



The Expanded City

2015-2016

Foreword

Elaine Speight
In Certain Places curator

The Expanded City is a creative investigation into the changing nature of cities, with a focus on the Lancashire city of Preston. During the last decade, urban development was largely concerned with transforming neglected, post-industrial city centres into desirable residential and retail environments, which would, it was believed, generate wealth for their wider communities. However, as geographer Michael Dear recently noted “there is a growing sense that the geography of cities is changing; no longer are cities being built from the inside out (from core to periphery) but from the outside in (from hinterlands to what remains of the core)”¹. The global financial crisis thwarted Preston’s plans for a large-scale city centre retail development. However, significant regeneration has continued in the form of the City Deal scheme which, as well as parts of Preston’s centre, focuses on its periphery - the housing estates, roads and business parks which occupy the city’s rural fringe.

¹ *In Geohumanities: Art, history, text at the edge of place*, 2011, by Michael Dear et. al. (eds).

To simplify a complex scheme, the City Deal is a central government initiative designed to encourage economic growth in key cities across the country by addressing strategic transport, employment, housing and environmental infrastructure challenges. Together with Lancashire and South Ribble, Preston has received over £400 million to enhance its transport and community infrastructure, and to encourage the creation of over 20,000 jobs and 17,000 new houses over a ten-year period. Such ambitions raise significant questions about the future of the city, and the implications for places which will be affected by the scheme. From where will the thousands of new homeowners arrive and to undertake what types of employment? What provisions will be made for their health, education, leisure and cultural pursuits? How will these new developments affect the social fabric of neighbouring communities, and what are the environmental implications of new roads and green field developments?

As an artistic research project, In Certain Places has been asking questions in and of Preston since 2003. Over the years, we have worked with artists, architects, businesses, urban planners and other Preston residents to explore the specificities of the city centre and to test new approaches to its development. The Expanded City was developed in response to an invitation from Preston City Council to help ensure a provision for culture within the City Deal scheme. As such, it marks an extension of our activities from Preston's

core to its peripheries, and presents the city as a terrain in which suburbs, out of town retail parks, distribution centres and farms sit alongside more traditional urban features. Exploring new territory and growing familiar with a place is, necessarily, a gradual process, and The Expanded City has been designed to develop over a number of years as the City Deal unfolds. This publication presents the first twelve months of our activities through the work of our co-explorers – artists Emily Speed, Gavin Renshaw, Olivia Keith, Ian Nesbitt and Ruth Levene, and writer Lauren Velvick, who we recruited to help us 'map' the City Deal areas through their creative practices. As well as documenting our first forays into the peripheries of the city, we hope that this booklet will provide a starting point for new explorations, conversations and interventions within Preston as a whole, which connect with experiences of urban life in other expanding cities.

The Wrong Sort of Map

Lauren Velvick

The Expanded City came about in an unusual way, and could probably not have happened anywhere else. In Certain Places have been practicing in Preston since 2003 and are distinct in their focus on the lived experience of the city, working with artists and architects, amongst others, to deliver projects that interpret and alter their site. As such, Preston had been selected as a beneficiary of the government's City Deal scheme whilst harbouring an organisation that specialises in exploring the city and its many 'deals', in every sense of the word. This confluence has established

fertile ground for artistic interpretation and intervention, facilitating a situation whereby the critically engaged, and humanistic methods that The Expanded City artists use, can function in the context of a project initiated by local government. This is not to say that the work produced by The Expanded City artists is explicitly anti-establishment, but rather seeks to emphasise the irony of processes like 'deep mapping' being utilised towards government implemented infrastructural schemes. As Wendell Berry enunciated in 1991 on the subject of landscape and the powers that be; "they cannot take any



¹ *Out of Your Car, Off Your Horse*, by Wendell Berry, in *The Atlantic*, February 1991 Issue

place seriously because they must be ready at any moment, by the terms of power and wealth in the modern world, to destroy any place"¹. Neither is the invocation of irony here supposed to communicate derision, but rather the inherent humour of any attempt to understand something so vast and complex as a city, and the particular instances of everyday absurdity that are located in the edge lands where rural and urban are sewn together like mended patchwork; potentially neat, but not unified.

As with the potential physical construction that it is responding to, The Expanded City is a long term and ongoing endeavour, requiring an intensive and extended engagement with the sites in question, as well as the people, flora and fauna that inhabit them. The participating artists were selected on the basis of their previous or then-current projects, exploring either Preston in particular or cities in general, as well as their ongoing artistic concerns, including architecture, cultural memory and movement through space as a form of research. Each of these autonomous projects has evolved over the past ten months, reacting and responding to the - as yet imagined - new City Deal schemes of housing and infrastructure. There are superficial similarities between the works that Gavin Renshaw, Emily Speed, Olivia Keith and Ian Nesbitt and Ruth Levene have undertaken, as would be expected given their selection process, however it is the differing character and aims of these projects that set them apart from

each other, fittingly evoking parallels with the multitude of perspectives and needs that dwellings and cities must fulfil if they are to be successful. It must also be noted here that within the context of The Expanded City, although perhaps not the City Deal, success must be defined more widely than as a measure of economic prosperity.

This question of success was approached during a symposium in July 2016, where alternative definitions were discussed by speakers Carolina Caicedo and Paul Swinney. Caicedo described how, in a relationship similar to that of In Certain Places to Preston City Council, her organisation The Decorators would be invited by local authorities to respond to an issue of urban planning or community cohesion. Swinney on the other hand outlined how the economic success or relative failure of various types and sizes of urban centre could be quantitatively understood through an interpretation of demographics and their behaviour. These differing approaches can be loosely mapped on to the projects of Renshaw, Speed, Keith, Nesbitt and Levene, tracing either a concern with the personal and familial or with overarching geological, architectural and economic realities and influences. Olivia Keith's project along with the collaborative work of Ian Nesbitt and Ruth Levene both take maps as their starting point, only to subvert or ignore them in the process of their work, tracing the contradictions between human habitation or movement, and official pathways and boundaries.

Gavin Renshaw however cannot go off-road in this way, given that a major generative constraint of his work is that his research is conducted by bicycle.

As such he too is testing the limits of the official map but without leaving its bounds, and instead of exposing the weaknesses of quantitative



Large-scale drawing on historic map, showing the point at which the Western Distributor carriageway will cross Savick Brook as part of the City Deal scheme, by Olivia Keith, 2016

measurement he attempts to forge a pathway within and using this rigid system. Most of the artists' projects were developed in the response to In Certain Places' brief, or began as a form of open ended research without a defined goal, and then in the context of The Expanded City framework they have had to be modified in order to reflect the needs of Preston City Council. As such there is a web of conflicting desires and influences that are at play within The Expanded City, just as the machinations of developers and government can shift and warp according to outside influences. Exterior to any pragmatic applications for this research, the concept of 'deep mapping' was evoked in some of the earliest conversations around The Expanded City as a desirable process, and as such it is appropriate to question whether the combined work of Renshaw, Speed, Keith, Nesbitt and Levene would constitute a deep map of Preston.

It is necessary here to define what is meant by a 'deep map', a term that is generally understood to have been brought into usage as recently as 1991, to describe a meandering mode of literary description that seeks to define the character of a place with a meditative and overwhelming wealth of material. The seminal work of deep mapping is William Least Heat-Moon's *PrairyErth*, a thick tome that links deep mapping specifically to the landscape of the North American prairie, with its great vistas. However, as Ian Nesbitt pointed out, Gilbert White's *A Natural History of Selbourne*, published in

1798, performs a similar function. As such, Deep Mapping can be seen to constitute a literary device, but also a technique of bringing different registers of data into close proximity, so that they may be understood in relation to one another. Through this methodology it seems that the multifarious character of a geographical area can be documented, but only with the proliferation of material that the aforementioned works comprise. *PrairyErth* also communicates a deep melancholy that stems from an engagement with the landscape's history, and this a palpable aspect of The Expanded City as well. Whilst in the popular imagination the Prairie is defined in terms of new starts, self sufficiency, the vast horizon, and the injustice of occupation, the landscape of the North West of England has a thick history infused with industrial exploitation and irreversible changes to the land in the service of agriculture, as well as religiosity and the occult.

The eerie aspect of Lancashire was invoked by artist Paul Rooney in his 2007 vinyl release *Lucy Over Lancashire*, named for The Fall's *Lucifer Over Lancashire*. In this sound piece a woman's thickly accented voice narrates an alternative history of the region, attributing real historical abominations such as the slave trade and the 'satanic mills' of the industrial revolution, and sites like "the A666 near Darwen", to satanism and witchcraft. Whilst works like Rooney's are evidently satirical, there is an idiosyncratic religiosity that runs deeply through

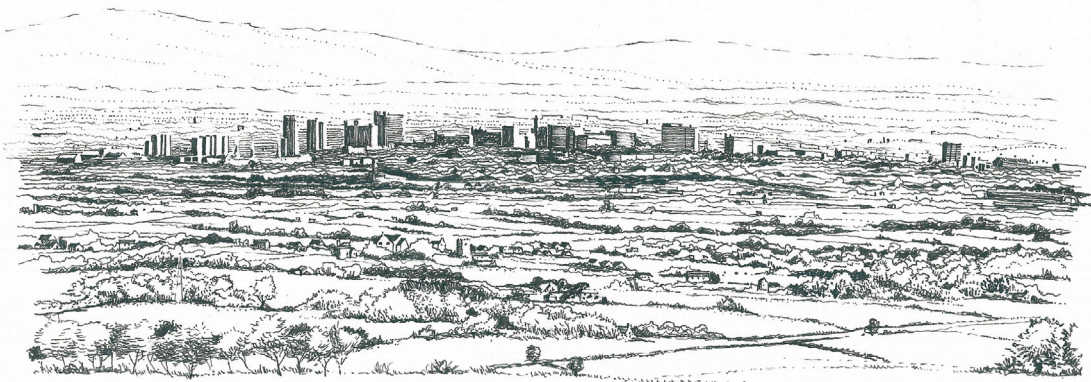


New housing developments as part of the City Deal scheme. Photograph by Olivia Keith

the region and the landscape, which has been carved into, named and renamed under this influence for hundreds of years. This is something that Olivia Keith has exposed through her interactions with passers-by during her sessions of on-site drawing. Keith's research into the naming of roads, houses and waterways in the North of Preston has pointed to the influence of holy wells on the names that are used today for new developments, for example the Red Scar industrial estate is named for a seam of reddened, iron rich water that surfaced as a holy well.

The way in which naming transmits the important landmarks and anchors of the past into the present is a central concern for Keith, and has also been recognised by Ruth Levene and Ian Nesbitt. With a joint practice that takes the form of walking and dialogue, Levene and Nesbitt have traversed one of the official boundaries of Preston on foot, scrupulously recording their

thoughts and encounters. During an early reconnaissance prior to beginning their eventual boundary walk the artists noted that a soon to be demolished riding stables will be immortalised in the name of a new housing development; The Paddocks. In this way, the intrinsic power of naming features prominently in more than one aspect of The Expanded City. This is also noted by Least Heat-Moon, as he laments the lost indigenous names for the winds of the North American Mid-West, an issue that doesn't so much trouble meandering walkers in the English North-West, where names in the local vernacular live on, if with revised spellings and redesignations. However, the way that cultural or economic power is reflected in the names that persevere is relevant here, with the pretty, rurally inspired names given to developments seeming cruelly ironic to longstanding local residents, who will see their beloved landscape altered irrevocably.



Sketch of Preston from Beacon Fell
by Gavin Renshaw, 2016

Levene and Nesbitt's practice also constitutes an engagement with the landscape outside of the culture of naming. The action of walking, and walking simultaneously with each other, is a defining aspect of their work together, and is portrayed in their written documentation; "our conversation ebbed and flowed in direct correlation with periods of driving and walking, reminding us of the importance of walking as a means of unlocking our thoughts". Gavin Renshaw's practice of active research also involves negotiating a circuit of the city, and although an intimate engagement with path and surroundings is inevitable for a cyclist, Renshaw's gaze is directed back and inward, towards the centre of Preston. His is the project with the clearest pragmatic application, drawing attention to the insufficient provision for cyclists in the area, even with the recently opened

Guild Wheel cycle path, and tracing the routes from the centre to the periphery that are the safest.

Unlike Levene and Nesbitt, however, Renshaw does not document his open-air journeys in writing, but has instead produced a series of documentary photographs and drawings that, despite their straightforward technique, offer an unsettlingly illusory view of central Preston. An interest in the function and influence of architecture, alongside the techniques and outcomes of town planning has influenced this body of work, which exemplifies the futility of any attempt to encompass a city with one image. Renshaw, Nesbitt and Levene have each circled Preston, and at the relatively slow pace of walking or cycling this action has led not to a more unified understanding of the city, but has instead fragmented

the site into either a grid of isolated images, or a series of observations and anecdotes that have resonance on a personal level. By following supposedly official routes and boundaries each of these artists has been drawn into the liminal parts of the city; the overgrown footpaths that haven't been used in years, and the minor roads that offer a pleasing aspect, but not efficiency.

The way that these spaces form in the cracks between dwellings and infrastructure is a central concern for Emily Speed, whose research departs from the enacted physicality of Keith, Renshaw, Nesbitt and Levene's. In order to plan and implement new housing developments, including a provision for leisure and play, there must be an assumption that the provided structures will be used as expected. It is safe to say that this rarely happens, at least not smoothly and entirely, and it is the ways in which spaces can be subverted or abandoned that interests Speed. Areas that have been designated for employment are claimed for leisure, whereas structures designed for play are discarded, and this activity may well go unnoticed except perhaps as vandalism. The way in which unofficial activity can thrive so long as it is ignored manifests implicitly within each of The Expanded City projects, and is exemplified by the way that these activities move within and around the City Deal scheme. Some can be

instrumentalised as new maps that are informed by the human pace of walking or cycling, a resource that could be used to circumvent official routes and landmarks, whereas others constitute a way of augmenting ancestral designations, that may or may not eventually influence the official ones. In these attempts to constitute and recognise advantageous public resources, that may never be implemented, the irony and absurdity of The Expanded City is conveyed, but also the seriousness of the situation. Provision for housing is imperative, and the precarity of our societal structures and institutions requires the kind of intensive and unflinching attention to detail that a project like this can accommodate.



The Expanded City: Symposium

As a public introduction to The Expanded City project, a symposium held on June 16 2016 reflected the research concerns of In Certain Places and the commissioned artists through the structure of the event, as well as the content. The day was divided into two halves, with an initial pick-up at Preston train station in a double decker bus, which then went on to transport attendees to the first venue; Woodplumpton and District Club, which sits approximately five miles outside of the city centre. The

afternoon included artist presentations in some of the City Deal areas. The two invited speakers that presented during the morning session gave differing but complementary views on what constitutes a community, of why and how change occurs, and to what extent this can be controlled or directed.

First came a presentation from Carolina Caicedo of The Decorators, a multidisciplinary design practice who work with local authorities and public institutions to design and deliver



interventions in regeneration areas. These interventions are sensitively tailored to the surrounding community, and often offer a critique of the regeneration in question.

“The work we do is working with the in-between spaces of the city, and our approach was developed using the temporary as a way of testing possibilities; really our work is about community building. We all come from different backgrounds, including architects, and I come from a psychology background. We look at space through all of these different dimensions” - Carolina Caicedo

The second speaker, Paul Swinney, is the lead economist in the Centre for

Cities think tank, specialising in the role of city centres compared to out-of-town employment areas. He showed and explained a series of data visualisations that demonstrated, demographically, how differently sized cities are structured, and offered some possible explanations as to why.

“we wanted to understand the relationship between cities and their hinterlands, there has been a lot of discussion about this in terms of policy in recent years, feeding into the City Deal scheme, then into devolution. It becomes very quickly an argument about cities and non cities, when really cities are clearly connected into their wider areas, constituting a symbiotic relationship between the two.”





Olivia Keith

Olivia Keith has a deep interest in naming, and the ways in which titles that may lose their cultural significance can 'make it through', and perhaps be reused and welcomed into circulation once again. In order to perform research into how this progression might function in the particular environment of the Preston City Deal scheme, Keith has developed a method of gleaning information voluntarily from passers-by. Part of this involves the public action of becoming a conspicuous person, that is, a person who may be noticed as out of the ordinary, but not in an upsetting or threatening manner. This is accomplished through the means of large-scale outdoor drawing, the results of which simultaneously form the basis of her work. Keith has described how the sites that she chooses often feature, or are close to bridges, and that these are then paired with an obsolete map showing demolished houses and

felled trees, which is reproduced at an oversized scale. Keith's process requires a significant investment of time, with some elements carefully planned, but others left to fate, like the changeable Lancashire weather and the unknown reactions of other people. This has been necessary in order to allow the artist to develop her own sense of place, as well as an understanding of the local communities through conversation and presence. The research that Keith has completed so far could eventually be used to create new maps, inscribing this vernacular knowledge into an official register whereby place names can be reinstated, and new names invented. As with many of The Expanded City projects, Keith's is a negotiation between the official and its opposite, serving to acknowledge the feelings and frustrations of the communities currently based at Preston's edges.

Large-scale drawing on historic map, looking from
the Saddle Inn north to the Sitting Goose,
by Olivia Keith, 2016







Ruth Levene & Ian Nesbitt

It is not quite accurate to refer to Levene and Nesbitt's practice as a collaboration, with all the attendant connotations. There are a number of points at which the two artist's individual practices intersect, and it is from these shared interests that the boundary walk has emerged as a shared act. Prior to their involvement with The Expanded City, Levene and Nesbitt had completed a walk around the official boundary of their home-city of Sheffield, and had proposed to recreate this scheme in Preston. In previous work Nesbitt has explored the pilgrimage as a vernacular route or 'rogue network', and the boundary walks can also be considered in these terms, but as a 'circular pilgrimage', with no particular destination, although no less transformative than a traditional pilgrimage. As well as artistic research and discussion, enacting the boundary walk also enables Levene and Nesbitt to perform

intensive research into the official and unofficial walking infrastructure of Preston's edge lands. The artists have described how through their research they have observed a lack of engagement with existing walking infrastructure, citing how lesser known footpaths become overgrown when 'superhighways' like Ribble Way and The Guild Wheel are promoted. In order to remedy this, Levene and Nesbitt have suggested organising theme led guided or curated walks, along with location lectures. Both artists have a pervasive interest in the differences and relationships between systems built in the service of human industry, and those that are formed by social interaction or the natural world. As such it is interesting to consider what would happen if the boundary walk were to be formalised, forcing the route into dialogue with the other large-scale infrastructural projects that are underway as part of the City Deal.

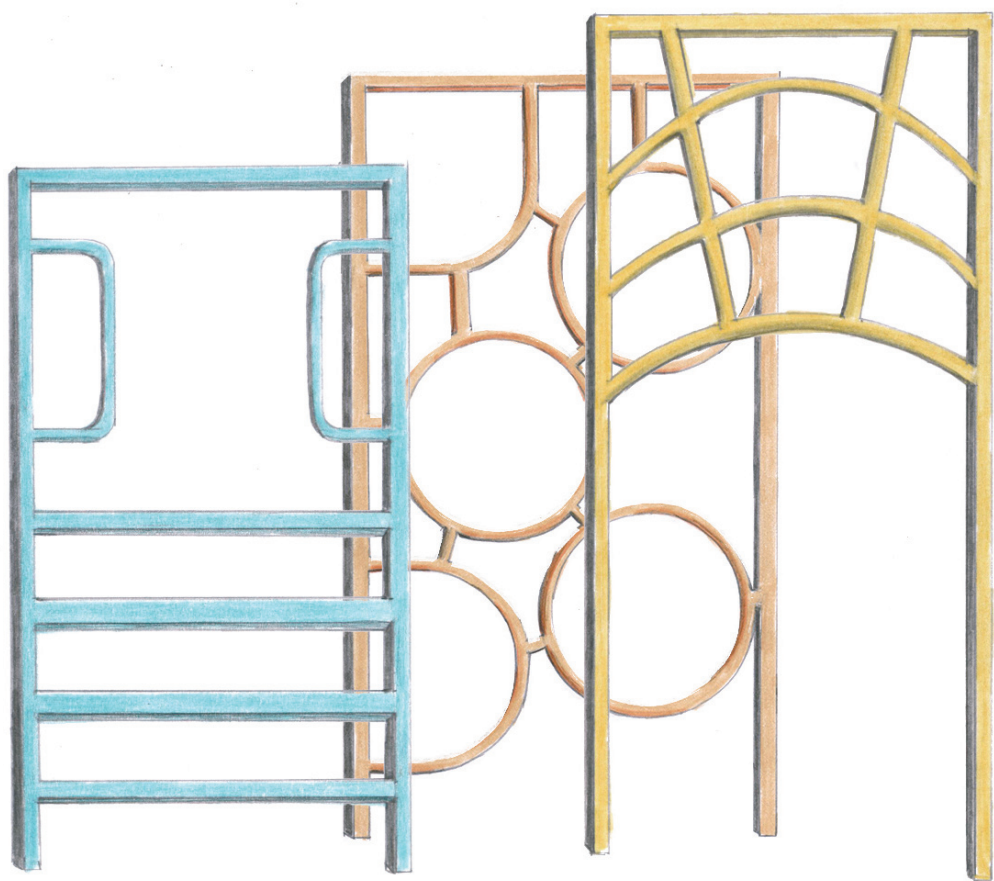


Gavin Renshaw

Gavin Renshaw's project for The Expanded City constitutes the development of a form of ongoing artistic research. Visually this work is presented as a grid of seemingly unrelated landscapes which on closer inspection are revealed to be the same city, viewed from numerous points around its edges. Renshaw has described how this practice has been influenced by an interest in monumental architecture and town planning, as well as the use of forms of navigation that utilise landmarks rather than maps. Undertaking this work as part of The Expanded City has meant that different stakeholders have developed different impressions of the project, with its application towards informing new infrastructure being foregrounded. With this in

mind, Renshaw has proposed to devise a set of cycling routes within and around Preston, which could be published and shared online. Prestonians would be able to access a map that includes a gradient profile, a description, key sections of national beauty and full directions, which could then be printed or sent directly to a GPS device. Even in this pragmatic application, it is clear that Renshaw's interests lie with the ways in which cities are experienced subjectively, with each inhabitant building their own internal map. Indeed, the images that he has produced tell us more about the point of view of the photographer than about the illusory subject of the photograph, and the routes that he is developing provide only a starting point for others' explorations.







Emily Speed

With a longstanding interest in the ways that buildings affect the bodies and minds of the people that inhabit them, Emily Speed is here invited to consider these aspects in terms of structures that can, as yet, only be imagined. Whilst other Expanded City projects tend to deal with the spaces in between buildings, Speed is less concerned with the process of urban development, than the ways in which such sites will be used in the future. As an artist who has often dealt with structures that are long established, or even ancient, it is noteworthy that here she is considering that which is yet to be built. One of the criteria of the City Deal is that spaces for leisure and culture must be provided alongside those for housing and employment, and it is this provision for 'play' that interests Speed in this context. The act of play exists in many forms, and does not necessarily require

designated areas or equipment. As such, play can be seen as inherently subversive, especially if practiced by those emerging or removed from childhood, and often takes place outside of and hidden from designated sites for leisure. With this in mind Speed has become interested in the structures provided for play, and how these could be understood otherwise than how they are intended. Through her research, Speed has discovered that children's play areas are often purchased as pre-fabricated structures, and is considering how they may be understood as sculptural in their potentially incongruous relationship to their surroundings. Whereas, the places on the outskirts of the city that are actually utilised for play by young people are often those that provide the most privacy or distance from home, school or work.



Lauren Velvick

Alongside five artists Lauren Velvick has been commissioned as a writer to report on, and respond to The Expanded City. This unusual role functions as a way to make the private research of The Expanded City artists public during its development, as well as enabling Velvick to experiment with creative modes of writing and reading in the context of the city and its hinterlands. During the past ten months this has involved interpreting the work and progression of each of the commissioned artists, as well as conducting individual research based on site-specific observations. Preston is Velvick's hometown and it is notable that she grew up here whilst the city was still a town, returning now having lived away for a decade. This experience has influenced her approach to The Expanded City, viewing Preston's outskirts through

a nostalgic lens, but also with an awareness of the ways in which the city has changed. Of particular interest are the ways that choices of layout and design in new developments can signify a desirable lifestyle, often through terminology, brands and street furniture. This can also back fire, for example if the plans change around how a site will be used, then the landmarks and signage already implemented become obsolete and confusing. As part of this research Velvick has focussed on the 'employment area' to the North East of Preston's city centre, which features what artist Robert Smithson called 'nowhere monuments'. She is interested in recording how the use and character of this site will change as the amenities, such as coffee shops and convenience stores increase, while the wastelands currently used for play and rebellion are built over.



Biographies

Olivia Keith

Concerned by the loss of cultural diversity in the face of globalization, Olivia Keith strives to accentuate elements of intangible cultural heritage – traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants. Recent projects have explored the practicalities and functions of making large scale reportage drawings in public places. In India and Morocco they provoked discussion around the fragility of the traditions and skills of street workers, whereas in England the focus has been on recognising the human endeavour (often of volunteers) that shapes our countryside.

Ruth Levene

Levene's work attempts to reveal systems that are often hidden but that shape our everyday lives. She questions our relationship to those systems and how they, in turn, impact and disconnect us from nature and the natural resources we rely upon. She has been exhibiting her artwork since she completed her MSc from Duncan of Jordanstone in 2001 and recently completed a research residency in The Faculty of Engineering, University of Sheffield. Ruth is currently working with The Pennine Water Group on a new work around the hydrological/ social cycle and collaborating with artist Anne-Marie Culhane, Farmer Peter Lundgren and a collective of 42 on A Field of Wheat.

Ian Nesbitt

Ian Nesbitt's socially engaged practice spans documentary film, cinema activism, co-production and community organising. It focuses on exploring peripheral territories and working innovatively with marginal communities. He is interested in uncovering 'wild' systems and initiating rogue networks within the managed structures and manufactured communities that are handed down to us. His projects are largely collaborative, working with both artists and non-artists. Nesbitt recently took part in the fourth 'Intersections' commission at Primary, Nottingham, exploring time banking and sharing economies local to the gallery. His work has been shown and commissioned throughout the U.K and internationally.

Gavin Renshaw

Gavin Renshaw's practice is concerned with topography, local histories and the ability to interact and respond to the city, predominantly in regard to its architectural infrastructure. Often associating with Outsider art and graffiti culture, he explores the topophilia associated with place in an attempt to strike an unspoken dialogue between the established and the divergent. This analysis can take the form of photography, painting, map-making or print. Renshaw is a highly skilled illustrator and graffiti artist, and he is now utilising the skills and concerns honed over fifteen years of working in this field towards his current expansive research projects.

Emily Speed

Speed's interests lies in the relationship between people and buildings. Her work explores the body and its relationship to architecture, with the concept of shelter and the idea of the inhabitant at the core of much of Speed's work. She questions how a person is shaped by the buildings that they have occupied, and how a person occupies their own psychological space. During 2016 she will have solo exhibitions at TRUCK, Calgary and will present a major new commission at Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas. In 2014/15 In October 2014, Speed was resident at the British School at Rome as the Derek Hill Foundation Scholar (drawing).

Lauren Velvick

Lauren Velvick is a writer, artist and curator based in the North West of England. She is currently a Liverpool Biennial Associate Artist and Programme Co-ordinator at Bluecoat Arts Centre. She is a regular contributor to national and local arts publications including Art Monthly, FEAST Journal and is a Contributing Editor of Corridor8. From 2013 to 2015 Velvick was a co-director of The Exhibition Centre for the Life and Use of Books, and the project was featured in Modern History V.I curated by Lynda Morris. In 2016 Velvick curated *Cracked Eggs*, a group residency and experimental exhibition/publication.

In Certain Places is a programme of artistic interventions and events, led by Professor Charles Quick and Elaine Speight, with the support of associate Rachel Bartholomew, in the School of Art, Design and Fashion at the University of Central Lancashire. Based in the City of Preston, in the North West of England, the project examines how artists can contribute to the form and functions of a place, by exploring new approaches to art, culture and urban development.

The project is financially supported by the University of Central Lancashire, Preston City Council and the Arts Council of England through their Grants for the Arts scheme.

www.incertainplaces.org

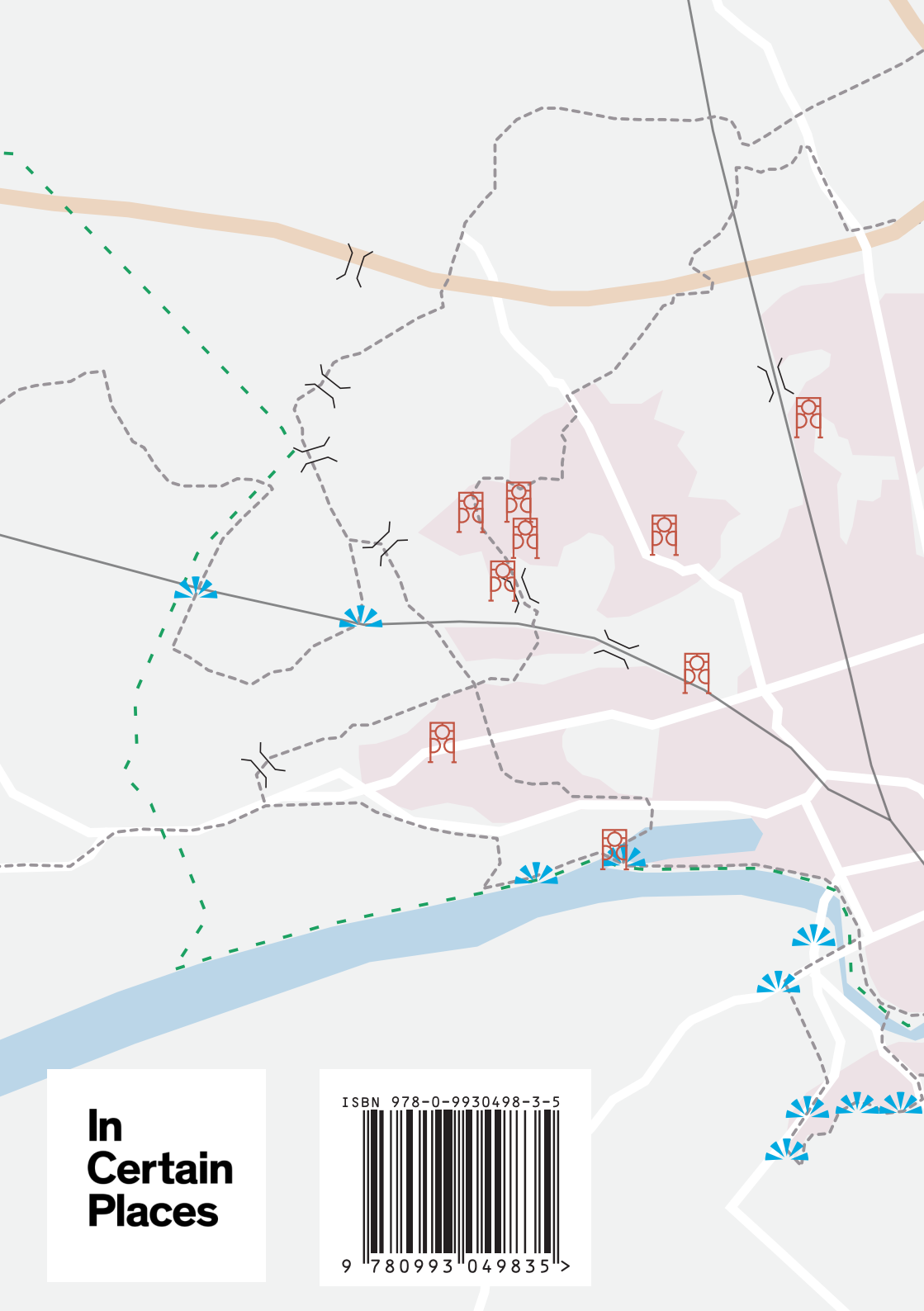
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