Book Section:

How the exhibition became co-produced:
Attunement and participatory ontologies for museums

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In 2008 an exhibition titled 'In Our Own Words' was held in the Museum of Croydon. The exhibition was made up through different wooden boxes with glass fronts. Some held large images. Some were used as lightboxes illuminating images printed on vinyls. Others held objects and large labels with images. In the middle of the exhibition hung a glitterball, casting specks of light around the gallery. The exhibition's main panel, a vinyl on a lightbox, read: 'Two of Croydon's large Day Centres have recently closed. Here are the stories of life at the Day Centres and what we think about the changes.' This was the only text in the exhibition that was not in the words of someone with a learning disability.

The 'In Our Own Words' exhibition emerged from a two-year project, funded by the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund, called the 'History of Day Centres' project. Over the previous two years I had worked collaboratively with the people with learning disabilities who used to attend the day centres, the staff that worked there as well as senior staff responsible for implementing the changes. We collected oral histories, photographs and documents. We ultimately developed an archive, now in Croydon's Local Studies archive. We also produced the In Our Own Words exhibition (May-September 2008). Looking back – ten years now since I first turned up with an audio recorder in one of the then new Resource Bases – I want to use the opportunity of offered by this article to draw out the implications of how the project became an exhibition and why traditional forms of interpretation and explanation seemed inappropriate.

<Ch12_Fig1>
Caption: The introductory panel for the In Our Own Words: Stories of Croydon's Day Centres exhibition.

The term 'exhibit' contains within its genealogies the idea of manifesting and of showing clearly. Although histories of curatorial and museum practices have complicated any simple idea of transparent communication between authorial intention and audience reception (Rogoff 2003; Falk and Dierking 2013), the practice of curating often includes the process of developing of headlines, 'big ideas' as Beverley Serrell puts it, and interpretive hierarchies (Serrell 2015; Tilden 1977 [1957]). Understanding of the purpose of exhibitions as, in effect, accessible and clear communication was especially the case for me. Before I came to work on the 'History of Day Centres project' my background was working in the kind of pioneering UK local authority museums which have worked hard to create accessible exhibitions through interpretive planning with explanations communicated through straightforward and highly-edited language (Devine and Williams 2011). The duty of the curator, I had come to think, was to stage some form of (however temporary) stability in meaning to enable the direct communication of key ideas.

So this was my problem. We were working towards a form – the exhibition – which appeared to demand clarity. Yet we were developing the exhibition in a time and space of powerful ontological instability. Everyone I worked with was in the midst of a complex process of making sense of the past of the Day Centres in the new present of the Resource Bases. In this, tone, texture, intonation, emphasis, facial expression and gesture often seemed more significant than words spoken.

To address these curatorial dilemmas, in this article I want to practice a hybrid of reflective practice and retrospective theorizing of the ontologies of both the project and the exhibition. Ontology describes theories of what the world is; of being, of what there is in the world. In recent years the idea of relational ontology has been used to argue that it is the relationships themselves – the interactions between things and people – which produce and constantly reproduce the world. While the term has been used in a variety of contexts not least theology (Boersma 2011), I take the step of thinking of a 'relational ontology' as a 'participatory ontology' through drawing on 'participatory worldview' advocated by action researcher Peter Reason (1998). In thinking of the History of Day Centres project as a 'participatory ontology' I seek to recognize it as produced through a series of evolving relationships. Relationships between people, between ideas and everyday life, between things and exhibit cases and between those that made the exhibition and those who came and visited it. Participatory ontology allows us to move beyond simply describing a relational world to, in terms both of research and exhibition development, enacting and cultivating a *more* participatory ontology in our making and becoming.

The worlds of the day centres
One of the most memorable things about my first weeks – maybe even months – in the Resources Bases was how little I understood. As I've written elsewhere:

> Our worlds could not mesh. They spoke of the day centres, but I understood almost nothing: names, connections, memories… this happened, then that, and someone had left and they had seen them recently somewhere I did not know and someone else had said something about something. Nothing could come into meaning for me. Equally, my words – Project, Archive, Exhibition – could not come into meaning for them. Slowly, over months and months, one conversation and cup of tea at a time, I was shown that we needed to begin in the middle of where it matters and build a new project both like and unlike the one in the funding bid. I needed to slowly, carefully and gratefully become part of their world first. They needed to engage me and involve me before I could 'involve them' in any way the funder would recognise. The "someones" I did not know became specific people; people's names started to have faces. And places that were only 'somewhere' for me at first became places I knew too. (Graham 2017)

I did come to see there were a number of ways of potentially understanding the day centres. There was the policy that led to their closure, the 2001 white paper *Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century.* The Valuing People vision was for 'new opportunities for children and adults with learning

difficulties and their families to live full and independent lives as part of their local communities' (DH 2001, p. 2; followed by *Valuing People Now* (DH 2009)). *Valuing People* anticipated a reduction in the number of people using large day centres by 2004 and the development of new services, of which the Resource Bases in Croydon were one possible model (DH 2001, pp. 50, 78). As a result before I arrived the two of the large Day Centres had been closed and people moved depending on how much support they need either to the last existing large Day Centre to support people with more complex needs or to the Resource Bases which aimed to enable people to go out and use local facilities and to potentially find paid or voluntary work.

Another way of was through the history of the day centres, as community-based replacements for institutions. In 1967 Croydon's Waylands Craftwork, Social and Training Centre was opened by Enoch Powell, who had in 1961 made a speech criticising the large institutional hospitals as 'isolated, majestic, imperious, brooded over by the gigantic watertower and chimney combined' (quoted Welshman 2006b, p. 66). With their more community-focus, Waylands and the other Day Centres were focused on 'training' and had lots of different types of work including factory packing work (for airline), paper rounds, running a Garden Centre or an industrial Laundry.

A third way was to understand Waylands and its closure through staff and a senior managers accounts. Here one of the key mangers talks – in an oral history recorded as part of the project – about why it was necessary to close the Waylands' Laundry:

> Built into Waylands was the laundry [. . .] they were working flat out in there and the conditions were . . . – but they loved it, they loved it. I was the person who actually phased it out in the end because . . . if it had been a sheltered workshop and people were being paid for the work that would have been fine. […]I believe in consultation, I believe in choice and getting to a position where people can make informed choices but in that respect I think I felt we had to make a choice for them. We put alternatives in place. So there was a certain amount, a lot of soul searching really but I just felt we had to move on.

Yet, as I began my time in the Resource Bases there were lots and lots of other ways of knowing the Day Centres too. Here are just some of the ways of knowing about the experience of working – as service users – in Wayland's Laundry:

> Yeah, laundry. Go out in the mini bus and pick the washing up. Thornton Heath, from old lady places.

> We done the laundry right up to twenty to four. Then we use to go home then. We used to get £4 and at Christmas time we used to get a bonuses. We use to get £12 bonus at Christmas.

> They used to have a laundry here, but they didn't have enough money to keep it running, so they closed it down. So, one day they had to close it all

down and those people had to send out their clothes somewhere else to wash, to another laundry. There were sheets, blankets, all sorts, pillow cases and then they used to iron the overalls.

We tried to save [the laundry], we had lots of meetings trying to save it, but it went against us, didn't it?

<Ch12_Fig2>
Caption: People at work in the Waylands Day Centre laundry. The Laundry was closed in an early phase of the transformation project that eventually saw Waylands and another large day centre in Croydon closed.

Taken together these different ways of knowing – from policy, historically, from the perspective of a senior manager responsible for implementing policy and from those who spent so much time there – indicate a variety of quite different theories of the world. The policy deals in ambitions and abstractions – how can changes in daily life enable people with learning disabilities to be choice-making, independent and included. The official 1967 account of the Waylands opening shows what the future looked like then, the now-old new dawn, better than the long-stay hospitals and with a focus on training and skills. The oral account of the senior manager suggests the enormous complexities and genuine dilemmas of what practically needed to be in place to make this desired mode of choice-making person possible. Then there are the accounts by people with learning disabilities. They are radically specific and of specific places, of what matters (the bonus, the £4, £12), of the specificity of living the life of working in the laundry (sheets, blankets, pillow cases, overalls) and of theories of why the laundry had to be shut (not enough money).

As I tried to listen, and as I read more policy and spoke to more senior members of staff who had to make the decision to close the laundry, it became viscerally clear that no single one of these accounts could be usefully treated as the explanatory 'key' to the others. It would have been easy to take the reference points I found easiest to deal with – the written *Valuing People* policy or the senior managers account – and use them like tent poles and pegs to create a structure for interpreting the more complex and highly specific accounts from the people who spent their days in the Day Centres.

I remember sometimes feeling enormous relief when I spoke to a member of staff who had a strong position on the closures and could offer me a structure to make sense of all that I was trying to understand. Yet perhaps one exchange stands out as helping me develop a sense of caution about explaining anyone's contribution using the analytical framework offered by policy, 'history' or anyone else. Having learnt over time that I was interested in her old Day Centre, a woman with a learning disability who I used to sometimes have a cup of tea with would say:

Too much noise at the day centres. Too much noise.

She would say this with deep significance, very slowly and rocking her head slightly. Too. Much. Noise. She wasn't the only one to say this. This memory recalling the atmospheric shifts and moods of tens and tens of people in a building, some of who would scream or shout to communicate any stress or distress. *Too. Much. Noise.* Then, often soon afterwards, she would also say, rhythmically, of her packing work at the Day Centres:

> I liked that work. Kept me going. Kept me going because I liked doing that work.

Implying ever so subtly that she was not *being kept going* quite so much now. For her both things were part of her accounts of being at the Day Centre every weekday for most of her adult life. *Too much noise. Kept me going.* In us coming together to find a way of 'exhibiting' this world, something more than *showing* and something more than *explanation* was being called for.

A Participatory Ontology: Methods of non-representation and of attunement
In contemporary Disability Studies there has been a turn towards methodologies intent on exploring the radical instability, contingency and relational nature of 'ability' and 'normalcy' (e.g. Goodley 2014; Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole 2014a, 2014b). As such the first wave 'social model of disability' (UPIAS 1976) – which as a core principle emphasized disability as created by the way the world is organised and not as resident in the individual – has been developed into imaginative complicating of the lived experience of disability which can address pain and difficulties as well as structural barriers (Wendell 2000; Shakespeare 2006; Kuppers 2011). A key idea here is that the model of the independent and rational choice-making subject – often framed in the Disability Studies debates as 'neoliberal ableism' (Goodley 2014, p. 34) – is a fiction for us all and to be human is to be in constant reciprocal relationships with other people and technologies. Or as literary theorist David Mitchell has put it, 'disability subjectivities create new forms of embodied knowledge and collective consciousness. Queer and disabled people's interdependencies provide alternative ethical maps for living together outside of, even in opposition to, the dictates of normalcy' (2014, p. 1-2). Seeing the world – both 'ability' and life itself – as relational finds synergies with the participatory modes of 'research-as-sense-making' which also seek to fully recognize and build research precisely through these reciprocities (Burns 2007; Fals-Borda 2013 [2007] p. 159; (Reason and Heron 2001; Reason 2005).

In the same period as ontological approaches have become more prominent in Disabilities Studies they have also inflected other disciplines, not least geography and anthropology. One key reference point in these debates has been Nigel Thrift's elaboration of non-representational theory, a 'geography of what happens' and of 'what is in experience' (2008, p. 2). Thrift characterizes non-representational theory as 'going beyond constructivism' (2008, p. 5). Thrift argues that it is not enough to simply note that things we think of as being natural are socially constructed, crucial though this has been and especially in terms of the social model of disability (Kuppers 2011, p. 101). Instead Thrift proposes methods for ontologically-orientated

research that seeks to 'lean-in' to pay different kinds of attention (2008, p. 219). Through methods of 'leaning in' Thrift is interested in 'descriptions of the bare bones of actual occasions' asking how 'these actual occasions […] might be enlivened – made more responsive and more active – by the application of a series of procedures and techniques of expression': 'a permanent supplement to the ordinary' (2008, p. 2). For example, in addressing the lived experience of moving through urban space, Thrift characterizes 'cities as oceans of hurt result from the undertow of small battles of everyday life but also of reservoirs of hope result from a generalized desire for a better future' (2008, p. 219).

In an anthropological context, a similar ethos of leaning-in has, by Kathleen Stewart, been termed 'attunement':

> An attention to the matterings, the complex emergent worlds, happening in everyday life. The rhythms of living that are addictive or shifting. The kinds of agency that might or might not add up to something with some kind of intensity or duration. The enigmas and oblique events and background noises that might be barely sensed and yet are compelling. (Stewart 2011, p. 445)

In describing her research practices, Stewart draws attention to the ways in which theory, explanation and interpretation can have deadening, too-simple effect of explaining 'what-can-be-seen by reference to what cannot' (Poovey 2002, p. 143). In a similar vein to Thrift, Steward asks: 'What happens if we approach worlds not as the dead or reeling effects of distant systems but as lived affects with tempos, sensory knowledges, orientations, transmutations, habits, rogue force fields ... ?' (2011, p. 446).

When I entered the Resource Base at the beginning of the project I was coming in the aftermath of a massive disruption of the 'shared fund of meaning' (Scott 2008, p. 147) that had characterized the daily life of the Day Centres. Not all of the shared meaning was positive – far from it. There was for some, too much noise, too many people you were stuck with and boring work. Nor was all of it negative, there were collective joys, liking people, work that kept you going, intense significances of things which might seem small to others, £4, bonuses, pillow cases, the clock coming round every day to 'twenty to four'. Somehow in developing a display, the point became to hold open these complexities and ambivalences. Part of this was to see the stories told as 'theoretical models in themselves' (Stewart 1996, p. 80) and through this encourage visitors to 'lean-in' and to attune temporarily to the complexity of what it meant to go everyday to a Day Centre and for them now to have closed.

<Ch12_Fig3>
Caption: The Garden Centre was another place people worked in the Day Centres. The panel indicates our approach, mixing short quotes and images. Short oral history clips accompanied each panel.

The exhibition becoming co-produced

If the Day Centres had to slowly come into meaning for me, to the point where I had some bearings in terms of names, rooms, places and activities, then it was also the case that my job was to create the conditions where the 'History of Day Centres project' could come into existence for all of us together. Projects imagined in funding applications always have to be recrafted through being put into practice. The idea of the exhibition needed to be built at the same time as we built the exhibition. In abstract, 'do you want to get involved?' / 'tell your story?' / 'participate?' were meaningless questions.

To do this we went regularly to visit the Museum of Croydon 'Croydon Now' space. To try and make the exhibition more concrete we would look at specific exhibit cases and asked what might go in there. One day when we went in and I asked that question someone said, 'nails'! One of the group had worked in the Day Centres packing nails. 'Ok, but what kind of nails?' He was not sure he could describe them. So we visited hardwear shops until we found the right size nails. 'Lots of nails! In bags'. We'd go to another box. 'Discos'. What happened at the discos? 'Glitter Ball!' (which we bought on Ebay and hung in the centre of the exhibition). 'Dancing!' Then one day a Glitters t-shirt – the name of the occasional weekend disco – appeared: 'Look what my Dad found'. Then I'd get a phone call, someone had found an old Virgin airlines pack that some people used to make through working on an assembly line. 'Come over and get it'. From this we came up with two themes: Work and, basically, Not Work (called leisure on the online version) and included sport, shows, holidays and discos.

As such the exhibition was not produced in the sense that an object is made to a blueprint or to an entirely preconceived plan. Instead it was more like a coming-forth, happening through the interactions with the display boxes and with the materiality left over from the Day Centres. As such the exhibition came to be through, in terms resonant of Tim Ingold's accounts of making, an iterative process between people, things, cases and spaces (2010). It was co-production in a way that holds together its more common use in museums – collaborative work with communities – with its use in Science and Technology Studies where it is used to evoke the intimate connection in our realities between, as Karen Barad puts it, 'world and words' (Barad 2007; see also Graham 2016).

Many interventions in inclusive research with people with learning disabilities have argued for the need to develop collective explanations a bit more strongly than we did here. There has been a big emphasis on shared data analysis as a way of combating concerns that non-learning disabled researchers end up control the meaning (Seale, Nind, Tilley and Chapman (2015); Nind, Chapman, Seale and Tilley (2015)). And across the participatory action research literature there has been an interest in trying to build 'share understanding' or 'common knowledge' (Edwards 2012). Looking back, I do remember exhibition meetings that were certainly very hard to convene as a space of collective sense making. Yet alongside these meetings, a more network-y, emergent, nails and t-shirts approach took over. I work with each individual person and each person who was named came into the museum to install their case, a bit like Orlando Fals-Borda's 'slow rhythm of reflection and action' (2013

[2007] p. 159) and certainly resonant of Michael Ames' account of co-produced exhibitions as an iterative 'to-ing and fro-ing (2003, p. 177).

Oral histories: Editing and creating conditions for audiences to lean-in
Yet the History of Day Centres project was also an *oral* history project. By the time we were developing the exhibition, I had recorded interviews with over 80 people. While two interviews had been conducted by people with learning disabilities, this had not been a focus of the project (though it might be if we did it again today). As part of the project – and before the archive was been donated to the Croydon Local Studies Library – The Open University held all the interviews and I was going to be responsible for editing the oral histories for display. Before doing anything else, I spoke to people about their voices being in the exhibition and people chose the thing they'd most like to be talking about. Before the audio was signed off, I played the clips to people, and sometimes their supporters and family.

But it was me that edited the interviews. Each edited excerpt did, on one reading, convey a simply story or memory, as you've seen above with the Laundry memories. Yet at the same time, I wanted to make sure that in the selection and editing for display that the tones, textures, pauses were still present. So I did the editing with the hope of conveying something of the intensities of the memories and something of the densities of the social world of the Day Centres. Of course – and this became very viscerally clear to me as I used software to edit the oral histories to reduce a pause or cut a sentence so a clip could come in under two minutes – that there was something both very true and very problematic in calling our exhibition, 'In Our Own Words'. Not only because I was very much involved. The 'our' had, through the project's participatory ontology, to very much also include me. But also that the title was in danger of falling into the ideal human subject desired by the *Valuing People* white paper. The ideal of the independent, choice making, autonomous person that so much recent work in Disability Studies has critiqued as the ideal 'neo-liberal able' subject (Goodley 2014). I worried about this a lot in what I wrote just after the project ended (Graham 2009; 2010). Yet it was through the attentiveness precisely to what people, said and how they said it that we could tell the modest and mundane stories which could be read as 'there was sport', 'there was work' and, at the same time, allow, for listeners who were prepared to hear it, 'vast oceans of uncertainty' to be held open (Latour 2005, p. 245). Far from either affirming this mode of ideal personhood or only emphasizing its impossibility, the edited oral histories sought to unfold the lived and remembered struggles for agency – the very stuff of participation's political ambitions – as well as its constant negotiations and its unfinished nature.

As a direct result of so much change in people's lives, many people I interviewed were still very much working it all out. As Stewart puts it, 'the body has to learn to play itself like a musical instrument in this world's compositions (2011, p. 450). Having developed certain ways of being themselves in the Day Centre (whether being loud and being the centre of attention; or hiding, avoiding, finding safe members of staff and safe places), people, in looking back to the Day Centres, were

also learning to play themselves within new compositions and social configurations of the Resource Bases. It felt crucial that this came across to audiences too.

One of my collaborators did the welcome to the exhibition:

> Welcome to the Day Centres Exhibition. Talking about our old lives what we used to do at Day Centres work and that lot, discos and the paper round, Christmas shows. We're talking about there's been changes. We've been decided to go to the Resource Base centres, where we go out to places.

Another explained what learning disability means to him:

> My learning difficulty is you know when you get upset about when people take advantage out of you. I would rather not go against anybody, I'd rather go and tell somebody, that they said, like they call you all different names under the sun. I used to be rather offensive with people but they don't do that to me. What it is, some think they can get one over on you, that's the way it is. But some of them like, think that they can do what they have to do but I just take no notice of them, walk off and leave it.

I hope in reading these quotes – even without hearing the intonation and pauses – something unresolved is suggested, something that is still becoming. The pauses and the changes mid-way through a sentence in who/what is active and passive; *there's been changes, we've been decided to go to the Resource Base centres*. The way in which learning disability is a way of being in the world that is not a fix thing, certainly not a number given after an IQ test, but a lived experience which means *some think they can get one over on you* and that sometimes you just have to *walk off and leave it.*

A modest politics of potential: Participatory ontologies for museums

In one of the Resource Bases one man would come up to me as soon as I arrived and say, with a piecing looking, 'what are you doing here today'? I always had a practical answer – to see X or do Y – but I always laughed too, his interest and seriousness always seemed to invite me to take it as a deeply existential question. As if he suspected that really, deep down, I didn't know.

<Ch12_Fig4>
Caption: The History of Day Centres project and exhibition took place in the wake of quite radically change in people's lives. A lot of the work we did together was to reflect on what this meant. As this panel suggests, there were quite a variety of responses and theories about why the day centres were closed.

There is a long tradition in participatory research and for those interested in participatory approaches to museums to hope for a 'third space for critical engagement' (Chatterton, Fuller and Routledge 2007, p. 222). There have been three key modes of expressing this in a museum context: as

a 'safe' space (Heumann Gurian 2010); the dialogic 'third space' space (Lynch and Alberti 2010) and as activism (Sandell 2007). Each imply different roles for the museum in social and political change. Looking back and more than a bit unwittingly, we did not drawn on any of these three notions. In describing the purpose of non-representational theory as to generate a greater 'lean-in', Thrift evokes a 'political imperative' (2008, p. 19) which comes from attentiveness and attunement, to the world and its potentialities:

> For in studying practices in detail it became clear to me that what was missing from too many accounts was a sense of mutability; of the moments of inspired improvisation, conflicting but still fertile mimesis, rivalous desires, creative forms of symbiosis, and simple transcription errors which made each moment a new starting point. (2008, p. 21)

In every oral account of the day centres – and in the edited versions for the exhibition – these mutabilities, improvisations and new starting points were always at play.

Yet another connotation suggested by non-representation is precisely its explicitly political genealogy – also drawn on by Participatory Action Research – of direct democracy, 'speaking for yourself', as self advocates with learning disabilities have often put it. Charles Scott, as he elaborates his account of attunement as a research method, develops the idea of sensibility and democratic space. He argues:

> The aspect of democracy that I want to emphasize is its characteristic of valuing the rights and privileges of a wide range of participants without giving any of those participants authority to define the whole. Taken out of a strictly political context, "democratic space" means a region of occurrence in which none of the happenings defines or normalizes the space of their occurrence. (2008, p. 153)

Here we could read participatory ontologies generated by our project and its interactions as a democratic form of meaning in the specific sense – also enabled by Latour's flat ontology – that no single account could define the whole. And as it was built one conversation, word, intonation, facial expression, nail, photo and glitter ball at a time it could 'never truly be kept within traditional theoretical tramlines' (Thrift, 2008, p. 12). And the nature of memory also meant that little of what was shared, recorded and then edited for display could never quite be kept within the tramlines of an ideal (policy-led) model of personhood. As a result the history of the day centres and their closure could not be easily understood as a story of uncomplicated progress or unremitting loss.

Participatory research is often aimed at creating social and political change, whether that is less ambitiously a better design of a social care service or product or, as in the tradition of Paulo Freire (2000 [1968]), radical political transformation. As a result the fields of participatory research are also characterized by a rich variety of 'theories of change' and theories of what makes research 'actionable' in the terms

used by 'academic-activists' Paul Chatterton, Duncan Fuller and Paul Routledge who argue for the 'A' over the 'R' in the PAR of Participatory Action Research (2007, p. 218). Yet our politics of participatory ontology – seeking attunement – can only be considered 'actionable' in an oblique sense. A *how* which sees the path to political transformation through first trying to listen very carefully and then work out where to go from there.

If museums are often accused of deadening, of decontextualizing, of too-simple explanation and of making things *clear* but also boring (O'Neill 2002, p. 34), then one potential line of inquiry always lies in a very serious commitment to seeking attunement; to the complexities of that issue, place or experience. How might museums shift attention so they can, to reinvoke Thrift, 'become connected to a general theme of more life, boosting aliveness, ontological involvement'. 'Too often', Thrift argues, 'we are not open to that pressure, clipping our own wings' (Thrift 2008, p. 14). Social history practices in museum can often seem to hoover worthily at the top of the interpretive hierarchy, explaining their subjects lives as workers, mothers, campaigners, soldiers…all the while lower down the interpretive hierarchy the quotes, the photos and the oral histories never fail to open up more complex worlds. The cue for my thinking is often *Theatres of Memory* by Raphael Samuel (1994). You could say *Theatre of Memory* is deeply ontological (Schwartz 2012). Resisting the critical voices of the 'heritage baiters' who might see heritage as co-optive and not epistemically valid 'History', Samuel's bid for its value is composed of an account of life and excess, of a proliferation practices, elaborations of many examples of the past with the present, of experience as knowing. The political worth of these practices emerging, not only cognitively or through clarity or critical distance, but from action and from experimenting together.

If what we did together as part of the History of Day Centres project was research, then it was in the most ambitious and in the most modest and everyday sense – we were just trying to work out, at times together but always in relationship to each other, what it means to be alive in the 21st century. Although we can never exactly know, the exhibition was an expression of the hope that a visitor or two, as they listened, might also *lean-in* a bit closer.

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