

# Meaning and Making: Laying the Groundwork for Community-Based Research-Creation

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## Abstract

Research-creation practices have long consulted the public in the process of research, yet the act of making often rests in the hands of the individual researcher. This paper proposes a more integrated and collaborative framework for arts-based researchers and educators called Community-Based Research-Creation, which extends the collaborative logic of oral history into the realm of creation by encouraging art educators to develop focused and prolonged workshops and classes with community. I draw from my own practice as a community art teacher working primarily with adults and propose methods and frameworks for developing community-engaged studies using artworks.

## What Is Community-Based Research-Creation?

Community-engaged research-creation practices consult the public in the process of research, yet the act of creation often remains in the hands of the researcher. This paper proposes a collaborative framework for arts-based researchers called community-based research-creation (CBRC), in which researchers provide the conditions for research participants to create their own works of research-creation within the framework of a larger research study. CBRC extends the logic and ethics of oral history, which studies historical events and memory through oral testimony given in long-form interviews (Yow, 2014; High, 2009), into the realm of visual creation, welcoming community members to create artworks depicting their experiences, memories, and present understandings. By emphasizing the agency of participants and their perspectives within an academic research project, CBRC democratizes the creation side of community-engaged research-creation and opens the artistic aspects of these inquiries to diverse perspectives, fruitful complications, and more interesting directions than is possible through gathering community input for individual creation alone. I propose a methodology that engages community through multi-week classes that conjoin the researcher's chosen topic with guided making. These classes ideally see participants through the concept to realization of a project, which is fostered by skill-building activities and discussions between participants and the instructor that help to form individual and collective understandings of the topic and the artworks made about it. I argue that, when conducted thoughtfully, CBRC provides an exciting possibility for researchers wishing to work with community and arts-based practice.

I came to CBRC as a methodology while developing an oral history and research-creation doctoral project on development in the urban environment in Montreal's Sud-Ouest, while also teaching free online community classes during COVID-19 lockdowns at the Pointe-Saint-Charles Art School called

*Landscaping the City* (LeRue, 2023). Classes were eight-week sessions open for free to anyone who registered, which attracted participants spanning a range of ages, backgrounds, and artistic abilities. Working from Kevin Lynch's (2008) framework of the image of the city, exercises drew on landscape drawing principles and theory to have participants reflect on their own experiences of living in Montreal to create artworks. The class culminated in a three-week final project that asked students to reflect on something they notice in their neighborhood that others might not. As work developed, students took up several mediums and topics, and it became clear that the projects were high quality, rigorous, and represented an exceptional plurality of viewpoints and experiences of the city. In my initial project, I intended to create works of research-creation based on the testimony given to me through oral history. However, student projects in *Landscaping the City* showed the complicated artistic perspectives I was aiming to replicate in my project, providing a plurality of views that my singular art practice could not have captured alone. I found my initial research plan was better articulated by the works created by the students and thus conceived of CBAE as a method.

In what follows, I will articulate CBRC as an education-based framework informed by oral history and artistic creation of mostly 2D practices. This is not to discount other possibilities and applicability of this method, and I welcome others to extend the logic of this method as they see fit. However, I will keep the following inquiry rooted in my practice to offer concrete examples that I found relate to a study of this nature. I do not claim CBRC is a new framework, but rather that it is an assembled paradigm that articulates a process of collaborative creation in, and with, community that offers new approaches to authorship, co-creation, and collective meaning. In the following sections, I will situate CBRC within three fields of academic and pedagogic inquiry—I will explain how I came to develop CBRC through what J. Ulbricht (2005) called Community-Based Art Education (CBAE), before considering how CBRC re-purposes ethics and frameworks of oral history to extend its logic into the visual realm. I will then consider community-engaged arts-based research (ABR), and how CBRC can contribute to enriching and deepening the connections arts-based researchers have with their participants. These discussions will culminate in a proposed method and ethic for CBRC, considering how we might design our studies, treat the works created, and use them as parts of larger arts-based and qualitative studies.

## **Community-Based Art Education**

CBRC is situated within, and inspired by, existing frameworks of Community-Based Art Education (CBAE). CBAE is defined simply as art education taking place outside of K-12 and university settings (Villeneuve & Sheppard, 2009), best understood as an umbrella term describing several community-engaged artistic and pedagogic practices, including art workshops, informal community sharing, collective making, and the making of artworks for community, such as murals and public sculpture (Ulbricht, 2005; Lawton & La Porte, 2013). CBAE can refer to grassroots artmaking by community members such as the Fibres and Beyond collective, where members offer each other feedback and exhibit work in rural British Columbia (Sinner & Yazdnapanah, 2021). It can also refer to educators from formal settings engaging with communities as a site of collaboration, such as art education professor Pamela Harris Lawton's (2010) community quilting project, where she and preservice teachers welcomed people visiting a homeless shelter to contribute a square to a collectively made quilt. Formal educators may also develop curricula

designed to learn about and with communities, such as the collaborative project between art education professor Kathleen Vaughan et al.'s (2016) three-year initiative in Pointe-Saint-Charles, a post-industrial Montreal neighborhood with a reputation for social activism where students from Concordia University in four artistic disciplines were invited to engage with oral histories and the built environment to create community-engaged artworks.

Many engage in CBAE for its perceived benefits for students from a community and students in formal education engaging community. CBAE has been taken up in public schools and universities under frameworks of contextual and cultural learning to better form students' understanding of communities and identity (Luo & Lau, 2020; Ulbricht, 2005), and to make education socially relevant for participating students (McFee, 1991). Lawton (2019) conducted work with preservice teachers in community settings and argued that CBAE "connects them with the democratic concepts of civic responsibility and social justice" (p. 215). Community art practice, she said, provides rich learning opportunities for all involved, creating moments of reciprocity between educator and participant where each contributes to the outcomes of the project, while gaining mutual understandings beyond simple artistic creation (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012; 2015). Reciprocity here means changing the relationship from one between artist/teachers and student/learners to one of mutual interest and respect rooted in mutual understanding rather than charity or simple giving and learning. Others claim that CBAE can help to rectify social inequality by either beautifying public space, reclaiming land for public use (Hutzel, 2007), or through empowerment programs to elevate the person creating the art (Kim, 2015; Bellavance & Venkatesh, 2018). Belgian social work professor Griet Verschelden et al. (2012) argued that community-based art practices conscious of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's (2018) definition of praxis, meaning, to conjoin the process of reflection and action, contain an emancipatory potential that enables participants to consider their needs in society with the potential to act in resolving their needs. However, Verschelden and colleagues recognize that some community practices see communities as lacking and needing external intervention, which they argue, citing theorist Chantal Mouffe (2000), negates the agency of the community and the conflict and dissent that exist within them. This reveals a split in philosophy in CBAE—some engage in reparative practices that engage in community to repair an apparent lack, and inductive practices that view communities as fully formed, containing their knowledge and understandings of the world.

CBRC asks researchers to use the principles of critical pedagogy to see communities as fully formed (Freire, 2018; hooks, 1994) rather than sites in need of external intervention. Freire (2018) implored educators to enter the student-teacher relationship as equals, believing students arrive already with tremendous knowledge about the world. Rather than recounting facts and rules to students as is common to traditional education, it is the educator's role to engage in dialogue with students that pose problems for students and instructors to think through critically and collectively. Detractors often claim critical pedagogy merely adds social activism into the classroom. While this characterization of many critical pedagogy practices is not entirely false, Freire claimed its true humanizing potential means educators should allow students to think freely, and to trust them to draw their own conclusions. He said, "Without faith in people, dialogue is a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation" (p. 91). Feminist theorist and professor bell hooks (1994), a follower and student of Freire, introduced teaching

as a practice of freedom, meaning “a way of teaching so that anyone can learn” (p. 12). To teach as a practice of freedom requires knowing one’s students, seeing them as individuals, and delivering course content in a way they can both understand and engage with. This does not mean watering down the course content, rather knowing how to make understandable and tangible course content so that students can self-actualize through the learning process. By working through exercises that draw from existing knowledge and perspectives in conjunction with sharing skills and frameworks that help our students articulate them through art, a CBRC study aims to make visible and tangible the individual and collective knowledge of our participants.

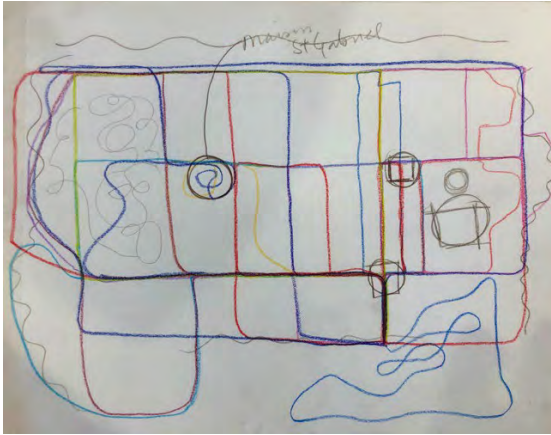


Fig. 1: Example of mind-mapping.

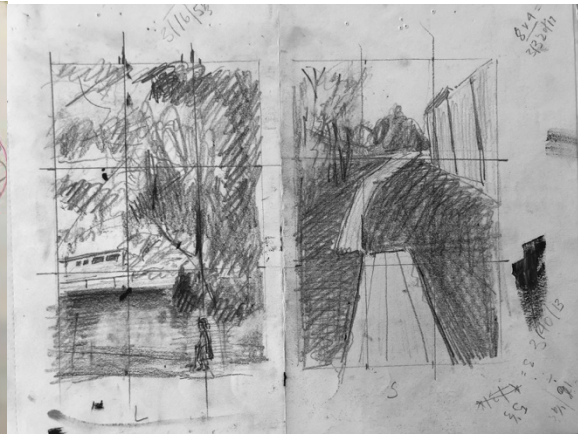


Fig. 2: Example of rule of thirds (Courtesy of Catherine Wells).

## Landscaping the City as Case Study

So how might we structure our CBRC classrooms to promote inductive participation? I propose that educator-researchers taking up CBRC develop classes that can both guide and stoke the imagination of participating students. The topic and content of the class should directly relate to the researchers’ desired study, while striking a balance between skill development, conceptual thought, and personal and group reflection. In *Landscaping the City*, exercises catered to students from multiple levels, ages, and abilities, and built off each other in equal parts skill building and brainstorming. We aimed to understand our relationships to the city, drawing mind-maps of the neighborhood (Figure 1) and developing projects that sent students out into the neighborhood to sketch and gather photographs, many of which were used in class exercises. We also covered drawing skills, going over shading, value, and compositional tricks such as armatures and the rule of thirds and mark making (Figure 2). Weekly exercises scaled engagement, and optional homework allowed students to continue with a skill or method if they desired. Throughout, we explored conceptual frameworks for landscape and found ways to bring it back to discussions about the student work. This culminated in an open-ended final project over the last three weeks of the session that invited students to share what they thought was overlooked in their neighborhoods. I met individually with students to aid in their thinking and project building and made groups to give feedback to each other. Like any other art classroom, peer feedback helped students to identify the strengths of their work while aiding in thinking through the concepts and techniques required to fulfill these visions.



Fig. 3: Example of potential CBRC project (Courtesy of Nouella Grimes).

As a result, these converging elements created guiderails that led most students to complete a final project that was unique to their own ideas and stories within their capacities as artists. Bhea, one of the younger participants of *Landscaping the City*, took notice of larger squirrels in the park and decided to create a work on transparent mylar documenting overlapping layers of bone, muscle, and fur on the animal. When she could not find a visual reference for the skeleton, she used a reference from another small animal and imagined the structure given the top and middle layers (Figure 4). Nouella considered the multiple storefronts in the neighborhood ranging from the Islamic cultural center, specialty grocery stores, and a church that had significant meaning for her and considered how they are a metaphor for the many people living in the neighborhood. She decided to put them together in an imagined storefront (Figure 3), and further discussions in class revealed the fear that changing neighborhood conditions put these stores—and the communities they cater to—at risk of displacement. Leon recounted growing up around the Negro Community Centre (NCC), which was formed in 1927 in the Sud-Ouest neighborhood of Little Burgundy. Unfortunately, lack of funding led the center to close in 1993, and despite hopes for revival a retaining wall eventually collapsed, leading to its eventual sale and demolition in 2014. Leon made a pencil drawing of the collapsed retaining wall, before noticing abstract faces in the rubble that then became a subject of further drawings (Figure 5). The mother-son duo of Nadia and Justus created a one-minute animation about ruelles, which are back roads behind many Montreal rows of apartments that are far less formal than the front side. Often, these are the sites of social life, where kids leave toys, people socialize outside and have garages and other informal architectures. The animation personifies elements of these sites, slowly revealing the narrator to be a white cat who has made this ruelle its home. This is but a small sampling of the works students made, standing alone as excellent works of creation. Taken together, they reveal compelling and complex views of the neighborhood that are multifaceted and worthy of a larger study.



Fig. 4: Example of CBRC project (courtesy of Bhea).



Fig. 5: Example of CBRC project (Courtesy of Leon Llewyn).

## Oral History

CBRC is informed by the ethics and frameworks of oral history, which unsettles academic expertise by taking interviewee's testimony as the expert of their subject. Oral historians conduct prolonged interviews with individuals who are non-experts in the academic sense and who may be overlooked in traditional arcs of historical research. Oral history testimony may be taken individually or with others to give descriptive analysis about the historical past or present that is filtered through a participant's subjectivity; they may remember, misremember, selectively remember, or otherwise emphasize different meanings about a situation over time. For oral historian Alessandro Portelli (2018), an oral historian's subjectivity is integral to the study, as it is the historian themselves who asks the questions, puts them into the narrative, and is a physical presence during the interview for participants. If an interviewee has a desire to tell a story, an interviewer has desires for the direction of the story and their overarching project narrative, with the oral history interview becoming a navigation between these two interests. While these interests can be antagonistic, they may also find mutual understanding and reciprocity if both parties remain open minded.

Group or collective memory is of particular interest to oral historians, who often interview those who share a location, culture, or experience. For oral historian Valerie Yow (2014), there is a distinction to be made between individual and collective memory, which might both be held within the same narrator with memories that contradict each other. Yow used the example of workers at a cotton mill, who remembered a backbreaking work environment controlled by an unforgiving company, while also remembering the lifestyle around work positively. While individual memory remains in the realm of what happened and how an individual perceived events, she argued that collective memory is the product of rigid social forces that incentivize certain identifications with the way things were or are. She theorized that collective memory informs how one derives meaning from individual events, which is how the workers recalled brutal conditions and the close-knit community that built up around it with no

contradiction. As such, human memory for Yow should be seen as both fallible and trustworthy, meaning that the oral historian is not only interested in specific accounts of history, but also how that history is remembered and why one might be remembering it this way.

If “oral history is the recording of personal testimony in the recorded form” (Yow, 2014, p. 3), CBRC is the recording of personal testimony in the artistic form. If oral testimony gives us insight into one’s memory, experience, and meaning over historical events, CBRC offers extra-linguistic insights into participants understanding, memory, and experience, providing viewers the product of artistic choices and expressions that are made over a prolonged period. But why might we want to ask our participants to make artwork rather than give an oral testimony? And what kind of participant might this attract? Admittedly, oral history interviews are far less burdensome for the participant than participating in an eight-week class, the latter requiring up to 30 hours of engagement. The perspective pool of participants is narrowed to those with an interest in artmaking, those who have the desire and time to complete a class, and those with enough interest in a specific subject to register. However, the participants who do meet these criteria are likely to find much in common with the researcher-teacher, and the situation provides an opportunity reciprocity based on shared interests—The researcher is not merely extracting “data” from participants, as is a debate in oral history methods (Lawless, 2000), but is learning with participants, embedding in their sites and offering spaces for participants to reflect on their own lives and grow as artists, ideally for free. This process responds directly to feminist historian Elaine Lawless’s (2000; 2019) call to practice reciprocal ethnography, meaning to narrow the distance between researcher and participant, finding meaningful ways to engage and give back. In the case of *Landscaping the City*, the class was a reprieve from the pandemic, providing participants a community of makers who were remaining connected through the isolated period. Artistically, students expressed how the class changed their relationship to their neighborhood and helped them articulate meanings they associate with place. One student, who I have since become close friends with, has continued to make work about the neighborhood and think through the formal concerns initially articulated in the class. Others have created works that have found their way into exhibitions, and in one case a book written about the history of the Sud-Ouest. I also worked to create additional points of meaning and gathering, creating a publication of artworks and working with a local bike-gallery initiative called *Pedalbox* to put on a show of student works that could be viewed outdoors during the pandemic. I also continue to volunteer and teach at the Pointe-Saint-Charles Art School, working to sustain the school now and into the future. Through working to be less extractive, I have formed relationships that have become profoundly meaningful, both personally and to my practice, as I move toward completing my doctoral project, while ideally contributing to the lives of participants and the long-term well-being of the organization.

## **Research-Creation**

Community-based research-creation builds off existing research-creation paradigms, which is a term to describe the integration of creative practice into the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. For communications professors Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk (2012), research-creation describes practices which have existed for decades but have only found widespread institutional uptake since the

turn of the millennium. The definitional boundaries of research-creation are porous, with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada defining it as:

An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms). (*Definitions*, 2021)

For Chapman and Sawchuk (2012; 2015), these practices pose radical possibilities for research in the university, which they argue is governed by a "regime of truth" that favors knowledge stemming from the written word and the scientific method. Research-creation instead welcomes the extra-linguistic insights of artistic making, including affect, emotion, and the uncertainty of artistic practice into the research process, which often cannot be accessed or described by the written word alone. This view takes seriously the knowledge contained within artistic practices and their possibilities for exploring research questions and problems.

Research-creation practices by definition merge multiple forms of academic and artistic inquiry into interdisciplinary studies. Art historian and artist Natalie Loveless (2019) proposed the framework of polydisciplinarity as an approach to research-creation, which centers one's object of study, rather than disciplinary boundaries. She contrasts this with interdisciplinarity, which calls for fidelity to multiple methods simultaneously. For Loveless, the uptake of arts-based research makes a similar move to research as the expanded field had to sculpture in the 1970s. *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* by Rosiland Krauss (1979) identified moves being made in sculptures of her era that expanded the field beyond its own boundaries and logics. Sculptures were becoming unpredictable, boundaryless, and resistant to paradigms. Rather than create a new logic for sculpture, the expanded field seemed to overturn disciplinary boundaries altogether, meaning sculpture could suddenly become a landscape installation, or an architectural interruption in a gallery. The expanded field thus liberated sculpture from its conventions, to take up ideas and interventions as the artist saw fit. For Loveless, arts-based research expands the field of the social sciences and humanities, which for her ought to embrace this newfound erosion of disciplinary boundaries, rather than invent and institute new, formalized methodology. In short, polydisciplinarity means each project or approach requires specific methodological considerations that are resistant to simple duplications.

The framework of polydisciplinarity is useful in describing CBRC, as the community-created artwork will likewise draw from multiple methods without much consideration for their conventions. For the researcher-teacher, CBRC can be seen as another tool in the toolbox of arts-based research, easily adaptable to a given framework as needed, and expands Chapman and Sawchuk's (2012) model by pushing the envelope of *who* makes works of research-creation. Important to note for CBRC, however, is that these types of practices can needlessly jettison traditional arts practices such as painting and drawing, which are at once accessible to view for a public who might not be versed in expansive practices, while also being an accessible entry point into making. For example, Loveless takes "easel painting" as the stepping point *from which* research-creation evolved, whereas I argue that if we are truly taking research-creation as a framework of expanded possibility, we must not discount the potentials



available to us from traditional approaches to artmaking. For CBRC to function as a method, it requires making accessible the process of making, which for a participant who did not train as an artist would likely be traditional 2D and 3D practices.

In the following section I will define CBRC, describing its implementation as a methodology, strategies for data collection, how to use it in larger studies and propose ethics for its implementation. At risk of defining CBRC too narrowly, I hope other researchers take this as a proposition of methods and principles which they may alter or edit for their own practices.

## Articulating the Methodology of CBRC

CBRC refers to singular artworks made by students in community art classrooms that the instructor has specifically designed to foster creation, contemplation, and sharing on a given topic over a prolonged period. For a work to be considered CBRC, it must turn the participant's life, ideas, hopes, or research into a finished artwork, which the researcher accepts as an inductive piece of data over which the participant is the expert, like an oral history interview. It is the responsibility of the researcher to guide the creation by creating a class which helps students develop skills and stoke thought simultaneously, and the researcher ought to make themselves available in whatever means necessary to help the participant realize their chosen work of research-creation. In addition to the creative work, the researcher gathers qualitative data through the formation of the work: What has the participant said about the work? How was the work developed, and what meanings evolved over the course of its creation? The researcher should also document what other participants say about work in discussions and critiques and consider their own impressions and thoughts as well, realizing that extra-linguistic insights generated through making may be describable through ongoing discussions and interpretations.

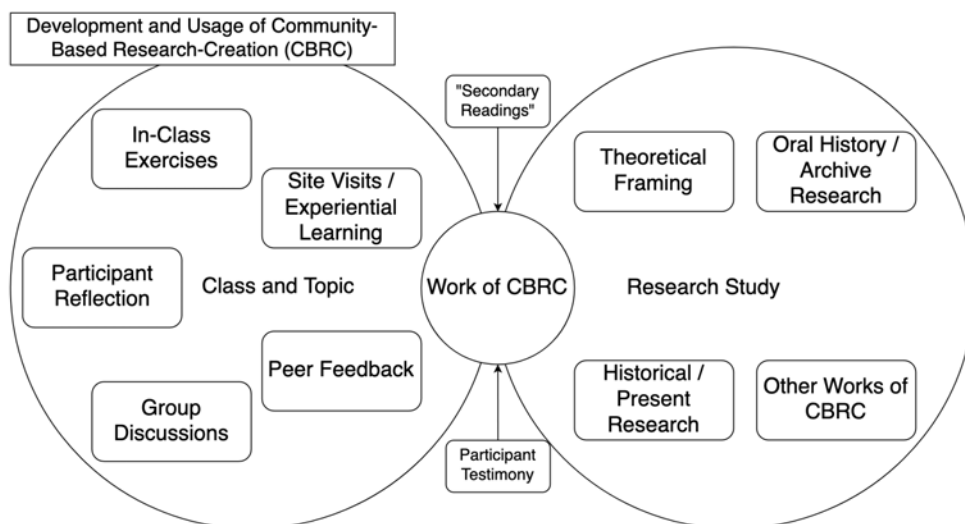


Fig. 6: Visual diagram of CBRC as a methodology

The artwork and the data collected through the classroom study must stand on their own, independent of the classroom in which they were formed and the study for which they will be used, as visualized in

Figure 6. Like any other study, a study integrating CBRC must frame its own methodology, theory, and background research, which will be unique to a researcher's interest and stated aims. A researcher may wish to use CBRC as one component of a study that uses other data such as oral history, use works of CBRC in a larger humanities, science or social science study, or conduct a study entirely of CBRC works that are examined singularly or put into conversation with each other. How we contextualize and interpret the meaning of works of CBRC likewise bears ethical consideration, given that artworks have meaning beyond the intention of their creator (Barrett, 2018). If we are to take our participants as experts, we must balance a fidelity to the creator's interpretation with the readings of the researcher and other observers. I thus propose the following ethic for researchers interpreting works of CBRC:

1. The stated intention of the creator should be the primary reading for the work. This should be gathered as secondary data through manners such as student journaling, classroom observations, or interviews about the project and its creation.
2. Secondary readings should add to, rather than contradict, the intention of the maker. These can be readings that emerge from classroom discussion, from the researcher's insights, or from community members who did not participate in the initial study. For instance, if during in-class sharing, a participant claims their work is about their family history and a classmate argues that it is instead about a political movement, this would be a fundamental contradiction in meaning. If in another instance a student created works about abandoned factories, and others read into the present re-purposing of said factories and the social changes that came with it, we might see this as an additive response. Ultimately, it can be tricky to discern what contradicts and what adds to a reading, and if in doubt we can member-check our secondary readings with the creator.
3. The work remains the physical and intellectual property of the student, who may keep it, sell it, gift it, or throw it away. The researcher meanwhile is obligated to ask permission when sharing works of CBRC beyond the initial study and to follow social science research protocols to destroy gathered data in a set timeframe after the study is complete.

Other researchers may tweak these ethics to fit the context in which they work. On this final point, CBRC sidesteps a longstanding debate in oral history that questions the life of the interview, and whether it is appropriate to reuse, archive, or otherwise adapt an interview beyond the initial stated aims for the project it was collected for (Bishop, 2009; Bishop & Kuula-Luumi, 2017). While it might be morally or ethically complicated to discard an interview, the eventual destruction of the observational or interview data about a work of CBRC does not compel us to destroy the artwork itself, which would have to be licenced by future researchers to include in further study. Further discussion is required to decide if and how works of CBRC should be archived, and whether the secondary data collected in these studies is appropriate to use for other purposes. In my own studies, I will use secondary data only in the service of a work of CBRC and will destroy data after the appropriate period of retention.

The interpretive framework of a study is up to the individual researcher, but I implore those using this method to see the communities they engage with as fully formed entities *from which* the pedagogical process draws. Ideally, we are listening to our participants and what data tells us, not engineering our classrooms to give us desired results, and not painting ourselves into a corner while teaching and sharing. Considering *Landscaping the City*, I have considered artworks through the dialectical method as articulated by Hegel (2013) and Marx (1981), which aims to understand how the whole is revealed through a particular instance (Lukács, 2013), in this case a work of art. This is affirmed by Brazilian

geographer Milton Santos (2021), who argued that current capitalist formations have made it so that even one in the tiniest village can learn about the world by examining their surroundings: “Each place is, in its way, the world” (p. 216). This has given me great flexibility in interpreting and conjoining data, while doing right by my participants. But one could just as well examine CBRC through feminist, decolonial, or postmodern frameworks; it is on the researcher to consider what emerges through the study, who ultimately shows up, and what the wishes are for those who do.

A study of CBRC inherently shares authority with our artist-participants (Frisch, 1990), but we must also consider how we share authority with the sites which host our collaborations (High, 2009). To engage community inevitably means to engage community centres, art schools, and cultural organizations. It is important that the ethic of reciprocity extends to them, and that as researchers we are aware of the shoestring budgets, lack of personnel, and diverging attention many sites have, even if they are delighted to receive such a project. To put on a class requires resources: space, time, competition with other potentially paid classes, advertisement, registration, and so on. For CBRC, I maintain that we must keep the cost free to the user, but the researcher ought to honestly consider what they can give the site. If one has adequate funding, the cash-value of the class should be paid directly to the school for each participant. If not, the researcher should offer something beneficial to the site, such as graphic design, administrative work, cleaning, or other forms of volunteering. I have been fortunate to be in the room when organizations decide whether to accept or decline projects and have had to make difficult decisions about what we as administrators can take on. Often the organization’s human and financial sustainability is at stake, and small organizations often jeopardize both to accommodate worthwhile projects. It is imperative as researchers that we make it easy to say yes, and that we find ways to make it worthwhile for our sites to have hosted us.

At the center of CBRC is an ongoing sharing process, and work is best conducted when we make ourselves accountable to the communities we work with. If we simply conduct our CBRC study, document the work, type it up, and submit it to a journal or thesis committee, we have forgotten with whom our loyalties as community-based researchers lie. Throughout our study, we should find ways to remain accountable to the communities we are engaging with. A study is discredited when we find a researcher fundamentally misunderstood or misrepresented an individual or group of people, which is easy to do if one is only receiving feedback from a narrow group of participants. No community is a utopia, and most are rife with internal struggles and contradictions that we are best to understand. We need to spend time in the room listening, engaging, and *basing* ourselves in said communities. In my research, I have volunteered in organizations, learning their inner workings, goals, and aims, which has given my research an informed baseline from which to ask questions. During our study, we need to be sharing our research in progress, being clear with our intentions to all involved before, during and after a study. And when the study is complete, finding ways of sharing artworks by creating a publication, a website or finding a venue to host an exhibition, all of which give finality to a project, and is a material benefit to artist-participants that they can put on their CV. It also does right by the organizations we work with by inviting their larger communities to engage with their sites, and by giving documentation for the projects they have hosted.

## Conclusion

To conduct a CBRC project is not a small task, asking infinitely more of the researcher, participants, and community sites. While the oral historian can show up to a site with a tape recorder and a pen, CBRC requires tremendously more commitment. However, I hope I have demonstrated that for the right kind of study, it can also be tremendously rewarding. I close this articulation of CBRC by referring to Figure 6, which gives visual depiction of the lives of a participant artwork—it stands alone while equally involved in the classroom in which it was formed and the study in which it was used. In a way, all works of community-engaged research work in this way, between contexts that they are not fully in and without. If the reader does not carry forward and make works of CBRC, I hope they appreciate what I have realized in the course of this work, which is that to engage a community is to engage a small segment that comes from a much larger, rich context that is already fully formed.

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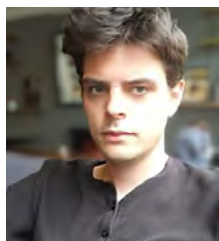
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