



School: School of Art

Researcher: Dr Ben Parry

Project Title: *Rethinking Waste and the Logics of Disposability: Compound 13 Lab*

UOA: 32: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory

Research Timeline

Date	Rationale of research activities and decisions undertaken
	Stage 1: Research and Project Conception
Jan 2012	This participatory action-research project began in 2012, during a 16-week research/artist residency with URBZ; an urban lab/ think-tank led by Matias Echanove and Rahul Shrivastava based in Mumbai, India. During this period, I met Acorn India, working in the recycling centre of Dharavi to support informal waste workers and provide creative learning for young people. I worked with Acorn to establish the project "Reversing the gaze" whose aim is to critically challenge the norms of international research by putting research tools in the hands of a team of young local researchers, handing over the role to local actors in a way that gives them control and ownership of their own storytelling and representations.
Feb 2013	I returned to Mumbai to continue the project with Acorn. The second phase comprised mapping recent demolition zone of worker and residential colonies within Dharavi's 13 th Compound informal recycling centre. Maps, interviews, photographs and outdoor exhibition at Acorn Foundation centre.
2013	Stage 2: Dissemination Through reflective writing, seminars, presentation and discussion with academics and students the difficulties of work, nature of outcomes and methodologies used were scrutinized. This process of dissemination and critical reflection established the ethical framework for future work. Research Ethics: Documenting Communities on the Edge, Mumbai. Dept Media & Communications, London School of Economics. This seminar with Master and PhD media and communications students discussed the politics of representation of the urban poor, and the worlding of Mumbai via numerous slum tours operating in Dharavi. Reversing the Gaze. Public lecture programme, CCA Glasgow in association with University of west of Scotland. This lecture to a public audience at CCA served as an overview of the project, from genesis through to future plans.

2014	<p>The project <i>Reversing the Gaze</i> was written up as a chapter in my PhD (University of West of Scotland / Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow). <i>Excursion as Method: All Roads Lead to Dharavi</i>. This writing explored the development of the project, methods used and lessons learned. It framed the work in the wider politics of formal-informal relations of rapid urbanization and the politics of representation and knowledge production.</p>
2015	<p><i>Recycling the Indian Dream. Utopias Futures and Temporalities, Critical Considerations for Social Change, Connected Communities, Bristol Zoo</i>. A film lecture put together with Prof. Graham Jeffery showing media representations of Dharavi as 'Asia's largest slum' and how poverty tourism exacerbates visual tropes of 'slum world' that are misrepresentative.</p>
2016 Nov – 2017 July	<p>Project Funding <i>Resources of Hope: giving voice to underprivileged communities in India</i> [2016 – 2018, AH/P00637X/1]. Ben Parry Co-Investigator. A team of UK and Indian academics were assembled to write the bid for a new project: Graham Jeffery (University of West of Scotland), Tushar Joag (Shiv Nadar University), Vinod Shetty (Acorn Foundation, India), Tom Wakeford (PI. Coventry University) Laxmi Kamble (Acorn Foundation). This international team of researchers and community engagement practitioners used participatory, socially-engaged art practices to co-create multi-media materials – including film-making, to transform the dominant narratives of life among underprivileged classes and castes. Specifically, to critically assess their representation in media that influences the policies of the state, international philanthropic groups and other agencies.</p> <p>Three field trips to India – coming together of team in Mumbai, and establishing goals of project. Co-production with communities on developing sustainable models.</p>
2017/18 (Dec-May)	<p>Outputs</p> <p>Launch of Compound 13 LAB – dedicated space, equipment & technician. Weekly design classes & workshops. Funding to support a 6-month pilot project. 3D Printing and design workshops by Sonny Lee Lightfoot, Rajat Ragadir. Appointment of 3D lab technician. Ongoing classes. Building of plastic shredder and extrusion machines.</p> <p>Shooting and production for the film: <i>Materials of Hope</i>. Interviews with recyclers from 13th Compound. Film made in collaboration with members of Acorn, interviews conducted by Tushar Joag. Sound recordings and music score Graham Jeffery. Sections of the film were screened at Acorn during the making to discuss content, representation, accuracy of depiction of livelihoods.</p>
2017	<p>Dissemination of AHRC Project</p> <p>Lecture, Q&A. <i>Curating the Dharavi Project, Mumbai. Curating Development Seminar Series, Department of Anthropology, Goldsmiths University of London</i>. 13th September 2017. Ben Parry and Vinod Shetty, chaired by Mark Johnson and Gabriela Nicolescu. Session explored questions – how might artistic, visual and curatorial practices contribute to development and its critical social and political engagement.</p> <p>Presentation: <i>Resources of Hope: giving voice to underprivileged communities in India. Global Challenges Research Fund & Collaborative Research: an international symposium, UEA, Norwich, 6th June 2017</i>. Presentation of the project to date with Vinod Shetty.</p>

	<p>Conference / Workshop. GCRF Global Engagement Meeting. India, New Delhi 7th-9th November 2017. Lalit Hotel, Connaught Place New Delhi-11000, funded by GCRF and Newton Fund. Presentation of GCRF project <i>Resources of Hope</i>. Presenter, Ben Parry</p>
2018	<p>Outputs</p> <p>Documentary Film:</p> <p><i>Materials of Hope</i>, Ben Parry + ACORN, 2018</p> <p>https://www.compound13.org/waste</p> <p>This short documentary has been produced collaboratively between a team of UK-based researchers and members of ACORN India, using participatory methods. It tells the story of the journeys that waste materials make through the informal recycling industry in Dharavi, Mumbai. Sections of the film were screened at Acorn during the making to discuss content, representation, accuracy of depiction of livelihoods.</p> <p>The incorporation of 'recycled sounds' as hip-hop soundtrack into <i>Materials of Hope</i> a documentary film co-produced with members of Acorn as an output from <i>Resources of Hope</i>, available at https://vimeo.com/277435980. The film offers a glimpse of the very challenging conditions within which the Lab's work is situated.</p> <p>Film Screening + Q&A. <i>Materials of Hope</i>. AHRC Connected Communities: New Perspectives in Participatory Arts, UEA, Norwich, 22/23 May 2018</p> <p>Exhibition</p> <p>Video Installation – Media Wall, Bath Spa University Title: Rethinking Disposability 26 November to 17 December 2018 Ben Parry, Digital video 7.35m x 3.75 (30 HD digital panels)</p> <p>This work was made specifically for MediaWall at Newton Park, which hosts work from international artists and researchers, while also creating spaces for students and staff to learn through creation. The work presents a concept of waste as sensorium, focussing on the hand sorting and disaggregation of plastic recycling in Dharavi's 13th Compound</p> <p>https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/be-bath-spa/facilities/mediawall/project-archive/</p>
2018	<p>Project Funding</p> <p>AHRC/GCRF Follow-on funding for impact and engagement: <i>Rethinking Waste and the logics of disposability: Compound 13 Lab</i> (Principal Investigator, £99,500) [2019-20, AH/S005897/1].</p> <p>This was the 2nd funding to support work with Acorn Foundation. <i>Rethinking Waste</i> focuses on the knowledge politics of the informal waste management industry in the 13th Compound in Dharavi, Mumbai's largest informal settlement, where members of the project team have been working within a series of partnerships established since 2012, in particular through intensive collaboration, dialogue and action research with Acorn Foundation, India.</p>

	<p>Compound 13 LAB</p> <p>Compound 13 Lab was established in Dharavi – envisaged as a long-term project and commitment to the communities working in informal waste management – including education programme for young people. The activities centre around a programme of workshops and residences by artists, scientists and designers. The lab shares emerging tools and technologies of the circular economy with those who not normally have access to them.</p> <p>https://www.compound13.org</p>
2018	<p>Dissemination of GCRF Project <i>Rethinking Waste</i>.</p> <p>Presentation: <i>Rethinking Waste; Compound 13 Lab</i>, at New Perspectives on Participatory Arts conference, University of East Anglia,</p> <p>Presentation: <i>People, Power and Curating; exploring alternative forms of exhibition making</i>, Turner Contemporary, Margate.</p> <p>Paper: <i>Smart Cities from Below</i>. Big Data and Urban Governance on the Margins of the City. ESRC Newton Fund and British Academy workshops. Paper <i>Smart Cities from Below</i>. Anatomy Museum, Kings College London, 2nd August 2018.</p>
2019	<p>Film Screening: <i>Materials of Hope</i>: MeCCSA Conference, University of Stirling, 7 - 9 January, 2019.</p>
2019 – 20	<p>Artist Residency Programme</p> <p>Feb 2019 – Jan 2020. Delivery and document six participatory residencies with leading artists, designers, engineers and scientists (4 from India, 2 from the UK/EU) which provide a learning exchange mechanism to address issues of waste, work, education, survival and sustainability in Dharavi.</p> <p>The residency programme at the Lab produced significant outputs on the ground through the development of an ecological design and 'living' curriculum for young people aged (8-20yr) of families working in the informal recycling sector. Each residency will produces unique outputs (design artefacts, audio-visual media, artworks, events, performances, as well as the curriculum and learning materials) and stimulates further enquiry.</p> <p>Artist residency programme at Compound 13 lab: artists included, Aquí Thami, Ian Dawson, Sharmila Samant, Mrugen Rathod, Aquila Krishnan, Vrishali Pundare.</p> <p>https://www.compound13.org/ian-dawson https://www.compound13.org/aqui-thami</p>
2019-20	<p>Art and Design 'Living Curriculum'</p> <p>Art1ST art classes (series of weekly art and design classed led by Art1st - https://art1st.co.in)</p> <p>This work and the pedagogy of the lab is reflected in the chapter 5 – in: Jeffery, G and Parry, B (2021) <i>Waste Work: The Art of Survival in Dharavi</i>. Bath: Wunderkammer Press</p>

	<p>Link to chapter: Chapter 5: Pedagogies of the Peripheries: City as Classroom Penny Hay and Graham Jeffery, with Virshali Purandare, Ajmal Shifaz, Nisha Vaghani and Sharmila Samant</p>
2019	<p>Exhibition</p> <p>2019 MEETINGS Video and Performance Festival, Jutland, Denmark, 30 August - 8 September 2019. Video installation of the film Materials of Hope.</p> <p>Publication: Havskov, K and Weiss, K (2019) <i>Meetings Video-og performance festival: Jutland ET4U</i></p>
2019	<p>Exhibition</p> <p><i>Project Anywhere</i> <i>Plastic Mahal</i>, Project Anywhere, (online exhibition), Parsons/New School Fine Art, New York City. http://www.projectanywhere.net/plastic-mahal-palace-of-plastic/</p> <p><i>Project Anywhere</i> is a global blind peer reviewed exhibition model for art at the outermost limits of location-specificity. <i>Project Anywhere</i> is a vehicle for illuminating artistic research and projects that take place outside traditional exhibition circuits.</p>
2020	<p>Dissemination</p> <p><i>Compound 13 Lab</i>, online talk at Cambridge University MPhil in Arts, Creativity and Education.</p> <p><i>Rethinking Waste and the logics of disposability</i>, October School, Delhi, India.</p> <p>Project Funding</p> <p>British Academy, Urban Infrastructures of Well-Being. <i>Waste, Water and Wellbeing: lessons from the interface of formal/informal urban systems in Dharavi, Mumbai. (co-investigator, £300,000) [2020-22. UWB190022].</i></p> <p>As an interdisciplinary and global team, we will examine urban development through the lens of the 'smart city from below', at the interface between the user-generated city and centralised systems of urban planning. The project builds on existing interdisciplinary GCRF work, and developed through close collaboration between researchers from the UK and the Global South, the team draws together expertise from across the natural and social sciences and humanities (namely environmental scientists, policy analysts, engineers, urbanists, and cultural practitioners).</p> <p>Output</p> <p>Jeffery, G and Parry, B (2021) <i>Waste Work: The Art of Survival in Dharavi</i>. Bath: Wunderkammer Press</p> <p>https://www.compound13.org/about-3</p>

Multi authored book documenting the project with contributions from the research team, Acorn and the contributing artists. Due to Covid-19 the original publication date of Nov 2020 was put back – (see supporting Covid statement).

The book documents the activities of the lab, the use of art residencies as a method for building a platform for knowledge exchange as well as framing the project in relation to rapid urban development and the infrastructural collisions of urban informality and Mumbai's global city imaginary.

Chapters in portfolio:

Jeffery, G. and Parry, B. (2021) 'Waste Work and the politics of knowledge', in Parry, B. and Jeffery, G. eds., *Waste Work: the art of survival in Dharavi*, Bath: Wunderkammer. ISBN 9780993551178

Parry, B. (2021) 'Subaltern Realism: aesthetics of hope and recuperation' in Parry, B. and Jeffery, G. eds., *Waste Work: the art of survival in Dharavi*, Bath: Wunderkammer. ISBN 9780993551178