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Clore Leadership-AHRC Online Research Library Paper

How can libraries provide a gateway to further engagement for culturally isolated individuals?

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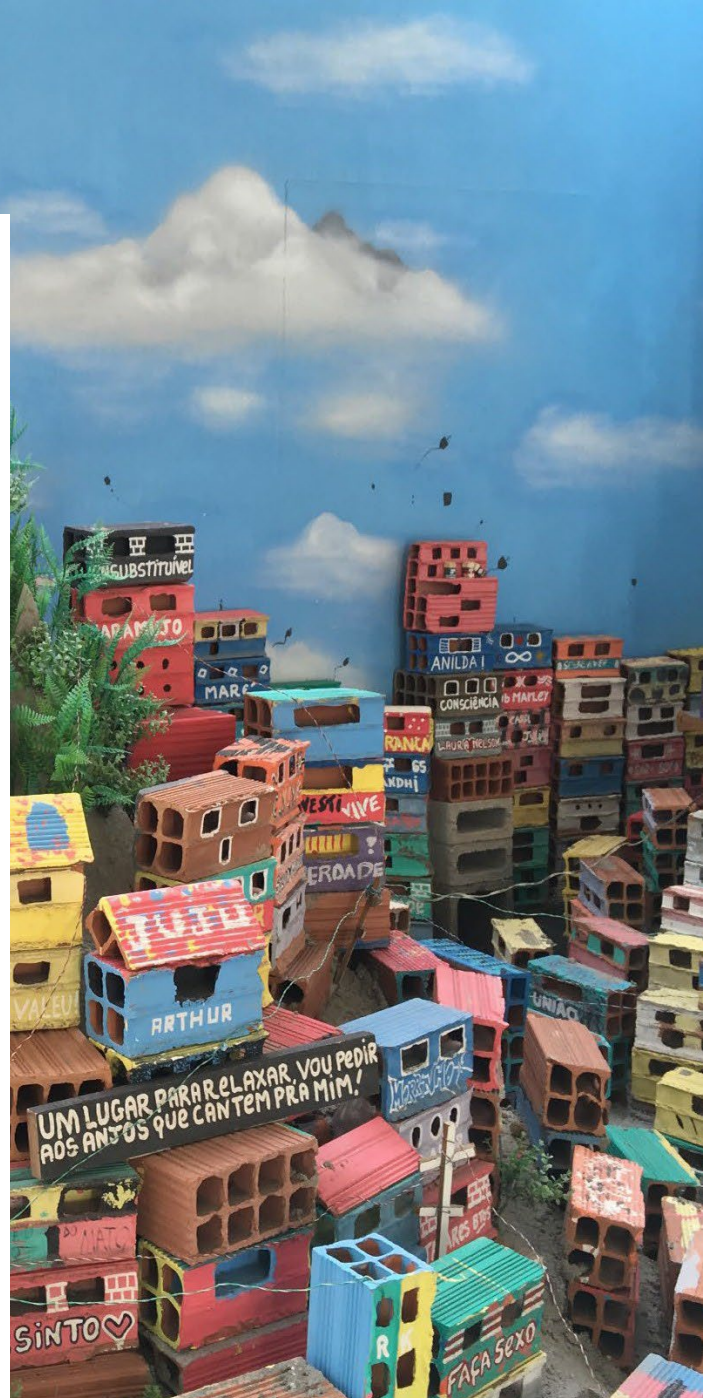
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Can public libraries in the UK provide a pathway towards increased cultural engagement for people perceived as having low socio-cultural capital?



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Supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Clore Leadership Programme
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Introduction

This report summarises a six month research phase into the suitability of a new initiative I am developing called *Quest*, which aims to connect people experiencing low socio-cultural capital with cultural spaces and their community via their existing relationship with public libraries.

Public libraries provide carefully tailored conditions of welcome and support for a wide range of people. These conditions could be replicated in other civic cultural institutions seeking to remove the visible and invisible barriers that affect people's confidence in entering and engaging with them.

I want to better understand the conditions that make libraries welcoming to people who lack confidence in civic cultural spaces due to their perceived or experienced low socio-cultural capital.

My hypothesis is that certain conditions created by public libraries contribute to making people experiencing low socio-cultural capital feel welcome and at ease. By socio-cultural capital I refer to the accrued social and cultural elements that enable people to feel confident enough to enter and engage in public spaces dedicated to the arts. People can experience low confidence socially and culturally for a number of reasons. This research project seeks to consider the experiences of people who have low confidence or capacity due to a period of temporary or long-term transition or instability relating to homelessness, migration, bereavement, loss of a loved one, relationship or job.

Context

The genesis of the *Quest* initiative began in 2013 during my MA in Migration Studies at the University of Sussex. I was working with migrants who were waiting for decisions on their right to claim asylum in the UK. The lack of opportunities for integration into UK culture during this transitional period seemed to directly oppose the requirement for integration. With no legal right to study, work or volunteer, migrants relied on cultural and charitable organisations as the gateway to engagement. However, they received very little or no signposting, and I heard from them anecdotally that a number of barriers – both visible and invisible - stopped them from trusting that they'd be welcome at museums, theatres, and galleries. Libraries were often the only institutions they chose to enter.

In my next professional role at *The Reader* I witnessed the unique capability of libraries to create the conditions for comfort and curiosity for people who had the uneasy feeling that civic cultural buildings or institutions were 'not for them'.

The extent to which this feeling of exclusion can be changed by adaptations to the institutions rather than the individual's context and circumstances is difficult to measure, but people experiencing exclusion can benefit from maintaining a sense of personal agency and connection to themselves and other people, as well as from well thought through invitations to reintegrate for those who are isolated. If this process which is in evidence in public libraries were better understood and captured it could be extended to engage more people in other civic cultural organisations and programmes.

During 2018 I undertook a Clore Fellowship during which I devoted my line of enquiry to exploring the different conditions that make people feel at home, comfortable, and curious about the world and their place in it. I opted to do my secondment with *With One Voice*, the international homelessness and arts network that was at the time being incubated by *Streetwise Opera* and has since become an organisation in its own right. I wanted to see how the arts were employed to better serve people experiencing a lack of connection or supportive social scaffolding. The secondment enabled me to spend time at *Streetwise Opera* in London and Gateshead, as well as conducting interviews

during research visits in the *Toronto Public Library* as part of *With One Voice*'s research into the accessibility of cultural spaces to people experiencing homelessness. My experience with *Streetwise Opera* convinced me of the role of conditions of welcome to sustainably engage people; *Streetwise Opera*'s theory of change has been influential to the development of *Quest* and can be found in the index.

The flourishing, well-funded library network in Toronto further consolidated my belief that the particular conditions of libraries already hold solutions. In the *New York Public Library* I became acquainted with the provision of the IDNYC card, which offers free access to 40 cultural institutions for new migrants during the period when they have no right to work, study or volunteer in the US. This confirmed for me the power of having proof on your person of your right to be somewhere, something I had been noticing for years in relation to the arts.

In this research phase I aim to understand the existing provisions in a UK public library and to test their wider applicability in other institutions. Alongside this intention I seek to better understand the 'transition' period of migrants and people experiencing homelessness, and to link these experiences to other factors of social isolation and dislocation to test my own definition of low-socio cultural capital.

As a starting point I noted the factors which I believe contribute to a person's confidence and ability to engage in social and cultural situations in public, and therefore to develop sufficient socio-cultural capital. My intention being to challenge them through the research phase and expand and edit them along with staff, volunteers and participants in the study to inform the development of a *Quest* pilot.

1. *Familiarity with cultural events and spaces*
2. *Confidence of the person in themselves and their abilities*
3. *Confidence of a person to interact with others*
4. *Ability to understand administrative systems (tickets, cards, rules)*
5. *Practical resources such as money and transport*
6. *Emotional and mental capacity*
7. *Support from a network*

Low socio-cultural capital has a negative and isolating effect, but if conditions are altered, people's socio-cultural capital can improve. Libraries offer these conditions every day. A recent report published by Libraries Unlimited into the value of public libraries explored 'how libraries can learn to develop a better understanding of their 'social value - the difference that libraries make to the people and communities they serve.'¹ It goes on to explain that 'libraries are multiplicitous places, bringing together complex communities of users with different needs relating to different outcomes.'² In short, libraries are working to understand what makes people want to come in and they prioritise it at the frontline of their offer for a variety of potential and actual users.

In summary, these elements of welcome offered by libraries seem to relate to the basic conditions of contemporary comfort not specifically tied to people in transition but to all, such as: a warm, light environment, electricity and WIFI, coffee, tea or water, friendly staff and community, and the freedom to exist in the space in relation to individual interests without challenge or interruption.

¹ Libraries Unlimited report, March 2019 https://librariesunlimited.org.uk/news/new-research-into-the-value-of-public-libraries-released/?utm_campaign=digest&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nuzzle

² *Ibid.* p.122

As Ciara Eastell, CEO of Libraries Unlimited, says of the role of libraries: ‘It’s important that whilst we continue to provide local communities with the library services they know and love, we also take time to think about how we can constantly adapt services to meet the changing needs of local communities.’³ Libraries generally appear to succeed in meeting the needs of people with low socio-cultural capital, while other types of civic cultural institutions generally still lack that same universal reputation for welcome. This study considers if it’s possible to bridge that gap by replicating conditions in libraries in other civic cultural institutions and simultaneously offering a signposted pathway from libraries with the accrued confidence they have established in the library space.

This research follows a wealth of findings identifying libraries’ capacity for welcoming people experiencing low socio-cultural capital in relation to homelessness. I have drawn on Willett and Broadley’s 2011 study of libraries’ “Effective Public Outreach to Homeless People” which aimed to identify ‘good practice in conducting outreach for homeless people, and hence to provide recommendations for future library outreach projects’⁴. My focus here though is not on recommendations for library outreach to people experiencing homelessness, but on the specific conditions within libraries (which may include their outreach strategies) that support the involvement of people experiencing homelessness and the destabilising effects of difficult transitions or changes.

This research also builds on that of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England⁵ as it is my intention for the *Quest* initiative to offer a connective solution to some of the issues identified by these commentators at a national level.

Another intention of this research is to highlight and celebrate the vital and unique role that public libraries are playing in offering a cohesive and multifaceted place for people to be part of an inspiring community, something that is especially crucial during a challenging period of change or instability.

Methodology

³ Libraries Unlimited report, March 2019 https://librariesunlimited.org.uk/news/new-research-into-the-value-of-public-libraries-released/?utm_campaign=digest&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nuzzle

⁴ Peter Willett, Rebecca Broadley, (2011) "Effective public library outreach to homeless people", *Library Review*, Vol. 60 Issue: 8, pp.658-70, <https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531111166692>

⁵ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/higher-education-and-public-libraries-partnerships-research%C2%A0>

I sought first to capture the specific conditions that make people feel welcome in libraries using two main methodologies. The first was semi-structured interviews and participant observation with users, staff and volunteers at the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library. The second was to make an international comparison of models of best practice for civic cultural engagement with a series of People's Palace Projects connections in Rio de Janeiro.

Phase One: What is it about Libraries?

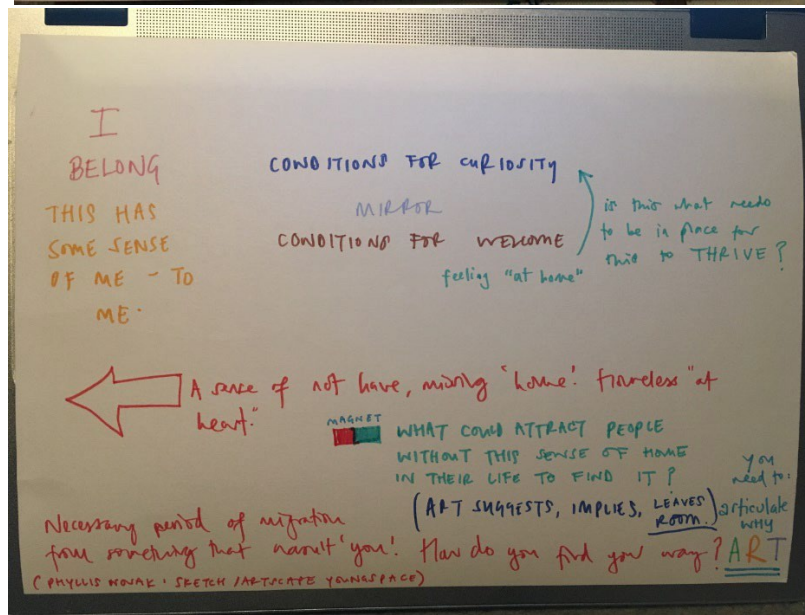
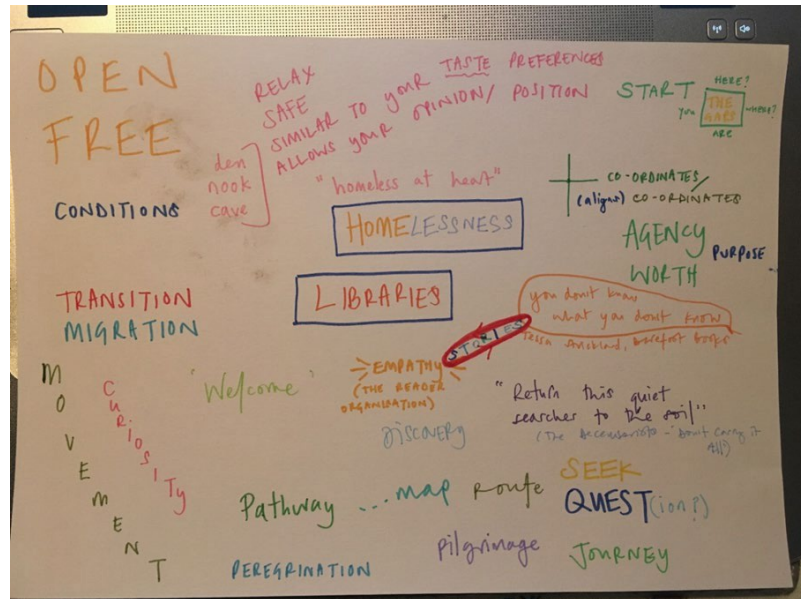
From September 2018 – January 2019 I established a relationship with Norfolk Library Service based at the Millennium Library, Norwich – one of the most used lending libraries in the UK. Through conversations, formal meetings, and observation visits I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews with staff, volunteers, and participants in four free library groups. I gathered evidence of the particular conditions of welcome created by libraries, tested my hypothesis about the barriers to other types of civic cultural space with respondents, and identified a list of the places in Norwich and Norfolk that respondents might visit if they were invited to engage in ways tailored to their specific circumstances. I focussed on thirty institutions identified as 'of interest' or 'out of reach' by respondents.

Phase Two: International Comparison.

The second phase in February 2019 was an international research visit to Rio de Janeiro to visit projects and cultural spaces specifically designed to remove the invisible barriers to civic spaces for people experiencing low socio-cultural capital, in the main due to living in the favelas. I was based at Casa Rio, Botofoga for a week and visited a number of projects and organisations, my findings are drawn from experiences grouped in these six categories.

1. Casa Brota: <https://www.anf.org.br/casa-brota-o-primeiro-espaco-de-trabalho-coletivo-do-alemao/> interview and invitation from *Marcelo Magano*
2. Afroreggae: <http://www.afroreggae.org/> tour and discussion with *Roberto Pachecho*
3. Redes da Mare, Casa das Mulheres, Lima Barretto Library tour and from *Isabela Porto*
4. Observatorio de Favelas: <http://observatoriodefavelas.org.br/en>, Galpao Bela Mare tour with *Isabela Souza*
5. Museu do Amanha (Museum of Tomorrow) <https://museudoamanha.org.br/en>
Interview and tour by Fabio Moraes formerly of Biblioteca Parque <https://oglobo.globo.com/rio/fim-de-convenios-poe-bibliotecas-parque-em-risco-205505077>
6. Museu de Arte do Rio <https://www.museudeartedorio.org.br> interview with *Izabela Pucu*

I thought it was important to capture the presumptions and ideas I bring to this process in order to note how I influence the methodology and findings. I created a mind map of the inspirations and influences which had led me to think about creating an initiative like Quest. I photographed and shared the results (below) with staff, stakeholders, and participants as a starting point for discussion. This was a particularly effective element of the project, demonstrating that I had a personal connection with the topic and had given it deep consideration over a long period of time, whilst also indicating that there was room here for challenge, a search for answers, and a requirement to include other perspectives to fill out the picture. People responded to the mixture of influences I'd mapped by bringing their own personal references such as books they'd read or something that a parent had told them which may have put them off or turned them on to certain types of institution.



Phase One: What is it about Libraries?

Aim	Method
<p>Identify and test the effective conditions created by the Millennium Library, Norwich and its branches which succeed in engaging people who lack confidence with cultural and social engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interviews with Library staff and volunteer group facilitators (8) • Short Questionnaire to existing gateway group members of 'Just A Cuppa' 'Norfolk Reading Pathway' 'People from Abroad' and 'Drop in and Draw' groups (producing 4 detailed case studies)
<p>Catalogue the civic cultural spaces in Norfolk which have the potential to become part of a pathway from libraries for people interested in furthering their engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note down gaps in knowledge of provision, suggestions or preferences of respondents. Follow up with online research and site visits.
<p>Suggest possible pathways, direction for increased cultural engagement in Norwich (and beyond) for people with low socio-cultural capital</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture what happened in the final report with recommended steps and implement a strategy for dissemination.

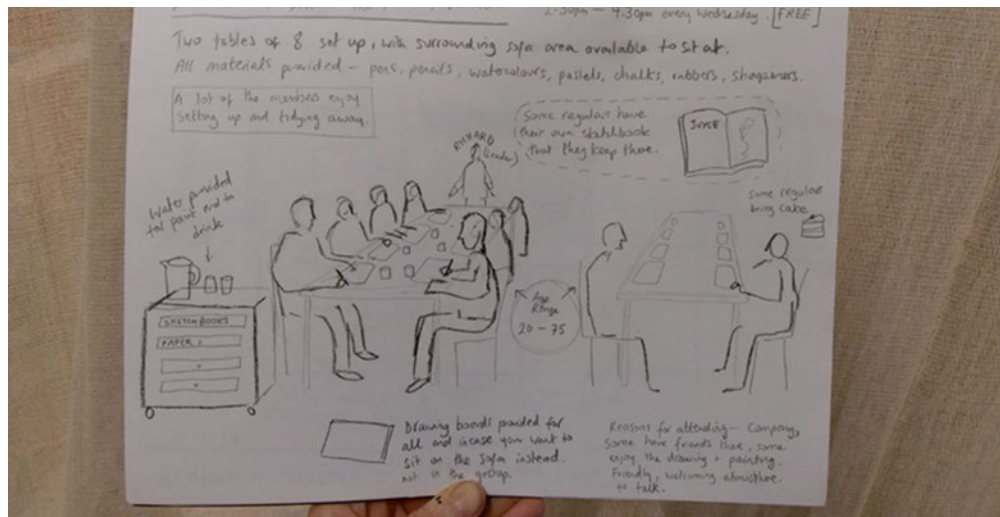
The respondents were from four library groups which I identified with the help of the Assistant Head of Service, Sarah Hassan, in our initial meetings about the research project in late 2018. In those early discussions we established that the definition of people with low socio-cultural capital that I was using matched a number of library users who attended four specific groups provided by Norfolk Library Service. These groups have many commonalities, such as being regular, accessed on a drop-in basis, and free, but they offered different types of activity. For the purpose of this study we agreed to focus on staff, volunteers, and members of the following four groups: The Drop in and Draw group, the Norfolk Reading Pathway, Just a Cuppa, and the sessions led by the People from Abroad team.

- **Drop in and Draw:** Anyone can attend, free on the second floor of the library every Wednesday afternoon 2.30 - 4.30 to draw with materials provided and tuition offered.⁶ You can also book a free ticket in advance via Eventbrite. This meets several conditions for welcome in terms of the free, open sessions in a comfortable environment. Provision of materials and somewhere to

⁶ <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/drop-in-draw-tickets-46281984662>

store them at the library is also a key element of support for someone experiencing homelessness. The option to book a free ticket also offers the feeling of empowerment in terms of accessing the space, for those who find confidence in holding a pass in advance which they can keep on their person.

- **Norfolk Reading Pathway:** The Norfolk Reading Pathway is a free programme which runs in all Norfolk Libraries and is open to any adult who would like to become a more confident reader. Learners are matched with a Reading Pathway volunteer coach and together they work through the '[Yes we can read](#)' handbook. Coaching sessions are usually weekly for up to an hour.⁷ This scheme offers similar conditions of welcome in terms of the environment, and additionally tailors to literacy – a specific area of individual interest and development which can be a barrier to engagement for some.
- **Just A Cuppa:** 'Pop into the library for a cuppa and some company. Refreshments will be available on the ground floor of the library in our reading corner. Friendly volunteers will serve you a drink while you enjoy spending time in our lovely library.' Every Wednesday 11 – 1.⁸ This group focuses purely on community. There is no specific task or interest, only the conditions for comfort and the provision of tea, coffee, and cake.
- **People from Abroad team:** This council team providing support for new migrants to Norfolk chose to base themselves in the library because it was considered to be a safer space than council buildings. They aim 'to provide a non-threatening environment and allow the families they work with to attend other volunteer-based services, such as arts and craft, reading and English exchange groups.'⁹ This gateway to further engagement aim chimes with the thinking behind the *Quest* initiative and enables an exploration into the effectiveness of this signposting style to extend welcome.



A sketch of the

Drop in Draw group by a

group volunteer

⁷ <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/whats-on/norfolk-reading-pathway>

⁸ <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/your-local-library/locations-and-opening-times/norfolk-and-norwich-millennium-library>

⁹ <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/politics/top-award-for-social-workers-who-help-norfolk-s-syrian-refugees-to-start-new-lives-1-5811236>

The questions in the staff and volunteer interview script were devised to test the main assumptions behind this research by establishing the respondents' realities. Aiming to gather ideas, solutions and capture language – as well as establish that my key definitions reflected those used in libraries now.

Question one seeks to establish whether respondents feel that that libraries are in fact welcoming and, if so, what in their experience are the conditions that make them so.

Question two looks for details about the methods of communication and delivery which have been successful in getting people to engage in each of the groups.

Questions three, four and five aim to test my definition and theory of low socio-cultural confidence by asking respondents who they think of when they hear the words low social confidence in relation to cultural institutions. These three questions also seek to understand whether the respondent is conscious of the barriers to engagement I have outlined, and which institutions they are (or, perhaps more tellingly, are not) aware of. Finally, question five elicits suggestions from the respondent as to what might be a reason for lack of engagement and a solution to this.

Question six focuses on the library itself in order to allow the respondent to access and share their sense of the ideal conditions for welcome and engagement, unshackled by the limits of reality, but tethered to the actuality of a real location.

Interviews with library staff and volunteer group co-ordinators used this semi-structured interview format.

1. In your experience what are three conditions which make libraries welcoming to all?
2. Which marketing and delivery methods have worked well for your group?
3. When we speak about 'people with low social confidence' who are you thinking about?
4. Could you give me an example of a person who has to overcome barriers to engage with cultural institutions? Please describe i) the individual ii) the environment iii) the institutions.
5. What do you think would help to lift these barriers for that person?
6. What would a perfect role of the library in this town be? What do you think would be required to do this?

Findings

What follows is a list of conditions that staff and volunteers believe make people feel welcome in libraries. This is my interpretation of participant observation and interview responses. Staff responses were kept anonymous so are not featured as verbatim responses here, apart from one group facilitator who was happy to have his responses shared. His answers are featured before the list to demonstrate the source material from which my conclusions were drawn. Three volunteers were happy to have their verbatim responses shared so these follow the conditions list labelled with their initials: C, S, and SW.

Some of the conditions the process of interview and discussion revealed as being instrumental in making people feel welcome were not actually present in the library but as they offer an important insight into what might make people experiencing low socio-cultural confidence feel comfortable in a space I have included them here to capture the data.

Richard, Facilitator (Drop in and Draw) Millennium Library

1. Accessibility/convenient opening hours * Knowledgeable and helpful staff * Late sessions
2. Word of mouth-flyers-lively, attentive volunteers
3. i) People with chronic physical/mental illness/socially isolated ii) Beneficial for those with English as a second language
iii) Limited ability to work – benefit trap for those with low literary skills
4. J. no formal art training – working in retail industries – however visits art galleries regularly, London especially. Using holiday photos as a starting point – Lisbon Trams signature mark yellow and blue – developed theme – responded to ideas of working with other artists and styles.
5. Developing opportunities to show work and engage with further workshops. Continue to learn about other artists and visit exhibitions.
6. Greater opportunities to rotate book stock and other resources to schools and community venues. Continuing lecture series on historical/art subjects and popular culture. Stage, film, music events – encourage choirs, board games, book/literacy events, film clubs, etc. / Create artist in residency and librarian in residence schemes at cultural venues including sporty venues, museum events, railways and nature reserves. /Continue to promote/campaign issues invoking EQUALITY in various aspects throughout society.

Conditions for welcome according to library staff and volunteers

- Accessibility. Central locations. Free
- Convenient opening hours. Long. Late sessions
- Knowledgeable and helpful staff
- Free heating
- Free WIFI
- Free space, no cost or suggestion that a donation is expected
- Wide range of resources and activities to choose between and links to other activities
- Comfortable and plenty of seating
- Quiet
- No sense of being watched

- Welcoming entrance – no gatekeepers
- Somewhere to put large bags
- A place to wash and use the toilet with more privacy than a standard cubicle
- Unlimited free water, tea, coffee and biscuits
- Not being met at an initial reception desk but staff visible and on hand if needed
- Somewhere to charge mobile phones
- No requirement to give personal information until people are familiar with the space
- Very clear and welcoming signs
- The option to go with someone else – friend, family, or new companion at no extra cost
- Other visitors being friendly towards you while you're there and not judging you

Volunteer verbatim responses:



C – Volunteer (Colouring Group)

1. Plenty of seating. Welcoming entrance 'no gatekeepers'. Free to use.
2. -
3. People with illnesses or disabilities, people with difficulty travelling and doing things.
4. Myself; diagnosed with mental illness and rarely leaving home as a result, elements which help to engage are a feeling of not being watched by security, that is welcoming to sit in whether or not I use the services available, and that it is not noisy/crowded.
5. More low key security, fewer physical barriers/markers at entrance, more comfortable seating, free entry.
6. Encouraging reading and access to information while providing space for formal and informal groups and activities, forum library fills this role well.



S – Volunteer (Colouring Group)

1. Free. Warm, welcoming, comfortable seating, quiet. Good atmosphere, no sense of being watched.
2. –
3. People with learning disabilities, mental health problems, suffer from loneliness or lack of confidence, or poor social skills
4. We encounter some refugees with little or no English. We also see ex-offenders who may show signs of racism or intolerance.
5. In our colouring group we share chocolate and biscuits as a way of breaking down barriers, we are not competitive, no marks given – just enjoyment of the task.
6. The Millennium library is an excellent example but could be improved by having toilets on all floors and offering an exercise class for the elderly/disabled, reading classes for all ages assisted by volunteers.



SW – Volunteer (Norfolk Reading Pathway)

1. Wide range of resources. Free to borrow. Links to other activities: storytelling, authors, poetry.
2. Library newsletter. Info from friends who volunteer.
3. People who don't feel at ease in certain settings, lack of experience, or lack of cultural background.
4. –
5. Welcoming staff! Supportive person at first events/visit. Education re. cultural apps. More money.
6. To include/welcome all through wide ranging activities media/music/film/IT/books. More money!

Creating a pathway with library group participants

Interviews with members of the library groups were conducted in person by participating in the open session. Four respondents were selected as case studies for the purpose of this research project.

1. On a 0 – 5 scale (where 0 is not at all and 5 is greatly) how much has this library group increased your confidence?
2. How many cultural spaces and events have you visited in the last month other than the library? (please list)
3. Which other places and events would you like to attend and why?
4. What would make attending these places and events more likely or enjoyable for you?

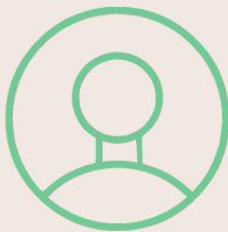
The interview transcript for participants was designed with a different aim in my mind. The intention with the first question was to establish whether the library had in fact affected confidence in the respondent, and the following three questions were to be understood in relation to this information. Not all library group participants experience low socio-cultural confidence so this felt like a necessary step. Questions 2, 3 and 4 then focused on comparing respondents' experience of the library with their attitude to and engagement with other kinds of civic cultural institution. The answers which follow from the four case study participants led to a) an increased understanding of the conditions for welcome (in addition to that of staff and volunteers) and, b) a list of places in the local county where respondents would like to visit if conditions were altered and certain needs certain of being met.



Claire

1. That was the aim: to give myself time (6 months away from work) 'out' doing. NOT to increase confidence. Back into a skill I used to practice (drawing) Join something. The structure appealed, no objective.
2. Theatre royal, cinema city, SCVA – national trust membership – Tate Modern member for two years, maximising on the opportunity but last week was my first visit despite not working for six months)
3. 'I probably do the things that I'd like to do'
 - Yoga – library. Queried whether this is the right setting. – Groups is what I'm after here, not a skill.
4. – If they targeted me (e.g. the castle and gallery) ten years living here and I've never been.

Forum leaflets advertising each individual event and time
Emails, timely, REMINDER



Lucinda:

1. 2. Mostly the skill. Wellbeing was the main reason for attendance. 3 ->
2. Maddermarket Theatre (7-8) works here / Theatre Royal
3. More art galleries – more talks – working my way up to doing a class, rather than this fluid one. Not sure yet what that's about.
 - Norwich Castle – make the free bits come first then once in the space you might want to go to the paid exhibitions. / Bridewell – for children. / Strangers Hall – I've been, it's a one-time thing because it's a fee. / Norwich Arts Centre - go often / NCW: my writing confidence stops me, they're great at outreach.
4. Less pressure. Around people without the obligation to talk to them. Passively engaged. While quietly improving your skill. Time – no need to justify.



Christine

0. Not the purpose of coming for me.
10. Cinema City, Theatre Royal, SCV (repeat visits totalling 10) – affronted at first to be asked as if I was assuming she wouldn't go to cultural spaces. Demonstrates that there is a mix, which occurred later on.
- Strangers Hall, Norwich Arts Centre, Dragon Hall, South Asia Collection, Marble Hall (all from looking at list – hadn't heard of South Asia Collection thought it was a shop)
- The weather.



Joe

2. "I quite like drawing" "More in social ways than skill" I saw it in the library happening while I was in there anyway.
1. Pub – does the pub count? 2. Gym "the amount of people who go there to talk and use the equipment, and people do go there because their friends go there."
- There would be. Not really aware of what's going on here. Museums – mood thing. 'I probably wouldn't go for just myself' Pubs – to socialise.
- If it's free. "seeing it [Drop in and Draw] right in front of me made me compelled" went on to explain how he wouldn't have gone based on a flyer description, he liked to see how it was run and then decided he'd be happy to go to this.

COMMENT: Have you considered virtual spaces? Gamers and so on?

The list below shows institutions of potential interest to participants provided at least some of the conditions of welcome detailed would be met. These will form the basis of the *Quest* pilot in Norfolk in 2019 and discussions have begun with the organisations listed for adaptations to be made.

Civic or Cultural Institution	Further information and website link
1. Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery	https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/norwich-castle
2. The Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell	https://www.visitnorwich.co.uk/explore-and-experience/sights-and-attractions/listing/the-bridewell/
3. Strangers' Hall	https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/strangers-hall
4. Norwich Arts Centre	http://www.norwichartscentre.co.uk/
5. Dragon Hall: National Centre for Writing	https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/dragon-hall/
6. The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (UEA)	https://scva.ac.uk/
7. Colman's Mustard Shop and Museum	Since closed
8. The South Asia Collection	http://www.southasiandecorativeartsandcrafts.co.uk
9. Norwich Puppet Theatre	https://www.puppettheatre.co.uk/index
10. East Gallery (Norwich University of the Arts)	https://www.nua.ac.uk/university-life/east-gallery/
11. Marble Hall	https://www.visitnorwich.co.uk/explore-and-experience/sights-and-attractions/listing/marble-hall/
12. St Andrew's Hall (civic collection of paintings)	https://www.britainexpress.com/counties/norfolk/norwich/the-halls.htm
13. Norwich Theatre Royal	https://secure.theatreroyalnorwich.co.uk/Online/
14. The Playhouse Theatre	http://www.norwichplayhouse.co.uk/
15. Maddermarket Theatre	http://maddermarket.co.uk/
16. The Book Hive (literary events and readings)	https://www.thebookhive.co.uk/
17. Waterstones (literary events and readings)	https://www.waterstones.com/events
18. Jarrolds (literary events and readings)	https://www.jarrold.co.uk/events-diary/events-list
19. Felbrigg Hall	https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/felbrigg-hall-gardens-and-estate
20. Blickling Estate	https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/blickling-estate
21. Houghton Hall	https://www.houghtonhall.com/
22. Holkham Hall	https://www.holkham.co.uk/
23. Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse	https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/gressenhall-farm-and-workhouse
24. The Thursford Collection	https://www.thursford.com/
25. King's Lynn Arts Centre	https://www.artuk.org/visit/venues/kings-lynn-arts-centre-4086
26. Pennsthorpe Natural Park	https://www.pennsthorpe.com/
27. Cinema City	https://www.picturehouses.com/cinema/Cinema_City
28. Vue Cinema	https://www.myvue.com/cinema/norwich/whats-on
29. Odeon Cinema	https://www.odeon.co.uk/cinemas/norwich/13/
30. Assembly House	https://www.assemblyhousenorwich.co.uk/

'Wellbeing was the main reason for attendance... less pressure. [To be] around people without the obligation to talk to them. While quietly improving a skill.' Lucinda, *Drop in and Draw*

Phase Two: International Comparison

With the guidance of my supervisor Professor Paul Heritage and his team at People's Palace Projects I decided to make a research trip to Rio de Janeiro in February 2019. Following on from my interviews at Norfolk Libraries, I wanted to visit cultural spaces created and adapted to purposefully suit people experiencing low socio-cultural confidence in a new context in order to engender fresh thinking about transferable solutions. I thought that Brazil might offer new learning opportunities for me and the UK. I'd gathered vital insights from visits to Canada and New York during my Fellowship year and seen how different climates can engender their own specific problems and thus solutions. I'd heard and read about a few flourishing cultural projects in favelas, circumstances where cultural engagement might not be considered a high priority amongst the community due to the reputation of the favelas for being dangerous. I wanted to question this stereotype and see for myself.

I outlined my research questions to Virginia Muller and Brenno Errick at People's Palace Projects (PPP) in Rio who arranged a programme of visits and meetings supported by a translator and producer. The visit to Rio changed my thinking in the following ways, starting with the welcoming mode of communication employed by the PPP team before I even arrived.

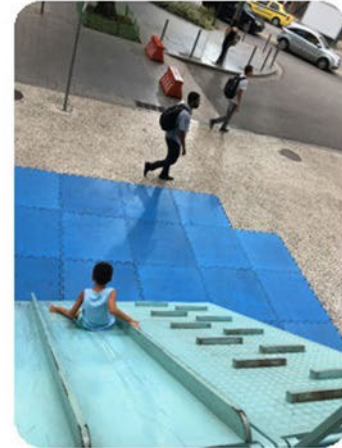
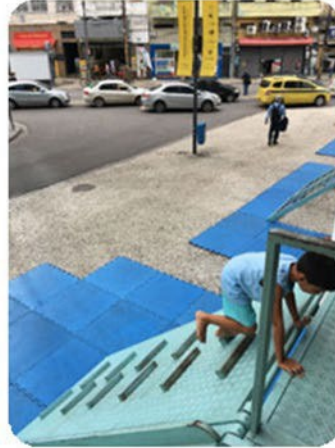
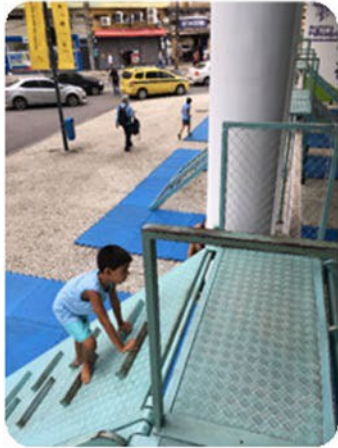


Meeting in translation with Izabela Pucu, Luiza Lessa, Jen McDerra, and Lucy Oliver-Harrison

Summary of Phase Two findings

Below are the key findings accompanied by a photograph or illustration of the recommendation. For the purpose of presenting this research to partners and potential funders for the *Quest* initiative there is a fuller presentation showing detailed examples of findings and initiatives in Rio de Janeiro which will inform the further development of the pathway.

- New ways in that are playful, patient, and light



- Congruence I noted the relaxed and consistent manner in email communication by my contact. The whole team knew about my visit and reason for being there. No sense of false formality was employed to convey importance. This felt like personal professionalism and was exhibited by many of the people met in Rio. This sense of consistency and congruence contribute to the dissolving of barriers between staff and visitors and would potentially ease discomfort for anyone experiencing low confidence.
- Outdoor space plays a key role for people on the peripheries – steps, courtyards, open doors, windows, edges, surrounding benches. Boundaries are undefined and there is no line to cross.



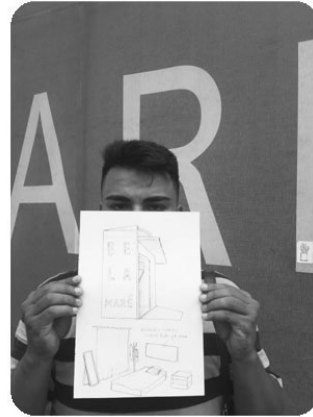
- Trees, plants, and green spaces are relaxing, unthreatening, and inviting. Gatherings under large trees create community: nobody owns the sky or the natural world no matter what they might think, and something of this understanding seep into people's attitudes when events happen in the open air.
- Clothing matters Whether informal for those leading, formal or uniting for those who may be otherwise stereotyped or feel unempowered, a relaxation of uniform can offer a big shift. Labels can also be positive, as demonstrated by this installation at the Museu de Artes do Rio where attendees are encouraged to literally wear and share their own values on their sleeve.



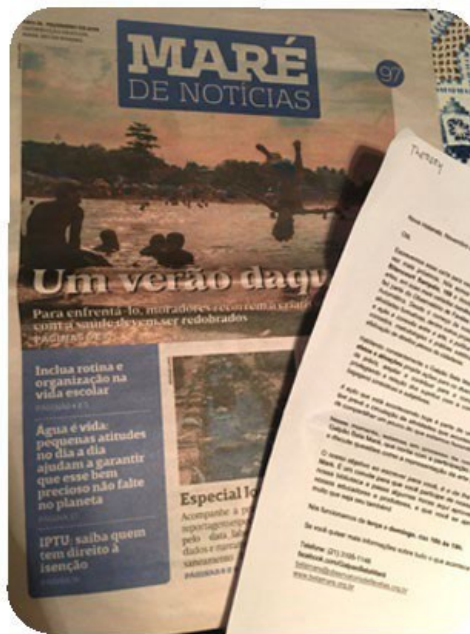
- Ways without words to join in and communicate: this was a crucial experience at *Afroreggae*, enabling people with low socio cultural confidence due to illiteracy or language barriers to engage with others.



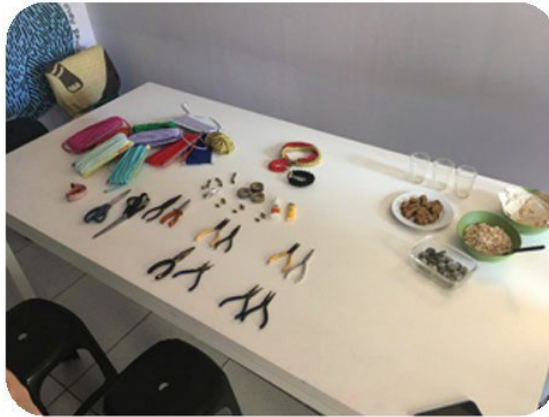
- Power – to do your own thing in a safe and neutral space. As with libraries in Norwich, electricity and no challenge for how you use it drew people of all ages to charge their phones and use the internet. It also engendered people who spoke and created work about aspects of their life that they couldn't share in their own home environment or networks, such as the LGBT artists who created work in Mare.



- Having your say and being met where you're at with no judgement. The newspaper delivered to people in their homes in Mare's favela met them where they were rather than expecting them to come into a new space of their own accord. There were similar initiatives at the Museum of Tomorrow who sent postcards and invitations to those within a two mile radius.



- Preparation. Being expected. Quality and enough resources and snacks are important. The mirror aspect of this condition for welcome and comfort is to feel that you have something to offer in return: food, a skill, a service, a chance to teach. An exchange shares the balance of power.



- Space you can be proud of. Recognising your own surroundings in art, seeing yourself reflected there contributes to not feeling othered by an institution. Here outside the Museu de Arts do Rio an installation of the neighbouring favela which can be touched and explored.



To discuss with the thirty listed institutions in Norfolk to prepare for the pilot:

Exchange / Representation / Mapping / Signposting / Humour / Authenticity / Not putting on a uniform / Having a role/ Being expected in advance / Agency / Support with travel logistics/Food

Conclusion

It is clear from the conversations and exchanges in both phases of this research project that there is room for an initiative such as *Quest* on the UK cultural map. There is will from libraries to share their knowledge and there is interest from respondents who fit the definition of low socio-cultural capital to further their engagement in other civic cultural institutions if conditions are improved and a pathway offered.

This research phase has established an initial list of recommendations, adaptations and requirements to begin a pilot of the project immediately in Norfolk. There is much still to be done to draw together the findings this phase has gathered, and it is now time to bring new voices into the conversation.

What is clear is that public libraries in the UK can provide a pathway towards increased cultural engagement for people perceived as having low socio-cultural capital by offering a working model and a starting point.

Co-production and Ownership

My learning from presenting participants with a hand-drawn mind map before interviewing them will be useful in the next phase of this project. I intend to use a similar process to elicit honest and challenging responses to the design of *Quest* in terms of its branding and design. Colour, type of design, and requested information all influenced whether people responded to e-marketing for the library groups and need to be considered when making cards that are a product of the findings rather than an imposition on the individuals it seeks to represent.

What next?

1. Set up a steering group
2. Set up a stakeholder group
3. Seek further funding for a pilot

Pilot

Quest will be piloted in Norwich and in partnership with *With One Voice* from 2019 – 2020.

Sources

Peter Willett, Rebecca Broadley, (2011) "Effective public library outreach to homeless people", *Library Review*, Vol. 60 Issue: 8, pp.658- 70,<https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531111166692>

Libraries Unlimited report, March 2019

https://librariesunlimited.org.uk/news/new-research-into-the-value-of-public-libraries-released/?utm_campaign=digest&utm_medium=email&utm_source=nuzzle

Arts Council England report, November 2018 <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/higher-education-and-public-libraries-partnerships-research%C2%A0>

Recommended Reading

Libraries

<https://amp.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2017/mar/02/without-libraries-and-librarians-we-are-less-human-and-more-profoundly-alone>

Homelessness

<https://amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/11/homeless-people-rough-sleepers>

Reading and Homelessness

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-leicestershire-46864436/books-send-homeless-man-into-a-different-world>

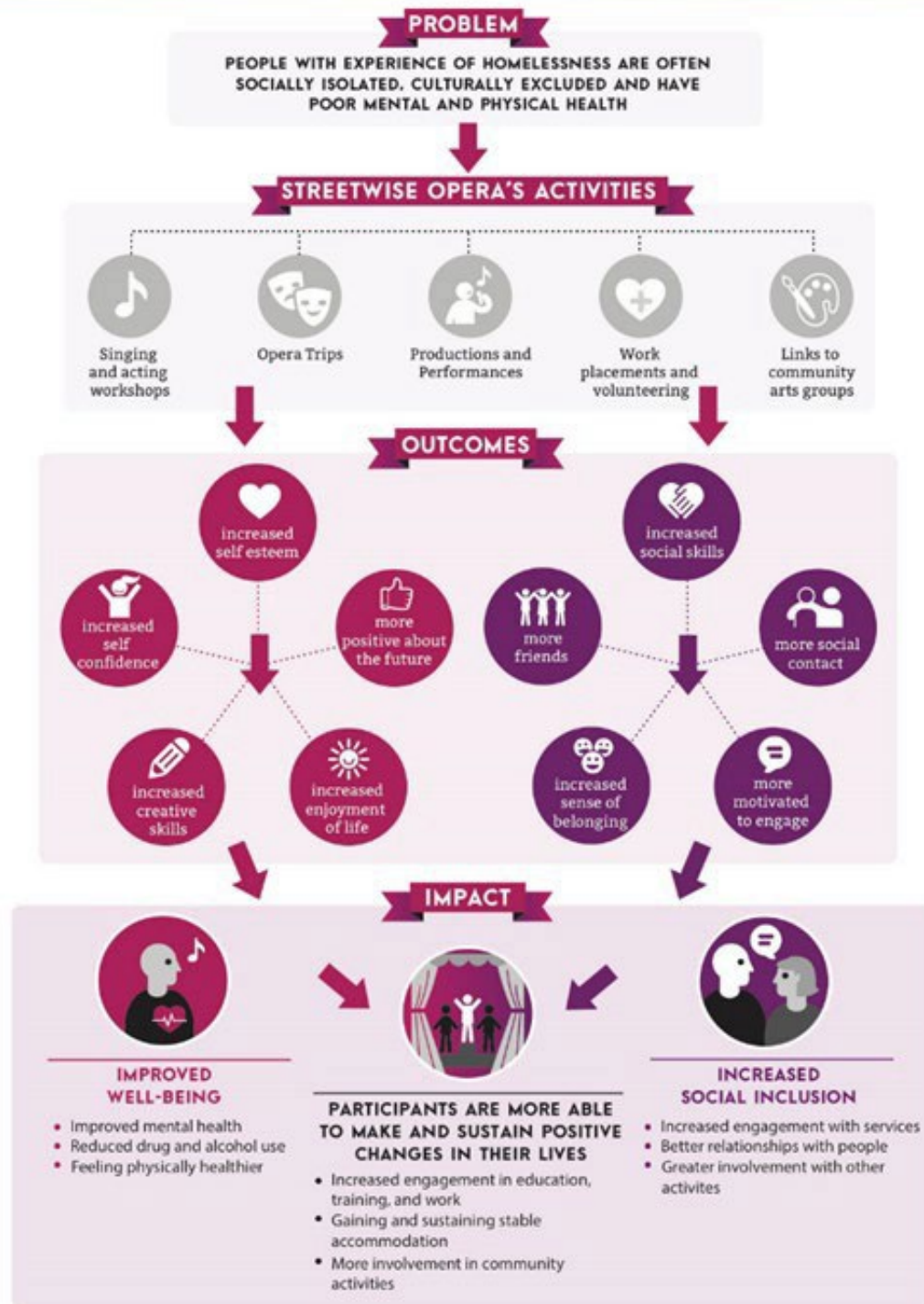
<https://readingagency.org.uk/news/blog/my-visit-to-the-homeless-book-club.html>

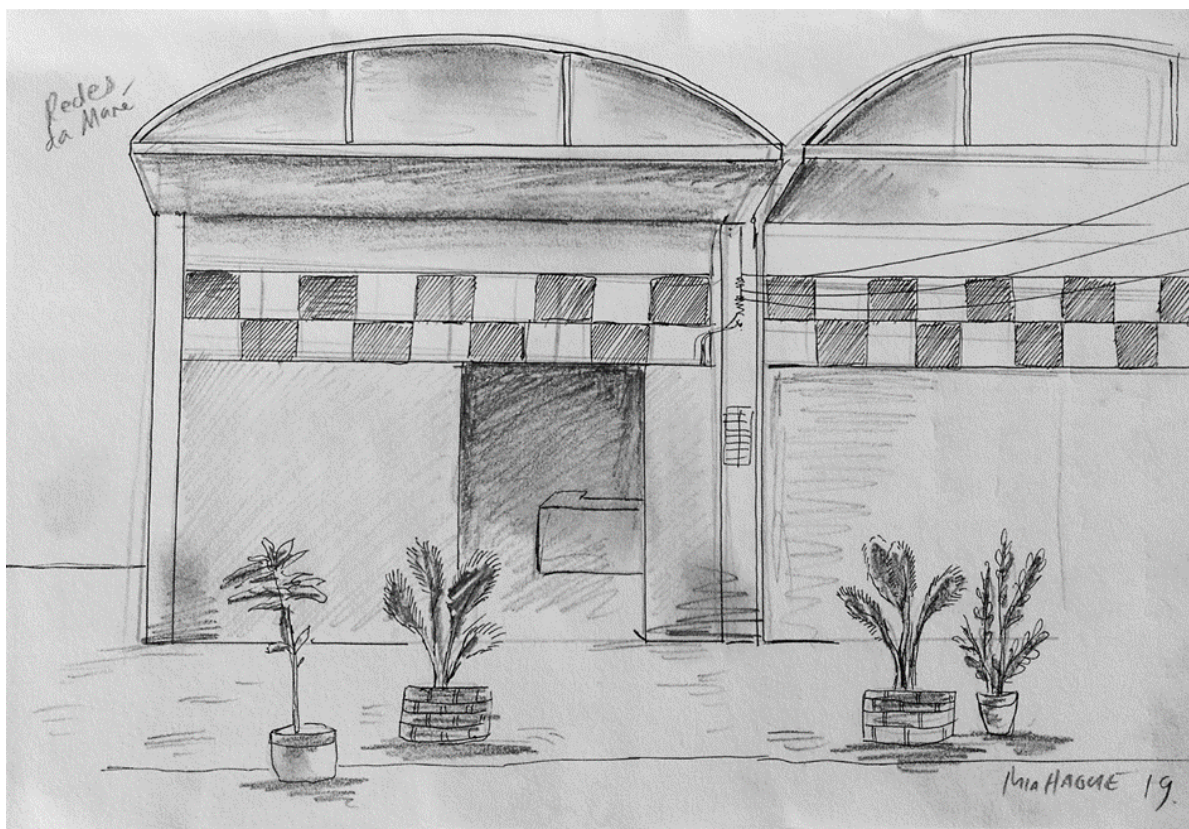
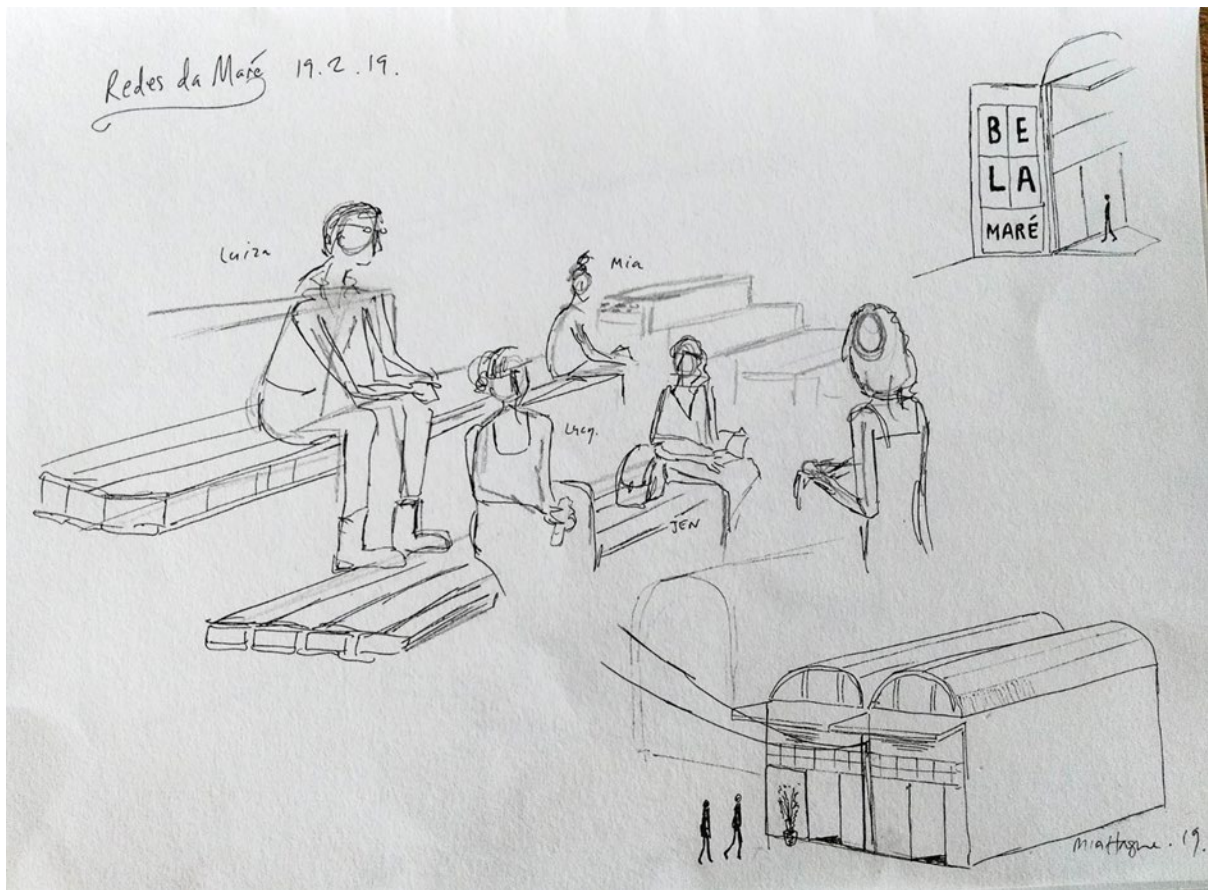
Brazil

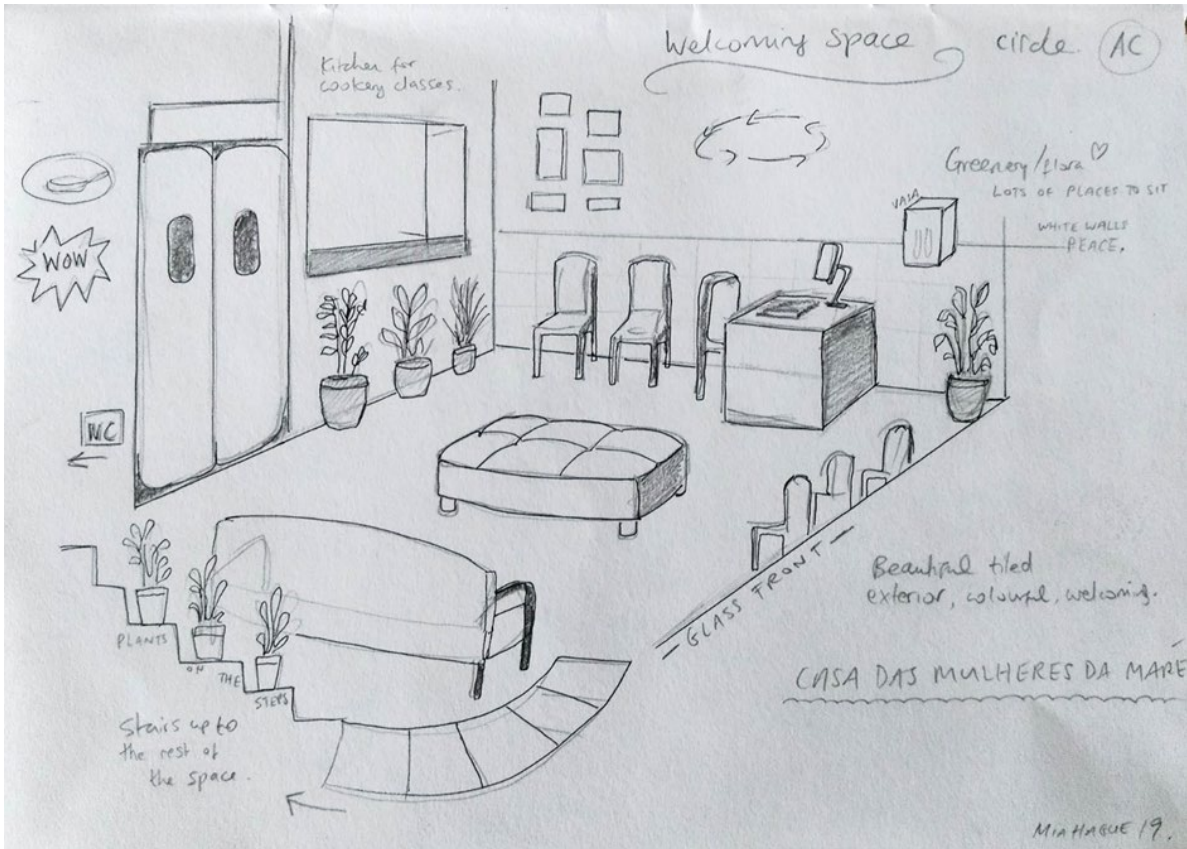
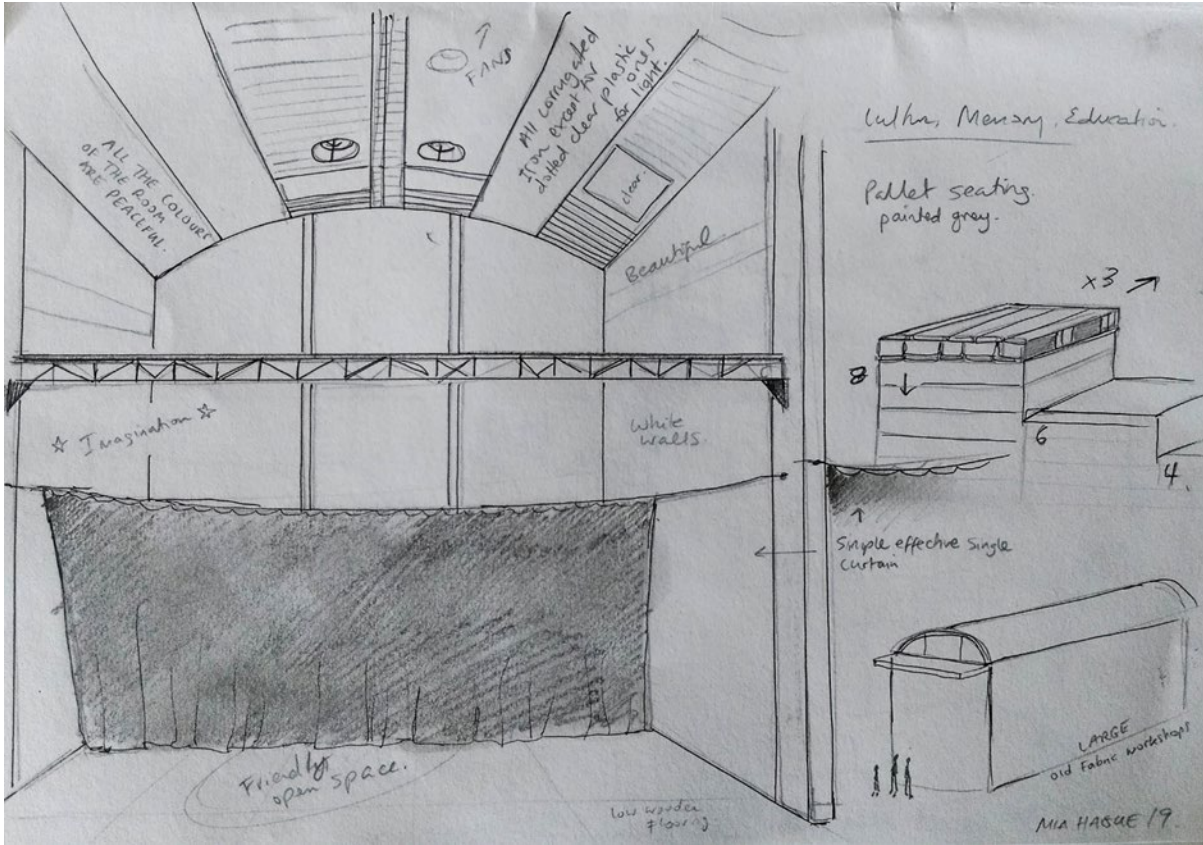
<https://oglobo.globo.com/rio/fim-de-convenios-poe-bibliotecas-parque-em-risco-20550507>

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STREETWISE OPERA'S THEORY OF CHANGE





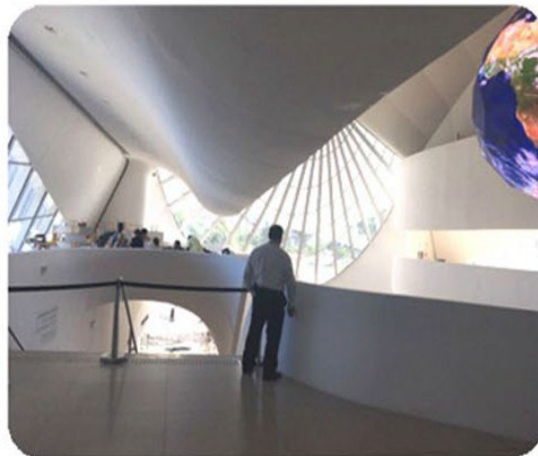




Rio de Janeiro 'Conditions of Welcome' artwork by Mia Hague Illustrations www.miahague.co.uk



Be open to having your mind changed. *'Rio is an essentially friendly place, sometimes there are shootings and fights, but it also has beautiful things, the Christ, the mountains, the favelas.'*



Attitudes do change: *Security guards at the Museum of Tomorrow now request to be situated near the With One Voice choir rehearsal made up of people experiencing homelessness.*

For further discussion or to participate in the pilot of the Quest initiative please contact:

j.mcderra@qmul.ac.uk

Thanks for taking the time to read this report