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Reconfiguring Ruins: Beyond *Ruinenlust*

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What explains the global proliferation of interest in ruins? Can ruins be understood beyond their common framing as products of European Romanticism? Might a transdisciplinary approach allow us to see ruins differently? These questions underpinned the Arts and Humanities Research Council–funded project *Reconfiguring Ruins*, which deployed approaches from history, literature, East Asian studies, and geography to reflect on how ruins from different historical contexts are understood by reference to different theoretical frameworks. In recognition of the value of learning from other models of knowledge production, the project also involved a successful collaboration with the Museum of London Archaeology and the artist-led community The NewBridge Project in Newcastle. By bringing these varied sets of knowledges to bear on the project's excavations of specific sites in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Japan, the article argues for an understanding of ruins as thresholds, with ruin sites providing unique insights into the relationship between lived pasts, presents, and futures. It does so by developing three key themes that reflect on the process of working collaboratively across the arts, humanities, and social sciences, including professional archaeology: inter- and transdisciplinarity, the limits of cocreation, and traveling meanings and praxis. Meanings of specific ruins are constructed out of specific languages and cultural resonances and read though different disciplines, but can also be reconfigured through concepts and practices that travel beyond disciplinary, cultural, and linguistic borders. As we show here, the ruin is, and should be, a relational concept that moves beyond the romantic notion of *Ruinenlust*. **Keywords: art, cocreation, interdisciplinarity, *Ruinenlust*, ruins, transdisciplinarity**

Several events, productions and a growing body of scholarship from a wide range of disciplines and geographies have instigated a renewed interest in ruins. From *Ruin Lust*, an exhibition at Tate Britain (2014), to the granting in 2015 of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage status to twenty-three sites in Japan—a number of them with a history of forced labor—through to the

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ongoing interest in the regeneration of derelict, abandoned, or decommissioned industrial sites around the world, ruins continue to fascinate and inspire. Cities have often formed a focal point for this continuing "love affair with ruins" (Huyssen 2010, 17), whether as part of the European Grand Tour (Sweet 2012), sites of urban exploration (Garrett 2014), or the realm of philosophical introspection (Trigg 2006).

Ruins are remnants of the past and reminders of alternative futures, both intended (DeSilvey 2012) and unintended (Gansky 2014). As Dillon (2011) argued, their "dual valence" rests on the capacity that ruins have "to place us at the end of a historical continuum or cast us forward into the future ruin of our own present" (13). Ruins enrich our understanding of places as simultaneously "transformed and stabilised" (Edensor 2011), in a process that ranges from "slow picturesque decay" to "abrupt apocalypse" (Tate 2014). Encountering ruins is also a personal emotive experience through which they become "spaces in which alternative emotions, senses, socialities, desires and forms of expressiveness and speculation are provoked by their disorder and affordances" (Edensor 2005, 171).

The fascination with ruins' decay and otherness (Roth, Lyons, and Merewether 1997) has a long history. Writing amid the ruins of postwar Britain, Macauley (1953) for instance, declared that "to be fascinated by ruins has always, it would seem, been a human tendency" (9), and her significantly titled *The Pleasure of Ruins* opens with an examination of passages from (the King James translation of) the Hebrew prophets that dwell on ruins and ruination. Macauley's approach reads the European Romantic "ruin-sensibility" known as *Ruinenlust*, which contains "a blend of pleasure and romantic gloom" (Macauley 1953, 9), as a transhistorical emotional and aesthetic reaction to ruins. In view of the destruction of World War II, Macauley did at least allow that the pleasure of ruins should be experienced with a somewhat heightened sensibility, which is to say not directly, but "at one remove, softened by art" (454).

The gaze of *Ruinenlust* is the "preserve of an elevated aesthetic sensibility, a mark of sophistication and sensitivity" (Zucker 1961, cited in DeSilvey and Edensor 2012, 466). Such a gaze tends to see ruins as spaces of lament and melancholia, testament to the creative powers of man to construct beauty and the sublime power of nature to invade and overawe humankind. Thus the epitaph that Percy Byron Shelley placed ironically on the crumbling statue of the eponymous Ozymandias in his famous sonnet ("Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!") could be an instruction to any visitor to classical ruins, especially the exoticized ruins of the Orient. From the Romantic perspective, the pleasure to be derived from the ruins of Ozymandias's statue lies in the gap between the character's vainglorious ambition to create a lasting legacy and the reality of material conditions. The sublime forces of nature and time have rendered the "colossal wreck" of the statue risible. In contrast, the authors of this article find greater interest in who might be the "traveller from an antique land" in whose voice most of the poem appears, as well as the conditions by which Ozymandias's statue has come to be situated in an apparently uninhabited desert where "The lone and level sands stretch far away." Ruins, we argue, are relational, in time and space; they speak to what (and who) is not there—or remains either actively hidden or merely unseen—as well as what is.

In 2014, we obtained a twelve-month developmental award from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) Care for the Future theme to work on the collaborative project *Reconfiguring Ruins: Materialities, Processes and Mediations*. The project was developed by researchers from different academic disciplines (history, geography, English literature, and East Asian studies) and included two nonhigher education institutions (HEIs): Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA), and the artist cooperative The NewBridge Project in Newcastle (NBP). The project developed from a shared understanding that any approach to ruins grounded in *Ruinenlust* has

important limitations. Among other things, such a Eurocentric "ruin-sensibility" leans on outmoded Romantic conceptions of the self as well as reifying the relationship of humans to nature. Moreover, such an approach permits the long history of the figurative usage of "ruin," and the social consequences of labeling people and places as "ruined," to go unacknowledged. To a significant degree, the desire to view ruins through the aesthetic gaze of the sublime as awesome, empty spaces, has led to the marginalization of communities who are connected to sites of ruin either through their history or through their everyday lived experiences. For ruins to be empty often involves overlooking—if not outright displacing—the people inhabiting them and the people to whom ruins relate.

The aim of the project was therefore to treat ruins as thresholds, windows that provide unique insights into the relationship among lived pasts, presents, and futures. To do this, we brought together academics, planners, professional archaeologists, and artists to discuss the theoretical and practical aspects that related their work to ruins. Through two workshops, an artist commission, and a Web tool—all planned and developed in conjunction with MOLA and NBP—we wanted to engage with but also reinterpret the very nature of and the cultures around ruins. One of the project's most significant findings was the realization of the range, quality, and sheer diversity of work that artists have made in connection to ruins and processes of ruination in the United Kingdom, Europe, and beyond, itself a key factor in our exploration of transdisciplinarity, praxis, and cocreation.[1]

Charting the experience of *Reconfiguring Ruins*, the article argues that moving beyond *Ruinenlust* requires a close engagement with at least three themes. First, to challenge the preeminence of any one discipline when thinking about ruins, and reflect on the degree to which an approach to making the interdisciplinary, in particular the pursuit of learning from each other as well as from our non-HEI partners, contributes to a better understanding of the differences between inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary academic research. An inter- or a transdisciplinary approach is necessary to see ruins differently, which for us meant shaping the object and the method to study a range of ruins as the project progressed. Second, rather than focus on the individual encounter with and search for the aesthetic sublime, we placed the emphasis on the social relations for which the ruin stands. We develop this point through a close reading of a selection of artist contributions to the project that highlights the limits of cocreation, and outlines the specific conditions associated with it in the British context. Third, inspired by the work of Bal (2002) and others (Rovira 2005; Enjuto Rangel 2010; Gandy 2011; Ingold 2011), we use the notion of traveling meanings and praxis to discuss what connects a Roman bathhouse in the City of London, the Dunston Staiths in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and the complex industrial site of Hashima Island on the southwestern coast of Japan. We do so as a way of reflecting on how we can bridge but also build on disciplinary boundaries and practices beyond academia, emphasizing an approach that combined rigor and openness. The article concludes that through a discussion of these themes and how they were implemented in practice, the project provided a distinct understanding of the theoretical and practical underpinnings of the ruin as a concept that moves beyond *Ruinenlust.*

MAKING THE INTERDISCIPLINARY, BEING TRANSDISCIPLINARY

The success of any interdisciplinary research project depends on finding effective ways to work collaboratively. As with any single-discipline team, building cordial and collegial interpersonal relationships based on a willingness to learn from each other was central to the success of the

project as a whole. Each of the academic team members had previous experience of learning, researching, or teaching in more than one discipline and therefore understood the potential competing priorities in the project. Unlike most single-discipline research teams, however, we did not have prior knowledge of each other's research outputs. Our first discussions took place at an AHRC workshop for early career researchers in February 2014. We were immediately excited about the different ways each of us approached ruins as an object of enquiry, and saw collaboration as a means by which to challenge dominant cultural perceptions of ruins by incorporating different scales (local, national, global) and temporal lenses (from the ancient to the contemporary). Through this, we hoped to develop a richer understanding of ruins and ruination beyond European contexts and beyond a narrow focus on ruins as artefacts of historical processes. Similarly, we asked whether the imagination of ruins can be a generative and prefigurative means of engaging with future change as well as thinking about interactions between the present and the past.

Making the interdisciplinary thus meant that both the object and the method of our research were themselves in the making. Ruins and processes of ruination gave us a focus, but they provided neither a clearly defined object nor the method with which to approach it. Recognizing the significance of recent experimental approaches to engaging with ruins such as "creative nonfiction" (Dillon 2011), "memory, affect, and interruption" (Dixon, Pendleton, and Fearnley 2016),[2] and performance (Lavery and Gough 2015), our approach considered specific ruin sites as a means of exploring how exactly the materiality, processes, and mediation of ruins interact with one another and to what extent these interactions precede the object we call a ruin. Such an approach treats ruins as thresholds in a manner that resonates with Bal's understanding of concepts, "not so much as firmly established univocal terms, but as dynamic in themselves" (Bal 2002, 11). Thinking of ruins as thresholds allowed us to structure conversations dynamically, drawing in examples and scholarship from a range of perspectives and places, so that we could extend our understanding of ruins well beyond sites we could physically access. Moreover, our understanding of and approach to ruins traveled, shifted, and adjusted as the project progressed.

For us, making the interdisciplinary was also a process in which theoretical issues emerged as questions of praxis. This was based on our interest in aligning a desire to translate our thinking into practice and creating together with our partners, MOLA and NBP, a space where to reflect on their own work and ours, and recognize where key connections emerged. Wherever we encountered conceptual difficulties in our interaction when dealing with ruination—often emerging from a priori principles related to our disciplines—we could return to discussions of real-life examples of physical ruins, and vice versa. Even when our questions related to the figurative uses of ruins in literary or theoretical contexts, there was a tangible quality to such uses relating to embodied action within a particular spatial and social environment. For example, to describe a white, middle-class man as "ruined" usually implies financial downfall (think perhaps of the character Gordon Gekko from Oliver Stone's films *Wall Street* [1987] and *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* [2010]), whereas Thomas Hardy's ([1866] 1898, 35) poem "The Ruined Maid"(written 1866), about a financially successful sex worker highlights the gendered resonance of the term *ruining* by passing judgment on a woman's refusal to adhere to (patriarchal) sexual mores. Yet despite their gendered and classist points of contrast, both of these examples speak to social relationships in the real world.

The duality of the ruin as offering both a physical and a social dimension is embedded in the very etymology of the term, which comes from the Classical Latin *ruīna* and the later Anglo-Norman *ruwine* or *rewynne*. Both etymons denote physical ruination and decay on the one hand, and social

downfall on the other.[3] This suggests an important relationship between physical ruins and the human body. In other words, to reappraise the ruin in both aesthetic and social terms requires an acknowledgment of the ever-present possibility of our social or financial downfall, together with the certain fact of our own individual physical decline as we age and die. The possibility of social downfall implies determinant social hierarchies from which to fall, whereas in physical terms the original ruin par excellence is the human corpse. The shift away from an emphasis on the Romantic concern with *Ruinenlust* as an individual experience of the sublime permits emphasis to be placed instead on the social relations of the ruin. Such a change in approach acknowledges that ruins are in part fascinating because they mirror, reflect, and extend our sense of the limitations of our own physicality.

Our engagement with both theory and praxis was further refined through discussing the challenges and opportunities of working across disciplines. Here, we concur with Huutoniemi et al. (2010) that "Interdisciplinarity is … best understood not as one thing but as a variety of different ways of bridging and confronting the prevailing disciplinary approaches" (80). Rosenfield's (1992, 1351) taxonomy for research in the health and social sciences proposes a hierarchy from the multidisciplinary (where researchers work in parallel or sequentially from their disciplinary bases to address a common problem) to the interdisciplinary (where researchers work jointly but still from discipline specificity) and ultimately to the transdisciplinary (in which researchers work jointly using a shared conceptual framework drawing together discipline-specific theories, concepts, and approaches). Although research projects in the health sciences tend to be of a different conceptual type than those of the humanities (e.g., to answer a humanities research question does not necessarily involve seeking a curative "solution" to a problem), to the extent that Rosenfield's schema can be directly applied to a humanities project we clearly set out from the start to adopt a transdisciplinary approach.

In a more recent reflective study on the work of a large medical humanities project,[4] Woods and Bernini drew on Klein (2010) to lay out the following:

> *Multidisciplinary* approaches juxtapose knowledge, information, and methodologies from different disciplines in composite, sometimes collaborative, configurations (however, the disciplines "remain separate, disciplinary elements retain their original identity, and the existing structure of knowledge is not questioned"); *interdisciplinary* approaches emphasize integration as well as interaction, effecting disciplinary transformation at methodological as well as theoretical levels; finally, in *transdisciplinary* approaches, research questions and practices are framed by problems arising from the life-world and addressed by academics in partnership with other stakeholders. (Bernini and Woods 2014, 604)

Pooley, Mendelsohn, and Milner-Gulland (2013, 23), writing about the intersections between the environmental humanities and the natural sciences around conservation, in turn suggested that transdisciplinary projects generate new theories and new knowledge largely as a result of the involvement of nonacademic stakeholders. The collaboration with MOLA—themselves a research institution deploying academic work and the work of professional archaeologists—and the NBP prompted the merging of our theories and approaches to understanding ruins in a practical environment that built on group discussions and collaborative field work with participants from a variety of backgrounds. Our approach blurred the line between interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity as Bernini and Woods described it: On the one hand, we spent considerable time addressing specific issues surrounding ruins together with our partners, which we develop in the article's third section.

On the other hand, through conference panels and roundtables, contributions to the project blog, and other interactions, we began to integrate disciplinary methods and emphases, learning from each other's experience within and across disciplines.

In hindsight, it was the blurring between an inter- and a transdisciplinary approach that allowed us to overcome some of the key challenges that have been commonplace in multi-researcher projects involving both social sciences and humanities scholars since at least the 1980s. Pooley, Mendelsohn, and Milner-Gulland (2013), for example, showed the striking divergence between social sciences and humanities publications that examine issues around conservation, the environment, and ecology, and that use the terms multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary. Overall, there is a significant increase in the number of social sciences publications using these terms, from around seventeen in 1986 to more than eighty in 2001 and nearly 120 in 2010. By contrast, humanities publications score one in 1986, more than twenty in 2000, and just over thirty in 2010 (Pooley, Mendelsohn, and Milner-Gulland 2013, 24; see Figure 2). These results might be read in a number of ways, but we would like to highlight two things: First, whereas there was a sevenfold increase in social sciences publications, those from the humanities increased by a factor of thirty. This might be due to the growth of the environmental humanities, especially during the 1990s, and humanities journals encouraging contributions on conservation, ecology, and the environment. Second, the apparent interest that these topics have generated in the humanities (more than twenty in 2000 and just over thirty in 2010) compares poorly with the social sciences (more than eighty in 2001 and close to 120 in 2010). One way of explaining this is by thinking about entrenched disciplinary differences, both practical (e.g., through academic recruitment) and theoretical. There are also important structural challenges when carrying out research across disciplines that "arise from the widely held dualism in Western society between environmental subjects and issues which are coupled with the natural sciences and social and cultural issues which are coupled with the social sciences and humanities" (Pooley, Mendelsohn, and Milner-Gulland 2013, 25). As Pooley (2013, 1482) noted elsewhere, "The debate over the limits of objective knowledge of the 1980s and 1990s deeply polarized some social scientists and humanities scholars from biological scientists and environmentalists." It might sound counterintuitive, but no environment is asocial and no society can be sustained without recourse to a variety of environments. Although necessary, disciplinary distinctions are analytical and it is worth reminding ourselves of how often we forget to rejoin the parts of reality that we dissect through analysis.

There is one last aspect of transdisciplinary research that merits our attention, namely, the various etymologies of *trans* that have emerged over several decades of work on transgender identities. For social psychologists Kessler and McKenna (2000), the "trans" in transgender has at least three meanings: first, to transform, or to change oneself to align with a category that a person feels greater affinity for; second, to cross over a boundary between two fixed categories—this can potentially be a more fluid movement; and third, to go beyond or through such categorization entirely. In the history of trans politics, the first two meanings dominated initially, after the emergence of discrete transsexual identities in the middle of the twentieth century, before the third came to greater prominence. This third usage is profoundly more radical in that it potentially calls into question the processes of categorization themselves. Given our knowledge of this history, we were conscious of thinking about the potential for our transdisciplinary praxis to operate through a similar process of evolution; that is, from an initial understanding that we could either alter our own processes or cross over disciplinary distinctions, to ultimately developing a practice that seemed to move beyond the disciplinary categories themselves. This was a combination of both the open-ended nature of our approaches to research collaboration, and the

involvement of people beyond the academy in a rigorous process of mutual engagement and critical cocreation. The next section discusses how the incorporation of artists, creative approaches, and artistic outputs contributed to casting the transdisciplinary in a different light.

THE LIMITS OF COCREATION

Many interdisciplinary projects linking social sciences and humanities research engage with creative collaborations and practices focused on producing what is known in academic reporting as *creative outputs*. When this project took shape, a key element in making the interdisciplinary was to incorporate creative modes of investigation alongside such outputs. Working with the NBP, we were keen to find out about both practice-based research and research-based practice directly from artists. Similarly, MOLA's representative, James Dixon, brought his interest and experience in working with artists and creative methods in the context of contemporary archaeology.

The project's twelve-month timeline raised some difficulties concerning how fully to engage in processes of cocreation, a term that is worth expanding on in some detail. In studies of consumer culture, cocreation is the means by which consumers actively contribute to the design of a product, usually through Web tools, user interfaces, and social media (Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008; Holdgaard and Klastrup 2014; Roig et al. 2014). In this context cocreating is linked closely to "the phenomenon of consumers who increasingly participate in the process of making and circulating media content and experiences" (Banks and Deuze 2009, cited in Roig et al. 2014, 638). A significant part of the challenge of our initial discussions with the NBP and MOLA about what and how to cocreate was precisely related to this kind of participation. The idea behind one of the project outputs, namely the Web tool, was to engage artists, archaeologists, and the public in the process of reconfiguring different ruins and ruin sites. The tool would assist us in incorporating diverging views and media (text, image, video, audio, and more) so that a specific ruin might then be seen through a range of perspectives and approaches. Ensuring this diversity of views seemed pertinent to understand the multiple and converging processes through which a ruin becomes a ruin, whether and how the ruin has been preserved, and whether or not the ruin, particularly in urban environments, is sustainable. Seen in this way, the Web tool could not be developed from a consumer's perspective, but rather through enabling a better understanding of communities, including those taking part in urban planning initiatives. Emphasizing cocreation for its own sake seemed to bypass this important distinction.

Another important dimension of understanding the emergent interest of cocreation in academia is how research is funded. In Britain, for example, the question of how to cocreate is often linked to funding pressures to provide evidence of the impact of academic research in nonacademic environments. This pressure, which is also connected to government research evaluation exercises, such as the Research Excellence Framework, might be seen as the reflection of a position whereby academic research is produced and disseminated to a broader audience, where it then has an impact. The direction of travel tends to be one from knowledge (by academics) to use (by the public). This stands in sharp contrast to longer traditions of public engagement and involvement in the creation of research. Since the late 1960s, for instance, British social historians, particularly those associated with the History Workshop movement, were concerned with a process of expanding what historical knowledge was and how it could be generated. This took place through

a valuing of nonacademic historical knowledge and a two-way process of engagement—both a decentering of the professional historian as fount of historical knowledge and the expansion of historical knowledge beyond the academy. Our project was structured around thinking about engagement in these terms—a process of cocreation and mutual interaction that might, given time and space, produce both academic and nonacademic impacts. As History Workshop movement founder Raphael Samuel (1981) argued, these approaches have "the merit of raising a crucial question for both theoretical and political work–that of the production of knowledge, both the sources on which it draws and its ultimate point of address" (xxxii; see also King and Rivett 2015).

This suggests that the lines between cocreation and the coproduction of knowledge are often blurred. Among geographers, for example, there has been what some have called a creative (re)turn to embrace artistic methodologies within spatial practices (Hawkins 2013; Madge 2014), in which academics, either individually or through collaboration with artists, experiment with art to create and produce knowledges (Foster and Lorimer 2007; Last 2012; Hawkins 2013, 2015; Holdgaard and Klastrup 2014). Although it is often attractive to employ artistic methods to create or cocreate, as Hawkins (2013) pointed out, it is also important to pause and take stock of how and to what end art is being used in academic research.

In the context of our project, cocreation involved the framing of the collaboration both between the academic and nonacademic partners, and in view of the creative outputs proposed. Given that our main purpose was to engage with several perspectives on the nature of and the cultures around ruins, our strategy was to concentrate on gathering a diverse set of participants who would have the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of ruins from various perspectives, informed by a range of theories, and combining activities where preconceptions around ruins were challenged. A brief description of that process will help to explain this.

Calls were sent out to artist networks to participate in two workshops, one in London hosted by MOLA and the other in Newcastle hosted by NBP. Following a competitive process, a selection of ten to fifteen artists was invited to come to the workshops and take part in group discussions, field work, and site visits. A number of MOLA's professional archaeologists also joined the London workshop. Time was given for everyone to introduce themselves and their work. The introductions, including those from the artists—often poignant with their display of audiovisual material—sparked discussions among the entire group. Participants were then invited to contribute brief posts to the project's blog. Here, we would like to focus on two of them, by Katie McGown and Verity Birt, to highlight the diversity of views on ruins and the significance of letting them speak in their own terms.

McGown's blog post entitled, "The Fabric of the City," reflected on the use of textile metaphors when referring to urban environments, and also related to her piece *Fabric Folds* (Figure 1).

In her work, McGown challenges the perception that the flexible properties of cloth and the rigidity of the built environment are antonymous. Although their characteristics might initially appear incongruous, McGown explained that,

> textile metaphors provide us with potent ways to discuss the flexibility, disintegration, growth and repair of our built environment. They encompass the individual and the communally woven whole. Unlike biological or technological metaphors, they provide us with a tangibly physical structure suffused with social and cultural connotations. These strands allow us to think about movement and time, how a space can rupture, or fall apart and how we can knit it back together. How we weave the

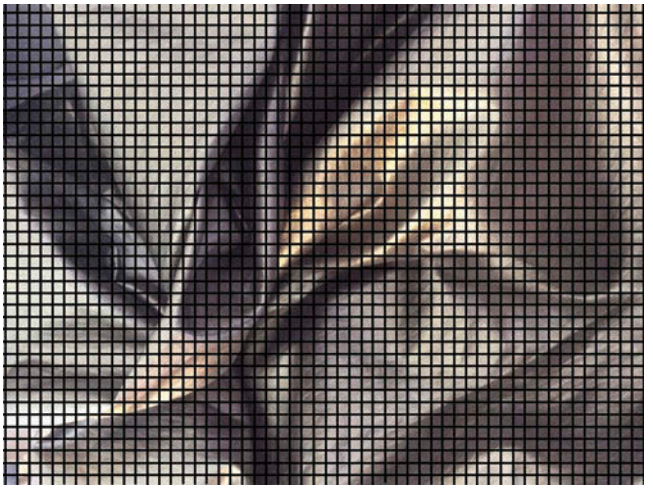

FIGURE 1 Fabric folds, 2014, Digital Collage © Katie McGown; used with permission. Both post and images available at http://reconfiguringruins.blogs.sas.ac.uk/ruins-elsewhere-otherwise/the-fabric-of-the-city. (Color figure available online.)

> old ruins into our new spaces. How it all hangs together, year after year, our cities worn away and then embellished, thread by thread.

Attributing textile references to solid, fixed elements softens perceptions of the built environment and facilitates a more flexible rendition of urban ruins. Through McGown's poetic words, ruins become a material that one can touch, stretch, and fold.

In a similar vein, the mediators in Birt's blog post are film and sculpture, which she uses as a means to investigate temporality and to challenge perceptions of chronology and mediated time (Figure 2).

The installation she writes about is entitled "Common Era." As Birt described it, "Common Era" is "an on going project which considers the concept of History and the nature of temporal materialities. From video-collage of ISIS' iconoclastic acts of destruction, to manifestations of cosmic time in geological stratigraphy, Common Era seeks to rupture and resist the dominant pretexts and territories of Time, and question what it is to be durational through an aesthetic and affective encounter." Birt's film combines "'Virtual Archaeological Reconstructions' as well as 'Geophysical Radar' and 3D satellite" images with images of ISIS's demolition of Nimrud and Palmyra found on social media and "other images of historical reconfiguration and iconoclasm throughout the world." The installation reflects on the gap between deep time and contemporary time. The sequence consists of shots that are stuck together, producing a film that runs "on a loop which means that there is no beginning and end, and you can enter the film at any point in time." The film appears on a seven-inch closed-circuit TV monitor, which is encrusted in a half-polished granite rock as a "totem-tombstone object." The film can be updated and reconfigured at any time, playing with concepts of chronology and nonlinearity. The granite acts as an "organic materiality" associated

FIGURE 2 Common era: *Kairos*. Granite, 7" tablet monitor, moving image (23:00-minute loop), 30 × 40 × 3 cm © Verity Birt; used with permission. The moving image can be viewed at http://reconfiguringruins.blogs.sas.ac.uk/ruins-elsewhere-otherwise/ce-ii-excerpt/. (Color figure available online.)

with deeper time, yet although its surface is polished, it is also partly a rough and raw piece, suggesting that it has been broken off or that is somewhat damaged.

Birt's mediators are also mediated: The objects she uses to represent time, heritage, and their uses are reconfigured through social media and film. What is distinctive in this piece is that it captures an important aspect of our project. The use, reuse, and manipulation of media, embedded in Birt's methods, were closely related to our interest in highlighting the processes and mediations that are part of reconfiguring ruins. Birt's play with time, by juxtaposing the contemporary with the ancient as an ongoing process, speaks to a creative means of exploring the ruin (in this case, a broken-off piece of granite that could have been a remnant) that the authors of this article would not have been able to conjure, nor was it our aim to do so.

Listening to the artists speak through their own work and feed into the project enabled us to gain both insight and enthusiasm about the different ways in which we come to understand ruins from our own disciplines, without the unnecessary emphasis on coproducing an output with them. Although the knowledge exchange and collaboration between partners and academics involved a form of cocreation, we encouraged artistic creation to be led by the artists themselves. From this perspective, we limited cocreation that was beneficial not only because of our project's time frame,

but also because it invited us to value and respect the artists' work and skills in their own terms, perhaps more akin to models of coproduction of knowledge from the British social history tradition. The project's artist commission further illustrates the significance of this mutual respect and understanding.

The commissioned artists Kelvin Brown and Jacob Robinson proposed a visit to Guadalupe, a town near Santa Barbara, California, famous as a gateway to the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes and used as a key location for the 1923 Cecil B. DeMille film *The Ten Commandments*. Brown and Robinson's commission resulted in a three-screen installation work of the same name, combining video footage of the town and its surroundings alongside an audio track, which included an original soundtrack, site-specific recorded sound, and interviews with local residents. The work was exhibited at NBP in October 2015, and The Crypt Gallery of St. Pancras Church in London in June 2016.

In the 1920s, large-scale film sets were purpose-built and installed in Guadalupe's sand dunes to replicate the landscape of biblical Egypt. In their original proposal, the artists anticipated a metaphorical excavation of these ruin sites to question "the meaning of the ruin, as well as that of archaeology in a contemporary context of rapid technological change, transient materials, and built-in obsolescence." For the artists, this involved both an interrogation of the landscape itself and a thinking through of the changing processes of filmmaking, and in particular the historical dissolution of the Hollywood studio system. Brown and Robinson proposed in their original bid to look at how "a film making process dating from less than a century ago feels as prehistoric in the modern age as the relics of ancient Egypt its set designers attempted to replicate."[5]

Brown and Robinson's *The Ten Commandments* produced a unique perspective on the key interrelated themes of the project (materialities, processes, and mediations) in original and surprising ways. The artists' journey to, in, and around Guadalupe included poignant interactions with local residents who described the town's history as one shaped by processes of ruination. Originally a key juncture in California rail travel and a regional hub for the surrounding agricultural industries, the town attracted a range of migrants from the late nineteenth century, from Europe, China, the Philippines, Japan, and Mexico. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, town residents of Japanese descent were detained in "camps" alongside well over 100,000 other Japanese Americans, out of fears that ethnic solidarity would trump national identity (Robinson 2009). A Guadalupe resident, aged eighty-nine, described his story to Brown and Robinson in the following way: "I was an American until the day after Pearl Harbor. Then I was reclassified as an enemy alien." His ninety-eight-year-old friend added, "He was in the camp and when he came of age he joined the service. [But] his parents were still in the camp. People don't realize that the most decorated division in the United States Army, all Japanese boys—the 442. People don't know that . . . and it's a shame." Similar racialized fears did not adhere to Americans of other "enemy" ethnicities, such as Italian Americans or German Americans.

The town entered a period of decline after the postwar closure of the train depot and the move to truck-based mass freight across the U.S. West: "It's kind of dying. Used to be a booming town before the war. Most of the stores were Japanese owned. A lot of Japanese in this town," said one local. Large sections of the town are now abandoned.

Through these audio narratives, and by presenting contrasting visual imagery of contemporary abandonment and historical vibrancy, Brown and Robinson engaged with locals in a process that highlighted the sociohistorical and environmental conditions of ruination in the Guadalupe dunes. The commissioning process was one involving an iterative conversation, which facilitated a mutual

learning experience stemming from each other's areas of interest. More specifically, Brown and Robinson were able to discuss how to approach the history of Japanese internment in Guadalupe with one of the authors of this article, Mark Pendleton, an expert on East Asian history. Although the process was in some respects collaborative, it gave Brown and Robinson full freedom and independence to decide on a framework and how to shape it.

Wider, and perhaps longer, processes of ruination in Guadalupe connect the contemporary U. S. experience with historical empires such as those captured in DeMille's film. Another local in the film described the long-term impact of the imperial overreach of the United States in the following terms: "I think within the next 100 years there won't be any United States." This person later argued that the United States is, like the Roman Empire over 1,500 years earlier, in a state of slow decay.

The film ends with shots of Guadalupe, including the drawings on the walls of a local school, possibly by local kids (Figure 3). The camera follows a toddler circling around on his tricycle, enlivening the backyards of the houses where families of agricultural workers, largely Mexican, live.

What *The Ten Commandments* showed us with eloquent simplicity is that one way of reconfiguring a ruin is by looking at the different practices that evolve around it over time and in relation to different contexts. Did we know that Japanese internees of war from the West Coast of the United States would enter the discussions related to our project? Most certainly not. Did it matter? Without a doubt. Entirely in the spirit of our project, the very excavation that Brown and Robinson set themselves to in the commission was based on openness and room for adjustment. Not only did their interpretation of ruins provide an element of surprise for us—we did not know what the artwork would look like until we saw the three-screen installation at the NBP launch in Newcastle—but it was also a reminder of the premise that the Eurocentric views on ruins and the very concept of *Ruinenlust* should be challenged and refined in practice. The

FIGURE 3 Modern ruins? A drawing depicts "fake" pyramids with a film crew. Scene from Brown and Robinson's *The Ten Commandments* (2015) taken during the exhibition at The NewBridge Project in Newcastle, October 2015. Photo by author N. Bartolini. (Color figure available online.)

following section shows the expansive and experimental character of drawing contrasts between sites and theories, and between approaches and disciplines, which we argue constitute a necessary step to travel beyond *Ruinenlust.*

TRAVELING MEANINGS AND PRAXIS

The workshops gave us access to several ruins and ruin sites in London and Newcastle, but also beyond through places and sites related to the participants' work and research. In London, for example, artist Lia Wei and urban geographer Rupert Griffiths outlined their collaboration Site_Seal_Gesture, which connected former brutalist bunker sites in the Thames Estuary to Chinese art and archaeology through the use of seals that, they argued, "function as a link running from stone to ink to paper . . . [and therefore] help us relate literary production and language to matter and the body, connecting experience to memory." In Newcastle, in turn, geographer Nick Rush-Cooper took participants to the exclusion zone around the ruins of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant through a discussion of tourism practices and gaming. Moreover, the authors of this article presented work that traversed the varied geographies of contemporary East Asia, Victorian England, and ancient Rome. In this section, we focus on three particular sites that we "traveled" to as part of this project—two we were able to visit physically—a Roman bathhouse in the City of London and the Dunston Staiths in Newcastle—and one we only encountered collectively in an imaginative sense, although some participants had visited the site previously—the Japanese island of Hashima. Ideas around water, renewal, and extraction serve to highlight the connections across them.

The visit to the bathhouse in the City of London gave us a firsthand experience of the Roman past preserved within a building opposite the old Billingsgate Market in Lower Thames Street (Figure 4). The contrast could not be more telling: Concrete columns pierce through the remains of part of a Roman building, including a mosaic floor, built sometime in the third century AD. The columns support an office block built in the late 1960s, which in 2015 remained largely empty.

FIGURE 4 Visiting the Billingsgate Roman bathhouse in the City of London during the Reconfiguring Ruins London workshop in January 2015. Photo by author N. Bartolini. (Color figure available online.)

Archaeological evidence has shown that the bathhouse was a private building, by no means the only one in the city. Its proximity to the River Thames is indicative of the kind of use that was given to the area over 1,600 years ago. Since March 2016, the bathhouse has been open to the public through prebooked tours via the Museum of London.[6]

The range of responses that we all shared during the workshops and site visits revealed the degree to which perspectives shifted from individual to individual. The artist, the English scholar, the archaeologist, the East Asia expert, the geographer, and the historian all saw different things in the bathhouse. Drawing meaningful connections between these perspectives was not easy. Other than being suggestive, it was challenging to see where the connections might be and how they would provide fresh insights into our study of ruins and, what is more, what object and which methods we should use and delineate.

Our starting point was to interrogate the nature of and the cultures around ruins. Questions that we used to frame the discussions included these: Are ruins the materialization of cycles between and across what they used to be and what they will become? What notions of time can we recover through ruins? Other questions focused on sustainability, authenticity, and preservation: Are ruins sustainable? How do we account for changes in the environments where ruins stand and the alternative "other" environments they create? Should ruins become part of a sustainable future? What exactly is sustainable in a ruin: its materiality, the processes through which the ruin has emerged, or the mediations that turn ruins into recycled objects, buildings, sites, or texts?

Unsurprisingly, the workshops opened up more questions rather than providing any satisfying answers. At the same time, the question of sustainability seemed to link a range of issues that are worth exploring, specifically in the context of the Roman bathhouse in London. As alluded to by Rodwell (2007), *sustainable* has become overused as a term. For us, the term is applied when considering active urban environments that are in an ongoing process of development. It is therefore closely aligned with the Brundtland Commission's view on sustainable development; that is, a "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations 1987). This is particularly relevant in historic cities where a variety of groups have competing interests in preserving (or not) the material past. The needs of those in the present will invariably turn on what values one attributes to urban ruins. Hence, what do we value of or in the Roman bathhouse? Is it its materiality—conserved and with the potential of being brecciated (Bartolini 2013, 2014) in a future design with the Brutalist office building? Or is it the process of "traveling" millennia from the Roman past to face visitors of the twenty-first century? Or is it the mediation of what we know about the building, largely through archaeologists, and how we know it?

Like the Japanese American internees, bathing was not something we anticipated would enter the discussions related to our project. Reconnecting to the Roman past drew on our sensitivity, as outlined earlier, to the multiple temporalities of ruins. In discussing how we might reimagine the site through the remains, both during the visit and afterward, we began to think about "bathing" rather than the "bathhouse." In other words, we reflected on the process of recovery as a verb instead of a noun.

Bathing is characterized by familiar sounds: water dripping, flushing, and rippling through in that most mundane and timeless of rituals. It is an activity that might be private and secluded, or for all to see and portrayed in public. Differing sounds reflect these statuses: contained, brittle and moving from wall to wall in the case of the private bathhouse; expansive, elusive, echoing

voices, dispersed through the textures of grass, tree, and water in the case of, for example, a river stream. What do the sounds of a ruin suggest? Can we ever recover the sounds of a site that was once used and the presence of which now is little more than a record, silenced and mediated?

In his *Letters*, Seneca described staying above a public bathhouse in terms that might help us reimagine the staid life of the office block above the Billingsgate bathhouse. Seneca heard a continuous "babel of discordant noises" from below, including the "grunting" of "strenuous types … doing their exercises," and the smack of the masseur's hand, on his client's shoulders:

> But if on top of this some ball player comes along and starts shouting out the score, that's the end! Then add someone starting up a brawl, and someone else caught thieving, and the man who likes the sound of his voice in the bath, and the people who leap into the pool with a tremendous splash. Apart from all those whose voices are, if nothing else, natural, think of the hair-remover continually giving vent to his shrill and penetrating cry in order to advertise his presence, never silent unless it be while he is plucking someone's armpits and making the client yell for him! Then think of the various cries of the man selling drinks, and the one selling sausages and the other selling pastries, and all the ones hawking for the catering shops, each publicizing his wares with a distinctive cry of his own. (Seneca 1969, Letter LVI 109–10)

These varied sounds speak to an experience of bathing as a sensory bombardment: the smells of sweat and soap, the taste of street food, the visual spectacle of the swimmers, the cacophony of raised voices. Bathing is an energetic, boisterous, and heavily masculinized pursuit in Seneca's description, and the bathhouse becomes a place not of relaxation but of entertainment, socializing, and commerce. It was hard to envision any of that when visiting the bathhouse, not least because of the bathhouse's fortune confined to—and, partly thereby protected by being in—the basement of an office block. Can we ever restore and recover any of that experience of bathing through the building? Perhaps more provocatively, should we?

The contrast and distance between how the bathhouse was presented (in 2015) and accounts such as Seneca's that take us back to the Roman past were far too abrupt for the ritual that the bathhouse exemplifies to come to life. Aids such as descriptive boards might evoke stories and suggest connections, but we could not help but wonder how else might the past be brought into the present, in a manner that was meaningful and, perhaps, more respectful. It should be noted that following a campaign for conservation from the City of London in the late 1980s, the bathhouse has been undergoing a process of preservation and recovery since 2011, involving the City Surveyors Department, Nimbus Conservation, the Institute of Archaeology at University College London, the Museum of London, and English Heritage.[7]

The stories evoked by ruins have been a significant part of our understanding of heritage and conservation (Jokilehto 1999). The question that the bathhouse and Seneca's *Letters* raised for us is whether we should aim for an understanding of ruins that incorporates verbs (*bathing*) qualifying nouns (*bathhouse*), so that past practices and rituals become part of the "rich past" that is often, when not exclusively, the past of buildings, conservation areas, gardens, parks, monuments, and archaeological remains.[8] If so, shouldn't the actors, like the Anglo-Saxon visitor whose brooch was found at the bathhouse, be brought out of the shadow and portrayed in a light that makes them visible to the present? Doing so would leave us with a different narrative, which is precisely the threshold that the transdisciplinary praxis of reconfiguring ruins invites us to cross.

Our traveling praxis took us on a different turn in Newcastle, where, as part of the workshop, we embarked on a site visit to the Dunston Staiths, led by Ed Wainwright (School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, University of Newcastle). The Staiths, erected in the 1890s, were used to load coal from the Durham coalfields onto vessels in the Tyne to be shipped around the country and beyond. In 2003, a significant part was destroyed by fire and the platform to which we climbed, ten meters above the mean high-water level of the Tyne, is the downstream section that remains as partially stabilized ruins. Like the Billingsgate bathhouse, these extraordinary wooden structures have been for the most part inaccessible to the public, but unlike the hidden underground bathhouse the Staiths are an iconic landmark jutting proudly out over the south bank of the river adjacent to a new housing estate (Figure 5). Here again, the question was posed as to the importance—or value—given to these urban ruins. For them to remain an active part of the cityscape, there will be a need to revisit how the structure's maintenance and its meaning can play a part in the local community's future.

Where bathing (from London's Roman bathhouse) suggested a process of renewal, ritual, and recovery, the original purpose of the Staiths was connected to exhuming and exporting raw materials. In Ingold's (2015) words, "For the coal that made its way onto its platform, there was no going back. And so, too, there is no way back to the past." Yet Ingold complicated this picture, adding that "the [coal] wagons, however, [would] come and go" (13), returning back on their path to collect new loads.

Works on the Dunston Staiths started in August 1890 and were complete in October 1893. They were funded by the North Eastern Railway Company and included the Dunston railway extension that "connected the staiths with the Redheugh branch and a portion of the Team Valley and Annfield Plain branch, between Ouston Junction and Stella Gill." North Eastern had erected staiths at Low Quay, Blyth, north of Newcastle, which were complete in February 1884 and expanded by May 1888, including a 1.5-mile (2.4 km) loop line from Newsham and sidings at Blyth itself (Tomlinson 1915, 697–98, 701–02).

FIGURE 5 The Dunston Staiths, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, during our visit as part of the second workshop. Photo by author C. López Galviz. (Color figure available online.)

Central to the building of the staiths was the reduction of costs that the coal companies dispensed with, notably, the jobs of keelmen and coal fitters. Unsurprisingly this was challenged by the many workers attached to the coal industry, not least the miners, a workforce that amounted to more than 559,000 in 1882 in the United Kingdom and Ireland.[9] Estimates from an earlier period (1829) in the area around the Tyne and Wear put the figure of seamen and keel workers at 15,000 and 2,000, respectively.[10] Shipment tonnage in Blyth by the mid-1880s remained high, however, and despite a seventeen-week strike from the Northumberland miners in 1887 (Tomlinson 1915, 698). Also important to the building of staiths was the support and opposition to different schemes put forward either by the colliery companies or by the railways. The success of a promising scheme linking coal fields to riverside facilities depended on the support given by whoever was involved, whose competition the scheme might face, whether or not the local authorities were on board, and the degree to which Parliament was called in to intervene. A third factor was the need to upgrade river navigation, often under the banner of improvements that fell under the remit of local authorities. Improvements ranged from embanking and deepening of channels along the causeway of rivers through to the building of new bridge and river crossings that would allow the passage of larger vessels.

Therefore water, extraction, and renewal combined in different ways in the staiths. Whereas the River Tyne and the direct connection to the Durham coalfields gave us a clear sense of the first two, renewal seemed more elusive. This was partly because of the current state of the structure, impressive as it is, and partly because of how we encountered it. The scale of the structure gives you a sense of how much labor went into building it and of the amount of people who used it, from the navvies loading vessels to the miners extracting coal in distant fields, and the receivers at the other end of the supply chain, nationally and beyond. This is the kind of history that reminded us of labor rather than capital, which resonates with the third site we had "traveled" to in our discussions, the island of Hashima, also known as Gunkanjima (or Battleship Island), off the coast of Nagasaki in southwestern Japan.

Hashima was also developed in the late nineteenth century as an access point to an undersea coal seam. Over time, development of the island slowly transformed its profile, eventually burying the bedrock under concrete high-rise constructions built to house the expanding

FIGURE 6 Hashima Island. Photo by Carina Fearnley; used with permission. (Color figure available online.)

workforce (Figure 6). This, combined with the high concrete seawall surrounding the island, gave Hashima its iconic battleship shape, a description first recorded as early as 1911 in a foreign resident's accounts of viewing the island's shifting morphology.

Access to Hashima's coal seam involved two processes of vertical mobility. At the beginning of their shift, workers would pile into a lift to be transported some two kilometers below. On completion of their work, the miners would return to the surface. Before rejoining surface life, however, they would be required to pass through two baths, located adjacent to the mine shaft. The first required miners to enter fully dressed and still coated with mud and sweat. Water in this bath was reportedly "pitch-black" (Itō and Akui 2010, 34–35). Once this initial bath had taken place, the miners bathed in a more conventional Japanese style—washing their bodies and then bathing in clean water. Nonminers on the island had a separate bathing process, more akin to conventional communal bathing practices. The baths were abandoned in 1974, along with the rest of the island, and are now inaccessible to the general public beyond narratives told by tour guides, and photographs found in museums and publications.

The mine is not the only such structure in which verticality is key. High-rise residential complexes were built largely without running water, meaning human excrement was disposed of through gravity. Architecture scholar Norihiko Tsuneishi (2011) noted the testimony of a former resident of the site, who recalled that "the lower it [excrement] reached, the worse the smell and noise were." During the period of Japan's imperial expansion, forced laborers were also transported to the island from Korea and China, working in exploitative conditions in longer mine shifts and poorer housing conditions, often at the very base of the high-rise towers where the smell of excrement and the rising damp met. Alluding to a 2003 novel of the island by Korean author Han Susan, Tsuneishi described this spatial organization as a representation of "colonial monstrosity" with literary forms seeking to "awaken the oppressed dead of this post-industrial debris."

This awakening has carried through into contemporary debates over the island's UNESCO World Heritage status, confirmed after much controversy in 2015. Japanese authorities sought to downplay this colonial monstrosity through focusing on the early role of the island in Japan's industrialization process. The time frame for the heritage bid ended conveniently in 1910, the year that Japan formally annexed Korea. Korean officials, on the other hand, argued for a continuity between this early industrialization and later exploitation. A compromise was reached whereby the Japanese agreed to acknowledge the Korean workers, although as soon as the bid was approved they began to backtrack on this promise, suggesting that they had not used the contentious term *kyōsei rōdō* (forced labor) and instead had simply acknowledged a process of all workers being *hatarakasareta* (being made to work). The bringing to the surface of buried pasts, like the coal miners emerging from Hashima's depths, resulted in cleansing processes shaped by contemporary concerns, about glorifying Japan's industrial past on one hand, and highlighting Japanese imperial aggression and colonial exploitation on the other (Dixon, Pendleton, and Fearnley 2016).

One important insight from the contrast between the Roman bathhouse, the Dunston Staiths, and Hashima Island is that the process of excavating stories builds on the disciplinary angle that "reads" ruins against specific contexts and perspectives, and seeks connections and allows concepts (water, renewal, and extraction) to travel in the interest of shedding new light on otherwise familiar objects. In the context of our project, excavation also meant questioning the premises inherent in the approaches that we each deployed to reconfiguring ruins. Thinking

about which concepts might connect what in principle appeared as disparate and unconnected sites became for us a challenge about specifying the value of those connections in a way that would not appear contrived and that, we hope, is revealing. What was revealed in the process? The first thing was significance of language in the use of verbs and nouns, but also through choices that foreground certain histories and, by extension, hide others, whether in the context of Roman metropolitan heritage or formerly industrial sites seeking—and being granted—UNESCO status. Also revealed were the stories that heritage practices and institutions keep dormant, but that, arguably, will always be latent, waiting to be discovered and shared. The limitations of our approaches and practices when encountering ruins from our insular specialisms were also an important part of what we discovered, as was the relative partiality toward contexts we are not familiar with and approaches we do not share.

CONCLUSION

This article sought to contribute to the emerging field of the geohumanities by discussing the processes and practices involved in a twelve-month cross-disciplinary collaborative project. The purpose of the project was to enable reflection on the concept of the ruin to move away from the Western (often male) gaze that tends to render ruins as matter that invites nostalgia, awe, and reverie. By combining the knowledge and approaches from different disciplinary academic backgrounds, and through the incorporation of two non-HEI partners that are involved in contemporary issues around the built environment in London and Newcastle, the project contributed to opening up debates and starting to make sense of the many layers that the ruin, ruin sites, and ruination offered for us and our own practices.

Three broad themes captured the main aspects of the lessons learned and why the project was successful. First, we reflected on what it means to "make" the interdisciplinary. Key to this was the realization that both the object and the method of our research were themselves in the making. Our approach was one that considered specific ruins and ruin sites as a way of exploring how the materiality, the process, and the mediation of ruins interact with one another, shaping specific understandings and practices around them. It was a process where theoretical issues around the interdisciplinary emerged as questions of praxis, and therefore, conceptual difficulties—to do with, for example, how each discipline "configures" ruins—were met with particular examples of urban ruins in situ. We realized that, in effect, our methods lent us to an approach that was transdisciplinary (as described by Bernini and Woods 2014), merging our theoretical framework with specific urban problems faced by a range of stakeholders.

Second, the article engaged with the idea of cocreation and the conditions associated with it in the British context. With the lines between cocreation and coproduction of knowledge blurred, it is often difficult to extricate one process from another. Nonetheless, in our project, we chose to heed Hawkins's (2013) warning and consider how artists and artistic outputs could be incorporated in such a short-term initiative. As such, we focused on collaboration and debate, with artists and their work being an important part of the conversation. The artist blog posts enabled us to appreciate how they saw ruins through their own distinct approaches. McGown folded in her interests with fabric as a material to discuss metaphors in which ruins and the city's built environment are juxtaposed, whereas Birt played with time, media, and rock formations as a means to engage with themes running across archaeology and heritage through sculpture.

Incorporating an artist commission within the project also contributed to appreciating the skills and perspectives that artists brought into the project. Brown and Robinson's *The Ten Commandments* captured a sense of the ruin that was both unexpected and highly relevant. It alluded to aspects of the ruin through filmmaking—the very nature and deterioration of transient materials—and combined it with the decline of a community affected by world-shifting events, local myths, and the ongoing social and cultural histories of work and migration. All three works showed ruins as relational, far removed from the gaze that tends to ignore social relations and highlights their emptiness in the interest of aesthetic experience. What is more, enabling the artists to have control over their creation, and being surprised by what they produced, challenged us in appreciating the limits of cocreation.

Third, the article considered how notions such as water, renewal, and extraction might travel across contexts as disparate as Roman London, late-nineteenth-century Newcastle, and industrialized Japan. The sites emerged from the project workshops, which focused on activities that led the participants to explore, touch, feel, and experience ruins from different eras and locations, while drawing in representations of ruins from elsewhere. Of course, the choice of concepts connecting the three sites is somewhat arbitrary, but that choice, for us, is also a means of moving beyond *Ruinenlust*, in other words, beyond nostalgia, romantic gloom, and reification. Resonating with the excavation that Brown and Robinson did in the dunes of California, our excavation of the bathhouse, the Staiths, and Hashima Island deployed concepts to highlight what role language plays in the process, for example, through the use of nouns and verbs (*bathhouse* and *bathing*), and the distinction between workers and forced labor. It also highlighted the role that the untold histories and the stories connected to the sites can play so that we see ruins differently. This called for a balance of openness and rigor: openness in the sense of not giving preeminence to any one discipline's configuration of a ruin, and rigor by allowing every discipline and practice to "read" the ruin in its own terms whether in connection to the ruin's materiality, the process through which a ruin has become a ruin, or the mediations that we use to encounter ruins.

Finally, and despite its short time frame, we can safely assume that the outcomes of the project (some intangible) will be long-lasting. Networks stemming from participation in the workshops in particular brought a diverse group of people together to debate aspects of one central concept—the ruin—encouraging the interaction between differing and divergent views. One way of capitalizing on this is by thinking of future collaborative projects that engage more closely with the relationship across arts, heritage, and urban regeneration. The role that a geohumanities approach might bring to understanding that relationship is both timely and valuable.

For the authors of this article, coming together and combining our own disciplinary perspectives into writing collaboratively was part of moving away from and traveling beyond *Ruinenlust* by reflecting on the lessons learned, and ultimately, learning about what it takes to reconfigure ruins.

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NOTES

1. Submissions to take part in the workshops (50+) and the artist commission (170+) gave us an indication of this. Details of the workshops and winning commission are available at https://reconfiguringruins.blogs.sas.ac.uk (accessed 6 August 2017).
2. See also The Future of Ruins at http://www.futureofruins.org.uk (accessed 9 April 2016).
3. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the Anglo-Norman figurative use as originally referring to the Fall of the Angels (c. 1175).
4. *Hearing the Voice*, funded by the Wellcome Trust, is a project that ranges across the medical humanities, psychology, cognitive neuroscience, theology and beyond. See http://hearingthevoice.org (accessed 6 August 2017).
5. Quotes are taken from Brown and Robinson's submission to the artist commission call (the deadline for applications was May 14, 2015).
6. See https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/visit-the-city/attractions/Pages/Roman-Bathhouse.aspx (accessed 11 May 2016).
7. See the Billingsgate Bath House blog at https://billingsgatebathhouse.wordpress.com (accessed 11May 2016).
8. See the "Historic Environment"' section of the planning services of the City of London at https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning/heritage-and-design/Pages/historic-environment.aspx (accessed 6 August 2017).
9. See, for example, the *Reports of the Inspectors of Mines, to Her Majesty's Secretary of State, For the Year 1882* (London, 1883), viii.
10. See the "Work in Progress" of the Durham volumes of the Victoria County History, especially "Economy and Society 1800–1914" at http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/durham/work-in-progress/economy-and-society-1800-1914 (accessed 10 May 2016).

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