Interviewing Images: How Visual Research Using IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) can Illuminate the Change-Making Possibilities of Place, Space, and Dwelling

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ABSTRACT

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative method mainly used in psychology, the social sciences and health science. Beginning with processes of open question interviewing, and taking an idiographic approach, it elicits unusually rich data from persons about specific life experiences, opportunities, and challenges. In so doing, it generates flexibility of thought and feeling, and evokes unanticipated insight. As a visual culture scholar, and inspired by the distinctly visual connotations of the word inter-view, I propose that our understanding of contemporary lived experience and our attempts at change-making might be extended if the descriptive, analytical and interpretative techniques of IPA were applied to the image-worlds (and object-worlds) that play a role in shaping us as individuals, citizens, and researchers. But is it possible to interview images without this being merely or wholly a process of projecting our own perspectives onto them? This question has been central to a series of workshops I began developing and delivering in 2018 called 'Using Phenomenology in Contemporary Arts Research and Pedagogy'. In this paper, I present the philosophical underpinnings for the "interviewing images" methodology and report on the techniques involved. In particular, I focus on what workshop participants have found to be its decolonising potential. For purposes of demonstration, I draw on my use of this technique in early-stage research for a small-scale community-based urban development project I am hoping to initiate in the underprivileged area of the city where I live and teach.

***Keywords**: Interviewing images, Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), visual research, image-analysis, decolonising orientations, change-making*

Figure 1 Area outside of The Waldron Centre, Amersham Vale, London SE14, 2020. Photograph: J. Andrews

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will present an image-based methodology that is particularly valuable in the early stages of research design due to its balance of openness and rigor. Adapted from a recently developed qualitative process known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (hereafter IPA), it can be used across disciplines but notable, in my view, are its contributions to projects concerned with *hospitable* forms of change-making, a notion I will define shortly and return to repeatedly. For the purposes of demonstration, I will draw on early-stage image-based research of my own concerning a small-scale community-based labyrinth-building project that I am hoping to facilitate in the underprivileged London borough where I live and teach.

Fuelling this project is a broader enquiry into the potential of these ancient space- and orientation-changing structures to create opportunities for personal, social, and environmental restoration and for peace within troubled areas within public space. The plot to which I will refer in this paper is a rundown square located outside of a local health centre [1].

Sites for proposed change are as multiple and varied as are the researchers who are drawn towards them. At issue might be an environment or community that is marked by distress or deprivation, a mind-set in need of reorientation, a condition of wounded identity or emotion, or less dramatically a space that no longer feels fit for practical or aesthetic purpose and needs to be renewed or reinvented. Indeed, such factors commonly present themselves as intertwined in a single project. Adding complexity to specific change-making projects is the fact that ideas about what might constitute "hospitality" will differ. Determining factors include the varied histories, lived experiences, and conscious and unconscious feelings and value systems at issue as well as what researchers and stakeholders take to be the parameters of "the world" and our stewardship of it. More than that, as attested to by the ongoing clamour of global news reportage and troves of often-less-attended-to personal testimony, different visions of both "hospitality" and "world" habitually collide. As such, instead of prompting curiosity and further enquiry beyond the limiting logics of "either/or", such differences are taken to inhibit communication and give rise to competition, the uneven exercise of power, conflict, and pain. All change-making projects are situated in contested terrain of this kind. Therefore, researchers dedicated to non-coercive processes of change-making will need to build strategies for self-reflectively navigating contestation into even the very earliest stages of research design.

To support genuinely open and exploratory research, so I argue (and this claim may at first sight seem counter-intuitive), it is crucial that early-stage research begins by orchestrating a shift in attention *away from* what at first would seem to be most pressing – our vision of the change we wish to bring – *and towards* the site of proposed change as it is now, attending to it descriptively, in the first instance, until our own agendas fade and we begin to connect with the site's own modes of self-presentation. Why? Because if we want our change-making to be appropriate (that is, hospitable) it cannot be imposed upon a given site, by us, from without. It must emerge from a genuine encounter with that site and be co-designed with it. Inevitably such a process takes time. It also requires that researchers commit to situated enquiries that are accompanied by degrees of self-relinquishment and productive uncertainty: a reality that may seem unwelcome but is profoundly worthwhile. Indeed, it is for these reasons that I describe the research orientation at issue as decolonising and certainly decentring – a point to which I will return. In my own case, as soon as the Waldron site was presented to me as a possibility for collaboration and I had visited it and taken a first set of photographs, an almost fully-formed vision for how it might be transformed was installed in my mind. As I will show,

however, practising the "interviewing images" methodology made me increasingly attuned to the site as it was presenting itself to me then. As such, I found myself progressively letting go of that initial vision and entering a more open-minded and questioning sensibility – one that the phenomenologist Alia Al-Saji has theorised as a form of critical-ethical perception that is shaped by hesitation [2].

The notion of slowing down and taking time when engaging with sites in need of obvious or urgent change will appear risky, even irresponsible. To clarify, therefore, I am not arguing that this should be the only approach that is taken within such contexts. Acts of swift and immediate intervention will often be required, designed to serve immediate needs, and performed by those best qualified to do so. Nonetheless, alongside those swift interventions other, longer, slower, and initially more open-ended research activities must also be carried out. These are activities geared towards understanding the generally overlooked dimensions of those sites of trouble. But this is vital since it is within this overlooked terrain – or so I argue – that the seeds and strategies for deep change are nonetheless located. It is for this reason that the title of this paper refers to the change-making possibilities of place, space, and dwelling. As will become apparent from what follows, taking time – indeed, taking what might appear to be "too-much" time – yields accelerated and effective thought, strategy, and implementation later on.

In this paper, I present "interviewing images" as an especially effective means for grounding research processes (and findings) in the intensities of openness and attention that are required for deep change. Here, a given research site is addressed phenomenologically as a self-showing image whose role it is to attract, challenge and expand researchers' capacities to perceive and thus think beyond inherited norms. This perceptual approach to change-making initially emerged from my interest in the writing of the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), for instance, he claimed, against received philosophical wisdom, that the site and soil of genuine thought is located within the field of "phenomena, the layer of living experience through which other people and things are first *given to us*" [3]. Paraphrasing him, this means engaging with things in terms of "their concrete physiognomy" [4]. It entails discerning the individual ways in which organisms deal with the world, and the specific manner in which "subjectivity" inheres in history [5]. Later, in his unfinished book *The Visible and the Invisible* (published posthumously in 1964), he wrote that "It is at the same time true that the world is what we see and that, nonetheless, we must learn to see it" [6]. In other words, as researchers we must experience the perceptual world as our teacher. It is a matter of "the things themselves, from the depths of their silence" bringing themselves to expression [7]. Images are adept teachers of this kind and practices of addressing the world *as image* are vital. The insights that are obtained when researchers become "recipients" of vision in this manner generally bypass and are differently structured to the propositions we may have

carried with us into the research process. Furthermore, image-based, perceptual activity of this kind is crucial since self-presenting images address not only the realms of conscious cognition but also the potent, often change-resistant realms of the unconscious and of unconscious bias. Images, when attended to, invariably offer insight that is otherwise unavailable to cognition. Such insights are especially vital in contexts that are in desperate need of change but where effective change-making strategies have not been forthcoming.

Thus far, then, I have made two main points. In the first place, I am concerned with an early-stage research methodology in the service of what I have referred to as hospitable change-making. One of its crucial achievements is to orchestrate a shift in the researcher's attention away from "the desired change" and towards the site of proposed change as it is revealing itself here and now. In the second place, and with this end in view, I argue for the strategic importance of addressing (or "interviewing") our sites of proposed change understood as "image". I will justify these claims further in what follows. I will also expand upon my use of key terms and concepts (namely, "images", "interviewing," "hospitable forms of change-making," and "place, space, and dwelling") in section 3 below.

1.1. Related Work

1.1.1. Philosophical and pedagogical research

Broadly, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy is formative for the image-based methods presented in this paper. This is due to his nuanced foregrounding of perceptual engagements as paradigmatic for his attempts to re-envision philosophy as meaningful for, and applicable to, the often ambiguous and unsettled realities of everyday life. To this end, he studied the experiences of visual practitioners, notably painters, and sought to learn from them. [8]. Significantly, too, in my own turn to philosophy from an original training in fine art, and as I sought to engage with the writings of Merleau-Ponty which had so captured my imagination, I discovered that images consistently played a leading role in terms of directing my thought and shaping my arguments; that is, I experienced them as "agents for", or "carriers of", thought [9]. Such an understanding of imagery (and the "object"-world more broadly) as agential is not mine alone, of course. Routes into this terrain have been variously suggested and explored by thinkers including Hannah Arendt, Leo Bersani, Jean-Louis Chrétien [10], Georges Didi-Huberman, Kaja Silverman, W.J.T. Mitchell, and researchers working in the field of New Materialisms including Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Rosi Braidotti, Manuel DeLanda, Elizabeth Grosz, and Vicki Kirby. Interesting connections may also be found with Goethean Science [11]. Points in Robert Sokolowski's *Introduction to Phenomenology* and Raymond M. Weaver's work on description have also been instructive [12].

The image-based research methodology I will be presenting is novel. However, my efforts align with recent developments in educational studies that challenge the long-predominance of number- and text-driven approaches to learning by championing visual processing skills. Take, for instance, Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) as devised by Abigail Housen and Philip Yanamine [13].

1.1.2. Qualitative enquiry: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Figure 2 The IPA Grid (Smith, Flowers and Larkin)

In 2013, I discovered and underwent training in IPA. First developed in the 1990s by the psychologist Jonathan A. Smith [14], a detailed explication of its underlying theory and methods was set out in text-book form in 2009 [15]. IPA is a qualitative, interview-based research methodology used mainly in psychology, the social sciences and health science although researchers in these fields have more recently used it to produce in-depth studies of personal responses to visual imagery [16].

Beginning with processes of open question interviewing, and taking an idiographic approach [17], IPA elicits unusually rich data from research participants about specific life experiences, opportunities, and challenges. Citing Smith et. al. in *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*: "IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience. And it aims to conduct this examination in a way which as far as possible enables that experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems" [18]. In so doing, it tends to generate unanticipated insight as well as flexibility of thought and feeling on the part of both researchers and participants. At the same time, the investigative post-interview processes built into IPA equip researchers to address emergent data with analytic and interpretative nuance and consistent self-reflectivity. Briefly, interviews are carefully transcribed and entered, un-edited, into the IPA grid (Figure 2). Transcripts are then analysed line by line, in terms of their descriptive, linguistic, and

conceptual content, indicating a concern with both pre-reflective (descriptive) and reflective modes of analysis and interpretation – although, to cite Smith, reflection remains "primal and natural" rather than "rarefied and distant" [19]. Crucially, too, the work of interpretation invokes what is known as a double hermeneutic involving both the participant and the researcher as sense-makers (see Figure 3).
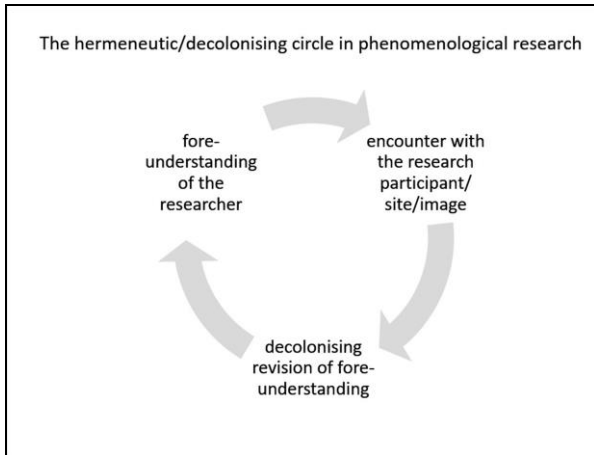

Figure 3 J. Andrews, The hermeneutic/decolonising circle in phenomenological research. Adapted from Elena Gil-Rodriguez and Kate Hefferon, *The London IPA Training Handbook*, London IPA Training, 2013, 21

Emergent themes are then identified, evidenced, and interpreted. Finally, the insights obtained across an entire data set are considered, compared, and contrasted to build a complex and finely detailed picture. At this stage so-called "super-ordinate" themes come to the fore. (In IPA, the in-depth nature of the interviewing, analysis and interpretation at issue means that data sets are usually no greater than 6-10 participants.)

IPA, I have found, allows for investigations that are rigorous without being reductive due to its careful and non-invasive (hospitable) openings-up of multiple perspectives from which new insight and new possibilities may be derived. Also crucial is what I have already described as the decolonising intent that is embedded within the phenomenological method and within IPA taken as a whole – decolonising in terms of prioritising participant experience, expression and concerns over the assumptions and objectives of the researcher and their research project. Indeed, the relationship between phenomenology, hermeneutics and decoloniality (as an orientation) are well-described in Figure 3. Further aspects of the decolonising capacity of phenomenology in relation to the questions of hospitality and change implementation will become apparent, I hope, within the case study material presented in Section 4.

1.2. Contribution

1.2.1. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The "interviewing images" methodology presented in this paper extends the scope of IPA's approach to information gathering, analysis and interpretation beyond that of vocalised human experience obtained through the interviewing of persons. As a first step, therefore, in 2018 I contacted Smith, shared what I was attempting to do, and asked for feedback [20]. I also presented the concept at a meeting of the London IPA Group, a gathering in which IPA researchers share work-in-progress and problem-solve methodological and other issues. I was encouraged by the openness of response in both cases and in 2019 was invited by Smith and Larkin to present the methodology in an IPA-focused session they were chairing as part of the "Phenomenology of Health and Relationships Conference", Aston University, Birmingham [21]. I am grateful for Smith's ongoing support.

1.2.2. Visual research methodology

More broadly, the "interviewing images" methodology presented here (alongside my broader, collaborative work on using phenomenology in arts-based research) hopes to contribute to visual research methodology. This is significant because, to date, there is a lack of comprehensive, explicitly phenomenological methodological resources for visual researchers working across the arts, humanities, and sciences [22].

1.2.3. Research on change-implementation

In the introduction to this paper, I foregrounded the significance of the "interviewing images" methodology for "hospitable" (that is, non-impositional and non-coercive) forms of change-making. This approach contrasts with prevalent change management practices. As the term "change management" indicates, at issue here is a predominantly top-down operation with consultation – even early-stage consultation – rarely playing a significant strategic role within the identification of required change and the design of new processes. Instead, a small organisational leadership team devises and implements certain change-making solutions that they believe are vital for future flourishing and then attempt to "manage" their workforce and other stakeholders into compliance. "Theory of Change" (or ToC) differs by taking a collaborative approach right from the start. As Dana H. Taplin and Heléne Clark have put it in their 2012 publication "Theory of Change Basics, A Primer on Theory of Change", "Theory of Change is a rigorous yet participatory process whereby groups and stakeholders in a planning process articulate their long-term goals and identify the conditions they believe have to unfold for those goals to be met" [23]. But here too, at least at first sight, a somewhat impositional approach is indicated: first identifying and then implementing a clearly defined goal by means of backwards-mapping "desired outcomes" and visualising them within a complex but strict "causal

framework" [24]. When ToC is investigated more closely, however, there are key moments throughout the design process, including at its initial stages, when rationales and assumptions (defined by the authors as "conditions or resources that your group believes are needed for the success of your program, and which you believe already exist and will not be problematic to maintain" [25]) are examined and adjusted. This interrogative work must be done for a given theory of change to be viable, and it is here that the strategies I am presenting in this paper could have a role to play.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to consulting industrial psychologist Daniel Burger's undated study "Phenomenological Perspectives on Change" [26] which reviews the impact of phenomenology (as expressed in the gestalt movement, existential psychology and logotherapy, and humanistic, including positive, psychology) on the person-centred approaches to organisational change that have arisen in recent years. As he puts it, this orientation challenges the Empirical-Analytical models that still dominate most contemporary organisations. He continues: "traditional management approaches like Taylor's scientific management and Weber's bureaucracy [...] focus on organisational goals to such an extent that the needs and dynamics of the people in the organisation are often neglected" [27]. Furthermore, the positivism that has so significantly influenced change facilitation and strategic management scholarship, with its "strong emphasis on rationality, quantifiable goals, and clearly defined problems", is "not effective in uncertain and instable environments" [28]. By contrast, he presents phenomenology's toleration of ambiguity and its prioritisation of "individual self-direction" and "growth and development" as essential to accomplishing effective organisational change [29]. Significantly, Burger closes his essay by referencing the valuable role of phenomenological research initiatives in South Africa, specifically those launched by the Centre for the Study of Violence of Reconciliation (CSVR). One of these, he adds "constitutes an analysis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) hearings in order to assess the impact of the TRC at different levels" [30].

1.3. Structure

In what follows (Section 2), I provide information about the emergence of the "interviewing images" methodology within a teaching context and (in Section 3) elaborate on key terms. Then (in Section 4) I turn to technique, drawing on my own case-study material. In the conclusion, as well as recap key points, I reflect on findings and impacts uncovered thus far, and on future developments.

2. BACKGROUND

The "interviewing images" methodology emerged in 2018 while I was preparing a series of workshops for arts researchers (staff and students) at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore and at Goldsmiths, University of London. Co-facilitated with LASALLE colleagues Jeffrey Say and Clare Veal, the first 3-day Singapore-based workshop was titled "Using Phenomenology in Contemporary Arts Research and Pedagogy" [31]. Its overall aims were to develop, deliver and test phenomenological methodologies that are not readily or comprehensively available within contemporary arts scholarship. Of more immediate concern was to examine how usefully these resources might assist arts researchers working in the emergent fields of modern and contemporary South-East Asian art history. At issue here was how best to critically approach South-East Asian art practices and projects which may not yet have been extensively studied or exhibited, and whose specificities might be obscured if already-formulated and generally Eurocentric art historical models are applied to them. In other words, the decolonising potential of these phenomenological methodologies was highlighted.

The first workshop provided a rationale for the value of phenomenological research strategies before focusing on the basics of IPA as presented in the IPA textbook. The IPA interviewing technique was presented as a useful addition to other approaches – interviewing being of particular use to arts researchers involved in field work and for whom encounters with makers, curators and viewers of art are crucial. Towards the end of the workshop, however, I asked whether the potential of IPA might be developed further into the terrain of "interviewing" images and objects and I presented and tested a range of techniques for doing this.

During the first workshop, as noted, the decolonising capacities of IPA and of phenomenological, image-based research more broadly emerged as a consistently important theme. This theme was foregrounded in the second "Using Phenomenology" workshop, held in London in 2019; it had the rather long subtitle of: "Phenomenological encounters with non-western and diasporic objects-images-archives-&-artworlds (phenomenology, displacement and decoloniality)" [32]. Crucially, the London workshop began with a series of phenomenologically-based investigations of the workshop site itself: the Goldsmiths' campus and its institutional and local histories (in relation to Britain's colonial past, for instance, and to various social justice and educational reform movements), and its holdings, legacies and ethos as these are visually and materially embedded within campus structures and infrastructures.

3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is almost time to address issues of technique. But before then it is worth further clarifying certain key terms.

3.1. Images

In this paper I have already defined images, fundamentally, as self-showing entities with the capacity to challenge and expand researchers' capacities to perceive and to think – if they are given the space and time to do so.

It is in the service of such exploratory and non-prejudicial investigations that I have argued for the importance, especially in the early stages of research design, of researchers putting their own agendas to one side and strategically regarding their research sites and sources not as material to be in some way dominated but as "images" to be interviewed. Such images might consist of memories or other mental pictures but, in research contexts, more usefully take the form of physical artefacts such as drawings. diagrams, or photographs [33].

My definition of images as self-showing entities requires repetition because it challenges a dominant negative conception of images as idealised or rationalised substitutes for the vagaries of lived reality, offering human beings the illusion of control. Take for instance Martin Heidegger's influential concept of "world picture". As first communicated in his 1938 lecture "The Age of the World Picture", "world picture" referred to the pictorial means and devices by which modernity converted a pre-modern agential understanding of the world into an essentially inert conception of the world as "manipulandum", subject to human-centred practices of planning, devising, systematizing, projecting and mastering [34].

Building a research methodology around practices of "interviewing" self-showing images also contradicts an alternate but also-dominant notion of images as so fundamentally unruly or ambiguous in terms of their potential meanings that they are only communicatively useful if they are externally disciplined by words (this, of course, is also to underestimate the heterogeneous and often ambiguous nature of verbal language). It also challenges the older idea that images are fundamentally deceptive and thus non-viable as sites for philosophical reflection; this was a prejudice that Merleau-Ponty was required to undo given his philosophical prioritisation of perception as foundational for thought. Indeed, deep engagement with the image-world reveals that image-based, perceptual attentiveness yields rich, detail-infused, self-structuring data for both inductive and speculative forms of thought processing.

As such – or so I argue – images, experienced as self-showing entities also play a vital role within change-making projects. As I will show, it was only as I took time to convert and then study photographic representations of a site for potential change I was interested in (that rundown location outside of a local health centre) that unanticipated, information-rich aspects of the space began to reveal themselves. These then impacted upon my research and planning process. Notable too was the way in which these images mediated, and helped me navigate, between complex external and internal realities with increased critical and ethical awareness. Once again, this shaped my decision-making capacities as a researcher. As aesthetic entities, for instance, the photographs invited me to attend to the realms of feeling and preference which so often operate – in me, in us – as deeply embedded and largely unconscious *obstacles to* change, as well as potentially powerful *motivators for* change. To reiterate, by inviting contemplation, they called me not to inaction or passivity, but rather to exercise less-practiced activities

of slowly unfolding attentiveness to realms of expression – both human and non-human – that are generally disregarded as having inherent insight or value.

3.2. Interviewing

In practice, interviewing may take different forms depending on the kinds of information researchers are seeking. Key to this paper, as indicated, is the idea of interviewing not persons but images. This may seem counterintuitive since we tend to associate interviewing with the asking and answering of verbalised questions. But it is worth noting that etymologically *inter-viewing* denotes not a verbal exchange but face-to-face visual interaction and forms of intersectional seeing. Nonetheless, the "interviewing images" idea must be consistently placed under critical pressure. Can images really be interviewed without this being merely or wholly a process of projecting our own perspectives onto them? My position is that the non-impositional interviewing of images is both possible and necessary and, in Section 4, I present a research process designed to support this. But at this point, and to set the scene, evidence from painterly experience as explored in Merleau-Ponty's 1961 essay "Eye and Mind" is worth bringing into play. In this essay, he foregrounds the receptivity and reversibilities of sight within processes of artistic making. "Inevitably," he writes, "the roles between [the painter] and the visible are reversed. That is why so many painters have said that things look at them." He then cites the painter André Marchand, who – in an interview with the writer, academic, and radio producer Georges Charbonnier – had followed Paul Klee in saying that: "In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me … were speaking to me. … I was there, listening ... I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it. … I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out" [35].

3.3. Hospitable Forms of Change-making

I referred to this idea in the opening paragraph of this paper and I would like to return to it. The word "hospitable" has its etymological roots in the medieval Latin *hospitare*, literally, to entertain. This word means not only to provide (someone) with amusement or enjoyment but also *to give attention or consideration* to something. Hospitality has further roots in in the word "host" which refers to a person who receives or entertains other people (notably *strangers*) as guests and also to a person, place, or organization that holds an event to which others are invited.

In the context of our discussions, a notion emerging from these definitions is of a given research site understood as a host with the researcher positioned as a guest or invitee. A deeper understanding of this arises when we also consider the biological connotations of "host", namely, a person or animal that has received transplanted tissue or a

transplanted organ. Tremendous intimacy in conveyed here, indeed a sense of incorporation (in our case) of researcher and researched. Also conveyed is the welcoming of otherness and the negotiations of difference and possible disagreement or discomfort which such novel encounters inevitably entail [36].

3.4. Place, Space, and Dwelling

Notions of place, space and dwelling infuse this paper due to its emphasis on how sites for change might most hospitably be approached. Therefore a few brief clarifications are warranted. Firstly, I would like to understand place, space, and dwelling as overlapping, intercorporeal phenomena. Thus, concerning place and space, I would like to avoid definitions that define place as situated and embodied and space as abstract, in the sense of being homogenous and disembodied. Instead, following Merleau-Ponty, I would like to define space as that which is generated by bodies when they are operative in their more abstract and speculative modes. Secondly, as implied, I would like notions of dwelling, and dwelling-places, to be aligned with hospitality as just described, that is, as welcoming of difference, strangeness, and change in recognition of the fact that difference is always already embedded everywhere.

4. HOW TO INTERVIEW IMAGES USING IPA

4.1. Image Gathering

For the "interviewing images" process key mages relating to a given research project must be assembled or made. There are no restrictions on the actual form, scale, materiality, or location of a research project's visual or material sources but for the "interviewing images" process to work these sources must be available in a format (an appropriate graphic or photographic form, for instance) that can be engaged with in a practical and sustained fashion. Key images associated with my community labyrinth-building project currently include photographs of potential project sites (as noted) as well as a growing archive of photographs and drawings of already-existing labyrinths and labyrinth designs from around the world. A further point is that image-gathering will likely occur at various points in the research process with the interviewing of images occurring iteratively.

4.2. Exposing Assumptions and Projections: Preliminary List-Making Project

An important preparatory aspect of IPA research design has to do with clarifying the assumptions, projections and prejudices all researchers inevitably bring into a given project, knowingly or unknowingly. Crucially, however, this exposure is not an attempt at eradicating the personal, situated character of phenomenological research; such

research, as already noted, is resolutely idiographic. Instead, it makes these perspectives and positions as explicit as possible, open to self-reflection and subject to further investigation, revision, or relinquishment, as required.

Regarding the interviewing of persons in IPA, this preparatory work usually takes place during the creation of semi-structured interview schedules. This is challenging work because it consists of compiling a small number of open questions designed to elicit rich information about the as-yet undetermined experiences of project participants, information that may run counter to the researcher's own agendas or expectations. The interview schedule operates as a guide. Depending on how a participant responds to the opening question, the schedule may be adapted, or even abandoned during the interview process. A key feature of IPA interviewing is that non-scripted follow-up questions are identified and asked within the interview context itself thus encouraging participants to expand upon their observations. The aim is for the researcher to follow the participant's accounts wherever they might lead.

Where the "interviewing images" process is concerned an effective preliminary exercise involves what I sometimes refer to as "extreme" list-making. Here, researchers work with a key image and make as exhaustive an inventory as possible of observations and responses. While list-making is normally regarded as a prosaic activity, when practiced within phenomenological research it yields surprisingly rich insights. Not only does it help researchers begin to attune themselves to the image in question, as will become apparent from what follows, it also has a vital decolonising impact. The process is as follows:
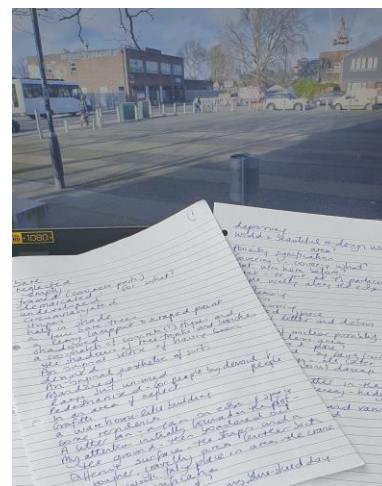
4.2.1. List-making

Figure 4 J. Andrews, Preparatory List-making Exercise (The Waldron Centre), 2020

List everything that comes to your attention while looking at your chosen image. Do not over-analyse or judge. Just write down one thing after another, line after line.

Sometimes, not words but a scribble or a shape may be exactly what is required. Whether the process takes two minutes, ten minutes, or more, keep going until you feel that you have nothing further to add.

4.2.2. Reviewing

Then review your list, which is of interest both as a spatial and a time-based creation. Notice where your attention has been drawn by the image's physical, representational, or compositional attributes, and where ephemeral or emotive factors are predominant. Notice shifts from outer to inner awareness. Notice repetitions, patterns, and progressions. Notice unexpected perceptual, aesthetic, or conceptual shifts. Has a blind-spot suddenly been exposed – and if so, what did it consist of? Are you aware of perceptual habits having come to the fore? You may wish to use colour or annotation to highlight connections between different parts of your list. Notice where and how your list identifies and perhaps reinforces named interests, thus indicating areas for further investigation. Indeed, you may define one specific moment in the list-making process as particularly singular. As you do this work, fresh observations may come to mind. These may be added to the list. Indeed, these lists can be returned to and extended throughout the overall research process.

When reviewing the results of my own list-making (Figure 4), my most significant observations were, firstly, that out of 57 entries 46 referred to what was visible in only the lower two-thirds of the image, the condition of the square itself. This is not altogether surprising since my site visit had confirmed its potential to hold a good-sized labyrinth. But clearly, I was disproportionately fixated on the aspect of the image that related most directly to my predetermined plans; I barely attended to the square's broader context. Secondly, although the site appeared to me as though "awaiting signification", I noticed that my descriptions of it communicated only negative judgements and emotions. I listed: bare, neglected, undeveloped, abandoned, gloomy, depressing, ugly, displeasing, useless, unwelcoming, a wasted space, unloved, dreary, and decrepit. Thirdly, I did raise several useful questions indicating a need for further research and thought. For instance, the plot consisted of one area laid out in a pattern of broad stripes and another consisting of rough, compacted gravel; did this indicate an original aesthetic scheme that had remained unfinished? I also asked why the site had become so neglected and wondered whether a beautiful re-design ideally incorporating a large labyrinth design and low-level planting would work in this unspectacular and under-resourced part of London (although I did think that a design inspired by South Africa's Labyrinth at The Edge at Hogsback created in 2002 might hold possibilities [37]).

4.3. Using The IPA Grid

The fundamental tool for interviewing images in a manner that amplifies the openness and rigor of IPA is the IPA grid. The approach here is analogous to that for analysing and interpreting interview transcripts – or indeed for closely reading other text-based materials. Simply put, a key image is inserted into the grid's central panel. The panel's rectangular format functions as a specific space of display from which certain of the image's varied modes of self-presentation are revealed and may be reflected upon.

Figures 5 and 6 J. Andrews. The IPA grid as used in the "interviewing images" methodology. Two different images of the Waldron site, 2020

In some cases, researchers may feel that the preliminary list-making project has been so exhaustive that the key image in question is unlikely to present further insight. It is important therefore that a sense of expectancy makes itself felt at this point. In fact, the "interviewing images" process is likely to enter unanticipated territory as IPA's more systematic investigations are layered onto the purposefully spontaneous and intuitive procedures that characterised the preliminary list-making exercise.

The IPA grid is a fundamental resource because it invites repeated yet diverse returns to a single self-presenting image and can provoke new forms of what the phenomenologist Robert Sokolowski has referred to as "searching mobility" where perception is concerned [38].

Particularly useful, in my view, is the grid's invitation not only to practice curiosity-driven seeing but also a non-intuitive, machinic mode of perception, akin to the linear, left to right data gathering of a scanning device. Such "unnatural" viewing disrupts both the image's more conventional compositional prompts for how it could be seen, and the researcher's embedded perceptual habits. By provoking such an unfamiliar way of seeing, the grid structure ultimately enlarges the image's self-showing potential. In addition, when it comes to exploratory commenting, the grid may be used flexibly. For instance, such commenting need not always be verbal. An insightful response to a key image might be another image. Thus, a detailed observational drawing might excavate an aspect of the key image. In some cases, the key image might provoke a memory which is then sketched, or a diagram might most efficiently convey certain visual or spatial dynamics. Alternatively, the key image may prompt associations with images created by others which may then be brought into play. In other words, just as the image will prompt differing modes of visual thought so too varied forms of visual and verbal notation may be deployed [39].

When exploratory commenting has been completed – as thoroughly as possible – emergent themes are collated. This can be painstaking, involving trial and error. It is at this stage that interpretation comes more emphatically to the fore. But – encouraged by the layout of the IPA grid in which key image, exploratory comments and emergent themes are positioned alongside one another – this interpretative activity involves constant cross referencing and accuracy-checking.

Once emergent themes have been identified, the whole process is repeated with other key images relevant to the project (Figure 6). In some cases, work already carried out may have prompted the need for additional image gathering to occur. As information and insight accumulate, emergent themes may be adjusted, and higher-level super-ordinate themes will become apparent.

4.4. Working With Exploratory Comments And Emergent Themes To Enrich Research Design

4.4.1 Exploratory commenting

Here again, I will turn to my own case-study material – which is very much early-stage work-in-progress. As an initial step (see Figure 5) I could have transferred selected observations drawn from the list-making exercise into the IPA grid, paying attention to whether they were descriptive, linguistic or conceptual in nature and making sure to align these entries with the aspects of the image that provoked them. But instead I decided to start afresh, scrutinising the image systematically from top to bottom (thus including the terrain I neglected to engage with sufficiently earlier on) and recording only new observations. I reviewed them and tried to code them (using plain text, italics and underlining) according to whether they were fundamentally descriptive, linguistic, or conceptual. This process is not always straightforward;

when looking at visual material it is more difficult to distinguish the what from the how of self-display (the descriptive from the linguistic). Nonetheless, making the attempt is important since it helps develop discernment. I then entered additional insights drawn from the list-making exercise, using blue ink, and made a comparison. Particularly apparent was a shift in my own aesthetic responses to the image/site from overwhelmingly negative emotions to ones that were significantly more positive. Consequently, I was more attuned to nuance and possibility (research has shown that negative emotions reduce perceptual openness by narrowing awareness; positive emotions enlarge and diversify our capacities to perceive [40]). Observations provoked while using the IPA grid included "open sky and clouds", "dynamic shape of crane: upward and expansive energy", "symbolism of springtime – promise; new growth", "delicate filigree of projected shapes (tree trunks and branches)", "patches of light", "potentially welcoming – free access", "a threshold space", and "flexible". I also noticed that (while aesthetically displeasing) the posts and street furniture surrounding the plot gave it a sense of porous boundedness and had the effect of both setting it apart and protecting it. As I observed the play of light and shadow upon the plot, I began to think about how it documented the passing of time and, more whimsically, how a non-human, sense memory might thus also be being conveyed. I also noted the corner of a bench in the lower left-hand portion of the image – a place for resting, waiting or viewing – and began to think about the site as a space awaiting creative activation and, as noted, signification; a space, indeed, that might be *inviting* something to occur, to be enacted or practiced, performed or displayed.

4.4.2 Emergent themes

Thus far, working with two images for the sake of extending demonstration (Figures 5 and 6), I have identified nine emergent themes all of which have provoked me to reconsider my vision for the project and how it might be implemented: (1) An open, non-invasive, co-designed approach – from the beginning. This prompted me to reassess a potential labyrinth-building project on the site in terms of its scale and materiality. It is vital that the site's current flexibility and ease of access is not compromised. Perhaps, prompted by my reflections on the play of light and shade on the site, non-permanent projected labyrinth designs such as those designed by Jim Buchanan [41] could be deployed as test cases? (2) Multiple vantage points – as many as possible; (3) Facilitating personal and social change by transforming a site that is merely traversed into a potent turning point (negative emotions into positive, etc.); (4) What happened here? Remembering but also re-signifying past communal pain; (5) Balancing opportunities for privacy and seclusion with the need for safety (a design challenge). This is particularly important for labyrinth-walking which is a meditative practice and all the more so if a labyrinth is installed in an unsettling location; (6) Creating a place for

reflection and communication/display (all Figure 5) and (7) Public space as healing space (care and self-care) – extending and externalising the work of The Waldron Centre; (8) Extending the scope and benefits of nature: urban re-greening; (9) Histories of ownership and usage/intended usage (Figure 6). As research develops these themes will undergo adjustment. But in each case, arguably, aspects of my overall research objectives – to activate the decolonising aspects of phenomenology in relation to the questions of hospitality and change implementation – are in evidence. Usefully too, where research design is concerned, the emergent themes presented themselves as prompts for additional information- and evidence-gathering. Indeed, to this end, I believe that responding to a current call for a local public engagement project might be productive. Such a project would also activate most of the emergent themes identified and (4) in particular. 18 January 2021 will mark forty years since the suspected racist murder of thirteen young black people in the notorious "New Cross Fire". It occurred at 439 New Cross Road, almost adjacent to The Waldron Centre. Apparent official indifference to the deaths led to the largest political mobilisation of black people then seen in Britain. An art installation on the Waldron site – researched and created collaboratively – commemorating the fire and the protests in a multivocal way could incorporate a labyrinth structure to provide powerfully embodied ways of journeying through those still raw memories differently. Such a project could also pave the way for further labyrinth-based projects locally by providing collective opportunities to learn about, experience and reflect upon the capacities of labyrinths to initiate positive change, socially, psychologically, and spiritually. To operate, quite literally, as turning points within challenging conditions.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I sought to present "interviewing images" as a research methodology that is particularly useful in the service of what I have referred to as hospitable (non-impositional, non-coercive) change-making. To this end, I argued for the importance of research design that orchestrates a vital shift in the researcher's attention away from a predetermined "desired change" and towards *the site* of proposed change as it is revealing itself here and now. To this end, I argued for the strategic importance of addressing (or "interviewing") sites of proposed change as "images" and I provided a set of explanatory IPA-inspired guidelines for doing so. Crucially, this methodology is still in development. Indeed, it is a project that Clare Veal and I are in the process of amplifying (there is much content, explored in our workshops, that I have not been able to present here, including the question of how to engage with moving imagery). It is also a methodology that can be combined with others within a given research project. As noted, I regard it as especially useful in the early stages of research design due to its capacity to encourage especially nuanced analysis, interpretation, and reflection.

In my own research and teaching, the "interviewing images" methodology has borne fruit in terms of opening unanticipated territory for reflection and, as indicated, prompts for further research. And, although my own research with respect to potential community labyrinth-building projects has barely begun, engaging with the Waldron site as image, and responding to its self-presentations, demonstrated to me how many assumptions and what an explicitly defined vision of change I was already bringing with me. My impetus, in my first meetings with a potential stakeholder – a member of the local borough council with responsibility for the health centre – was to enrol her into my way of seeing things. I am now better prepared to slow down and approach the project with less certainty but greater curiosity regarding the revelations still to come. I will continue experimenting with the methodology and would also be most grateful to receive feedback from researchers who have been inspired also to take up the "interviewing images" challenge.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968, 4.

[7] Ibid.

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[9] See in particular: Jorella Andrews, *Showing Off! A Philosophy of Image*. London, New York, Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014; *The Question of Painting: Rethinking thought with Merleau-Ponty*, London, New York, Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

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[38] Sokolowski, op cit., 18.

[39] Related ideas, including that of images interviewing one another and the Aristotelean idea of speculating with images, were featured in the workshops but cannot be discussed in this context due to the limitations of space.

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