**The Emotional Expression of Solidarity:**

**The Subversive Potential of Collective Emotions In and Beyond the Classroom**

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**Abstract:** This chapter explores the creative potential of pedagogy beyond the classroom. It focuses on a seven-day gallery installation, REFUGEE JOURNEYS THROUGH THE BALKAN ROUTE: A CRISIS NO MORE?, which brought to life a series of field work experiences of four academics who embraced alternative methodological and dissemination practices in the context of the European Refugee/humanitarian crisis. The week-long installation featured a series of public speakers, interactive maps and videos, photographs as well as an arts and craft table. Guests were invited to draw, colour, and create a quilt to express their experiences of the gallery installation as they reflected on the various aspects of the installation. This chapter attends to the role that creative methods can play in the understanding of emotional practices of everyday international relations. In so doing it pays particular attention to the collective process of quilt making and the stories that were shared during the making of a patch, as part of a wider quilt representing the region. We offer to the reader the opportunity to reflect on the artefacts (quilt squares) that emerged during this time. These squares, and their memories, are included in order to transcend the voices of the authors, and in so doing, bring to live the co-collaborative nature of the crafting space within the installation. The stories revealed through the quilt-making exercise demonstrate the emotional impact of the exhibit, while pushing us, as academics, to wonder what subversive roles emotional knowledge can play within a neoliberal university environment. We explore how learning beyond the university unlocks the capacity for creative and emotional practices relevant to everyday IR. Moreover, we begin to assess how such emotional and creative processes provide a space for non-hierarchical learning that can capture, and render explicit, emotional pedagogical qualities relevant to a creative interpretation of Global Politics.

**Introduction**

It is commonly understood that the higher education sector in the UK is becoming increasingly neoliberal (Harrowell et al. 2018; Günel et al. 2020), with a focus on market position, rankings and students as customers. This is part of a growing international trend where, ‘education has been defined as an industry, and educational institutions have been forced to conduct themselves more and more like profit-seeking firms’ (Connell 2013, 102). This approach to higher education - to teaching, researching, and learning collectively - risks prescribing a particular form of pedagogy, one that trains a productive workforce geared towards ‘capital formation’ (Connell 2013, 104). In so doing, it limits the potential research methods available to scholars to build the knowledge base on which they develop their teaching materials. In this chapter, we offer an approach to pedagogy that is rooted in an active research agenda and focuses on creativity, empathy, and emotions. To do this, we draw on our experiences of disseminating research outside of the University setting: approaching scholarship and pedagogy as symbiotic and fluid, as mutually reinforcing experiences that exist not only within the walls of a University, but that can also be reimagined as public experience.

In taking our scholarly and educational practices outside the University and, in this case, to a public gallery, we challenge the *ivory tower* approach to academia, which protects knowledge for a certain group of people who pay to access that knowledge, and, instead, open it up to a wider, public audience. In this chapter, we discuss our experience of choreographing an installation for the Tate Exchange Programme in Liverpool,[[2]](#footnote-2) of fostering a creative approach to meaning-making within that space, and of the responses and educational experiences of the visitors to the space. In our reflections, we recognise the importance of user-generated content, of providing opportunities for people to reflect creatively on what they are witnessing and the opportunity for transformational experiences that challenge attitudes, interests, beliefs and values (Patel et al. 2016). We also recognise that our account of the exhibition is only our experience, grounded in our own positionality, and that others entering these spaces engage with them differently at the intersection of different oppressions and privileges.

Our chapter has three parts. First, we consider the literature on emotional pedagogies, using this as a lens through which to examine the explicit goal of the Tate Exchange Programme to challenge the status quo by re-imagining individual, communal and institutional values. We introduce and problematise the notion of a neoliberal subjectivity and draw on emotional pedagogies articulated by black feminists and feminists of colour to wonder at the potential that affective, emotional, embodied experiences can play in unsettling the neoliberal gaze. In our framing of the spaces that we presented, we offer the possibility of alternative gazes within an educational setting: gazes which challenge the patriarchal and colonial articulations of migration, but also, more broadly, the setting of museums and the stories they tell. We argue that the potential for emotional and affective learning is possible within the installation itself: its truly transformative potential lies beyond both higher education and Museum institutions and with the people who visit it.

In the second part of this chapter, we describe the choreography of the installation, explaining how we set out the space to ensure the movement of visitors through it on an intended journey. The installation brought together photographs and audio-visual materials from a research project (@IR\_Aesthetics) that focuses on the spaces, stories and journeys of refugee reception along the Balkan Route(s).[[3]](#footnote-3) The purpose of the exhibition was to create awareness of the current situation facing refugees and to challenge the idea that the ‘crisis is over’ (Bird et al. 2017). In doing so, we intended to provide a space in which visitors could ‘transform’ (Patel et al. 2016) their knowledge of the current situation and respond creatively to it through leaving us messages or through participating in the creation of a solidarity quilt which sat at the heart of the week-long schedule of curated activities.

In the third section we unpack this creative experience and draw relationships between these creative outputs to the emotional pedagogies that inform the choreography of the Tate Exchange Exhibit. Beyond the physical material there were also a number of organised talks, walking tours of the photographs, as well as ‘story time’ sessions and colouring books to welcome younger guests. There were also opportunities to engage informally with us, as researchers and educators, as we remained present in the space throughout the seven-day installation.

In applying to the Tate Exchange Programme, we hoped to welcome our own students into the Museum and to prompt a different engagement with questions of migration, borders and global politics. We also hoped to welcome a new audience of those who are prevented by neoliberal constraints from accessing academic work - work that is often either presented inside University buildings or published behind pay walls. As we have come to reflect on our time within the gallery space, however, and come to engage more deeply with a growing body of research in International Relations focused on museums, memory and how we think about and curate history (Lisle 2016; Tidy and Turner 2020), we recognise that we may have swapped one *ivory tower* for another. In the conclusion, we gesture towards the role of museums and galleries as ‘everyday (rather than spectacular) sites of coloniality’ (Tidy and Turner 2019, 4). We reflect that they themselves may establish hierarchies of those who comfortably access these spaces and those who feel they do not belong. This is not a question of fiscal barriers to entry, as the Tate space in which we were housed was free to enter, but rather a question of who feels comfortable entering a formal gallery. As the chapter draws to a close we imagine a way of navigating future exhibitions, of thinking more deeply about subversive pedagogies, and how access to higher education can be broadened beyond the formal University and beyond the *ivory tower*.

**Part One: Imagining a Pedagogy of Embodied Discomfort**

We begin our rehearsal of both our experience of the Tate Exchange, Liverpool, as well as our mutual interpretation of an emotional pedagogy, by way of acknowledging the individuals who passed through the space we choreographed. Neoliberal articulations of Higher Education, and the student therein, offer the idea of the student as a consumer. This image is supported by a language including, but not limited to, a subject that seeks a material good (education), delivered through employees (the academic), through a business exchange (the payment of fees), thus guaranteeing an optimal outcome (a high class degree award). This neoliberal subjectivity brings with it a particular gaze (hooks, 2003): one that is inculcated in, and indeed perhaps embraces, the colonial and patriarchal structures that not only frame Western society, but also feature prominently in the migration narratives which we look to trouble.

It bears remembering, however, that while this image of the neoliberal student as consumer may dominate Higher Education policy it does not reflect the mind-set of all the students that enter our classrooms, or, those that experienced the Tate Exchange Exhibit. If we fail to acknowledge this dissonance, we run the risk of contributing to what Heyes identifies as a ‘melancholic loss’. We would, in this instance, inadvertently further a ‘two dimensional representation’ of student responses to neoliberalism (Heyes, this volume) while remaining captive to neoliberalism’s ability to co-opt research agendas, to deny the opportunity to ask questions, to champion individuality, and silence creativity (Davies 2005, 7). It is with this awareness that we, like Heyes, argue on behalf of the possibilities of a heterogeneous learning journey. We do so with an awareness of the writings of Davies, who reminds us of neoliberalism’s particular ability to ‘make emotion, humour, poetry, song and a passion for life on the intellect unthinkable’ (2005, 7). To support our ideas, arguments, and subversive forms of pedagogic agency, we demonstrate throughout this chapter the possibilities of a creative, curious, and reflexive learning journey, in the context of a museum that fosters the (potential) possibilities of an emancipatory gaze.

We set out this vision through the invocation of a pedagogy of discomfort as narrated by Zembylas and Boler (2002) which seeks, as its primary goal, to push individuals outside of their comfort zone(s). It demands a self-reflexive engagement, asking individuals not simply what they have been taught to see, but also what they have been taught to ignore. Zembylas and Boler (2002) draw on this framing in their own work as they interrogate post 9/11 expression of patriotism:

We argue that a pedagogy of discomfort, unlike critical media literacy, offers direction for emancipatory education through its recognition that effective analysis of ideology requires not only rational inquiry and dialogue but also excavation of the emotional investments that underlie any ideological commitment such as patriotism. A pedagogy of discomfort invites students to leave behind learned beliefs and habits, and enter the risky areas of contradictory and ambiguous ethical and moral differences.

The inherent value of a pedagogy of discomfort lies in its call to engage in a self-reflexive, subjective, interrogation aware of the challenges posed by risk and ambiguity. Yet, it says little on the particular roles that emotional experiences can play throughout this lived experience. While we witnessed such reflexive experiences during our Exhibit, we sought out, in greater detail, the possibilities of emotions, both personal, and communal, as the Exhibit was opened to a wider audience. Aware of a need to further reflect on the role that emotions can play within the emancipatory ends of a pedagogy of discomfort, we turned to Ionade’s (2003) work on emotional pedagogy as it provides a timely intervention into the possibilities of embodied discomfort.

In order to render the complimentary nature of these two alternative pedagogies clear we describe to the reader what this interweaving might look like. We acknowledge an emotional pedagogy’s commitment to challenge colour blindness and race in both the classroom and the wider higher education curricula, drawing on the writings of Ioanide to explore the emotional possibilities within choreographed learning experiences:

The pedagogy of emotional engagement involves pausing to make students’ existing beliefs objects of inquiry exactly in those moments the affective logics seek to protect those beliefs most ardently. It asks students to reflect on their emotional attachments to articulate values, principles, and ways of being. It invites advantaged and disadvantaged students to openly scrutinise fears of losing friendships and familial bonds, chances toward economic and professional mobility, and physical safety as a result of aligning with anti-racist feminist praxis (Ioanide 2019, 339).

Ioanide challenges the presence of white privilege in the classroom, demanding that advantaged students critically interrogate the intersection of race and privilege in their own lives. Herein lies the particular value of interweaving pedagogical approaches. She describes to the reader the emotional outcomes of a reflexive interrogation of the embodied, particularly positioned, self. What is more, she recounts her own observations of students as they sought to reposition themselves amidst the disorientation of a shifting world gaze. Here, Ioanade goes further than Zembylas and Boler (2002), describing an embodied discomfort, reckoning with the hierarchies and structures of violence previously ignored. She alludes to the possibilities of an altered gaze, when affective logics are properly deconstructed. Her writings raise an awareness of the possibilities of transformation like that discussed by hooks (2003), or silencing as discussed by Zembylas and Boler (2002), while carving out a particular emotional influence to this process.

As we developed our installation and imagined the journey a visitor would take through its spaces, we sought to recreate a sense of this embodied discomfort. We actively sought to interrogate, and challenge in turn, the gaze that individuals brought to their experience of the Tate Exchange. To achieve this objective, we could not simply foster the emotional reflexivity articulated by Ioanade. We also sought to bear witness to the journeys of those passing through the exhibit’s space. Our first goal was to problematize the narrative of a ‘refugee crisis’. Herein lay the particular role for an emotional intervention. We attempted, through various artefacts that comprised the Exhibit, to generate a form of emotional resonance on the part of the audience and, in so doing, embrace its reflexive potential (Beattie 2019). We hoped to see an emergence of an imagined relationship between the individual and the artefacts upon which they gazed. If successful, this experience would cultivate an embodied discomfort in the spirit of Zembylas and Boler (2003), thus prompting the same reflexive interrogation described by Ioande (2003). Drawing on these ideas, we hinted at the intersection of a privilege that emerges depending on one’s passport, country of origin, race and positionality.

We engaged in an act of deliberate curatorship when preparing our Tate installation to foster this embodied discomfort. We structured the space strategically, asking visitors to engage and reflect in particular ways, embracing the idea of a choreographed space. Reeves (2018) writes that individuals in galleries are bodies in motion and for them to experience the gallery, and its spaces, is to choreograph the experience. Choreography, she reminds us, tells the story of design. In particular, it shapes how architects, designers and managers imagine the experience of a space. Our use of space was, indeed, instrumental and sought to discomfort individuals through an interrogation of their own migratory privilege. Artefacts were positioned so as to generate an embodied gazing experience. The embodiment of discomfort that we imagined began with an acknowledgment of the privilege of an (assumed) European Passport intersecting with broader themes of a common humanity. If humanity could offer an emotionally resonant tie, we then queried how it might inform a reflexive engagement with a particularly situated experience of privilege. We could not, however, predict how this might unfold in real time. We embraced Reeves’s (2018) idea of idiosyncrasy within choreography, to allow individuals to navigate the Exhibition space on their own terms, to wonder at their own affective logics, while allowed for a negotiation of artefacts through space.

Our own lived experiences of fieldwork, which produced the artefacts for the Exhibit, fostered embodied discomforts of our own. While this chapter does not speak to that reflexive experience, it signals a necessary conversation about how to support the audience of the Exhibit. Having established how we choreographed the space, employed a particular design, while carving out space for the idiosyncratic, a second objective remained: How might we, as curators, bear witness to the journeys of those within the Tate Exchange Exhibit? We drew on Witcomb’s research, which seeks to understand how exhibitions can draw on affective experiences in order to engage not simply with museum installations but also, poignantly, how ‘embodied experiences can be translated into critical forms of thinking’ (2013, 256). In this vein, the space in the Tate itself was important, but so too were the discussions about how we envisaged the coming to life of the installation and its experience by visitors. It is with this awareness that we now turn to a description of the Tate Exchange space, the design of the exhibit, and the use of creative methodologies therein.

**Part Two: The Tate Exchange, Liverpool: *Refugee Journeys Through the Balkan Route: A Crisis No More?***

The Tate Liverpool hosts a space, the Tate Exchange, which invites scholars, activists and members of the wider community to engage with topics relevant to society and to bring their work in to the gallery. As their website explains, the Tate Exchange Programme has very specific goals. They seek to ‘collaboratively produce a program that explores the impact of art on individuals, communities, and societies’. The programme attempts a different approach to using museum spaces, one that builds on their work to invite members of the public into the spaces and places of galleries. As Patel, Health, Vom Lehn & Cleverly (2016, 70) explain, this program gestures to a growing endeavour in UK Galleries and Memorial sites to be places of potential individual transformation. Such spaces, they write, ‘provide opportunities for creativity; opportunities not simply for learning but for what have been characterized as ‘transformational’ experiences that significantly change an individual’s attitudes, interests, appreciation, beliefs and values’. We channelled this creativity, approaching the notion of transformation with caution, while at the same time remaining mindful of the goals of an emotional pedagogy which, drawing on affective and emotional embodied experiences, provide opportunities for reflexivity, renegotiation and alternative modes of coming to know.

The installation was in a rectangular space, framed by three walls (one long and two shorter sides), the forth being open to passing visitors who engaged with other exhibits in the Tate. This spacing provided us with the perfect opportunity to take our visitors on a journey before asking them to join us at a central table to discuss that journey. On the left wall there was a screen on which we played an interactive map.

<Figure 10.1 here>

Photograph by IR Aesthetics

The map detailed instances of violence and push backs that take place at borders, as well as, the multiple routes, returns, and areas of being stuck or trapped that refugees face in the region. The visualized paths of refugees were not causal, nor linear. To move, then pause and negotiate the closure of a border is to understand that journeying along the Balkan Route(s) is unique to each of those who travel upon it. The map sought to document this lack of uniformity and universality. In front of the map, we placed chairs, to allow guests to sit with the representation of the journeys and to place themselves on the path. Opening the exhibition with a map such as this one is a peculiarity in and of itself: while the routes that it presented are non-linear, it was the first step on the journey of the installation that we choreographed as, in fact, a linear journey through our space. Following on from the map, the visitors were invited to engage with eight sets of photographs presented on three walls, entitled: ‘Roads’, ‘Borders’, ‘Refugee camps’, ‘Life outside refugee camps’, ‘Reclaimed spaces’, ‘Abandoned space’, ‘Protest and solidarity’, and ‘Volunteers’.

Our visitors joined us on a journey: a journey that both traversed a given space, but also, an internal journey which they had the opportunity to take as individuals or to share with us creatively at the central table. We began by introducing the route(s) themselves and highlighted the fact that they are changeable. The photos in the first collection focused on the vast openness of space, a lack of protection from the elements, and a lack of support during some of the journeys that individuals fleeing war and persecution are forced to take. The second set focused on borders and how some inanimate objects are used to construct them, how bordering practices are not simply those that can be visualized through barbed wire, but rather that bordering can be violent both through the spectacular and the banal (Obradovic-Wochnik and Bird 2020). This collection also shared examples of graffiti we photographed that challenged and condemned bordering practices. In principle, the photos concentrated on the same objects that refugees would observe, come in to contact with and witness on their own journeys.

To contrast these open spaces, visitors were then invited (in the third, fourth and fifth set of photographs) to enclosed spaces: refugee camps, squats and abandoned buildings. We highlighted striking differences between different forms of shelter and living spaces (see Bird et al. 2020). We reflected, through our choreography, on the challenges of overcrowding, and the burgeoning reliance on squats as temporary cum permanent places of shelter. The photos in this section showed dilapidated buildings of the Athens’ Olympic Village, the port of Piraeus, and the abandoned Captain Elias Hotel on the Island of Kos. In the initial planning for the installation, we had hoped to be able to make use of lighting and temperature to add to the discomfort people felt when engaging with certain groupings of photographs (particularly those documenting camp spaces). However, due to gallery restrictions, we were unable to deliver on this additional layer of choreographed sensory experience. We were able to include sounds taken from our own research journey along some of the roads and path of one of the many ‘routes’ as an approach to disrupting the otherwise sanitized and quieted space of a gallery. The final sets of photographs focused on the work of volunteers supporting refugees on their journeys through the distribution of clothes, food and medical provisions, and the provision of educational activities; these bright and colourful images contrast against those of the camps and border areas.

On the right side of the room, we positioned a projector screening a 20-minute video loop. The video included material we recorded in 2017 and 2018 as we spent time in spaces and places in the region. The loop animated the environment visitors had engaged with through the photographs, bringing them to life. It also brought sound into the space. The loop sought to foster a particular sense of disorientation that was designed purposely to foster feelings of unease.

Moving beyond the loop, the final space in the installation asked visitors to reflect on the experiences of activists and volunteers working within the region. A shelf full of ingredients was the final aspect we asked guests to consider before joining us at the central table. On the shelf sat just under 4 kg of sugar, 4 jugs of milk and over 50 tea bags: the recipe for providing 40 people with a basic cup of sugared tea. In our research, we saw that such a simple gesture can mean an awful lot. This final section of the exhibition paid homage to activists and the work they do, to deliver food and drinks to those who need them most - whether that is people living homeless outside camps, or those whose circumstances make it impossible for them to join a queue for food that could last for 5 hours or more.

In putting together this project we were intentional in choreographing the broader space in which the installation was presented, attending to the way visitors would move around the space, the emotional responses we hoped to invoke, and the pedagogical intentions to transform and to challenge. In thinking through our spacing, it was key that the presence of our installation challenged and disrupted. Such disruption is key to invoking the responses of visitors. The use of reproduction banners, here was twofold. They facilitated a sense of disruption within the Tate Exchange space while complimenting the other visual component we had witnessed: graffiti. These banners divided the room breaking it down into smaller space. They stated, ‘Refugees welcome’ in English and, in Greek, ‘Solidarity with refugees’. We also focused on the curation of the photographs themselves and the content we felt would challenge our visitors, without causing vicarious harm. We sought to recognise the role of researchers, journalists, museums and galleries in racialising, othering, and space coding who does and who does not belong. Who is 'spoken about rather than to, (presented as) objects... the subject line of white liberal guilt' (Tidy and Turner 2019, 11). In choosing the photographs for this exhibition, we were conscious not to reproduce these images, not to make human beings into a spectacle for the white male gaze, bodies that could be used to tell not their story but the story that the researcher, the teacher, the journalist, or the curator wanted to tell (hooks 2010). As storytellers, researchers and teachers, we do not have a right to tell anyone’s story, yet it is important that we propel the stories of the spaces into wider circulation, that we share the injustices these spaces cause without compounding them.

In curating the photographs, then, we were cautious not to include recognisable human beings in any of our photographs; where a person is present they are in the distance, in a situation where it was impossible to avoid their presence, but they are not the focus and they cannot be recognised. We made this choice because placing human beings, often without informed consent, on the walls of a sanitised space turns them in to objects and in so doing takes away their story and their history; instead, it captures a single moment in time intended to invoke white liberal guilt (Tidy and Turner 2019). The use of photographs such as these does not subvert or challenge; instead, it sits within a historical tradition of othering that embodies the *status quo* and does not encourage guests, visitors or learners to engage in critical self-reflection. We return to this discussion in the conclusion and delve further into the ethics of engaging in research in these spaces and places, as well as in the reproduction of stories. We wonder how best to problematize and to challenge the *status quo* of research and teaching within and beyond higher education. How can we build a local, national and international movement that respects the central values of education and research and does not fall into the many traps of the neoliberal system of higher education?

**Part Three: Creative Methodologies and the Emotional Expression of Embodied Discomfort**

Having set out, in part one, the pedagogical theories that informed our design of the Tate Exchange Exhibit, and outlined, in the previous section, how that design was choreographed, we now turn to the objective of bearing witness to the unfolding learning journeys of those who passed through the Exhibit. To rehearse what we observed, heard, and conversed about requires that we turn our attention to the centre of the Tate Exchange space where a square communal table was located. It was here, at this table, where creative method making was enacted. Our hope was that this space would invite much that is otherwise absent within neoliberal framings of higher education. Specifically, the hope was that the space would allow individuals the opportunity to reflect, to spontaneously develop informal relationships (however temporal and impermanent) that would foster an embodied learning on the part of the visitors and the curators. While the space pushed back on the identified pitfalls of neoliberalism, it was also a space to immerse one’s self in the idiosyncrasies of a (possible) embodied discomfort, in the presence of similarly dis/oriented individuals.

There were two reasons for this communal space. First, this space fostered what Ionade calls ‘self-reflexive attitudes’ that engender, rather than negate, learning. As she writes, there are no strict rules to a pedagogy of emotional engagement; however, it is rooted in ‘emotional openness and relinquishes affective rigidity’ (2003, 339). All visitors were invited to sit and colour, tell stories, reflect, and contribute to the making of a patchwork quilt, itself a creative representation of the Balkan Route(s).

<Figure 10.2 here>

Photograph by IR Aesthetics

It was soon apparent that crafting and colouring provided a flexibility that accommodated the emotional experiences of the installation. What is more, in facilitating this space, we also remained mindful of the ethical challenges that accompany this type of pedagogical approach. Herein lies the second reason for the crafting and shared storytelling space. It fostered an unexpected sense of empathy and solidarity. As Zembylas writes,

An ethic of empathy and caring is necessary to provide a safe place for students to examine, challenge, and charge their cherished beliefs and assumptions. How teachers and students speak, how they listen, when and how they ‘confront one another matters’ (Zembylas 2015, 56).

The flexibility afforded by the Tate space, unlike traditional classrooms, allowed for individuals to engage in their own time, and their own ways. The experience of an embodied discomfort, or an emotional resonance, did not formally conclude with a timetabled learning session. What is more, we were not limited to single chairs and the tables could be moved so as to accommodate the possibilities of sharing stories and experiences. We were able to be flexible in the ways people grouped, the areas people chose to congregate in and the conversations they chose to start. Here, we were able to embrace the notion that education is an interactive and social experience (Connell 2013). It is within these encounters that caring and trust are developed and individuals seek to move beyond exclusive categories and hierarchies of power.

What we had not anticipated, or (if we are completely honest) prepared ourselves for, was the exceptionally moving reflections of our guests: their reflections on the videos they had watched, the stories they had read, and the photos they had gazed upon. The creative space facilitated a negotiation of the affective and embodied experiences articulated and dwelled upon by Ioanade. In drawing out emotional responses, this activity allowed for individuals to negotiate the shifting intersections of privilege, reflect on their discomfort, and embrace a curiosity open to the possibilities of learning. It was within this space that affective dissonances were openly acknowledged and interrogated. Gazes, within this space, were shifting.

<Figure 10.3 here>

Photograph by IR Aesthetics

When in the space, we, as a collective, sought to embrace an open disposition. There was no ‘head of the table’. We moved constantly around the table to invite more individuals to join. The table was not elevated above other spaces, nor was it situated at the ‘front’ as a traditional classroom would be. The space eschewed the enlightened, western, patriarchal renderings of the University lecture hall. We did this thoughtfully, in the hopes of creating an atmosphere that welcomed people to join the table and reflect on their thoughts with us. They did so in a number of different ways. The tables were covered in brown postal paper. This decision, made to protect the tables from the fabric markers, had an unplanned, but brilliant effect. Visitors drew freely on the paper, sometimes just doodling, sometimes creating something more planned. Sometimes, they did this in silence, sometimes they discussed their thoughts and feelings about the exhibit, as well as, sharing their own stories that the exhibit had brought to mind. A second option for people seeking a creative outlet at the table were colouring books. We included copies of the colouring book based on the story of Bana Alabed, a young Syrian activist, captured in the autobiography *Dear World* (2017), which was used by many visitors, both children and adults, during the week. Finally, individuals were offered the opportunity to create a square for a patchwork quilt. The squares were pre-cut, 5 inches by 5 inches, giving individuals a space to respond creatively to the installation with fabric markers.

It is impossible to speak to the multitude of stories and ideas that emerged within this creative space. Yet, sifting through the many squares that were produced during this time focuses our attention on both the goals of an emotional pedagogy, but also, the value of silence (Beattie 2019). This was not a neoliberal silencing, of limiting speech, and performing an answer. It was an embodied silence. If we reflect on the individuals who did not speak, or were limited in their verbal contributions, we recall some individuals with eyes shut, others with glances averted. It signalled to us a turning away from the space, even though physically present within it. Eventually many individuals spoke, and some shared their experiences. Many individuals also turned to the creative opportunities revealing, in less traditional modes, what was on their minds. We seek to illustrate what this means in the photos that follow. They document how some individuals could articulate their experiences, while others could not. They provide the emotional content of pedagogy, akin to the ideas of Ioanade.

Perhaps most poignantly, the photos of the quilt squares offer a glimpse of an emotional resonance at work. The squares contain messages to the imagined individuals, in the spaces and places revealed in the photographs, themselves devoid of people. A simple square with the message: “We haven’t forgotten about you . . .[heart] [heart] much love… solidarity” is situated alongside another square reproducing a single, large heart. Similarly, another square with the word ‘HOPE’ emblazoned upon it, reflect many of the conversations which sought to challenge the stagnate policies reflected in the EU/Turkey Deal. It was within this tension, and the stasis of the refugee experience, that we were able to listen, question, but also, learn and curate as those around us shared their discomfort, their affective dissonance, but also, their experience of the Exhibit.

<Figure 10.4 here>

Photograph by IR Aesthetics

Participants often reflected on the ‘refugee crisis’ as well as their experience of the exhibit. These squares provided many expressions of solidarity, intended for those still making their complex journey within the Balkan Route(s). We sat and watched as individuals absorbed the idea of ‘no borders’, while articulating their own interpretation of solidarity to those living in squats. As one square reminds us, ‘we are all just humans [heart]’ while suggesting there are ‘no borders’ here. This is situated alongside a second square pushing for ‘open borders’, while illustrating a ‘welcome refugees’ square. What is more, we welcomed squares written in many languages, one, written in French, asks for the ‘frontiers to be open’ and ‘everyone let in’ alluding to the collective moral failure of all if this cannot happen. The quilt squares reflect the diversity of experiences, languages and positions of the many individuals who passed through the exhibition over several days.

<Figure 10.5 here>

Photograph by IR Aesthetics

The table, however, was not always vibrant, and dynamic. At times, it was silent, as individuals reflected on what to say. Indeed, we were asked, many times, not simply, ‘can we draw’, but also, ‘what should we draw?’ The ability to create stood alongside, but also in juxtaposition, to the task of gazing, and while some individuals, as evidenced in the squares above, could offer a message, others could not. The ensuing quilt squares, what would be classified as ‘doodles’ and ‘scribbles’, we reflected on many days later, were the offering of those who had little to verbally offer, but sat, with an emotional presence that could be, at times, light, but also, heavy. Such squares, while devoid of an overt message, bear inclusion, if only to show the possibilities of a journey, in question, at the beginning, where reflexivity had taken hold, but was not yet able to be rendered in a recognisable form.

<Figure 10.6 here>

Photograph by IR Aesthetics

Despite their lack of an immediate sensibility, we suggest that these squares offer important insights into the embodied discomfort associated with a shifting gaze, and the disruption of privilege. They remind us all that the learning journey is not linear, nor is it always forward moving. Rather, there is a temporal aspect to an emotional pedagogy, yet to be excavated in the work we are doing, but worth noting, all the same. When viewed holistically all of these squares reflect a story, individual and communal, curated at the site of the installation.

**Conclusion**

By way of closing, we reflect on our experiences of crafting and delivering an installation of this kind, of thinking differently about knowledge production, pedagogy and education, and of challenging the neoliberalisation of higher education (Connell 2013). We acknowledge the limitations of our alternative pedagogical engagement, noting that in locating it in a public gallery we may, in fact, have been exchanging one *ivory tower* for another. Although the Exchange programme within Tate Liverpool is free and, as such, can be construed as being open and accessible, barriers to entry do still exist. Indeed, the construction of the gallery space and its embodiment within high culture make it more accessible to some than others, directed towards a particular visitor and a particular gaze (hooks 2010).

As an emerging body of IR scholarship argues, the site of the Museum is far from neutral in its presentation of global politics. Instead, museums are ‘locations of embodied experiences which normalise the conduct of a range of geopolitical experience’ (Tidy and Turner 2019, 4). In entering this space, we sought to do the opposite: to challenge, to subvert, to advocate and to embody solidarity. However, the question must still be asked of who our audience were, of whether, in looking to subvert the neo-liberalisation of higher education, of challenging it by moving beyond the University, we were, in truth, doing this within a second neoliberal space. [The Tate Gallery](https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/learning-programmes) in Liverpool puts together a series of learning programmes intended to welcome diverse communities in to the gallery. They also have a focus on diverse exhibitions and usages of the space. Yet, the Tate still sits within a broader tradition of museums and galleries in which some people feel more comfortable than others. As Rao’s (2020) arguments remind us, Gallery spaces, albeit public spaces, are contested, and offer up a particular version of history rooted in an imperial and colonial past. This in and of itself invites a political, and self-selecting audience. In thinking through the embodied discomfort that emerges within an emotional pedagogy, as subversive pedagogy, it bears further reflection on how to respond to this challenge.

A person’s embodied position in society affects how they react to and engage with the space of the museum or gallery. Some feel welcome whilst others may feel excluded or marginalised by the geography of the building, the other bodies present in the space, or the story being told within an exhibit. For us, this experience was a starting point rather than an end point for developing this work and for thinking more deeply about the ways in which we subvert the neoliberalisation of higher education’s teaching and scholarship. That being said, it is also important to reflect on the positive achievements coming out of this project. In particular, the ways in which our methodology engendered curiosity, spoke to the reflexive requirements of an emotional pedagogy, while inviting a critical reflexivity, both overtly and subversively, to those individuals that moved through the space. The installation prompted a (potential) transformation of views of a crisis which many believed to have passed, as well as recognition of the need for solidarity and community building across borders. In making these connections, the importance of ‘user-generated content’ (Patel et al. 2016, 70) embodying a ‘pedagogy of feeling (in which) there is a possibility of redemption precisely because there is an invitation to change the future’ (Witcomb 2013, 339) enabled our pedagogical choices to develop a sense of solidarity. This was something that we could not have predicted, particularly in relation to the role creativity and crafting came to play in starting conversations.

By providing a space in which people could creatively engage with their own responses, whilst also contributing to a collective effort of building and developing a quilt built of shared messages, transformations of knowledge and ideas could take place. If we recall, by way of conclusion, both the experience of an embodied discomfort set within an emotional pedagogy, as discussed in part one, while reflecting on the production of quilting squares in part three, we can offer up an affective pedagogy which fosters an individual learning journey couched within a collective notion of meaning making. As our creative table revealed to us, we remain, always, learners, compelled to listen, learn and discover in concert. The inherent value of this approach rests on its embrace of laughter, of tears, of reflection, and ultimately growth. As we remember the arguments of Lambert (2009, 302), we reflect on the opportunities for such learning within the traditional classroom, but also in the gallery setting in which visitors chose the level of interaction they had with the installation, as well as, the types of conversations they wanted to engage us in.

The opportunity for multi-layer, self-directed learning in a creative and open environment subverts our traditional understanding of learning in higher education and provides an alternative approach. It opens a conversation for how higher education could look in an environment that is not constrained by time and space such as the division of the day into blocks of 1 or 2 hours, instead allowing people to flow freely in an out of the conversation and learning space. While this can only be read as a starting point, a first step in continuing to think through how the use of exhibits and installations can challenge the neoliberalisation of research, pedagogy, and teaching it does, none-the-less, open a conversation about the need and value in doing this work. We hope that as our project continues to develop and grow we will be able to think more deeply about how to take this work further, how to challenge and to disrupt, but also how to bring creativity and emotions in to our pedagogy, offering a fluid and flexible alternative to the strict and fixed setting of the neoliberal institution.

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  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Tate Exchange Liverpool, <https://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-liverpool/tate-exchange> (accessed 10 January 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. We use the term Balkan Route(s) in recognition of the fact that the term ‘Balkan Route’ is often used to imply a singular path through a region, but that this is not the reality. The term imagined by Frontex is used to other the region, to securitise and to draw on the region’s imagined criminality (Bird et al. 2020; El-Sharaawi and Razsa 2019; Obradovic- Wochnik 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)