The GLC Story Oral History Project

Interviewee: Loraine Leeson

Interviewer: Tanya E. Denhere

Transcribed by: Tanya E. Denhere

Date of interview: Thursday 13th April 2017

Location: Cavendish Square, Westminster University

Interviewer
My name is Tanya Ennah Denhere. The date is Thursday the 13th of April 2017 and today I am joined by Loraine Leeson at the University of Westminster as part of the GLC Story project. Loraine, could you please spell out your full name and then tell me a little bit about your background please.

Loraine
L-O-R-A-I-N-E L-E-E-S-O-N. What- what sort of background do you want?

Interviewer
Where were you born and where did you grow up?

Loraine
Okay, I was born in West London. I was born in Middlesex Hospital, actually, in the centre of London. Grew up in West London, really didn't like it. There was no sense of community. When I was quite young we lived in a block of flats which had communal gardens, then we moved to a house that was sort of in a suburban street and spent my teenage years there. And, think as soon as I came to East London in my early twenties I felt I'd come home because I really liked the, the feeling of the, all the overlapping communities and as an artist then, I felt able to do things because there were sort of social networks, there was cultural networks, political networks. You know, there were people who you can engage with on a different - on different levels and, so that. I've been living and working in East London ever since.

Interviewer
Tell me a little bit more about those political networks, cultural networks and social networks.

Loraine
Well, I first came to Bethnal Green when I was doing a film video fellowship. It was a - I started life as a, as a student, I studied fine art through photography, film, and video. So on this fellowship I, the remit was to work with groups in the community. I was working with my ex-partner, Peter Dunn, who is also an artist. And so basically we were told to go and borrow the equipment from various places and set up the network and set up the groups ourselves and- but it just seemed that it was so easy to do that compared to when I had - I had actually tried to work in my hometown in Ruislip and done a project there but felt that there weren't so many sort of groups and organisations. There wasn't so much activity or energy so, we ran, we ran a number of workshops and then out of that - the Bethnal Green hospital went into occupation and a member of the Trade's Council - his name is Dan Jones - came and asked Peter and I if we would run one of our workshops in the hospital and make it one of our workshops. What they really wanted was a campaign video tape. So, that was my sort of introduction to being, to being working, what felt like, in a meaningful way outside of art institutions because I, as a student, I didn't want to do what I saw my sort of teachers doing which was, to just do my own work and sell it in a gallery. I didn't want to work for the gallery going public, I wanted it to be for a wider public, but I also wanted to make a difference. So I'd been looking for ways to do this. I met Peter there and together we made some attempts to do this work outside of institutions, but it wasn't until we went

to Bethnal Green and started that work with the Bethnal Green Hospital campaign that actually, we found a way of doing things that seemed to make sense.

Interviewer
You mentioned that you wanted to make a difference, when you were working in Bethnal Green, did you have any particular intentions or goals?

Loraine
Well, the, for the workshops, that was simply to run the workshops. But in terms of the Bethnal Green Hospital campaign, the intentions and goals were that of the campaign. Because we'd been trained as artists and we knew our history of art, we also knew - we were aware of how powerful art can be and how it is very good at conferring power and authority. If you only look at sort of 18th century paintings of landowners standing in front of their stately home, you know, you see how art is being used to and you look back on a whole lot of portrait paintings, how art is used to give people a sense of dignity, authority. We thought well if it's been used in the past for powerful people, why can't we use it for people who we think are important. So we knew there was a power that art has that perhaps we could bring to something like a campaign. We were also aware that on the left in this country, the tradition has been very much a literary one, that is, if there was a campaign, there would be broadsheets produced, so written material. The imagery hadn't been used so much on the left as on the right and, obviously advertising at that time, this was the late seventies, was really rising at the time. So, the right was using visual imagery very powerfully but the left wasn't and we thought well, there is something we can bring to this that isn't being done at the moment, so perhaps that's our aim - is to bring the power of art to something that we believe is an important cause.

Interviewer
And what was the response to that use of visual imagery?

Loraine
Well, let's say it was in stages. So the first thing was we were invited to do a video. I should say all this work is actually going to be on at the ICA next month. There's an exhibition in the ICA reading room documenting all this, all the work, the health work we did in the seventies and I've just seen the tape, I've just seen the video we did. So we started off doing the video because that's what we'd been asked to do, which was a real learning curve in a way, because they asked us to do it as one of our workshops 'cause that means we were funded to do it. But on the other hand, we needed a very good campaign video. Well there was a contradiction there because if you're running workshops, people need to be able to fail. They need to be able to learn and - so how do you put together a participatory workshop with something that needs to produce - a production that needs to be made very quickly and well. And so, we came across the issue there, of whether participation was a useful method and decided at that point to - that it probably wasn't. Now, I've come back to participation in a big way since but at the time it seemed that it'd be better to collaborate directly with the campaign committee. They were the people who really knew the issues. We had to represent them and together we could probably do that much more efficiently so it may not be the best place to hold a workshop. Anyway, we managed the videotape

and we edited out all the camera shake and whatever else happened in the workshop and we produced, we produced a campaign video. But it was because we were just there and we were around the campaign, we were out on the marches, we were documenting what went on that we then sort of just became part of it. And so the next thing was the committee asked us if we would make some posters. Now, we, we had all our, all our photographs and we, so we made some posters. We combined the images. I don't know why we arrived at photo montage really, it was a, it was a practical thing to do. We had a very small darkroom in the basement of our (inaudible) house, very small photos so it may have been that, but also we were aware of the work of artists such as John Heartfield who had worked very successfully in the thirties and forties, but obviously he was, he worked around the issues of the Nazi's and capitalism. He worked much more in a journalistic tradition than we did, but nevertheless, we were influenced by that work. And we also had looked around to see what other artists were working for social change, any historical precedence. And we came up with a lot constructivists. So, we were quite influenced by people like Rodchenko, Eisenstein, you know artist - it was an era when art and culture were seen very much as part of the struggle, and so that was quite important to us. And actually if you see any of the posters you'll notice the influence of the Russian Revolutionary artists. So, we did the posters and that was a good experience. The committee paid for the printing, we just put them together. And then we noticed that, that people didn't really understand why the hospital was in occupation or what that meant.
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So we noticed that people didn't really recognise why the hospital was in occupation or what an occupation was. What it means is - it was the first wave of cuts in the National Health Service, under the Labour government and they were cutting small community hospitals and they were bringing all the resources together into the big teaching hospitals. But there were a lot of arguments for why community hospitals were a good idea. In fact, recently, it has been in the press and we have politicians saying "What a good idea it would be to have small community hospitals that take some of the pressure off the big hospitals." _ I think most people who worked in the hospital had realised that it was a very good idea to keep it, but it was a rationalisation process. So what happened was, in cutting the hospital, the administrators left but legally, it turns out, that if there are still patients in the hospital and - then the staff there have a responsibility to look after them. And if GP's keep referring patients and ambulance drivers keep bringing the patients and people keep arriving for, for, for care at the hospital, then they have to be treated. So, if you have all the health workers in the area on your side, the hos-, the administrators leave but the hospital just keeps working. So this was quite a broad campaign, it was very well organised and had all those groups involved; the GP's, the medical staff, non-medical staff. And so, therefore, the hospital was seen to be in occupation. But that wasn't obvious, I mean that's quite a complicated thing to know, so we thought, what we could do is produce an exhibition. So some very simple visual panels, we can put in the hospital foyer so that when people come in, they understand, you know, what it is, what's going on. So, we used all those photographs we'd gathered in the process of doing the other work and on the marches and everything else and we produced a series of exhibition panels and they went in the hospital foyer. Interestingly, at that time, there was sort of interest in the art world in political work. I- I - When I say art world, I don't mean mainstream art world, but there was factions in the art world who were - there were some interesting political artists working. And an art critic, Roger Cork was curating at that time, an exhibition for the Serpentine gallery, so quite

a mainstream gallery, called “Art for Whom?” and questioning about who art’s for. And he asked us if we would show the Bethnal Green work in the gallery and we felt really rather worried about that ‘cause we thought, you know, it’s taken us all this time to get out of the art institutions, it doesn’t feel right to then to show the work there. So we weren’t sure, so we took the proposal to the hospital committee, who were absolutely adamant that we show the work there. They said, “because it will just widen our audience, people will understand what’s happening and what’s going on”. So, I could see that point, and actually, it was very useful to do that and I have had no qualms about showing in galleries ever since because in a way the work isn’t produced for the gallery, hardly ever, produced for a gallery and so therefore, showing documentation of that work in a gallery isn’t an issue. It’s also the case that galleries are where people go to see what’s looking - to see what’s going on in the arts and so if all this work is absent, then nobody knows it’s happening. So I think it’s important to keep a foot in the art world and to let the art world know that there is another sort of way of working. And Peter and I carried on writing for art journals and making this point wherever we could because we believe what we were doing was art. We could see a history of where it had come from. We felt that it was the next step for the art world, really to be engaging more directly with the public. If you think about it, the way art is in society at the moment; it’s seen as an individualistic activity, to produce objects of saleable - on the art market. Well, that’s simply capitalism. You know, we looked at our art history and realised that it was for less than five hundred years in the West that artists have been doing this, working as individuals to make saleable commodities. You know, we only look back to the Italian Renaissance and artists working in a team and producing work in the streets in the form of murals and sculptures. Even though it’s for church and state, it was a completely different way of working and the artists were, you know, training up younger artists in their studios. And so we just thought, you know, we shouldn’t worry too much about the fact that there’s half the art- most of the art world is going down that route, because if you look at the history of art, in the world, across the world, then art has always been produced with people about things that matter to them to construct meaning and to consolidate and celebrate meaning. And so, we can do that we don’t have to do what the art world seems to think we ought to do.

Interviewer
That philosophy, “Art by the people, for the people” how did that-

Loraine
(inaudible) Art with the people.

Interviewer
My apologies, “Art with the people”. How has that influenced your work as an artist up until now?

Loraine
Well, because, we have literally continued working with people, in that collaborative way. I suppose what I feel is that, as an artist, I don’t know much about the world. I have interests in the world, but I’m not an expert on things. Working with the hospital campaign, we were working with people who were experts in their field, they knew about the health issues. So it seemed to me that if I work with people

who really know stuff, I can help their voice get into the public domain in a way that it is, it's visible, it's valued and it helps create meaning in a wider society. So, I've continued to work in a collaborative way, even when large groups of people are involved because when I said I came back to participation - I've actually learnt how to work with people in larger groups where it is still collaborative. So when I say collaborative, it, it isn't about me taking something for participants to do or just to express something. I am working with the others, if even those are very young children, because of their expertise. So one I did, for example, in the, at the turn of the millennium, I did a ten a year project with children aged seven to eleven inventing a new planet in cyberspace. And there were over a thousand children. I was interested in the way the technology would actually, whether through the technology you could work with much larger groups of people and still something meaningful would come out. And I just thought well if we are all working on a new society, well, what will it be? And the only way I can find out is to create a situation, a digital setup in this case, where the children then put their ideas, which they did in a visual, as much as a textual way and that will all combine to create a new planet in cyberspace. So a new world and also, at that point, in the ninetie- at the end of the nineties, I felt politics had changed a lot because in the seventies and eighties, it was like you knew which side you were on - you were either with them or against them. A lot of us felt that if we only worked together we could change the world and then I think after Thatcher, politics became a lot more individualised and politics became more single issue. So in that situation, where it was, we weren't working with the with the grand (inaudible) we had been in the seventies and eighties - and it also wasn't appropriate to work in that way. I had to find other ways of doing it, I think I thought at that moment, I'll work with younger generations to tell them they can change the world so when they grow older, they will know that they can. So the project in, VOLCO, stood for Virtual Online Cooperative Environment - Planet VOLCO - was about letting children know that they could change the world.

Interviewer
Brilliant. And you mentioned about the political climate in the late seventies and early eighties. Can you tell me about when and how you became politicised?

Loraine
Yes, that's interesting. I always - even as a young child I had a concept of fairness so I always felt quite strongly about things in terms of being fair and equal. And I think then, just through working with people who I saw were working for the good, working to - with an interest in people's health, rather than saving money, you know. It just seemed to make sense to me. I mean, it was, it seemed rational to me that it's better to work for a better society than it is to make money. I mean working as an artist there weren't huge expectations of making a lot of money anyway, especially as I wasn't going to be selling work in galleries. So, it just made sense and I suppose the more I work with people who really understood what they were doing, the more I understood the politics and where it came from and sympathised with it. So, yeah, I don't know if that explains it.

Interviewer
How did that lead up to your involvement with the GLC?

Loraine

Yes, I'd like to explain another project before I get onto the GLC because what happened through doing the work I've described, at Bethnal Green Hospital, we then did another project where the Trades Councils had some money left over from that campaign and interestingly, instead of spending it on broadsheets or whatever, they asked us, as an artist- as artists, to work with them on how best to communicate some other issues, the wider issues about what the cuts were doing to people. That - they set up a steering group which was a really interesting way of working because that really was about how we share, all share our expertise. That's where I learnt that. In fact I think almost everything I've learnt from activists (inaudible) So at the end of that - that was called the East London Health Project and we produced a series of posters then, on, on different health issues. At the beginning of the eighties, 1979, Margaret Thatcher came into power. And one of the things that she did, her government did, was to recognise the area around London docks, the docks weren't being used so heavily because of containerisation and they were docking further down river. So there was quite a lot of land that was empty and was, had corrugated iron around it. Some of them, a lot of the warehouses were being used as workshops and warehouses, so things were changing and the area, it's a very big area, the London docks. This is how London became great, through its trade around the docks. The Thatcher government treated it as an empty area really, but thousands of people were living there, living and working, and consultation had gone on between the boroughs, all over the boroughs, about how they would regenerate that area. Actually, the word regeneration didn't exist then - redevelop the area, but to meet the needs of local people. But when the Thatcher government came in, they just saw it is a big piece of real estate with a view of the river, basically. And so because we'd been working with the Trades Councils and they saw what we could do, they came to us to say could we do a poster about it. Now, because people are very organised, as I've already mentioned, in East London, and for good reason, because East London is the industrial area, it's where people come in, immigration has happened through the docks, people have settled. But it hasn't been easy, people have had to organise in order to survive. So it's, it's the most organised area I've ever come across and in each area around the docks, all the tenants had actually already federated themselves into action groups for their area. There was no such thing as the London Docklands at that point, it was Wapping, Isle of Dogs, Southwark, Bermondsey et cetera. And, so all these groups that were representative groups, and this was real democracy at work. So then we were asked to make a poster. We needed to do research for the poster, we went and talked to all these groups. Well, they all said to us more or less the same thing, "This is really big, this issue's really big. It needs a big poster. So we need really big posters, not ordinary posters" Okay, don't know how to make really big posters but we take that on board and they said "Also we need to be able to tell people in more depth about the issues because there's so much going on, this is going to affect, you know, jobs, houses, healthcare, services, everything is going to be affected if they do what they're planning." What they were planning actually was to- they made a change, there was a new Act of Parliament brought in that changed the power so that the government could vest land away from local authorities. That means just take it, steal it - take it away from democratically elected local authorities. And they set up a development cooperation that they could give that land to the development cooperation. And that still happens, if you hear of any regeneration area now, that has a UDC - an Urban Development Cooperation - that's what they're doing, it's those powers they're using. Anyway, so the, everyone knew, who lived there, how big these issues were, important political issues not just

about - it was about, it was about the lives of people living there but you know the background to it were these huge political changes. So they said “We need to tell people more, more depth about what's happening. We also need help with our individual campaigns.” ‘Cause they were all doing their own - in each area, things were happening, they were all having their own campaigns. They said “We need help with graphics and posters, visual material and also we need a photographic record of what’s going on.” and you know they said, “The media basically represents us in it’s own way and we want to be able to have our own source of photographs so we can actually draw on them when we represent ourselves.” So we came up with a four point plan of; big posters which turned into lots of, now called, photo murals, travelling exhibitions which were sort of laminated and went on screens. This took ten years, this process, so this wasn’t quick. We didn’t have any money to start with. Graphics work and a photo archive and then basically in trying to get this going, we went to the Tower Hamlets Arts Committee - very good, interesting arts committee which had represented local people from tenants groups et cetera. And they gave us the money for materials. We went to the GLC which had just gone from being Conservative to Labour and had then voted in Ken Livingstone and his group as leader. So it went from the most right-wing, we were under the most right-wing government this country has ever had and the GLC went, not just Labour, but left-Labour. And we went to the GLC to say “We’re trying to do this project. Could we have a -we want to build this big billboard thing, we didn’t know the words for it at the time - we had nowhere to build it because we didn’t want to use advertising buildings, they were all in one place and” and they said to us, “Why do you only want one?” That would never happen now. But I think, you see, the GLC was very clever in a way that it did things ‘cause it didn’t have a lot of power but it could have a lot of influence and so, it had no jurisdiction over Docklands, but on the other hand, what it did was, it supported all the people who were getting together and organising around the London Docklands. So it supported the Joint Docklands Action Group, it supported ourselves and we became the Docklands Community Poster Project and we, you could call us the cultural arm of a campaigning community. So we weren’t the campaign but sometimes because the artefacts are the things that remain, people confuse what we did with the campaign - that wasn’t the case, we were a cultural arm of something that was highly organised, very (inaudible) , hugely democratic process, self-organised by local communities and the GLC recognised that and supported the people who were in it. And so that’s how the GLC came to have an influence over, over Docklands and that’s how we, eventually, when they set up a Community Arts Subcommittee, that’s how we eventually got funded and we, we were there for ten years doing that work, basically.

Interviewer
Tell me more about the Community Arts Subcommittee.

Loraine
So, when the, the GLC first set up, they always had a remit for the arts and they used to fund, as I understand it, about five centres of excellence, what used to be called centres of excellence, and even when there was a requirement to do a community program, it was just, they just had an education program tacked on. So, I believe it was something like five million pounds went to five different organisations, so a million to each, more or less (inaudible) it was all, it was all done by a civil servant called Lord Birkett. So there was hardly any committee discussion about any of this. Well, I’m not going

into what the GLC did with everything else 'cause you'll probably interview other people, but in the arts, what they did is that they took some of that five million pounds to put into other committees. So they set up a Community Arts Subcommittee, an Ethnic Arts Committee and I think some of it went through the Women's Committee as well. And so the Community Arts Subcommittee was, was a proper legal committee of the council and they invited - it was the adviser - it was chaired by Tony Banks who was brilliant. A brilliant politician, very astute, I think he'd worked in the media industry, in television, he understood the issues very well and his adviser was Alan Tomkins who you might be interviewing as well. Between them, they set up this committee inviting people from across the spectrum of the arts in London and then invited applications from - it had to be from organisations, you couldn't apply as an individual - but for organisations who were doing any sort of art that benefited communities. Then the committee would visit all the shortlist, and really spend some time with them and try and understand what they were doing. So although there was an application form, I have to say the funding was completely different to what it is now, in the sense that it was rigorous but it wasn't about box-ticking, you know, you had to be wanting to make a difference to a community or some communities. You had to be, your work as an artist had to be - have a social value. But, basically the value of it was ascertained by the people who visited so we all went and we - and it was quite common then, even the Arts Council used to have peer assessment boards of artist assessments, which really makes sense 'cause it means that people who are an expert in their field, are assessing other people. It's also spreading information about what happens out there, it was a very good way of doing things. It was done by the Arts Council and the regional arts associations - they've all dropped it now, it's all officer led. So then, that's what the GLC did and then we would come back to the committee and we would debate, we would debate those organisations to decide on who got the funding. So, it wasn't easy - there were no just easy handouts and we had to think about what art meant and what is culture. And so, for example, when the Dagenham Baton Twirlers applied, which was a girls group of baton twirlers and we had a long debate about whether this was art or whether this was just, you know, these were girls who couldn't play sport and therefore they were being shunted off into some, you know, lesser activity. And, the baton twirlers arrived and they were performing outside and we had a long debate and we decided it was an art form - it was their own art form and they got their money. And so it - when I say - I'm saying this to the explain that the funding was rigorous but it wasn't box-ticking, it wasn't evaluation heavy, you know, yes - you had to write a report on what you'd done, but it wasn't as it is now which is - the way funding, public funding tends to happen now is that the funders have very particular ideas about what they think is good practice, which I think that's not, not their position to impose because they don't know they're administrators and what they'll often do is they look at what they think is good practice and then try and distill it and impose it. So I had a situation where I'd been wanting to make an application to, say, the Arts Council, and they wanted to do (inaudible) and said "No, I can't do that" and somebody said "But that came from the way you used to work" and I said "Well, that's fine for that project but I might do three projects in three different ways." So you can't just impose a way, you know, a process on me and even when the Arts Council say "Oh we just have funding for the arts and it's for everybody", it isn't because if you look at what the questions are and how you are to required answers for all, you know, about eight thousand words with particular answers for all these questions then it actually guides your project into something that they've already decided. And what I'm saying is what we had then wasn't that, because people - projects were looked at for what they were and they were judged on those

terms. So there were - they were, it was critiqued, they were debated but it wasn't just all about whether you do what the (inaudible) says and then tick the boxes to say if that's happened. If it didn't work then they wouldn't get funded again. And what happened over that period is that there was a resurgence of the arts in London. It was the most fantastic time to be in London. There were festivals everywhere, there was community print shops, community video, community photography projects, there was - it wasn't just about taking arts to the people, which I think a lot of arts institutions are always saying about, even now, arts policy is very much (inaudible) give access to the arts to people. It wasn't about access, this was about involving people in the arts because, because creative expressive is a human right, it should be a human right. In fact, I read it's built into the constitution for South Africa, new constitution for South Africa, that creative expression is one of your human rights that comes not that far down list after the right to shelter and enough food, and the rest of it. So, that's why it was such an amazing time for the arts.

Interviewer
Can you tell me about any memorable moments from those marches and festivals at that time?

Loraine
Well, I suppose the memorable thing from my own project, because we didn't just do the activities I told you about and I should say, it wasn't just me. Myself and Peter, we had, we employed, there was twelve people - sorry, there were six people employed in the organisation, doing different roles. But I think the most exciting one, probably, was the People's Amardas to Parliament and that was, that happened because around Docklands, all the groups would have meetings. They were coordinated by the Joint Docklands Action Group - which I said was funded by the GLC, but it was set up by, it was all those federated groups around the Docklands who then appointed staff who were themselves planners and organisers et cetera, and then formed the committee, the Management Committee. So the Joint Docklands Action Group was managed by the people of Docklands. And one of their tasks was to just go round, there were big meetings held in all the different areas, and they would go round coordinating these, holding these meetings, and we would go to all the meetings as well. And at one meeting in Wapping, somebody said "D'you know, I think it's time to take another petition to Parliament." and somebody else said "Well, actually they're on the river and we're on the river. Why don't we take it on the river and we need a boat" and somebody stood up and said "Well, I'm a lighterman in Wapping and I have a barge. Would you like to take it on the barge?" and then somebody said "Well, can't we decorate the barge? Ooh, Docklands Community Poster Project can do that!". Anyway, so, it went from group to group and people were saying "Well, if the barge is going, can we come too?". So, eventually, on that (inaudible) first Armada, there were a few Armadas, there were a thousand people on the river. So there was this barge which we, as the Docklands Community Poster Project, we coordinated with arts groups in the area. The JDAG - The Joint Docklands Action Group - coordinated all the other groups, and so we had decorated the barge with a banner which was in the shape of a dragon. So the dragon was, sorry, the dragon was in the shape of the river that runs through Docklands and also it's a symbol of fight-back in a lot of cultures. The dragons are from the underworld, so like George and the Dragons, where the state against the underworld. It became a symbol of Dockland's fight-back with t-shirts and banners and badges and letter headings. So, that was the main barge and that was, there were a series of banners

around it that were printed by the Basement Print Workshop which was based in Cable Street at the Basement Arts Project. And the barge was then, so we had the lighterman who was actually managing, obviously, the vessel but then we had the, all the rest of it coordinated by somebody from a group called Cultural Partnerships who were based in Hackney. So, a colleague, Graham Downes, was on the barge making it all happen. And then following that, there was a flotilla of pleasure boats we hired, decked out with banners and balloons, and we all sailed to Parliament basically. And it was one of those moments that you, you know, you can go on a march and you can feel the sense of people there, but sailing down the river to Parliament - and there was music and, in fact the second Armada, a lot of people had written songs and poems and so we had a whole barge full of musicians so the sound going down the river was amazing. And also, on the Armadas, the, Graham from Cultural Partnerships was a pyrotechnics expert so we, on the third Amarda, I think it was, we sailed, first of all down river to Woolwich where the LDC offices had moved to and we circled there to cannon fire. And so it is those, it is those moments that actually make you feel "Wow, I think we have some power here" and also, just sort of brings tears to your eyes. You know, when you think about the sort of protest where you're sort of holding up a placard in the rain, the trouble with that - and this is what the Docklands communities learnt very early on - is that you're giving all the power to the people who you're seeing in authority, you're in opposition, you're still seeing them as the power givers. When you start taking back the power, that's when you're really strong and in fact that's represented in the images of the photo murals that we made - as we made them we just responded to how, what was happening. And then what we did was the, each time the, and this was funded by the GLC needless to say, then the whole flotilla would end up in Jubilee Gardens which was again given us to, the GLC gave it to us. The first time, we had a big marquee there and it was a cross between a community festival and a political rally. And the reason it was like a political rally is that strategy of the campaigners was, you know, these issues were really big, so the selling of the land was at government level and you couldn't change that except with a change of government. So there's a lot of things that could be done in terms of road going through here or housing to rent there or whatever but you couldn't change the big thing of selling off the land. And so a lot of energy went into convincing Labour politicians that when the Labour party came in, which we felt they would do at the next election, that they would, on day one, start to implement plans that were, you know, in line with what the communities had been campaigning for. Because obviously they needn't, we've seen Labour governments who just carry on Tory policy so nobody was, you know, nobody had that much trust that they wouldn't do that. So at the, each of these events there would be a political rally, in which the Labour politicians would have to stand up and say what they would do from day one of getting into power. And then what we did, as the Docklands Community Poster Project, we also made these People's Charters for Docklands. So the Joint Docklands Action Group coordinated what everyone- the key points, and then we made them into a, like an A3 poster on, mounted on (inaudible) wood so that they were given this thing that they had to take home and they had to sign up to. Now that was very powerful. The fact that there wasn't a change in government, was out of everybody's control. There were three terms of Thatcherism, unfortunately, so the land got sold off and eventually, you could say, the campaign wasn't successful because of that. A lot of things had happened on the way, but, I think the lessons from the campaign are still reverberating. And so these things don't go away and they're not for nothing, but I think those Armadas were, for me, were just the high point. Just all those people together and, and such a fun day out at the same time.

Interviewer
You mentioned how highly organised and coordinated all these committees were, and you talked about the community engagement, the sense of togetherness and taking back that power which, as you said, was a success despite Thatcher's three terms in Parliament. What lessons can we take from that?

Loraine
Do you mean what lessons can we take from-? Say it again, sorry.

Interviewer
What lessons can we take from that, taking back of power, that- rather than just standing in opposition to the state. Really engaging the communities or, as, as artists and as activists.

Loraine
Well I think it's because it's much better to get on and create models of what we, what we know and what we think can happen, and we know that from very good authority of being there. And so you probably know about The People's Plan for the Royal Docks and that was an amazing example of that. It was when there was a plan to turn the Royal Docks into an airport, which is City Airport, it's there now, and people in that area said, you know, "Actually, an airport would bring hardly any jobs, there'll be a few ground staff, we won't even get to use the airport, it'll be for business people" which is true, "and so we think that land can be much better used." and so they, the GLC had a Popular Planning Unit where Hilary Wainwright and Sheila Robotham both worked. So the people in North Woolwich contacted the Popular Planning Unit and Hilary and Sheila went down there and worked with them. Of course so did the action group and so did the Docklands Community Poster Project and they came up with this very, very, well researched plan which showed how you could bring homes and jobs and services and everything you needed into that area and it would work economically. It was backed by the council, it was put through every door in Newham we produced it as a document that was a bit like a (inaudible) supplement. It forced a public inquiry and won but the government was able to overturn it. So, if you go to the City Airport now and they say we started a public inquiry, you have to remind them that they lost. But that plan which was basically something that Hilary (inaudible) direct experience of which was the Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards Combine Plan from ten years previously and so it was that model of how you present an alternative. And I think those lessons are directly applicable, always. So in a way, the way I work now is through alternative not through, not so much through being opposition, not activism in that positional way but through using the arts to support people to make their own - bring their own ideas into the public domain. So for example, for the last nine years I've been working with a group of older men in East London called the Geezers who have ideas about, they want to know why we're not able to use the Thames or the rivers in East London to provide energy to help older people heat their homes because they say, you know, older people often can't even afford sheltered accommodation 'cause they can't afford the service charge. So why is there only wind power that we hear about and why aren't we using the power of the River Thames? They, I went to see them nine years ago on an arts project and I asked them the question about any technology that they thought would benefit themselves or the community, not knowing what they would say and they came up with that and nine

years later we are still working on renewable energy and we've already tested a turbine in the Thames and next month we will be launching what we call a streamline floating water wheel in the Lower Lea and that is going to actually - it's not so much heating the homes that one, that one is going to drive an aerator to pump oxygen into the water and keep the fish alive when pollution levels rise. But that's all come from the Geezers, you know, the- when I went to see them it, it was the result of, it was the end point of this research project at Queen Mary University where they were looking into why the life experience of older people isn't going into the development of new technologies 'cause it's all, they're all being developed by young people but the people with the most experience of life aren't informing that. And so at the end of that project, as often is the case, they tacked on some artist commissions. Well, you know, I need to start from scratch in a way. So I just went to see the Geezers and we, I had six weeks, really, before there was gonna be an exhibition and I asked them that question and they came up with tidal power as what they wanted to do and I had to say "I know absolutely nothing about it but I'll take you every step of the way that I can." and six weeks later, we had researched tidal power. We had found out that the Thames Barrier is an ideal barrage to put turbines on, we'd found the sort of turbines to use. I did a big visualisation of doing it and I'd interviewed the Geezers. I'd done video interviews so they could speak about their knowledge of why this would be such a benefit to the community and why it was so important for society at large as well. So in a way I'm still doing what I learnt then. So I say I've learnt everything from activists really and from people in the community. So that it like my version, at the moment, of an alternative and when, for example, another project I did which finished in 2012, not by coincidence, was when the London Olympics was going to take place and I knew, as many people did, that despite all the hype there wasn't gonna be anything in it for young people really. So I thought, well we could still use it, we can still make some use of this. So I used it as a hook for a project and started to develop a young person's guide to East London. Now, I'd already done a small guide to the Royal Docks with young people who had actually said we ought to do this stuff wider. So I worked with four hundred teenagers in different groups; schools, colleges, with support groups, disability groups, youth offending teams et cetera and together they came up with, obviously not just all together 'cause I did it through a series of workshops, but basically, together we built a website, an online guide - a real professional online guide to, to what's - young person's guide to East London, so what's good for young people in East London and then that went online and was visited by thousands of people at the Olympics. So what I said to those young people then is that - so this is how I work with I suppose anybody as an expert, in the way the Geezers were expert on knowing what the needs of older people were in terms of energy. And so for the young people I basically said, "Look, we're creating a guide to East London for young people but you're the only people who know. So I can help you. I can, you know, produce the website, I can show you how to take some photographs so you can help document where you think is good, but you've got decide where you think is good and you've got to say why it's good and then perhaps some photographs - I'll just make sure those photographs are really good. And so, and then that will all go on a guide and thousands and thousands of people will access it and use it. And of course those kids were hooked straight away because it was their real expertise, you know, it wasn't just an art project that, that they would do and it would go up in a classroom or something. It was real. And I think that's - and I valued their real knowledge and they respond to that value, that valuing and therefore that's what I mean about I've come back to participation in a big way because I've a found way that you can actually still work with even large

groups of people. As long as each person has a sense of ownership in what you do, as long as their ideas go into it and as long as I respect those ideas, and as an artist I can help to frame those ideas so when they appear in the public domain they're at their best. So if somebody, if a child isn't very good at drawing, I'm not gonna put their drawing to represent something but their imagination is fantastic. So I, for example, for the VULCO project I mentioned earlier, you know, it's, a lot of it is visual but I get the kids to choose objects, scan them, photograph them, put them together, write some things then it goes into big lovely colours and whatever. So it's all theirs, it's all theirs but it all fantastic, it's all theirs and it looks fantastic. So that's how I, that's how I now work in a way. I work with people as experts and I'm a sort of a means through which this stuff can get into the public domain.

Interviewer
Fantastic. Can you talk me through, back in the seventies and eighties, how different was your approach to engaging with the community and making sure that the experts you were working with did have that sense of ownership and that you were bringing the best out of them and still have the, the committee's idea of the campaign in mind.

Loraine
Oh, do you mean in the eighties?

Interviewer
Yes.

Loraine
Well, actually, what I omitted - I'm glad you asked the question 'cause what I omitted to talk about was a very important part of that project. I mentioned that with the health work that the Trades Council set up a steering group and, in fact, other artists used to say to us, 'cause there was members of the Trades Councils, not Trades Councils, Trades Health Workers Union's health campaigns and ourselves as artists and other artists used to say to us, "Isn't that like design by committee, you know, and we're the lowest common denominator. Does it mean you can't make good decisions as artists?" In fact it was opposite. It was really stimulating because everybody was sharing their expertise but they weren't trying to tread on each other's toes. So the Trades Unionists weren't saying "I think that you, that poster, you ought to, you ought to move it a bit further away, use a different colour." They weren't telling us about colours and we weren't telling them about the issues. We, they were looking at the images we produced and talked about what it meant; is this saying the right thing? And if not, what does it need to say?. So when we came to set up the Docklands Community Poster Project we took that on board and we immediately set a steering group from all those groups I told you about, that represented the different areas of Docklands and they actually met. They came together, which was a great accolade for us because they came together to begin with once a month to talk about what was needed, what needed to be communicated about Docklands and how we should do it. And that - so we talked about the photo murals, where they should be sited, what the content should be, you know, what they're about. So the first sequence, well, I say sequence, because they've changed over time, they were like slow motion animation because okay, I could describe that a bit more. We built these, we didn't use advertising

buildings, we built these structures and each structure had eighteen panels, three down and six across because we had to work out how to deal with these images. You couldn't just print them because there wasn't that sort of printing then, you couldn't just do a one off. So we did them photographically, so we did the artwork - sort of about A1, A0. That was photographed in eighteen sections, each section was blown up photographically (inaudible) photograph, three foot by four foot - don't know what it is in centimetres, pasted onto a wooden backing board, hand coloured 'cause we couldn't do it in colour. There was no colour printing at that time, really, that would work. And then sealed with (inaudible) varnish and then taken up ladders and screwed into the backing board of the photo mural and then together that made up the whole image. But because we had to take them down bit by bit and then the GLC funded us for - literally had - we built eight different mural sites. We had six in operation at any one time 'cause some were temporary and so we decided, well, we can take these down and so you have an image of the next coming through and became quite creative about that. So it was a little bit like a very slow motion animation process. So going back to the steering group, we would talk about what that sequence should be. So the first one was starting with a question of "What's going behind our backs?" which is what everyone was asking, and then it moved from that into something that somebody said at a public meeting on Docklands, he stood up and said "Do you know what's happening here? It's big money's moving in and pushing out local people" so that was our next image. So we hadn't thought about the whole sequence all the way through, we were just responding and our steering group, sort of, were the group that said, you know, "We need, we need an exhibition now on the, on housing or we need posters on this or something. So, and they were really valuable, I mean really valuable isn't even the word. They were the core of the Docklands Community Poster Project. The community members were in the majority. It was finally consolidated as a community co-op, so that was our constitution and the community members were in majority so it really was a community-led project even though Pete and I were direct- you could call us artistic directors I think we were just called artist coordinators at the time. But that's, that's how it worked and it was successful.

Interviewer
And in your own personal life, what was the response to your involvement in these creative campaigns and in politics?

Loraine
What do you mean in my personal life?

Interviewer
What did your friends and family think about your involvement?

Loraine
They were my friends and family. That was my life. I mean Pete was my partner and most of my friends are people I've worked with. So, I felt that, what can I say, I mean, when I had children I remember my oldest child, when he was a baby, I was making a dragon banner for the Armada and I had to hang him on his baby bouncer on a beam in the studio while we laid out the banner so, everyone was involved is all I can say.

Interviewer
And the public perception?

Loraine
Do you mean of the art or the campaign?

Interviewer
Both.

Loraine
I think it terms of the art there was still an interest at the time in political sort of work but we were very much outside of the art world. We were becoming more and more outside of the art world. In fact, we went to, I - you may know the Whitechapel Gallery - went to the director of the Whitechapel Gallery at the time to say, at the end of this period, to say, "Could we bring all the work together? 'Cause it'd be great to show it somewhere like East London. Whitechapel actually was built with a remit to serve the people of East London. And he said "Oh, I don't think you can show that sort of work in a gallery. You'll have to share it outside." And we said "We already do show it outside." but you know, it just wasn't going to go in a gallery. In fact, it has been shown more since, you know, it was shown in, I think in the nineties it started being regarded as a historical document and we had a - we showed it in Barcelona, we showed it in Madrid last year and now there's some people at the University of the West of Scotland have put in a bid to show it in Edinburgh and London in the next couple of years. So, people have come back to it. We had to accept that after the eighties that in a way, we had to carry on even though the art world wasn't interested but now people are interested. There's a thing called socially engaged art practice now and although the thing is, this work was never actually, because it never was really part of the art world, it's still largely overlooked even though I think people who know about, anything about the history see it as a precursor to a lot of things going on but like yourself, you know, there are young, there's a young generation that don't know that a lot of this stuff took place, but that's the reason I wrote my book, so that actually joins up the dots. And I think there are other people who are interested now in pulling together the knowledge of the different generations and see what the lessons are. And I teach art and social practice and you know for me what I'm doing is passing on the lessons, in a way, which is what my book is about as well because I don't want young people now to have to reinvent the wheel. They can do something different because obviously times are different but there are lessons that are also useful even if you want to change them so that's why I'm interested in bringing the work now into the public domain again or other people are and I'm interested in passing on that information.

Interviewer
Could you explain what socially engaged art practice is please?

Loraine
Well, to be honest, it really just means anybody who's working with people. But in practice, there is some work that is very much in the same (inaudible) as what we were doing. There's quite a lot of

institution-led, because it's become quite fashionable and now so there's a lot of institutions who now want their own sort of social practice. So money comes through commissioning and that means, and a lot of artists at biannuals get asked you know, do this, are invited to do this sort of work. So, you have to be a bit careful because it can mean, cause it really mean any art that works with people, that some of this work might be quite meaningless in terms of any wider social remit. You know, getting people to do things, for, for artistic reasons, well it's fine but it isn't, it isn't what I do. I'm interested in art as means for social change. So, social change is my aim, not creating art work. So there is a wide spectrum of different sorts of art, either for social change or for, or for the art world, really. But I think what I, what was quite useful to me was is that there's a writer on this area called Grant Kester. He's very good and he's in America but he's researched worldwide, this sort of work worldwide, quite well and when I read his last book which was called "The One and the Many" he's looking at this sort rise of global phenomenon. And I think when I looked at the fact that I really felt strongly, in the seventies and eighties, as I mentioned, this is one of the ways that art is going, or was going, that I was then quite shocked in a way when the nineties came and there was a real backlash in the art world. I mean, we had the (inaudible) artists, it was, it was the equivalent of what happened with Thatcherism, if you see what I mean. So, it was right back into the gallery and no interest whatsoever and all that sort of work was called community arts that people wrote off about murals or whatever. So I was quite despondent that that happened, although we just carried on but it seemed to happen in that States as well so that meant it that seemed quite widespread. But then what happened is that when I read Grant's book and I recognised a bit more about what was going on in the rest of the world. But actually it had carried on it was just that we had Thatcher, the States has Raegan and we both had right-wing backlashes, but not the whole world and so, there were, there are artists, globally, who are doing work that is with communities. Sometimes for very little money, you know, just doing it really for its own sake and it's very very, you know, energising to see that that's happening. So I think we were right. I think there was a movement amongst artists that this is where art needed to go. Of course there's all sorts of art, I don't mind (inaudible) galleries, I like art but I think there is a whole are of art which is much more concerned with engagement and less concerned with the art market. I think that's very encouraging and that's why I'm now (inaudible) a new MA so I can teach some of that. So, yes. I think that's, I think it's positive, potentially going positive.

Interviewer
You mentioned that you were inspired by..

Loraine
Grant Kester.

Interviewer
Yes and John Heartfield and even Russian artists. You mentioned that there was a rise in political art at the time. What do you think the Thatcher era would have looked like without those creative cultural campaigns?

Loraine

Well it would've looked like what a lot of people saw it as anyway. I mean it was just, you know it's interesting, I hear people on the radio talking about the eighties and they say "Oh, it's all about power dressing and ferraris and porsches and rising property values" So, that's what some people saw, so that, it would've been that. I mean, Docklands, you know, Docklands would've been, much as it is, there were some significant victories. For example there would've been a road going through the middle of Wapping and decimated Wapping and we did achieve housing for rent along the river at (inaudible) Gardens, south of the river. So there were certain things that are definitely great victories but I think that it would be what a lot of the rest of the world sees about that era. It would've been about individualism, getting rich, you know, and what was beginning to happen in the art world which was sort of sensational art that sold for a lot of money.

Interviewer
What do you think was the key successes that were won?

Loraine
When, in the eighties? (Yes) Through the Docklands?
I think recognising that all that was possible and recognising that even if we didn't win all of it, what could be possible. I think it gave a lot of people a glimpse into the fact that this can work, you can have democracy working in this way that it by the people, you know. It isn't, you don't have to just think that government does everything, that politics isn't just about government, it's about how you live your life and you can do things as an ordinary person to make a difference and to make things better. I think it just gave a lot, a lot of people at the time, a buzz and a glimpse into that possibility. And if they've got it, they can pass it on. You see what I mean? It's come back, hasn't it? So, it owes something to the fact that it was here before. I think, you know,we haven't talked about feminism which obviously was a really big thing at the time and I've only talked about male influences in the art but feminism was a huge issue at the time and you know that's come back as well and I remember reading a book at the time which said there's always been a women's movement this century and so, and I thought "Oh, isn't that strange? I thought it was just now" But actually it reminded me that these things go in waves and therefore the last wave really matters to the next wave. So, you know, what's happened is a dip in between. It's not what is, it's not what exists. That we are, we can come back, we come back in a different form but actually there is still a potential for socialism even if the socialism looks different because the times are different but there is still a desire for that and people are willing to do things not for personal gain but because - to better the society and so that's, it's very encouraging and it's very lovely to see. I can't tell you how it fills me with joy to see young people now who are actually wanting to make this happen.

Interviewer
What do you think the future holds for the current generation? Particularly activists and creative campaigners.

Loraine

It's hard to say what the future holds when we've just Brexit and we've got Trump because that all looks so dire so I will try and remove those things from the equation. Yes, if it wasn't for those things.. I think there is a chance to, to put some things in place now. You have to remember that they won't last forever and so this will be the top of the wave, which will eventually go away, but it might be here for some time. Quite a lot could be achieved in that time but I think the more joining together we do, the better, because in a way the worst sign of things happening are about divisiveness and I suppose I go through a process in my own work of joining up. It's all about joining up because it's that sense that actually things do belong to each other you can support each other. You could be different to somebody but you all share, there's things you all share. And It doesn't matter if you differ in some ways because you come together with the things that you share and you make each other stronger. And so I do believe that there, human beings do have the capacity to make a better society and can do it. Naturally, things aren't so much better now, as far as Brexit and Trump, than they were then. I mean, you know, when I look back to that video we did for the hospital campaign, I only saw it last week for the first time, it's just been digitised. I mean, I saw it then in seventies but it's just been re-digitised and I was horrified at how male it was and I was aware then, you know, of feminism and I was a feminist but it reminded me of how much we needed feminism. And the fact that I can look at it now and think "Oh my God, this is ridiculous" 'cause all the doctors are male, the patients, everyone we interviewed was male, even my partner who did the voiceover and so and I just thought we wouldn't do that now. You just wouldn't do it. So I think an awful lot of gains have been made that perhaps you only get a sense of how much when you look back to then. So things have moved on, things have improved. Despite the lack of equality, there is much more equality in the world. I mean look at what happened to gays, I mean, look what people went through, you know, only a few decades ago. So I just think that, however imperfect things are now, that there have been huge, huge, huge, gains and I think when those gains are just not individual but they are played out in a, in a bigger arena, like through the GLC, like the confidence that was gained through having a committee and an Arts Subcommittee, a Women's Committee, an Ethnic Arts Committee, just that confidence that that's okay and that supports some people to develop, that actually counts for an awful lot and it sort of, the ripples go on and so I think it's not always tangible to see, to trace each thing that has happened but I have no doubt that if all that hadn't happened, with the GLC and with the other initiatives, Social Solutions, at the time, we wouldn't be in the place we are now. So things don't change just because time changes, things can get worse, things can stay very, very rigid and so I think, I think an awful lot was achieved actually.

Interviewer
You mentioned the importance of joining together and the fact that the people you worked with were your friends and family and all of these networks that you formed. In light of that, were there any divisions?

Loraine
Oh, God, yes. Oh, It wasn't all sweet and light, no. Oh, my God, no. No. I mean, the more collective things are, the more difficult it is to manage and yes, it was no coincidence that in the middle of the Docklands Community Poster Project which was a community co-op that I I trained in conflict resolution. You know, I was in, I was involved in a collective, another collective in East London which was very torn

apart. And so, I think most people who've been involved in collectives know, and there was a very, there was a very good paper written in 1979 called "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" by, hmm.. well I can probably remember who it is anyway I can't remember who it is for now. And that was about, the fact if there's no structure, then people make their way by personal power so that's how, if you have a collective where everyone feels that they're equal,but you have no, you haven't sorted out roles, different roles and responsibilities, that the people who - there are people who will grab power just because it's there to be taken. And so I did this training, 'cause it was very cheap, the training. And I think it cost five pounds or something which was you know,at the time and then I realised that if I stayed on with this organisation (inaudible) Conflict and Change that if I became a neighbourhood conciliator I could then receive more training. So I did eventually stay for six years and worked as a, in my spare time, as a voluntary mediator and conciliator and those skills are absolutely valuable for me. Not just about where there is actual conflict, but in my work when I'm collaborating with a lot of people. I now have no fear of going into situations where there's a lot of different ideas because I sort of know that difference is positive. Difference is what makes new things happen and what you have to do is just be aware of what everyone's needs are. I would always, in a collaborative, I would always try and find out what everyone really wants in a situation and I remember a trainer, a mediation trainer once said "You know, when you go through the course of mediation and you ask each person what they want and whatever" and she said "If none of it works, all you've got left is creativity" and I thought "Well, I can do that bit!" and in a way, a lot of my projects are really like that - creativity - it's the project VULCO, the planet in cyberspace. All those thousand children who took part, the place, cyberspace is the safe space where people could come together, fairly anonymously and they could work together 'cause I linked up kids here with kids in other places, who they didn't know. They just thought they were Vulcan's from another settlement and therefore they didn't dwell on their differences, they dwelt on, 'cause they were all Vulcan's, they were really interested in their differences. So, yeah, so in a way I think the divisions were really part of it. I mean feminism, you know, now it's delightful to see the resurgence of feminism and I just sometimes wonder if, if young feminists know what the feminist movement was like, which was, as positive and you can't say that it wasn't as positive (inaudible) to describe how important it was, but you know, there were so many factions, that you know, there were people whose lives were destroyed by the factionalisation. You know, radical feminists, socialist feminists, you know, which pigeonhole do you put (inaudible) sometimes feeling, being heterosexual felt, you know, a bit like dodgy like you shouldn't really be there, or if you had a relationship with a man. So, but, on the other hand it was all very important but yes we had to manage an awful lot of issues and I think it's good to, to learn some of those skills, to manage them before they come up again.

Interviewer
What-

Loraine
Also, no I should say, the other thing that I learnt from it in terms of the roles and responsibilities. So I learnt that structure is fine and I leant that authority is fine. Authority isn't power. So through my training; conflict and resolution, that if, and I did end up as a trainer to (inaudible) and conflict, which was also very useful and that often where there is a conflict, and it's - usually comes across as a personal

clash, but ten to one you'll find it's issue of roles and responsibilities. So if you're very clear about these things from the outset then there's much, less likely to be a problem. So when I set up my current organisation, cSPACE, I had no qualms about setting it up as a regular charity, you know, I'm the artistic director and there's a board of trustees and when I've had freelance staff, you know, I manage them and I supervise them and give them appraisals and, because everyone knows where they are, you know. If I'm working for somebody else, I don't want to suddenly feel that I'm on equal par to them and I've just come into this organisation and it's just a job to me to be honest and then suddenly I can say something and that person who's been working here for twenty years or something, I can just say "Well, I don't.. Oh, I think that's rubbish" you know, so it matters that you actually identify where people are in that structure and you recognise that it's not about power relations it's just about making things work efficiently and everyone being where they are getting what they need from it.

Interviewer
You've talked about the importance of those facilitation and mediation skills and again the structure and roles, roles and responsibilities. What would you say to someone on the street that wants to get involved in activism? Do they have to equip themselves with those skills? What would you say to someone like that?

Loraine
Well I think first of all, you start where you are and you do, you work with something that you feel passionate about and I think you just.. I don't think you can go into training to be an activist but I suppose you can just be aware of those issues, so I would.. you know I teach my students something I learnt in conflict resolution, it's one of the basic skills and it's called active listening and it's how you really hear what somebody has to say and how you draw out from somebody what they think. In a way, I suppose, you see I do it in my projects because I try to draw out people's creativity and find out what they've got to offer, so it's sort of second nature but it isn't second nature to other people, I learnt it and other people can learn it so I think active listening is a really basic skill that is very useful to learn and I think if you're going to work in a collective it would, yes it would be really useful to go and do some conflict resolution training so at least you'll have a, you will have a, sort of a basis to start from but I don't think it should stop you, I don't think you should think "Well.. I'm not ready to be an activist yet cause I've not done my training"

Interviewer
And what advice would you give to yourself as a young, budding artist back in East London?

Loraine
About what?

Interviewer
About politics.

Loraine

What would I give myself, myself now, tell myself then?

Interviewer
Yes

Loraine
Oh, my God... life isn't going to be easy. Yeah, life is bloody hard and it throws things at you and you just have to carry on, basically. You just have to learn how to put one foot in front of the other and when life throws difficult stuff at you, you have to keep moving and never stop. I think that's what I would say.

Interviewer
And what would you say to a young person in this current generation?

Loraine
I would say, if you're gonna be an artist, find another means of earning a living. 'Cause I know what the arts funding situation is, I know what it's like so when I meet students.. I think to earn a living as an artist now, even the way I did, which was through fundraising and stuff, would be really really hard. I'm not saying that anything is impossible but it would be even harder than what I did and that was hard. So I think that's what I would say. I would say, yeah I think, because also I'm a mother so I would say find a way of earning a living, that's what my parents said to me, of course I didn't, because that's the nature of being a parent. I would also say, follow your heart, do what you have the energy for, don't do what's - something because it seems sensible. Because you can see people who've lived their lives doing something sensible and think "Oh at some point I'll do that thing I really want to do." Well, why not do it? I mean, I just think you need to follow, I think you need to go where your energy is. If your heart's not in it, don't do it. And that sort of might sound contradictory to earning your living but you can earn your living as long as you get - as long as you're focused on the thing that really matters, you can do other things and you don't lose, then you don't lose your way because I think, yes, I think I've learnt that when you're on your path, let's say, so you're following your energy, it's a sort of a flow and it takes you there, it just takes you there, you don't have to try, you go with it. And I've also learnt that when you have a gut feeling about something, that it's almost certainly right and just telling yourself that it may not be right isn't really helpful. That if you have a gut feeling about something, really you ought to go with that because your body is a much stronger mechanism than your brain on it's own and I think sometimes your core being can process something and it gives you a message and it tells you that you need to do this and your brain can be saying "Oh, don't do it yet, or no, no don't do it, be sensible" but you sort of know that's what you need to do, or don't need to do and I would just say that you need to go with it.

Interviewer
That's brilliant advice. And lastly, any final words you'd like to share?

Loraine
About?

Interviewer
Anything.

Loraine
Well, only that I think it's fantastic that this work is being done about the GLC and the fact that there are young people now who actually are willing to take the time to look back, you know, to the past and also take the time to interview us old folks and find out what we've got to say and feel that we have something to say and want to learn and take that information and go forward in an informed way so I'm really, I feel delighted about the way, what I see is happening amongst the younger generation.

Interviewer
Fantastic. Well, thank you for speaking to me, Loraine. I've had an incredible time listening to you speak about your journey as an artist from the seventies and the eighties up until now and your involvement in the creation of British culture and the creation of what London is today - and our history activists and as campaigners and I really enjoyed speaking to you. Thank you so much!

Loraine
(Inaudible) I've enjoyed it as well.