public pedagogy (Biesta 2012; Caris and Cowell 2016), and urban education (Dobson 2006; Gruenewald 2003; McFarlane 2011), rooted in the discipline of urban practice; it takes place within and outside of the borders of educational institutions, using processes of critical re-imagining of learning through action. Civic pedagogies exist at the borders of both the academy and spatial practice. They emerge as "critical friends" within the university or the school, aiming at transforming practices from within; they are equally comfortable outside institutions, exploring, testing, and envisioning new modes of civic learning in critical spatial practice (Rendell 2016).

Some civic pedagogies exist on the edges of universities. As agents of criticality, universities, and their architectural, urban, and social science departments, are well placed to allow students and academics to challenge systems of authority and facilitate conscientisation of citizens (Giroux 2010). Recently, developments in re-thinking the university's role in the city have challenged higher education institutions, calling for "civic universities" which embed critical learning and urban knowledge production into the communities in which they are situated (Goddard et al. 2016).

However, they have also been criticised for instrumentalising urban knowledge towards commercial interests (Perry and May 2010), and for perpetuating neoliberal policymaking to the detriment of both citizens and the environment by "plugging the gaps" of austerity-led policy making. Insurgent university researchers and teachers, such as the "University of Neighbourhoods" (Alovjanovic et al. 2014), have begun to use university resources to catalyse and support urban infrastructure. They use civic pedagogies to facilitate students and communities in collaboratively developing and maintaining community governed spaces.

Civic pedagogies can also be learning processes on the periphery of schools that involve young people in engaging with the city through the design, management, or production of their environment. Historically, civic pedagogies have aimed to increase the civic agency of schoolchildren by developing their rights to and responsibilities for their environment using design practices within the curriculum (Bishop et al. 1992; Hart 1997). However, the long-term integration of civic pedagogies into school curricula has often suffered from changes of leadership, whether in the UK (Environmental Education in the early 1980s) or in India (Gandhi's *Nai Talim* in the 1940s). More recently, the topic of architecture has been integrated into school curricula for the long term in Finland, where the national core curriculum teaches it as one of the arts for children between the ages of seven and 16 (Räsänen 2006). Further, there is growing evidence of the value of young people as changemakers over the last two decades (Birch et al. 2017).

Within the arts, there is a rich heritage of artists working with civic pedagogies as engaged forms of situated practice, where the process of production is a participatory one that builds agency for wider urban transformation through collective learning experiences (Caris and Cowell 2016; Morrow et al. 2020). Here the artist adopts the role of facilitator or mediator of open-ended processes, bringing together new formulations and visions for what a city might be—and importantly builds capacity in local networks through on-going relational work and solidarity building. This work goes hand-in-hand with the creative rethinking of traditional educational

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institutions, building new learning environments, testing learning methods, and creating more civic- and ecologically-minded education (Böhm et al. 2017).

Furthermore, all civic pedagogies are situated practices where learning takes place outside the traditional teaching environments of academic institutions; instead, the physical environment is foregrounded as the site of learning. In doing so civic pedagogies recognise their epistemological grounding from the feminist movement in embracing Donna Haraway's (1988:590) partial perspective, and identifying the importance of context and place in the production of knowledge for communities. This situated epistemology recognises that all knowledge is partial and sits within a defined social context and time (Simonsen et al. 2014).

Much of this epistemological grounding can be traced to the field of urban education and place-based education. Geographer Colin McFarlane (2011:363) argues that space and the physical environment is a key component in urban learning and that knowledge is constantly created and contested through this relationship of people and place. Similarly, educator David Gruenewald (2003:4) argues that situated learning is needed so that participants might have some impact on the places in which they inhabit, recognising their own agency through a place-based pedagogy. It is through this intent to learn from and with, and to transform place, that we can recognise the civic dimension of the practice: civic pedagogies create communities of co-learners, united in their desire to transform their environments. Civic learning therefore takes place within what Etienne Wenger (1999) understood as a "community of practice", a group assembled through mutual interest and shared desire to learn.

The creation of this community of co-learners is the vital first step in any civic pedagogy and one which is grounded in locality and place in a radical way. Situated practices can, however, exist and resonate across geographies, where situated knowledges can be shared across divergent contexts as a form of mutual exchange to learn from and with others, with a shared sense of purpose in the transformative potential of the pedagogic process. Combining this situated pedagogy approach with bell hooks' (1994) idea that the classroom is a radical space of possibility, our understanding of civic pedagogy is that it expands the "radical classroom" to the built and natural environment and its communities of practice, situating spaces of learning and spaces of research beyond the institution (Askins 2008).

In a civic pedagogy, it is through the process of exploring and understanding one's context (social and physical) that learners can begin to develop a sense of critical consciousness. Whilst the city or material world is the site of learning and the way in which learners can realise their agency, it is also the vehicle which allows the critical reflection of one's place within the world. This criticality is rooted in Freireian conceptions of *conscientização* (English: "conscientisation" or "awareness" [Freire 1974:25]). Through the situated practice of civic pedagogies, learners can explore the social and physical challenges of their localities and commit through action to change them. It is in this sense that Gruenewald (2003:3) argues that critical pedagogies have an agenda in education of challenging existing dominant cultural narratives by foregrounding lived experience as counterpoint. Civic pedagogies utilise methods of un-learning (a concept derived from Illich's [1971] *Deschooling Society*) as ways of overcoming these existing dominant

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narratives produced through institutional education, to overcome hierarchies that must first be recognised.

Much is inherited here from the work of bell hooks and Henry Giroux, who have approached their work within the academy through the development of Freireian conscientisation. Both hooks (1994) and Giroux (2010) are critical of the existing university for reproducing social inequalities through neoliberal and imperial practices. Despite this, for hooks (1994) the classroom remains "the most radical space of possibility in the academy", understanding the need to transform existing educational practice to make material and social change in the world. In opposition, civic pedagogy can shift power away from HE institutions to the communities where learning is embedded and shared (Tan 2021:3). Tan's definition of "decolonising learning" is then a useful framework for understanding the characteristics of civic pedagogies. She writes, decolonising learning:

> means collective self-teaching, learning by acting together, rejecting the gap between theory and practice, and deconstructing terms in education that are sustained by the institution, while preserving traditional knowledge from the earth and nature. (Tan 2021:4)

This understanding of decentralising learning foregrounds the collective aspects of civic learning as a community of practice committed to change through an engaged sense of criticality. It must always remain a "border crossing" critical practice (Giroux 1991), avoiding the institutional character of any educational process, and work towards the sharing of power with those who are oppressed or marginalised.

Infrastructures of Resistance, Trans-territorial Solidarities, and Transversal Methodologies

We see the civic pedagogical platforms and methodologies of our case studies as responding to urgent needs of people and place, by fostering the shifting of power away from institutions to communities, through unlearning or learning in transversal ways. To present, analyse, and discuss these case studies we have built on Tan's (2021) "urgent pedagogy" work that investigates the critical capabilities of situated pedagogies through "alternative alliances", the unusual collaboration of groups of people. Her definition of urgent pedagogies is used here as a framework: she writes that "forming alliances as infrastructures of resistance, trans-territorial solidarities and altering within transversal methodologies are more than ever urgent in pedagogies of art and architecture" (ibid.). We argue that these alliances, solidarities, and methodologies are crucial for civic pedagogies and pedagogies of radical geographies.

Firstly, central to processes of civic pedagogy are "communities of practice" who are assembled through mutual interest and a desire to learn (Wenger 1999). The ongoing maintenance of these communities forms a practice of learning itself, through a shared commitment (Simonsen et al. 2014:9). In civic pedagogies the formation of a community of practice is of vital importance, collectively and reciprocally experiencing learning. The potential of such communities,

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and the relational practices emerging from a civic pedagogy is the potential development of "infrastructures of resistance" (Tan 2021) as networks of sustained curriculum, care, and solidarity (Trogal 2017) through collective knowledge production. The production of such infrastructures on the margins of educational institutions (that resist the status quo) ultimately can lay the ground for radical social change. But through the development of such "radical classrooms" (hooks 1994), an educational structure is generated through collective processes which produces "instituting practices", never quite reaching the status of institution, but continuously speculating and disrupting the everyday (Tan 2021).

Secondly, in civic pedagogies, communities of practice create "situated learning" (Haraway 1988), or in other words "epistemologies of location, positioning and situating" where knowledge validity is relational to the places and communities where it originates (Haraway 1988:589). Situated learning can become trans-territorial (shared across places) when it can be used by others, in solidarity, in other similar situations: trans-territorial solidarity infers an ethics of care (Trogal 2017; Tronto 1998) through the sharing of the situated knowledge produced. The potential for networked, decentralised, trans-local pedagogy (Böhm et al. 2017:8) relies on the production of transformative tools which can transcend particular localities, which often requires a marginal positioning of those developing them in relation to institutions.

Lastly, transversal methodologies, that emerge from the field of critical pedagogy and praxis, alter practices transversally by interrogating the teacher/student relationship and deconstructing educational institutions. For civic educators and researchers, they are the tools and methods used to challenge normative knowledge production and sharing as an act of collective unlearning. Their situated nature allows for interdisciplinary, action-based interventions aiming to "transform the social sites in which they intervene" (Rendell 2016) in collaboration with communities of practice. A transversal methodology as part of critical spatial practice involves making visible the structures of institutions, through intervention into urban spaces which "prepares the ground for action" (Caris and Cowell 2016:472) and reveals "the possibility of a space where freedom can appear" (Biesta 2012:693). This highlights the potential of civic pedagogy to raise critical consciousness and build agency within the public for democratic and transformative change.

Activist-Researcher Methods

Taking a situated pedagogy (Kitchens 2009) approach to connect these concepts and theories to place, three radical classrooms of civic education are explored, as embedded researchers working in contrasting geographies and with divergent approaches. This approach was developed through comparative case study analysis (Stake 1978), with case studies chosen due to the similarity of the roles and methods of activist-researchers, in each case part of a doctoral project. Using reflective auto-ethnographic methods (research journals, document analysis) the authors have individually reflected on each associated case, before coming together as a research group to identify similarities and differences. This took the format of a

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comparative table of characteristics organised in relation to our theoretical framework, which identified three main analytical themes. Each individual case outlines a broad overview of the pedagogy (where, when, who) before outlining the lived complexities and contradictions of each case through narrative reporting which is consistent with qualitative case study research (Flyvbjerg 2006). Finally, our findings of alliances and resistance, trans-territorial solidarities, and transversal methodologies of learning are summarised and subsequently compared.

In the field of critical geography, activist researchers/scholars are embedded within communities to directly bring about change (Derickson and Routledge 2015). Here, we explore our roles as activist researchers, as initiators and facilitators of civic pedagogies. In each case, authors chose to work in sites of contestation (at the edges of institutions) or by engaging with uneven power structures from the ground up. All three sites demonstrate, to varying degrees, impacts of colonial histories requiring reflexivity of the researcher's process, self, and representation (Sultana 2007). In Sheffield, the researcher, who grew up in the area, used their position at the university to advocate for the involvement of communities in an urban development process which risks their displacement.

In Mumbai, the project was instigated by a researcher who lived in the city, and with an embedded approach built networks, both institutional and personal, attempting to negotiate uneven power relations and to avoid exploitative research or domination through language, duration of research, and sustained co-production techniques. In London, the author, as part of a design collective, aimed to redistribute the resources (of the Tate Modern) in support of grassroot activists, negotiating their relationships with academic and cultural institutions. Despite aiming to bring about positive socio-spatial change through the process, we recognise the limitations and contradictions of this approach when working in between communities and institutions. Our role has been to initiate, implement, test, and develop a civic pedagogy using techniques of spatial practice. Here we reflect on our positionality as scholar-activists, and work in solidarity as authors across our individual contexts. In the words of Chatterton et al. (2007:219), "Putting solidarity into practice also means co-producing contextually relevant knowledges which are useful to groups in their struggles". Although the case study contexts differ dramatically—from the global South (Mumbai) and the UK (London and Sheffield)—we are interested in the possibilities that such a comparison of practices and institutional relationships can bring about. This paper is an attempt to find a common ground for further discussion around theories and practices of civic pedagogy, to inform future civic educators and learn from the challenges of each context.

Three Understandings of Civic Pedagogy

As Engagement of Higher Education Institutions

Live Works is an urban room and project office established on the institutional peripheries of the University of Sheffield, aiming to facilitate partnerships with local civic actors and provide a space for non-academic communities to engage with issues of urban planning and design (Figure 1). Live Works began working

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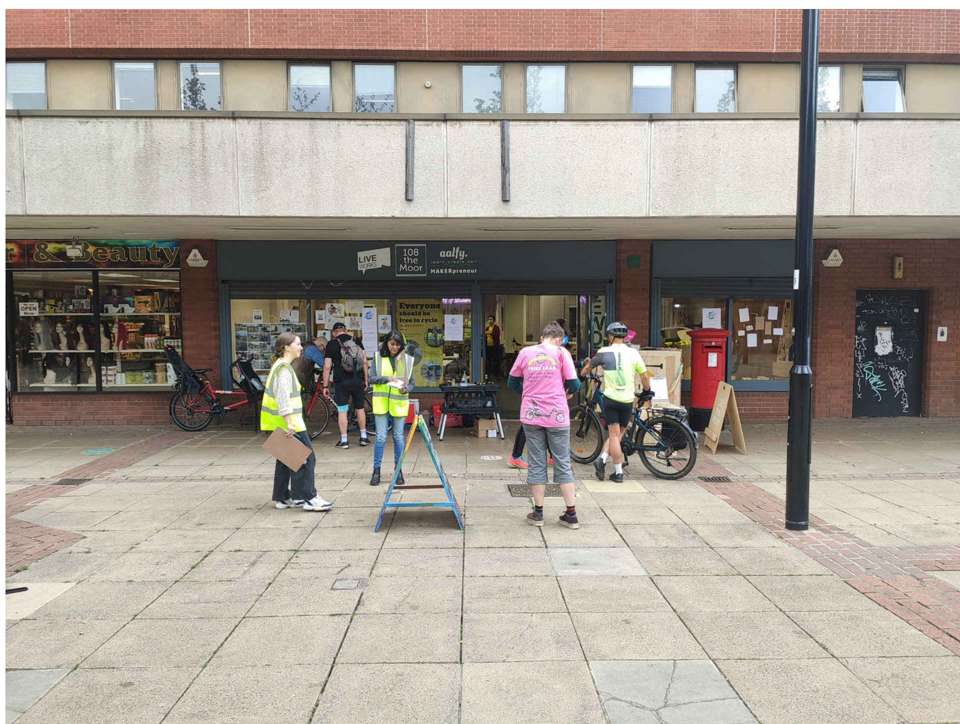

Figure 1: Live Works Urban Room hosting a community takeover, 2019 (source: authors)

in the neighbourhood of Castlegate following Sheffield City Council's (SCC) decision to demolish and move the city's market. Following demolition, Castlegate as a centre for social life was replaced by marginalised cultural enterprise and local artists in the beginnings of an all too familiar urban regeneration strategy. Initially engaging as a means to develop co-produced visions for the future of Castlegate, after six years of advocating for citizen voices, Live Works were funded by SCC to deliver a co-production strategy, placing the organisation in a position of complicity and accountability with the ongoing urban development process.

Live Works' civic pedagogy aims to develop critical consciousness amongst university students through facilitating prolonged engagement in situated projects. The author's engagement in the project began in 2016 as a "Live Project", a method of university teaching which pairs students with community partners to "extend the institutional confines of the design studio" (Anderson and Priest 2014). While the student benefits of such projects have been well established, criticism has emerged of the exploitative impact on community members (Butin 2010), favouring extractive and short-lived spatial practices. But Live Projects allow students to create relationships and embed themselves in situated projects, as remarked by a fellow student: "I found a place which I became emotionally attached to and felt some responsibility for" (2018). This echoes the author's own experience, with the Live Project becoming a six-year participatory doctoral research project. Live Works connected the author's practice to local

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actors and provided a physical space within which to develop citizen-led approaches to the regeneration of Castlegate (Figure 2).

With the backing of university resources, infrastructures like Live Works can give agency to communities of practice developing methods of community development. Interviewed at the early stages of the Castlegate project, a senior councillor remarked:

> Universities committing real resources and time has been extremely welcome. We see that as a collective resource and that's given us the confidence to say that in Castlegate we're going to do things in this collective way. (2018)

The intentions of this "collective way" have been evidenced in the formation of the "Castlegate Partnership", a collection of stakeholders including the university, local actors, developers, and members of SCC charged with the co-production of Castlegate. Through workshops aimed at realising the live project strategy, the Urban Room became a space for co-designing strategic moves assigned to partnership action groups for prototyping.

But a decade of post-austerity cuts to local government, disproportionately affecting poorer areas of northern cities like Sheffield, leading to policies aimed at passing responsibility of state-owned resources to communities has left members of the council stretched beyond their capabilities. Nancy Fraser (2016) theorised this contradiction between the needs of people and the economy as a "crisis of care". This became particularly apparent following the award of £16 million in Levelling Up Funding (LUF) from the UK government to Castlegate in 2021, with SCC having to commit their already-struggling resources to the delivery of the Castlegate project on incredibly tight deadlines. Live Works' role in this process became a civic infrastructure supporting SCC in their collaboration with the

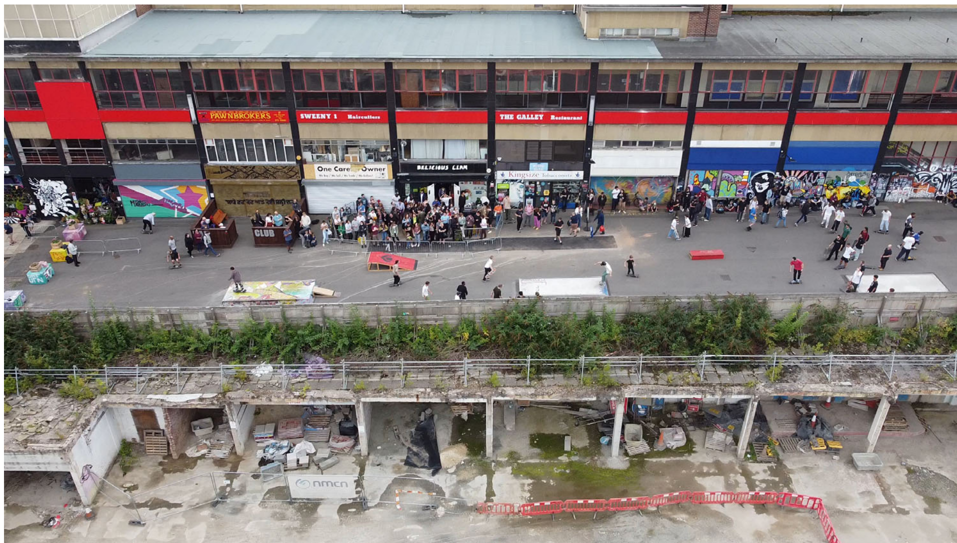

Figure 2: The site of Sheffield's former Castle Market, demolished in 2014, captured in 2021 (source: authors)

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community of practice. By utilising engagement funding to employ leaders of marginalised communities as experts in the co-production process, bringing diverse voices together (sometimes in conflict) in producing "provocations" to the council brief, and utilising the university's cultural capital to advocate for a pushing of the project up the "ladder of citizen participation" (Arnstein 1969) toward citizen power and away from exploitative methods of consultation. This risk of exploitation was felt by members of the community:

> If we do put all this work in, and all this time and energy, how long is it going to last? Before we just get kicked out anyway? (2022)

In the first instance, it is Live Works' role to ensure that this time and energy is valued, using its position as mediator to redistribute resources to participants and undertake the reproductive labour necessary to maintain the community of practice and their position in the process. By interrogating the council's brief with a multicultural community of practice, the co-production process attempts to address claims that the levelling up agenda forces cities to strive to be essentially the same as wealthier regions (Jones 2022). A co-produced "Castlegate Common Manifesto" commented on by councillors, for example, began the urban development process from the lived experience of participants. This mapping process revealed what is already there, as an antithesis to so called levelling up agendas which "appropriate concerns of left behind spaces" through opaque funding processes. These have been challenged as unlawful in attempts to garner Conservative support in Labour strongholds (Tomaney and Pike 2021).

The manifesto was produced through five workshops facilitated by the Live Works team, including the author, bringing together diverse forms of knowledge to develop collective approaches to caring for and developing the Castlegate site. A workshop that focused on heritage, for example, saw the sharing of stories of Sheffield's migrant pioneers challenge narratives of power and dominance associated with the castle archaeology buried in the site:

> We talked about celebrating Sheffield's greatness through history, and it wasn't just a castle, but that greatness was almost always a product of colonialism … It's difficult to celebrate Sheffield's greatness and at the same time say well actually that greatness was founded on iniquity. (2022)

These discussions have kickstarted a project exploring intangible heritage, shifting SCC's focus from representations purely of the castle and built heritage to a community project to create a "people's archive of artefacts and stories" to be housed in the area and governed by communities, an act of solidarity building and alliance making that makes invisible voices heard and part of the future vision (Figure 3).

The author's position in these discussions is embedded as a member of the community of practice but also quite deliberately on the margins due to the privileged position held on the periphery of the university. The spaces of civic pedagogy have become moments of "trans-local solidarity" when the community of practice transcends the institutional structures of Live Works, using the Urban Room as a threshold to engage a wider community of practice. Open workshops facilitated by Live Works in November 2022 in a pop-up urban room in Castlegate, saw open

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Figure 3: Co-production workshop—hosting the Castlegate Partnership at Live Works, 2021 (source: authors)

and honest discussion between the community of practice and the local authority regarding governance and transparency in the delivery of the project.

> That building described as a vacant building is actually a very popular restaurant, and a community association. They know nothing about this at all. And yet there are reports going to committee about occupying their building. (2022)

The Castlegate Partnership later advocated on behalf of the community centre in the council chambers, the decision to move forward was consequently delayed by councillors, citing a need for greater transparency and engagement. The community centre has remained in its home since.

The impacts of civic education on the peripheries of institutions in this case are found in continued engagement, over a number of years, with an ever-growing community of practice. Universities, armed with research funding, teaching modules, and engagement programmes, can be key actors when employing these resources to both catalyse agency of communities to develop alternatives to gentrifying urban development processes and ultimately "stay in the game". Establishing structures such as Live Works on the peripheries of universities allows this engaged activity to be held accountable, ensuring participants are compensated for their time and knowledge, whether through redistributing funding or ensuring voices are heard by decision makers.

As Engagement with Schools

This case study explores a project situated in Mumbai between 2012 and 2017, during which one of the authors led a project with NGO school staff, schoolchildren, and craftspeople to design interventions for their neighbourhood, an informal settlement. A series of civic pedagogic experiments adapted architectural design activities, leading to the co-production of an open-source Collective Design Pedagogy toolkit for schools. The design pedagogy aims to create a situated reciprocal learning practice whereby children learn skills from the design

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practice including agency, problem solving, empathy, critical thinking, sustainable development, and citizenship, and architecture students learn from engagement processes with children. A series of new alliances enabled the production of situated learning through shared methodologies in a radical classroom, the informal settlement.

Firstly, there was a formal alliance between the Mumbai municipality and the NGO Muktangan School through a public–private partnership. The founder explains:

> We were unique at that time [in 2003]. It was the first such school set up in Bombay city. Other NGOs had adopted already-existing municipal schools, which is very, very different from starting a greenfield project, and we were very fortunate in that. (2014)

Muktangan now operates seven municipal schools across the Worli area, creating a trans-local network of shared situated pedagogy and a teacher training programme that focuses on supporting low-income communities. NGOs often share premises with municipally run schools, highlighting the potential for alternative futures of education in their use of space as a learning tool. However, these alliances are also critiqued for complicity of NGOs in the neoliberal agenda, supporting paradigms of social difference (AlSayyad 2003) and perpetuating the status quo. In this case, the NGO tries to resist the status quo by retaining independence of thinking and self-reflexivity of practice in refining the curriculum as attempted here.

At Muktangan, the aim to connect home and school is a pedagogical driver, evident in the school's name: *Mukt* (freedom) and *Angan* (the safe space in front of the home). Visits and observations highlighted the extent to which children's families are involved in education, attending school meetings, project days, and events. Muktangan is known as an ally of the low-income communities it serves, for its social values and child-led holistic education for many children of migrant families from other Indian states. During workshops, local parents said how much they trust the school and that it "cares for the community" (2013). The school employs and trains local people (predominantly women) as teachers, enabling local work in education and developing collective knowledge production. As the founder explains, there is a reciprocal relationship between communities and the school: "many activities are held sitting on the floor in circles, whether for teacher training or children's work; and play spaces have been designed to resemble local homes" (2014). Identifying the settlement as a radical classroom enables solidarity in urban justice through reciprocity of action and interest between the inhabitants and craftspeople and the schoolchildren and teachers who work together in each other's habitual space (workshop and classroom) (Figure 4).

Through the workshops, the children identified crafts that they would use to design responses to issues they found in the settlement (such as open gutters, mosquitos, lack of green spaces, insufficient waste management, and fighting and bad language). One of the children said: "Adults take us for granted but through this project they can see our materials and creativity. I am proud that I can help

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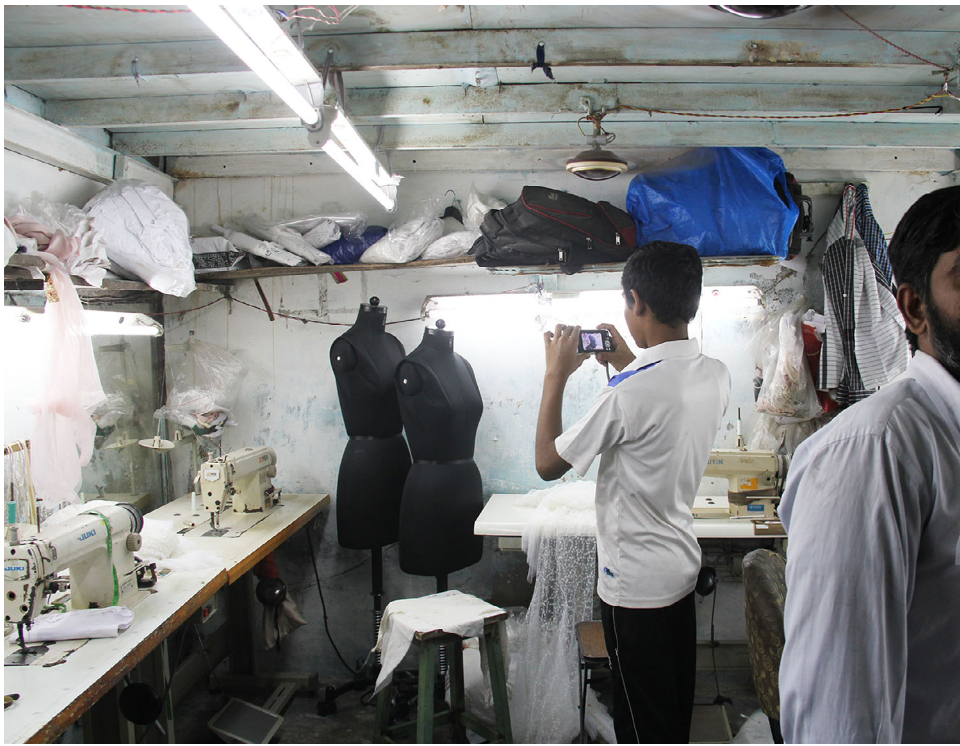

Figure 4: Radical classroom—one of the schoolchildren documents a tailor's workshop during a craft audit in the settlement, 2015 (source: authors)

my community" (2015). Alliances were created with the commissioning of settlement craftspeople (tin box makers, embroiderers, tailors, and bag makers), highlighting the potential of (informal) craft as a civic pedagogical tool, one that could give agency to both the craftspeople and the children. Although at first they were uncertain about the commission, the craftspeople said that "we are very happy to be supporting the children's [learning]" (2015), that it was the first time they had been invited into a school to share their knowledge, and that they were enthusiastic in their engagement with the pupils' neighbourhood designs. The children visited the settlement, and the craftspeople visited the school, to enable design discussions, encouraging understanding between the school and the neighbourhood. Pedagogically speculative (unplanned and opportunistic), the project required risk to be taken by the school, negotiated by the researcher and the school administration, testing institutional structures (with requirements of timetables, consents, curricula, and grades) while identifying the potential for unlearning and positive change through public engagement with the settlement as a radical classroom (Figure 5).

During workshops, design skills and methodologies enabled children to (re) design their environment. The architect-facilitators unlearnt and altered habitual design practices: the children took design decisions, enabling a movement of methodologies between them. This unlearning also challenges the hierarchies that are embedded in design practice and design education. The architect-facilitators

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Figure 5: Unlearning—an architect-facilitator discusses the children's design for a recycling bin, with the tin box maker in the settlement, 2015 (source: authors)

and children became a new community of practice, producing new knowledge in relation to the neighbourhood through their collective research, maps, and prototypes, resisting the usual short-term art and craft curriculum. One facilitator said that they were "thrilled to see the confidence the kids developed" and suggested that "autonomy in the process of making perhaps made them realise that concern [for the environment] is not an outside element, but rather something that can be addressed more close to home" (2017). The children shared their situated role as part of the neighbourhood and the school, enabling architect-facilitators to access and learn from these environments and modes of practice. The architect-facilitators came away from their studio environments as volunteers in the school and settlement in solidarity with local urban challenges, showing that architects and architecture students have both much to give and much to learn from their local communities (Figure 6).

The researcher, who was associated with a UK-based university and had recently moved to live and work in Mumbai, developed a relationship with Muktangan, thanks to an interest in the pedagogy that uses the environment as a teacher. Muktangan's existing UK–India relationship and previous work with UK researchers contributed to a mutual understanding of aims and practices for trans-territorial methods and communications. To attempt to address inequalities and uneven power dynamics, the researcher learnt and prepared workshops in Hindi as well as English, the medium of the school education. During the project, the researcher offered place-based workshops for children, in line with school objectives and interests, and documented and published the Muktangan

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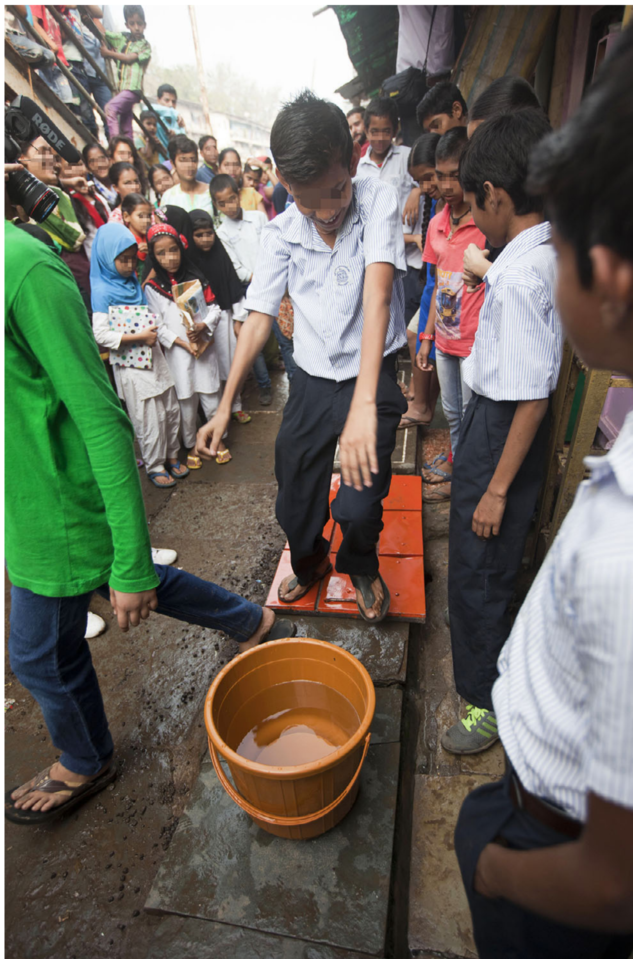

Figure 6: Community of practice—the children publicly demonstrate their design for a new gutter cover made from tin by the settlement tin box maker, during the final project presentations, 2016 (source: authors)

pedagogy in alternative fields and institutions; while the NGO offered essential support for the research through local knowledge sharing, meetings, staff and volunteer time, and spatial resources. NGOs working in informal settlements in India often host foreign visitors for short-term projects, leading to expectations of the motivations driving these types of engagement and their duration. In this context, the project was expected to be short-term; but over six years the research grew incrementally (and continues today) in part to counter the colonial impacts of short-term engagement, always supported by the NGO founders and directors who believe that "ideally a school should be part of the community, with interaction back and forth" (2014). It culminated with workshops being assessed as part of the curriculum, moving towards pedagogic formality as a means of building legitimacy. An open-source toolkit was also developed with the school to attempt

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to address issues of coloniality and enable the civic pedagogy to be reproduced and amended by local and independent facilitators.

As Engagement with the Arts

This case study aims to situate the School for Civic Action (SCA) within the context of civic pedagogy within the arts. The SCA is a prototype civic school initiated by art and architecture collective Public Works, of which the author has been a member since 2015. The practice has been experimenting with temporary "schools", bringing together a diverse and transdisciplinary community of practice which utilises existing situated knowledge and develops curricula from the needs of each locality (Public Works and Davies 2021:98).

The case focuses on two curriculum moments (2018 and 2019) as part of the Tate Exchange programme in London, which the author convened and co-curated, during which the SCA mobilised their network of collaborators to "transform Tate Exchange into a public classroom, bringing together activists and practitioners engaged in civic movements, prototyping a collective education platform for civic action". This platform was collectively programmed by SCA partners, involving 20+ arts/culture organisations, four universities, 10+ grassroot organisations, and hundreds of drop-in participants, who recognised the need for "spaces of collaboration outside community centres or universities" (Figure 7).

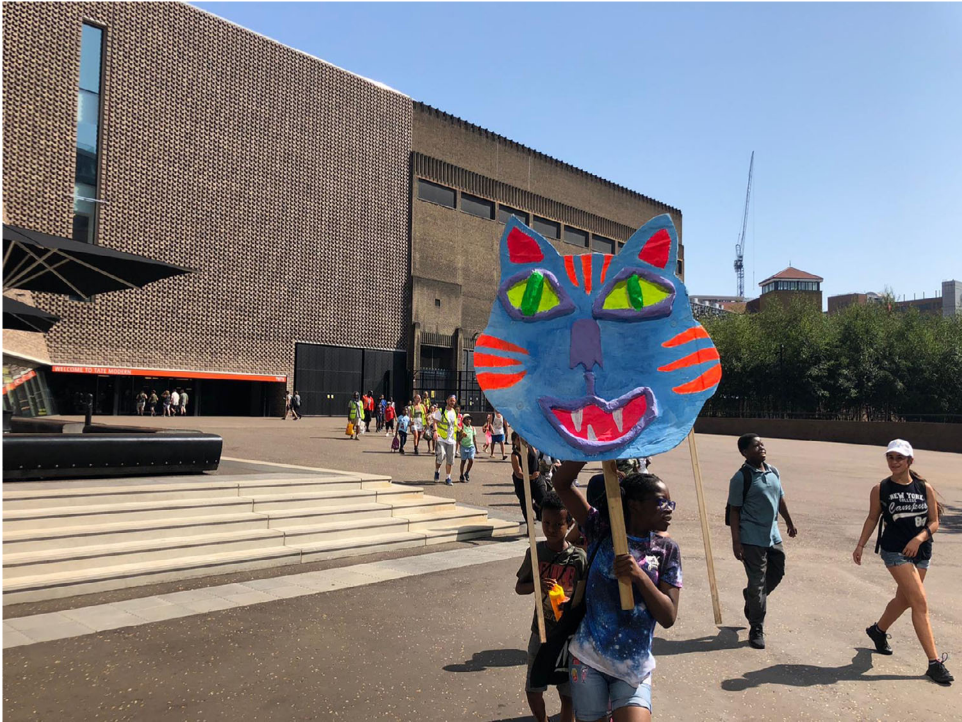

Figure 7: Assembling the School for Civic Action at Tate Modern (source: authors)

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The Tate Exchange offers an opportunity to share in the institution's vast resources (the building, the staffing, and its reputation) in exchange for animation and action within their space. This relationship is inherently challenging, with many activists conflicted by a sense of labour exploitation for free public programming, reflecting an increasing neoliberalisation of UK cultural institutions. One artist stated this predicament fairly bluntly: "We're effectively giving Tate a free public programme; what do we get out of it?" (2019). Despite these clear power imbalances, participants did so due to the opportunity afforded to raise organisation profiles, draw new audiences, and build new relationships with collaborating partners. These tensions were often drawn out during the co-production of the curriculum programme, with the author acting as mediator between groups, over conflicts and power imbalances. One such friction emerged between an activist group and an academic research network during the co-production of a shared symposium: "I'm not happy with the proposed publicity … This is co-option, not collaboration!" (2018). Much of the curation process was spent trying to keep this productive space of the middle alive, finding ways to make the event happen. One strategy which aided this process was the decision to remunerate grassroots partners where possible for their time, as an acknowledgement of the precarious nature of their situation in contrast with academics or salaried employees. This raises an important question about the power dynamics within this and other civic pedagogies: questions of meaningful participation were inherently tied to financial remuneration given that activists were expected to give up "free time", whilst academics and institutional employees were salaried to be there (Figure 8).

The school started with the co-construction of the learning environment, bringing fragments of situated projects from around the city into the Tate classroom. The physical space of the Tate Exchange feels heavily institutional—one vast, double-height, open-plan space. By borrowing small fragments (furniture, props, posters, structures) from participating groups from across London, we create a convivial space for learning, one that reflects the culture of the spaces which the participants represent, and that attempts to break rigid space formalities of institutional learning environments. This is an important step in developing civic pedagogies. Firstly, it enables multiple events, activities, and lessons to take place simultaneously in a caring (if somewhat chaotic) atmosphere. Sessions could run in parallel, with intimate discursive events, hands-on making, and network building events all taking place within one interconnected, borderless space. Participants could take part freely in any or all sessions, which enabled many chance encounters and relationships to be formed between participants.

The SCA utilised diverse learning methods as part of a wider transversal approach, foregrounding performative and creative methods. One such example was a performative discursive dinner organised by a local artist, which brought together scientists, academics, and grassroots campaigners for a discussion around air quality in London (Figure 9). The event was structured around a meal with a menu co-created by students, foregrounding different aspects of air quality and stimulating discussion and exchange about

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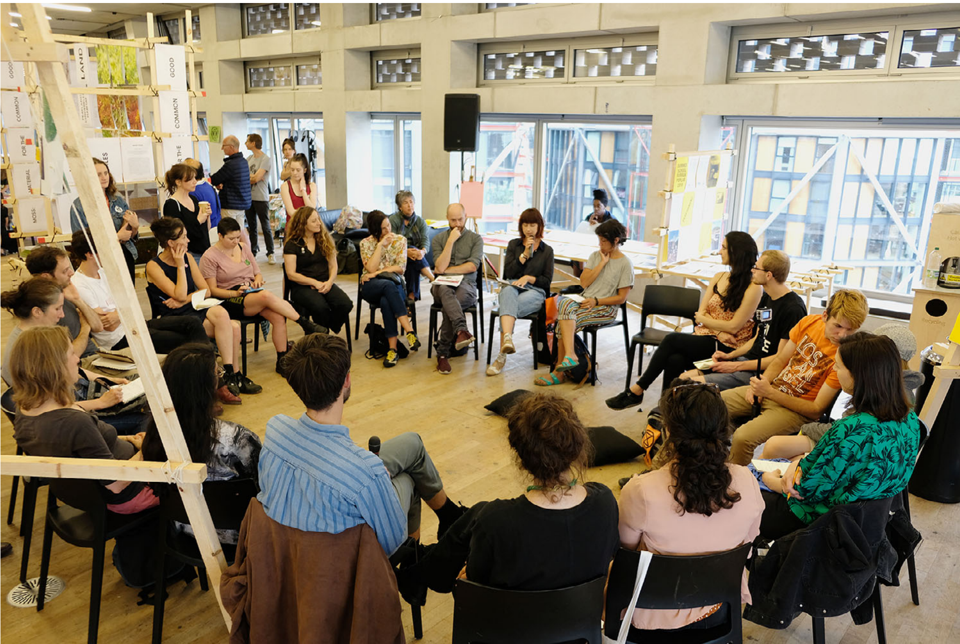

Figure 8: Trans-local learning exchange (source: authors)

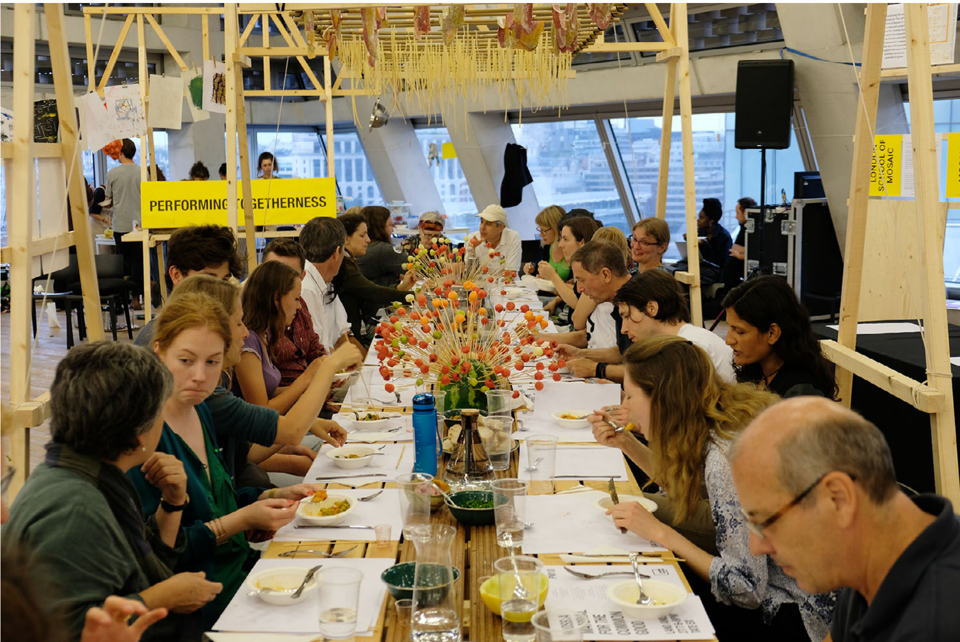

Figure 9: Discursive dinner as performative learning (source: authors)

nature-based solutions to air pollution. These performative learning methods play an important role in the pedagogy, bringing together previously disconnected groups and individuals despite mutual interest, and providing a public

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forum where different knowledge was shared and exchanged in simple terms. The artist stated that:

> The meal was a really good way to get them [academics] to explicitly explain to me the science behind moss and air quality … The meal brought together people from all over London, which helped move the conversation beyond Poplar [the neighbourhood of work]. (2020)

One long-term outcome from this dinner was the formation of an air quality network who continue to campaign for improved air quality in Tower Hamlets. Like the creation of the learning environment, civic pedagogies employ learning methods freely, without disciplinary and institutional restriction, which helps the process of building new relations between participants. These new ties can strengthen solidarity between disparate groups (academics, scientists, campaigners, artists) in creating generative relations which are formed through a collective desire to address a perceived urban injustice, in this case air quality.

To build alliances and solidarity towards civic action, the SCA acts as mediator across multiple disciplinary and institutional boundaries and hierarchies. It negotiates top-down and bottom-up power structures; for example, the support of Just Space in beginning dialogue with HE institutions about equitable research processes in communities (Just Space 2019). Facilitating this process and giving groups space for negotiation is central to civic pedagogies. One participant highlighted the project's importance:

> … so we can realise the significant potential for both communities and universities in working together. Universities can become more rooted in real world experience, and community groups working to give voice to unheard communities can be more effective. (2020).

For civic pedagogies to maximise impact it is vital to work across these existing power struggles and mediate mutual understanding for civic action. The value of such moments, which bring together multiple divergent voices into one shared space, is in challenging existing social hierarchies and the construction of alliances between seemingly unconnected groups. In this case, the trans-territorial connections between localised urban struggles and grassroots campaigners has a dual impact: first, in recognising that individual hyper-local struggles are part of a wider civic movement around urban justice which is facilitated through the Just Space network; second, for academics to recognise and commit to transforming existing research practices, to give more power to host research communities in solidarity with these urban struggles.

Reflection

The three case studies have much in common, despite differences of scale, timeframe, geography, and participants. To identify commonalities and divergences between practices, we compare the alliances and resistances, trans-territorial solidarities, and transversal methodologies, to analyse what could extend to radical geographical and civic pedagogical approaches.

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Alliances and Resistance

First, civic pedagogies can exist across multiple scales and geographies, whether through deep engagement with a particular neighbourhood and a small group of young people (Muktangan), a long-term city-wide process of civic learning between university students and urban actors (Castlegate), or as trans-local networks which bring together multiple stakeholders for the sharing of situated neighbourhood experiences (SCA). They are characterised by practices of contestation, aiming to resist neoliberal power structures by questioning institutional norms. In each case, the "radical classrooms" were chosen by the project leaders due to their potential for contestation and opportunity for alternative learning through a new community of practice. Trans-local and solidarity tools and practices were developed to enable resistance of normative siloed pedagogies that do not engage with place nor across communities.

For Live Works, the promise that Castlegate would employ a co-produced strategy involving its actors to resist development was consistently under threat; models and events were developed by the community to continually push up the "ladder of participation" (Arnstein 1969) but were often confronted by existing structures of power and control within the council. For the SCA, contestation emerged through the tension between the host cultural institution and the role of academics, artists, and activists in curating a pedagogic curriculum without sufficient resources, leading to challenging discussions around precarity of situations and how to work as a collective community of practice. At Muktangan, the radical classroom was the informal settlement, itself an environment of urban contestation. The shift of classroom and curriculum to the neighbourhood required much planning to enable safe, timetable-friendly, and parental-approved visits by the schoolchildren as part of the school day, highlighting the complexities of taking education outside institutional boundaries.

Across the projects, the role of the activist researcher/civic educator is the initiator of public processes which mobilise the community of practice to collectively re-imagine uses for urban and institutional spaces, and to contest the status quo or resist unwanted change. This role requires skills in conflict resolution and negotiation across multiple scales, from the individual and personal, in negotiating knowledge hierarchies or confronting and resisting neoliberal and colonial power structures within institutions. The role also requires a continuous decolonial reflexivity to negotiate ethics in the field, working towards reducing knowledge hierarchies and foregrounding justice. This remains a precarious space to operate, and despite some positive outputs in each case, the future landscape for these marginal practices undergoes constant negotiation.

All three examples seek to form infrastructures of resistance (of the status quo, of monopolies of decision making), by virtue of their position on the periphery of institutions: they aim to share power and redistribute resources to democratise learning, widening the debate in an inclusive and critical way. Live Works in its role as mediator of a co-produced urban design process sits between the university, the city council, and Sheffield communities. It questions the position of power held by local councils in UK "urban regeneration" processes by questioning taken-for-granted ideas and definitions through the inclusion of diverse voices.

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This valuing of alternative forms of knowledge also questions the disciplinary expertise of university researcher. The Collective Design Pedagogy of Muktangan, using methods of role play (children as urban designers) to give agency and voice to children and craftspeople in their local Mumbai neighbourhood, questions the role of teachers, students, and architects when addressing issues of citizenship and the environment in school curricula. Finally, the School for Civic Action utilises the institutional resources and presence of London's Tate Modern to house open and productive discourse between diverse actors with different levels of expertise, disciplines, cultures, and levels of power within traditional educational settings. Through methods which constantly question the institutions of which they work on the margins, each of the case studies finds spaces for communities and practitioners to engage in interdisciplinary transformative action in the urban environment, while utilising and redistributing the resources of those institutions as infrastructures of resistance.

Trans-territorial Solidarities

In all three cases the learning taking place is highly situated yet produces tools which transcend the locality. Most clearly in the case of Muktangan, the specialist localised knowledge of neighbourhood craftspeople and communities was harnessed to create learning experiences around the design of tools for local action. This situated process is then developed as a toolkit for use as a prototype curriculum for future places and spaces in and out of India, a further design output for the role of the project leader. Similarly, Live Works aims to model more collaborative and engaging methods of urban development across other neighbourhoods in Sheffield. The SCA creates solidarities across territories by sharing knowledge and experiences from different neighbourhoods, groups, and institutional partners located temporarily in the particular environment of the Tate, but with a view to repeat elsewhere.

In each case there was a transformative potential of civic pedagogy in producing new solidarities. Solidarity is not always without conflict but recognises how hyper-local struggles are part of a wider conflict against forms of oppression (in this case knowledge hierarchies and institutional power). Trans-territorial solidarities can form new relations between actors, building new networks and connections between previously disparate groups in working towards common goals (Chatterton et al. 2013), or even transform action through the sharing of techniques. In Mumbai this was evidenced by the school working in association with local craftspeople and citizen facilitators towards a new and shared pedagogy to improve shared surroundings; in Sheffield, by the university-led Urban Room working with activists to retain urban development rights in the city; and through the construction of networks between academics, grassroots groups, activists, artists, and scientists in London. In each case civic pedagogies had an active role in forming new relational transformative networks.

Further, the trans-local role of the activist-researcher often leverages their position on the margins of an institution; for example, in the case of academic researchers, to form networks of solidarity across geographies. Given the potential

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disparity of power in the relationship between project leader and learner and aforementioned reliance on volunteerism, it is important that leaders of civic pedagogies remain open and honest regarding what they have to gain from such processes (Cope 2008). Creating spaces for open dialogues between all members of a community of practice, embedding transparency for matters of remuneration, and being open about "what is at stake" for each participant, are central to working with care ethics and in solidarity with learners.

Transversal Methodologies of Learning

All three case studies employ pedagogical tools to disrupt hierarchies of knowledge sharing and knowledge production as an act of unlearning, placing often overlooked civic knowledge(s) at the centre of (un)learning towards the transformation of learning institutions. SCA's discursive meal, for example, creates an artificial non-institutional environment in which the lived experience of food and conversation is foregrounded, setting the ground for an ethic of care in which learners begin learning with their bodies. At Muktangan, local craftspeople are invited to become teachers and learners alongside schoolchildren who take on the role of designers, aiming to transform the school curriculum to value the knowledge of their students. In Castlegate, students, councillors, activists, and residents become co-learners through a "live" urban design process in which decision making is performed in an "urban room" as a collective enterprise. But the extent to which these practices are caring, valuing, and involving their participants is contested. In Castlegate, the pressure of "Levelling Up" delivery deadlines despite historic under-resourcing makes the complexity and unpredictability of co-production a risk for a council under pressure. Similarly, the time pressure of institutional curricula and cultural programmes in Muktangan and SCA respectively constantly undermine the longevity and agency of civic education interventions.

Each case was able to resist the pressure for short-term impact to different degrees, ultimately maintaining engagement over a number of years and consequently allowing for an incremental development of the transversal civic pedagogy methodologies. In all cases the civic pedagogy activist-researchers have developed a number of roles in order to reproduce the space and community of civic pedagogy. This somewhat contentious position, as gatekeepers to the community of practice, brings with it a sense of uneasiness for facilitators. On the one hand is the risk that filling the void of an underfunded local authority, rather than reproducing the relations necessary for an effective civic pedagogy, simply reproduces the structures of austerity it attempts to make visible. On the other, practising the very visible symbolic power of the university, school, or arts institution in implementing its power to name groups and organisations with the capacity to contribute to the community of practice remains problematic. However, if civic pedagogies on the margins of learning institutions can be considered an infrastructure of resistance, with the necessary borrowed social capital they can ensure the door remains open to alternative alliances between a community of practice and the hierarchies of urban production. Such infrastructures provide an alternative to ad-hoc student, researcher, and activist engagement in urban spaces,

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using their position on the fringes to maintain and reproduce urban spaces of unlearning and "stay in the fight" toward transformative action over the built environment.

Part of this role is to reproduce collective practices of care (Trogal 2017); whether care for overlooked physical spaces and places in the cases of Live Works and Muktangan, or the protection of the vulnerable and those with less power in communities of practice (SCA). Despite the intangible quality of much of this labour of civic pedagogy, the design outputs of the three projects aim to solidify the civic learning taking place. Whether through making the process more repeatable through the production of an illustrated toolkit for schools and universities in the case of Muktangan, establishing prototype spaces of collective civic pedagogy praxis in urban centres such as the Urban Room in Sheffield, or formalising a network as an infrastructure of resistance in the case of SCA, each of the projects makes a case for civic pedagogy as a potential role for urban designers, planners, and radical geographers. The role of the civic pedagogy researcher can be to instil transversal methodologies with communities, positioning scholar-activists as mediators at the threshold between institutions, communities of practice, and their latent trans-localities.

Civic Pedagogies for the Future

We have aimed to identify codependent practices for the initiation and sustenance of civic pedagogies, that disrupt and challenge knowledge hierarchies in both urban and learning environments, contributing to the emergence of radical geographers aiming to bring new people into new ways of learning (Rouhani 2012).

For civic pedagogies to decentralise learning they must challenge existing dominant cultural narratives by re-imagining practice and institutional pedagogy (Tan 2021). Acting as a critical friend from within and from outside the institution can be a productive space to operate independence, autonomy, and criticality. There is a degree of informality within a civic pedagogy, enabling a constant re-questioning to re-situate on the institutional borders. However, this position makes for a precarious practice, difficult to sustain when resources are scarce. Bringing together disconnected groups across territories enables skill sharing and unlearning dominant practices individually and collectively. This process involves a core commitment of partners and project leaders to actively challenge existing power relations, to share and redistribute resources to the community of practice and away from existing institutions of power. This requires a constant ongoing reflexivity for civic educators, negotiating the fine boundaries of aiming to transform relations with communities and places on the ground, by both retaining their criticality whilst keeping the spaces and processes of solidarity building alive.

A difficulty in evaluating long-term participatory work is something we have all found in our work, but the proliferation of networks of solidarity and care beyond our own practice provides a useful point of reference for the relevance of civic pedagogies moving forwards. Fundamentally these processes take time, requiring

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the building of trust between participants, partners, and spaces for reflection and future action.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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