

Stephen Brooke – Yeah so obviously, I guess my approach to these, to talking to people, I'm talking to some people involved in the DCC, is that I want, I don't want to be a historical magpie and just kind of cherry-pick what I think is important, I want to be told what is important, if that makes any sense. I have questions, but I'm also just sort of interested in opening that up and just hearing what is important ...

Jos Boys – And I do, I mean, it's all that thing isn't it, about where you, that fantastic thing with doing archival research, which I don't really do, and then talking to people and what they remember, because you know, I absolutely agree with you and it was one of the things that came up at the AA conference here was about how when you're living in it we didn't know it was an extraordinary moment, but it was an extraordinary moment when Ken Livingstone got, basically kicked, although Cutler did some amazing things as well, in housing – but kicked out the previous guy and just opened up this possibility of funding and of really quite radical activity simultaneously to, because the first meetings around Matrix were, came out of a conference called 'Women in Space,' and then came out of the women's design collective, so it came out of a group of 70 or 80 women really, just trying to work out what to do next, and again you made know this about that split - and this became an argument about whether you worked within the system or outside of the system and how you might do that, what that meant and a lot of women being very interested in just improving, kind of, employment conditions for women and becoming more visible, be able to make more of a mark, and the a group of us that really coalesced around the idea that feminism was radical it was an opportunity to actually critique an understanding of how the built environment worked, what was actually going on and what we would now called house basis [?] gendered but at that time we weren't expressing it like that but recognizing that it wasn't neutral in the way we'd been taught and the way everybody seemed to assume it, and that the [inaudible] opportunities for building types and redirection of resources towards women and women's groups, and of course out of second wave feminism there were women's groups so that were kind of potential clients, there was, as you said, that possibility of funding because the women's committee was actually looking for those kinds of things to fund and then knock on effect was also there – one of the things that we talked about at the conference was, we were part of a film that was on channel 4 because the broadcasting, Channel 4 was also quite new and was finding radical community filmmakers so there was a programme called *Paradise Circus*, about women in the city which had Anne talking to one of the [Jackanory?] clients, and some shots from that period, and which you can get at the BFI, it doesn't talk about the Dalston's Children's centre but it does talk about [Jackanory?], and it's set in Birmingham and it captures a whole set of kind of different activists in that period. It's just a very good film. It's by, her name will escape me, Helen Powell. And so she was part of a whole film collective, and so there was all these kind of, everything was able to kind of support, this moment of

these ramifications really, where things began to spread, and I've still got a cutting from the Daily Telegraph, saying that they thought despite the fact that it's about women, that this film was actually rather wonderful.

SB – the Telegram said that?

JB – Yeah it was definitely some kind of retired colonel from [inaudible] but it was kind of like, 'even though these are just young people, young women, they seem to be saying some very sensible things.' So there was a whole kind of moment I think, and again, as you probably know from your research, there was in architecture and planning, cause there had been some radical planning activity, some of which had come out of this school, and there had been quite a lot of, architects who had tried to copy lawyers, so there were these technical aid centres, so you actually had architects working as support organizations for community groups, offering themselves up as technical aid centres. So there were quite a few technical aid centres had already started up by the time Matrix [inaudible]. It was a kind of model, but not explicitly feminist.

SB – Can I ask what your personal background was in terms of feminism and being interested in community action? Was it a product of the external second wave feminist movement or was it something once you began architecture ... One of the striking things about 'Making Space' is there's a great line in it about having been educated by men, we kind of know we've been put in our place, I just wonder if, in terms of background ...

JB – Yes, yes. Well I think, and it's interesting compared to both Fran and Annie, and it's great that you're meeting Fran, I studied again at a weird moment, at the school up the road here, the Bartlett School of Architecture, completely by mistake, it sounds ridiculous but I wasn't really planning to do architecture, although I was interested in it. I was a South London kid without any knowledge really about anything and I didn't know the Bartlett was quite a well known school. I just thought I wanted to be in London and I didn't know this place existed, so I didn't know anything about the whole set up and I spent quite a lot of time just trying to work out what was going on, because a lot of people did seem to understand that. But it was at that time 50/50 male female, which was very unusual in architecture at that time, so it didn't feel you were an isolated female. And they also did have, it was structured really differently, it had options, at a time again when university education didn't have options, so you could choose a [?] range of different ways of operating. And it had a very strong, it didn't have a strong feminist line but it did have a strong Marxist line so there were a lot of Marxist planners, and kind of environmental, again at a time when you didn't really, I mean there was a [inaudible] of sustainability and self-sufficiency but there were people who were very interested in the environment and in thinking about that differently, thinking about it in terms of the commons. So there was a lot of activism and quite a

lot of students became very involved in local activist projects, quite a lot went on to be builders rather than architects...

SB – Yeah, this is really a striking aspect of it, to go into the building trades rather than ...

JB - ...into the profession. And we so, so I was involved initially really more as a political activist, so we squatted, cause there was a whole thing about Covent Garden [inaudible], about Covent Garden becoming, being knocked down and have a motorway plowed through it, and so we squatted down in Covent Garden for years. And there was another group who were very involved in the whole are over there, **Thomas Square** and there was another group later, a bit later that got involved in **Coin Street** [?] And they weren't projects that were necessarily – I mean we did do community based projects in our classes, but those projects tended to be, it's just because we were living in London I think, and those things were very, I mean there was a huge amount ...

SB – Live issues. ..

JB – they were really live issues. The whole resistance to a kind of, well in fact it was a kind of resistance to the state, and to planning as an agent of the state. It wasn't kind of in support of, it was people against the state.

SB – and when you mentioned, you know, about the certain ambivalence about the state, it's really striking that it's different after '81 because the GLC was willing to basically, there this phrase in criticism – get the money out of the room – the grant/aid system was not a way of centralizing things, but actually de-centralizing things, because there's that Marxist tradition in the 70s, I think it's **Claudia Cockburn**, about in and against the state...

JB – Citizens Against the State. Cynthia Cockburn? Or Claudia Cockburn? No Cynthia Coburn was someone else.

SB – yeah, I think it's Claudia. And Sheila Rowbotham, about the ambivalence about the state, but this is a way the state can decentralize itself.

JB – all of those things. So for me it was very much more a political thing and I wouldn't have thought of myself explicitly a feminist at that stage, so I think I came at it sideways because I think, it was that whole thing about just redistributing wealth and then I ended up out of my course, and then the final year of our course in undergraduate and they kind of closed it down and making it be all about being an architect and quite a gang of us, separately and together, chose not to do the final bits that would get you proper professional qualifications. And we studied a lot of Marxist planning, rather than doing structures, or construction. And I got a job at a magazine called Building Design, as a journalist, [inaudible] journalist, which was a trade paper, because I suppose I was quite interested in writing about architecture and I couldn't

imagine practicing it, but that was a political thing, rather than a feminist thing. I don't know if I was smart enough to realize it was quite discriminatory. I mean the things that happened in my, but they happened all the time so you didn't really notice ...

SB – yeah, yeah

JB – having this weird thing of being treated differently because you were female, I mean you did notice but it was just part of everyday life really. And I reported on the Women in Space Conference for Building design, and then got invited to, in sort of an odd capacity, got invited to join the feminist design collective thing. I don't think because I was a journalist, I think because I was clearly interested and then it kind of, so my initial involvement I have to say was more as a kind of intellectual problem – it's like, really what is going on here? Everybody's right, there is something really weird, so it, as I say, it wasn't so much about having been discriminated against as a women either in education or in practice, it was about the fact that our physical surroundings do something and we have no way of knowing what that ... we couldn't, we didn't know how to explain it. The word sexism didn't exist, we just wanted to try to work out how... and that's what that book is about – it's trying to be able to say something that hadn't previously been said.

SB – No, the way you were saying it, I think it's a really interesting moment in a lot of fields, but there is a struggling to find a language to describe something. I mean that book I think is very powerful in a way because it uses both very strong language – like I love the way that the city is described as a no-woman's land – but then at the other end, I think this is what I meant when I wrote to you about, sort of, emotion and I think it's that sense of like, I think it's Fran Bradshaw who talks about, sort of starting from feelings that would usually be described as sappy, and that's a really interesting, because it's sort of self-effacing about something, but it is trying to find this language, what is this new politics, and ...

JB – and it is that, and it connects one to having had that exact [inaudible] experience I would say. And architecture school which is, there were certain ways we weren't allowed to talk about things and so if you tried it, that was the sort of criticism. So it's not so much being or taking a soft angle, but if you're criticized for that then it makes you think you've got to kind of reclaim it, I think.

SB – And when you, at the conference, and early with Matrix, and again I'm thinking of Making Space, one of the things that is sort of striking is actually the illustration of spaces as the photograph shown here of the women trying to get up stairs ...

JB – Which is Annie [inaudible], with her kids.

SB – and that view of the city, I mean that is something you're kind of coming, I mean it does now seem very obvious about the inconveniences of the city and the dangers of the city but that's something that you were struggling towards ...

JB – Just to be able to explain yes, and I do, I mean it's funny because that cover photo we didn't, I was very, and partly because I had this journalistic experience, partly because I was definitely the one who was more of the writer in many ways – all of those pieces were well-written by people who write well but they were less interested in it, so I was very central. I did the kind of editing and kind of, role with the publishers of getting that book done. It was a fantastic opportunity for me, I learned so much from it, it didn't feel like a burden at all. And we didn't want that cover photograph, because we wanted something that was more positive, and they basically, Pluto Press were like, you've got to have something, this will only sell if you're got a kind of misery pic, you know what I mean. And I still feel, it still kind of makes me laugh that, it's an objective fact, exactly that staircase out of the tube station is the one that Anne used to bring Sam and Will out of – it's objectively what her experience was, but I guess one of the more, it was that whole thing I think that we, and I think some of the criticism of that wave of feminism, was that it just became oppositional in the other direction and that it was all oppression and all discrimination, and in a way I think it's, we were trying to get to something more nuanced but we weren't necessarily capable of doing that. And our references were just directly from the States, from **Delores Haven**, from Gwendolyn Wright, from **Susannah [?]**

SB – and Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff

JB – yes, yes, and actually from more importantly I would say, well from them, but from feminist geographers like Doreen Massey and ...

SB – yeah I was thinking of ... I know her stuff a little bit.

JB – She was a really kind of key importance to us.

SB – but when you say, I mean I guess I would say this, because to me it actually seems like a very incisive description of the city but as a historian it's informed perhaps by the generation of Catherine Hall and others and Doreen Massey, who began to see the space of the city and the space of the home in political ways, but I wonder, I mean I was thinking of your essay - the other reference point is sexual violence and there's another historian Judith Walkowitz who not long after this, in '92 writes a book about Jack the Ripper, in 1883 and '84 and one of the points she makes is that the inspiration for this book was living in London in the early 80s with the Yorkshire Ripper ...

JB - ... with Reclaim the Night and all those ...

SB - ... with Reclaim the Night and I'm just wondering actually, to me, Making Space actually seems like a kind of very immediate document about what unfortunately continues to be a really stark problem, but in the 80s was highlighted by feminists and ...

JB – And the whole women's refuge movement too, there's a whole lot of things. Yeah I guess, and I'm not, I mean what I'm doing is talking from hindsight, from the kinds of ways in which, I was going to say we've been criticized, but I don't think it's us, I think of the ways second wave feminism has been criticized and some of that is, I would, which is around a tendency – I think there's two things – I think one is a tendency to think about the difficulties of the middle class white housewife ...

SB- Yeah, yeah

JB - ... which I think is objectively true, although 'the problem with no name' was a really important moment and really vital and I do, what was great about Matrix and all the things that surrounded it, is we were actually really quite – before the word intersectionality had been invented – we were actually very, there was a real, it really mattered to have a sexually diverse and ethnically diverse team, and given that the way black and ethnic minority students, women students had been really discriminated against, you know, very few of them were coming through the system anyway, so there was, I think we were quite [inaudible] in thinking that. But I suppose that kind of concentration on the home was one set of things. And the other set of things, and I don't know if this is even relevant to you really, but I think the other set of things for me is I feel like, and I've had a discussion about this with some of the other women and I don't know if they feel the same way but, for me it is, it was kind of, in architecture and planning, it was this weird tail end of an attitude to architecture and planning which had really developed from the 1830s which was about trying to make built space map gender differences ...

SB – Yeah

JB- In a kind of very, literally make them real. So there's a real thing about the home and the suburbs, and the worker, and so a lot of what we were ...

SB – and how kitchens work, when in homes ...

JB – and how then you dealt with a kind of shift from servants to it being, which is now really [inaudible] with histories. But it was simultaneously part of that feminism was coming out of many more women to be [inaudible] past white women getting into university, revisiting their mothers' own experiences etc, etc and that kind of literally trying to build it into space, I think, was already coming to an end – we were actually critiquing something which, whether you say, capitalism, whether you say change, social change was, I think the way that gender and racial and sexual differences are now embedded into space are very different. I think it's, so I suppose

[20:25]

that's, and there's no reason why we would have noticed, well I think we did kind of half noticed that then but it was still really important to point out what was going on at that time. I think that piece by Sue Francis on you know, those space in the home diagrams.

SB – Amazing, amazing ...

JB - And they make me laugh out loud. You still get them around disability of course. You get exactly those kinds of really trite divisions. But to have, here's the woman at the sink, here's the husband sitting in front of the telly, here's the children around the women at the sink, in these sort of beautiful [inaudible] outlines. It's like a fantastic description of an ideal, an idealized nuclear family housing at that time, and just as it was actually turning, and of course it does mention that, but just as it was becoming not the norm in any way ...

SB – But I was also struck by, I mean it's jumping ahead a bit, some of the designs that are reproduced in that book, and the concerns about, and again I'm not an architectural historian, but concerns about movement within buildings and the way buildings are very contemporary, you know. You have a design for **Stockwell Health Centre**, the idea of, it's going to have a café at the centre of it, because you want the kind of, the health centre as a social place, and that's very different from **Peckham Health Centre** and Finsbury, which are great, but their monuments to a different kind of efficiency.

JB – Efficiency around preventative health rather than around curative health.

SB – Exactly, so that whenever I go into the kids' hospital, their hospital in Toronto, it's actually no, it's actually reminiscent of what was written about in that book. You make social spaces for users and that sort of thing. So I can see that yeah, it's part of a larger movement of things coming to an end but it is accommodating. I mean I do think that thing about the city as a hostile environment is something that...

JB – No I do, and I do think it had, I think all of that period of feminism, it did have, we can easily forget, the kind of waves of influence it had, whether it was the possibility of having women refugees, and the possibility of actually refusing to think that domestic violence is acceptable especially if you're married, you know, and I think, weirdly I actually think that, because another group that GLC funded was called Women's Design Service, which I did the development work for when they were failing and we moved on to another thing and they did work around shoppers crèches and stuff, which I would say, I mean there were things happening but I would say, that basically, in terms of, they were part of the invention of the shopper's crèche. And of course they turned out to be very valuable to shopping centres too in terms of their [inaudible].

SB – Yeah I think that’s interesting, I think that one of the things that happens in the 90s and the early 2000s was what were ideas like that funded by the local state, become ideas funded by Costa Coffee, or you know that they become very corporate things...

JB – They get picked up more generally. And that came up, at the conference here, that came up a lot, because it is that whole thing about how purist you can be, and whether somehow you can do something that protects you somehow from capitalism just kind of absorbing your ideas. I feel quite comfortable with that - at least they happened, at least they made some women’s lives better, I mean they reinforced certain ideas about women as carers but still...

SB – I have a friend, a male architect and we were talking the other night about how one of the difficulties is, for people to understand, that when you see like in these big superstores, grocery stores and you see older people kind of using the café, not to think that, ‘oh aesthetically that’s just awful’ you know. That no, this is a way community is formed, it’s just that the space has changed and Loblaw’s is providing the space but there’s no bad thing there, it’s not any better or worse than an local café or something like that ...

JB – Exactly. And often actually it’s precisely because it’s quite non-styled, it’s not threatening and it’s kind of something where as an older person you can just sit there and read the paper, in a way that you used to be able to do in this country, in libraries, which you can’t, of course, anymore.

SB – [inaudible] ... local government...

JB – Yeah, [inaudible] ... they’ve just been completely decimated.

SB – We should probably get back to the chronology maybe, just one other thing about, in terms of the concerns that were brought into it, was it also because of, let’s say the interest in community action, how class intersected with feminism at this time, and part of women going into building trades but also there seemed to be a real interest in, with the emphasis on clients and users, about breaking down social hierarchy. Does that ...?

JB – It’s interesting isn’t it, because I do, again I feel like it quite, there were a lot of transitional things happening, some of which moved on and some of which – I obviously have a timeline which is to do with progress, but ... so, because part of it was resisting things that were happening within Marxist planning and within even left wing architecture, and this will get round to the class thing in a minute, so our Marxist tutors were really only interested in workplace, so class in this country of course was kind of linked to the working man really, and it still had that slight nostalgia I would say, and there were women involved in that but the general think was quite, there wasn’t a lot of self-criticism about being, about romanticizing the working class male, so I you know, the British class system, as you know, is a very complicated place and

the new architecture movement which is one of the places that this kind of feminist route came out of was very interested in unionizing workers in architecture firms which was very important of course, and had a moment and then died unfortunately. They're trying it again now on the basis that professionals tend not to think they need those kinds of agreements. But again, the new, and it was, the men who ran it did expect the women to make the tea, it was a kind of an odd place to be because everyone was in favour of unionization but somehow ... and so gender and class kind of overlapped so these were people who were not necessarily kind of yeah, they perhaps had a bit of a stereotype about class and it did link to men. So I think it's something about the crossover between class and women that really was quite complicated and I certainly struggled with Matrix in some ways, with the women in the design side, even though I really liked them. Because there was a thread of women who had come from a very middle class, there was a lot of women who had come from Hampstead which is [inaudible] ... but you come from South London and you're working with women from Hampstead, you're like ... and so there were assumptions about, to me they had assumptions about what women did, what women housewife was, what their mothers were like. And my Mum had been actually an aristocrat who married a working class man but when I grew up she cleaned other people's houses, so the way that were talking about, the notion of the mother was so unlike mine and I couldn't quite articulate that cause I couldn't quite articulate the class sides of it. So I think that a very roundabout way of saying that I think class and gender intersect in really complicated ways and so we were, there was definitely this ... so in terms of community activism, which is what you're original question was, I think it was very definitely thinking about, yeah they were kind of supporting working class and poorer people from the kind of big profit making property speculation moves which were very different of course from the ones now, cause they're all about building empty office blocks ...

SB – yeah, yeah

JB – ... and making money out of them that way. So it was definitely about that, it was about defending working class people but it was also about defending a much more blurry ... a city as a social space, the city as a place where people live.

SB- And I guess there would have been a moment that is beginning to be lost in the 80s once the Housing Act comes in, that any influence upon working class lives would have largely been the building of housing estates and I guess, in a certain way when those housing estates stopped being built, then that ability to think about, what is a working class life, and how can it be different, that sort of thing...

SB – Did you find, I mean one of the questions that now seems quite typical, is working with clients and maybe just asking you about after Matrix was formed and what your role in it was?

JB – Yes, so my – and that’s why it’s great you’re talking to Fran, and you may need to talk to Anne too, or Julia Dwyer – because I worked, I never worked for the design practice, doing design work, partly because I had just worked out that I was interested in architecture as a subject but I wasn’t necessarily interested as a designer, I mean I’m interested in doing design, I teach it quite a lot but I’m not interested in the whole business by which you get built. So I didn’t necessarily have direct relationships with clients but I do, I think it was really clear for all of us that, and there was a whole kind of - against the planners, there were all those books about community based work, and we all had so much experience with that, and it was very much about building a process at all sorts of levels, from getting more women builders through to how you actually shared design and how you enabled it to be informed so ordinary people could understand models and all that and it was about how you had ways of working with a client that did really give them a quite strong say in what was going on. There’s a lovely piece in that **Jackanary** film where they talk about looking at colours and different sorts of bricks and then having huge arguments about, in the end nobody agrees whether its pink or blue or you know, but that sense that that’s what you did, you went off and visited buildings and you looked at models and you kind of tried to get at your clients expertise and what users you had expertise so, those kinds of participatory processes, I think they weren’t, there were quite a lot of variations on that happening and I think we were just looking, and in a way, it was just, it had its radical nature with women because women were often, even in participatory processes, I mean, quite often women are very forefront with community organizations but often they’re voices don’t get heard ...

SB – or rarely acknowledged ...

JB – or rarely acknowledged, or somehow get talked over when it comes to making decisions so I think that just made it feel kind of pretty vital I think, to be doing that.

SB – and this is, I don’t mean to sound like this is a loaded question, but one of the people I talked to at the DCC said that one of the great advantages was that it was an all male [female] management committee and workers, and that that, I mean was that one of the advantages do you think at the time, that there were no men talking over in your relationships with one another, and with your relationships with clients?

JB – Yes, yes, I think that’s right, although I also and again I think it would be Fran who would have more to say about that, but it’s also true that my memory is the person, the kind of person we dealt with for funding from the GLC, that I dealt with particularly – we didn’t get any money for the book, so it must have been ... The thing I got very involved in was supporting kind of advice and guidance ...

SB – Oh, good ... yeah, yeah

JB - ... so that's what we did with Women's Design Service as well. So there was this idea, that we should centre things around the client, and actually just doing it, job by job, but also if you just did it job by job it would get lost in the ether and we couldn't make an impact more widely, so you know, there was a ...

SB – Do you mean not, that you would lose, not really institutional memory but a kind of sense that there was a larger context and this kind of a ...?

JB – Yes, that you can kind of learn [inaudible] but it wasn't just these things around gender and sexuality were not just a one off but could only be done in every case. There were general things you could learn from it. So we did things like the, there was a book called *Building for Childcare* ...

SB – Yeah, I have, I'm going to look at it later this afternoon at the British Library I hope.

JB – And there were several things like that which I helped raise funding for and did bits of work on , and Women's Design Service that's what that did, the idea that it actually acted as a network for producing those sorts of documentation and getting them out there and getting them in places of influence. The reason I mention that is because there was a guy called [Bramwell?] and he was the funding officer for us, so here was a bloke who was just ...

SB – Oh wow ... through the women's committee or through ...?

JB – Yeah, through the women's committee, and I'm trying to think which committee. I'm trying to think, and I can picture him and I can remember his first name, and he was fucking brilliant, that's why ... sorry I shouldn't say that on tape...

SB – No, no, please do [laughter]

JB – He was just amazing, he was so supported and so completely on message. And what's interesting about the fact that I say that now is that it didn't feel in that period that there were that many men on message like that. And he was, and obviously it's so selective because he had that job. So ...

SB – Well that's really interesting

JB – so there were plenty of times that it was great to be working in entirely female environments but there were men who did, and I can't remember anything else about him but there were men who were definitely there for us. And the guy who did the editing for the book, **Justin** [?] Palmer, same thing – just completely, I mean not the cover, that was marketing, that wasn't him ...

SB – But just on side with your ...

JB – Yes, on side and the fact that I can remember their names, cause I’ve got a terrible memory is, like, that was magic to have a few men on side and then being able to work in an entirely women, female environment was also fabulous.

SB – Totally banal question, but were you involved in the applications to the GLC, and do you remember that process at all? Because I’ve just seen the paper trail, and ...

JB – You’ve seen the applications? No, I’m rather like, my god I’d love to see that ...

SB – I’ll send it, I don’t know if I have it on me right now but I’ll send you a PDF of it. They’re really interesting because you know the sense that I get, well the reason I love that archive is that you get these two pictures. One is of local government and their response to this, but the other is these organizations describing themselves, and you never get that, you rarely get that in history, like this tapestry of these organizations. And it’s a leading question, but the sense that I get was that the women’s committee loved things like the Dalston Children’s Centre, Matrix, in all sorts of different ways – one was that they prioritized childcare, one was that they prioritized women’s centres, they prioritized things like ethnic minority rights, and later disability and stuff like that. But it just seems a fascinating process, it wasn’t that they gave the money away but it was this, it was a very smooth process rather than something that seemed to like, took years or whatever, it seemed actually kind of providing a lifeblood to these organizations.

JB – No I think that’s right, and I feel like it was, and it was, that underpinning of both a certain sort of progressive politics and a commitment to feminism in particular, or to second wave feminism because the, and I never had anything to do with the committee and I think I might have been involved in a couple of bids, but not for the buildings, for pamphlets and things ...

SB – Because I think the Women’s Committee did fund the childcare pamphlet if I’m right ...

JB – I think they did, yes, yes.

SB - ... certainly they’re listed on the British Library entry, like its Matrix [?], and GLC

JB – And I was definitely, but Sue Francis who unfortunately is dead ...

SB – Right, sorry to hear that ...

JB - Quite recently actually. But she, which is why we definitely have to get a Matrix archive together, and some oral history, because, she’s the first. I think she put in the bid but I probably did some suggestions on some part in the middle and there must have been, I don’t know who was on the, I don’t think I knew people on the Women’s Committee. I’ve got no sense of who they were but there were people like Beverley Taylor, who worked for the GLC.

SB – They would have been the women’s support unit, which would have been really the ones who kind of handled the applications and the Directors General’s Office, and they handle it as they go. And they’re the ones who say, and maybe this is where the man came from, this meets the criteria, this is what we recommend in terms of....

JB – Yeah, and I feel like maybe there was again, a smoothness there, a kind of sense of everybody working together, and I think the women’s support officers acted very much as a kind of well greased knuckle because they were kind of part of the same network right, Bev was part of the Women in Planning group, and you kind of knew her through other means so, and they were quite a good, and again they were women that I didn’t know but it felt like they were quite networked into a kind of sexual politics and into racial politics ...

SB – yeah, that’s my sense

JB – And they did generate projects too, because I did a, just before it all fell apart in ‘86, we did a women and planning guidelines, called Changing Places and there was a [?] planning one and in fact the Women in Planning one we literally did as a ring binder, with pages in it because we didn’t know when we’d have to stop. We didn’t know how much we’d get done in the time before closure. So we decided we’d do it in a way that we could keep slotting things in.

SB – And I think that was part of, there were two things that was a part of, if I remember, it was part of a larger initiative called Popular Planning, which is to involve all sorts of constituencies in local planning and economic planning, but also there was this thing called the Program for Women in London which was exactly what you described. It’s kind of, it looks like a ring binder, and different groups were adding things to it and it was a really brilliant idea because it captures the complexity of kind of women’s lives rather than being ideologically rigid. This is a point, and again it’s a bit of a leading point, but it also comes out of talking to someone who was involved in the Dalston Children’s Centre, that as a political historian you kind of see how policies are enacted in this fairly rigid way. What’s different about the 80s is that a generation of people who understand that politics is dynamic and it’s kind of in a pretentious way, lived every day and negotiated every day, so when you mentioned intersectionality there was a real resonance with something like the DCC where it’s like, we’re a very diverse group of people, who are trying to figure out what anti-sexism is, what anti-racism was but it was not written in stone, it was like how do we work this out, and finding a language for it.

JB – Now I think that’s right, and I do, I think that especially now, and I don’t know when that now started, but that sense that there is a whole cycle that it about policy and practice being at the level of appearances. There’s a kind of, we’ve kind of moved to I don’t know, all that [Sarah ?] stuff about being included, but there’s a real, and it did fit, and that’s the thing when you look back, that’s the extraordinary thing, that sense of commitment and energy to change things and I do, that’s why I was thinking I don’t know quite how those planning documents got, but they got

commissioned, I mean I was asked to do that, it wasn't any sort of bid. And there were also things, as you probably know from the book [?] I guess the other side of it, which again you will have heard from other people, is of course it can look smooth and the realities are Matrix fell apart over gender, well over sexuality, not because an issue of separatists and lesbians versus, versus heterosexual women but it was about the fact, the kind of ... it was quite hard to find a dialogue, to find a way of ... we didn't know enough about how to sort those things out, and similarly our own racial politics, and to some extent around disability both - I say this off the record ...

SB – Yeah, of course

JB – But I think Matrix unfortunately fell apart because of one particular character that happened to be a black woman, was just very difficult for all sorts of reasons. And Women's Design Services fell apart because of a white woman there, did have severe mental health problems. And when you're a tiny group and you're struggling and you're trying to be feminist so you're having endless meetings, endless endless meetings, trying to sort this out around this kind of consensus, so that the, internally, and I'm sure that was true of the Women's Support Unit ...

SB – they had huge issues ...

JB – they had huge ...

SB – ... accusations of institutional racism, and I mean I think it's a story, a very difficult one to tell, and I have no idea how one tells a story, about the fissures that almost, that arise very very quickly around these issues, legitimately in some ways because of the communities involved, but then because of the resources available it becomes very complicated and these things, there are a number of initiatives that are the same way, and there seems to be a kind of fragmentation by '86, '86 into different groups ...

JB – And I feel like it is a story that does need to be told cause I think it is exactly that mixture of, that real sense of forward movement, of again, of seeing, of kind of agreeing of things that needed to be done, and of recognizing the breadth of that and joining, whether it's across class or gender or sexuality, or whether, there was such a recognition of that, but our different abilities to deal with that, and I, it's kind of an inherent flaw in second wave feminism, is that we weren't very self ... you know, there was all that, the personal is political, but in terms of having mechanisms, and again it's not a criticism but of having mechanisms, you know all the mechanisms for [inaudible] resolving issues were around some sort of actually middle class notion of consensus, like if you just sat down and talked about it, cause you're all women, it will all sort out. And I remember, and that is just my personal view, but I remember thinking, that it's just bollocks, that is not going to work, we have to have always, trying to get more structure,

[46:50]

and trying to have, but because there was such a resistance in something like Matrix to any sort of formal structure, which was seen as reproducing the kind of ...

SB – And by that you mean criticisms of hierarchy...

JB – Yes

SB - ... and the desire to achieve decisions collectively..

JB – Yes

SB – I mean I think this is again, it's the ideal that becomes really difficult to sustain...

JB – Yeah, and it may have been different in the Women's Committee, it may have been different in the Support Unit, although I know that they had similar, yeah because it was, somehow that collectively was about, I'd be interested to know if Fran agreed with this, but it was about that sense that you could just kind of come to it, it wasn't even that you would kind of write, if you wrote a policy statement, that would already be too structured. So you couldn't do that, because it is [inaudible], maybe that's just how my mind works, but you couldn't have statements and then agree to stick to them, even if you kind of disagreed with them. So it had to come out of the sense that everybody was involved, and I certainly, it was a kind of, a notion that all women could do that and then rightly, [although?] I think black and ethnic minority women said - you're just talking about middle class housewives, and this has nothing to do with us, this has nothing to do with our lives. So there was quite fierce criticisms and certainly Matrix had unspoken tensions around recognizing that women with children needed some time and space around that, but not thinking about well if you were lesbian and without children, well there's still the thing about what working life was and how it fitted with the rest of your life ...

SB – Yeah, yeah ...

JB – So somehow having kids kind of allowed you, gave you, which was really reinforcing your political idea of what was proper ways ...

SH - ... real place [?] of maternalism ... Did you find it, I'm interested in the emotional culture of these places. Did you find it an exciting time, an exhausting time, both? How do you regard that period now?

JB – I - it was two things – one was I was a single parent and my daughter was born in '84 so that kind of, so I had other things to do, rather lovely and rather exhausting, and ... I , god it's really hard when you look back when your adding things into it – it was exhausting, I loved it, I felt incredibly lucky because I did, I got paid to do some really fantastic things, like the Women in Planning stuff, that was just so interesting to take forward, to think about what that folder would be like, and I worked with Sue [?] and she had a you know, we just, her son was just born

and we just ran around like headless chickens putting that stuff together. It was a fantastically powerful piece of work to be able to do, and paid to do. I happen to have had very good childcare although not in a very convenient place, and I was quite good at, because one of the reasons I didn't work for the design practice was partly what I said already, not being that interested in these single design solutions, feeling like there was a lot more, just stuff around it that needed to be done as well. But also I could see that it was absolute, really hard working ... it was just really the fissures as you said were just enormous and I just remember thinking that I'm not having anything to do with that. So I think I was quite kind of aware of the difficulties of all that, which I guess was from the community practice, the community activism that we had been doing a college. I think I somehow had already knew how fraught it could be and I kind of made a decision not to get too caught up in it. And similarly the development work for Women's Design Service I mean that was a nightmare organization, again off the record. I'd use a different word if it was on the record ... between, what it was, was a failing organization which was just a lot of very young women trying to do a women's technical aid centre and just not having the experience, and not being able to find anybody to work with them who had experience. And a nightmare management board of trustees, but who nevertheless wanted to do something about it – their internal battles were huge too. And then the kind of revamped version, and then already a very small team, and in fact they did some great things as a team, and some of the women on that team were really good - but the fact that as a team they then began to fall apart almost immediately because of internal fissures. And I think that, it just says something about how I was operating, being the development worker, and that's still the way I work, but that was contained enough so I kind of go past ... I could work with, because it only happened because of the energy of all these fantastic women, who I've just slagged off, but just getting on and project managing it into a new building, into something that could exist was really great, really nice to be doing that. And so I resolved it by keeping a step away. A very long answer to a quite straightforward ...

SB – So Matrix sort of falls apart after 86?

JB – I think it ran until about '89. It fell apart ... I think the big thing was that without the public funding, and I think that is true and I think the one thing ...

SB – you mean probably as simple as that?

JB – It is, it is and it is that, and again, it was about taking that rightly, I think, probably, I don't know, taking a, having a very clear moral high ground position that we wouldn't take money from other ...

SB – you weren't going to take private money from ...

JB - ...they weren't going to take private money. And one of the great things about [?] talk here, is it was us, Matrix, and MUF, who you may not have heard of but they were like a feminist labour ... they're still going

SB – is that M-A-M??

JB – M-U-F, all lowercase. And they are a feminist art and architectural practice. They are very clever about how they play around the word feminist, they might not necessarily use it, they still use it and they, so they got going in very different conditions, they got going in Thatcher, and as I say, they still go and they, Liza Fior who runs it has a really good, she's really clear about how you play the system and Matrix was much more, morally noble or naïve, however you like to put it, we were just extraordinarily lucky that Matrix, the design practice, as you said, it didn't, for that period of GLC funding, we didn't have to think about it. We had enough money coming in and as soon as that money collapsed, there was just nobody in that group at that time, I think, wanted to go forward, and that is when Fran and Anne set up their own practice, to get out of that and just got on ever since. And in a way, Anne Thorne Architecture is just as if not more important than Matrix. Because it didn't sit on that nub [?] of a lot of things happening and hasn't become mythologized to the same degree and didn't self-promote.

SB – that's really interesting actually. I mean and how one, how those kinds of initiatives exist in a much colder climate, even under glare and even in those ...

JB – Absolutely, absolutely they do. And of course internationally too, some very powerful and, there was something going on like Matrix in Boston at the very same time that we didn't, we've only just found out about now, by meeting somebody doing something like you at this conference, so there is that. And I don't, I was looking, I always thought Matrix was not very good at self-promotion but actually I think the women in the design group were and of course we did the book, so we did ...

SB – Yeah, and that's an amazing book, and as a testament. I mean there isn't much else in England at that time.

JB- No, that's right, and I think that is, and of course, I didn't think of it as a piece of self-promotion I thought of it as us just trying to, just putting something out in the world which could be, which of course it was fantastic for. I still get people, not much younger than me, coming up to me saying your book was so important to us, men and women, when we were architecture students.

SB – yeah, no I can imagine.

JB – And I don't think we, I don't think I thought about that, I think we were just trying to put something out there to share, really and to see what happened to it, it's amazing that it's still having effects.

SB – No it's an amazing book and I think also the traces are really interesting, I think there are things that are un-built, there are things that are built, and it's, you know, that becomes more difficult in the 90s when the money is gone. I was walking past Calthorpe Gardens yesterday and I think Matrix was somehow involved in that but it's sort of like there's ...

JB – It never got built...

SB – It never quite got built but there is sort of complex archaeology of the actual built sites and I was talking to someone at the Dalston's Children's Centre, because it's interesting, well how did that design work go, it's now a childcare centre – she said actually we never saw the inside of it because there was a change in the management committee and they, it's this very, the actual physicality of these things is harder to discern I think ...

JB – yeah, yeah, yeah

SB – but Making Space is kind of this

JB – It's there ... and I do, Julia Dwyer, she and I just wrote a piece recently which is about feminist artifacts, and it's about what the Matrix, what we have left and how we might look at that and what it is that an artifact does. I mean what is it, is there something that's different about it if it is a feminist artifact. And she wrote about in that piece Calthorpe Gardens, cause she did it, and she wrote about the fact that it never came to pass, but she still has like a stack of drawings 'this' thick, like incredible details and lots of variations of every detail and she was just reflecting on the fact that even though Matrix was a, turned out to be a very different sort of organization, that completely conformed to all the things you get taught in architecture school, about this kind of obsessive working all hours of the night and day, doing huge, many many more, of course it's now all on computer but it's still the same, but doing much more work than to be honest you get paid for, because of the kind of notion of it being a perfect thing at the end, and then it not happening, and she was just looking at, reflecting back on the way that Matrix did reproduce certain sorts of things, again, not specific but I just think it's interesting how...

SB – but that idea of self-exploitation and then the very complex melancholy of ...

JB – Yes and that self-exploitation in a way multiplying up in the political activism. Particularly volunteer activism, community based activism, tend to do exactly that, has exactly that same pattern of self-exploitation, exhaustion, collapse, self-exploitation, you know, and so the way that you do architecture as a form of practice, particularly as a community based practice is exactly the same sort of thing and how interesting that ...

SB – When you think... I don't want to keep you for much longer because I'm sure you have things to do – but when you think of what you do today, what do you think the inheritance is of something like the early 80s, not just Matrix, but if think how we do architecture has changed, like was it the working practices, the view of the city, the, I mean, we've talked less about the actual designs and I'm very interested in the idea of warmth and home that Matrix talks about but I mean... it's a very long-winded, open question...

JB – I think, yes, there are several kinds of answers to it because I, I mean in terms of the things that go on interesting me, that I go on being obsessed about, even if it's learning [?] stuff, I think I'm always interested in what the stereotypes are, what the norms are, so for me personally I think that everything I've always done has been about getting at what assumptions get built into our physical environment, about who people are and what they're doing and how the stereotypes, how space gets gendered or raced and how it ends up being disabling. I'm really interested in the notions of [crypt?] space, and queer space, about the idea that you might have... so I think that penetrates everything I do, including the way I teach architectural interiors but in terms of the world out there for all, I mean architecture is a form of practice, I mean planning kind of got decimated anyway, so suddenly all those people who had been these radical planners, local authorities didn't have planning organizations anymore, they outsource, and architecture departments too also got decimated. So suddenly there wasn't work in those fields, most people who study architecture now go on into private practice, there isn't a public sector really. It doesn't really exist, or is just tiny compared to what it was. And because architecture has always been a very weird discipline, it doesn't really know, once it gave up surveying in kind of the 1860s, really gave up surveying in the 1860s and formed the RIBA it offered itself as the bit that it did was the design bit, but it doesn't really know how to sell that to clients, and it's always a bit underfunded in the process ...

SB – Okay, okay

JB – ... it's a tiny, if you look at the RIBA plan of work, design is absolutely tiny. And against that architecture is always trying to do much more, so it's a kind of very, and of course lots of private sector, they want it for the branding but they don't necessarily want good design, that's social design

SB – yeah, yeah

JB – I mean they do, of course they do, but they don't. Or they don't want to pay for it. And we live in a world where that tends to happen, to architects globally, often those services are on the cheap really.

SB – Yeah ...

JB - ... because they're stupid ... or because it's intrinsic motivation, you do it because you love it. And the world has changed, again pretty well globally, the commissioning, the power has gone much more to contracted, it's gone much more to development consortia. Some of the architects now can advertise now and they couldn't when we were training, so they can be more entrepreneurial than they could. The kind of, so the way architecture has inculcated in education has actually got more ... it's got less social actually, less interested in the social on the whole, there's a little sideline to that, but generally it is about, you know, it's not just about style but that is how it's taken up. Basically it's about having a kind of design philosophy that has a look to it, a look that you sell, and the way you argue it, there's multiple ... There is a whole subplot of social, I don't know if you've come across – I know it's a bit off what you're actually doing but there's a website called Spatial Agency ...

SB – Yes, yes, I looked at it because it [inaudible] – fascinating.

JB – I think what's brilliant about that is that sense of that network of community based and socially based practice still happens. It comes and goes, and it is global, and where it explodes, and that's what beautiful to me about that, it does give that bigger picture of those concerns, you know, from the discipline that I start from, those concerns go on and on, they're there and in many ways they're having their own renaissance now, I think, because of kind of austerity ...

SB – Yup, yup ...

JB - ... also because of involuntary politics, so that's kind of quite powerful. But that was again a very long answer – so the world in which I operate has become much, through that period, it did become much less willing to talk about social based practice and there are moments certainly where it's been possible. But I think for a lot of us, apart from the whole thing of just having families, but generally the possibility of really making an impact on architectural practice or education has been relatively, the openings have been quite small.

SB – The generational point is actually a really good one, I think, because it's about how old you are when these things are happening, and ...

JB – What's happening in the rest of your life

SB – What's happening in the rest of your life, yeah

JB – So I do, yeah, and it is, that's why I think Anne and Fran and Anne Thorne Architecture is very important and is just not recognized because it's just another architectural practice, or other, well [inaudible] there are people who have just tried to keep going, but they don't get the recognition because there isn't a kind of interest, you don't get Channel 4 programme about Anne Thorne Architects because it's just not seen, it's not on trend.

[1:06:23]

SB – But I think with some of those things, there is a kind of hope that in some ways this becomes part of quotidian life, like I mean that these concerns, if not spectacular, are worked through, you know. I mean I know particularly more in London and Toronto than anywhere else about the politics of housing and the politics of architecture, but then there are those little hints of kind of a client based approach or the attending to the The friend that I have in architecture designs swimming pools and those swimming pools that are worked into a [poorer area of town?], there is a concern, it's just not trumpeted politically as something that ...

JB – And I think a lot of things have just become, the norm has changed, within how architecture is practiced, within I don't know, maybe within government, in some ways, I think, and for me what's really interesting is where it changes and where it doesn't, and why, because it can be quite accidental, because I do, we are, and we'll see what happens around sexual harassment, but the domestic violence thing, even though everybody, because [inaudible] was kind of a difficult character, so there's that, but that's never gone completely back, that's never [?]. There was never that idea that it was okay to beat up your wife, it definitely had an impact. The sexual harassment thing that's going on now might have a similar thing, but you know, let's give a daft example, toilet design, the fact that you still have loads of extra, the regulations to provide many more toilets for men than for women and it's just like ...

SB – The size of toilets?

JB – The size of toilets, everything about that, the whole thing about, and there's such a big thing that's blowing up around gender, the fact that those regulations have just stayed, you know, nobody actually thinks that's kind of a [?] and it's completely unacceptable, but it goes on..

SB – Yeah, especially with new buildings, I mean there's been every opportunity. The other issue that strikes me and it's working at a university that has unfortunately a shockingly high rate of sexual assault on campus is exactly what Making Space and you talked about at that point. Ours is a campus that there's been a lot of building on in the last 15 years, very little attention has been paid to making the spaces safe for women to be sure, but safe for everybody, they're not well lit, they're, there's a great thing in Making Space about dead ends and you know, but nothing has changed...

JB – Yeah, lots of things which just do, I don't know they just get reproduced all the way down the line, nobody kind of, it just isn't part of the thinking culture, and yet, and that's why I think disability and ability, that pairing, why that's so interesting because that has, some real physical effects that again just get ignored, so I think there are a whole lot of things about ...

SB – And that fundamental point you were saying too about, you know, we shape space and ...

JB – ... space shapes us

SB – and space shapes us, yeah, and that this is something, I mean the disability issue in universities is a very clear one, about how space is marked out, and you know, that this changes how students think about themselves and that sort of thing so I think that's a very interesting resonance...

JB – So it is, it's like everything, you know, three steps forward and two steps back, it feels like really some things did shift and some others just didn't. And I just, it just endlessly fascinates me why, what it is that does and what it is that doesn't, and I think, and that's separate, to that thing about those moments where things come together, which is what's so fantastic about that period, '81

SB – yeah, yeah

JB – to '86, well yeah, that having lived through it and not realized it was exceptional until it stopped, but it is even in that somehow some things don't, its like it doesn't change, well of course it doesn't, it doesn't change people's kind of angle of view, it doesn't make them think. It doesn't necessarily change an awareness, it seems to only be able to happen in particular aspects, which is still powerful, but interesting to me,

SB – I mean is there anything I'm totally missing? I mean I'm sure there is. I guess in a follow-up ...

JB – yeah, not at all, not at all

SB – Would you mind if I sent something to you, and please correct me, that sort of thing. I will obviously send you a transcript of this once I can get it done ...

JB - Yes, you need me to sign that ...

SB - ... that will be more embarrassing to me than to you ...

JB – than to me ...

SB – I really appreciate you talking to, this has been absolutely amazing

JB – It's been absolutely fine. I hope so, I hope it hasn't been a bit ... especially since you're mainly looking at government policy, been too sideways

SB – But I think the idea of a Matrix archive is such an important idea...

JB – yeah, come the spring, it's on my list of things to do, we really do have to.. and again that's part of it, it's about that memory and forgetting...

SB – Absolutely. And I mean I think that what really struck me about those GLC archives is how many organizations there are that have left, there is some paper trail, but actually really valuable things, really interesting things that just have not...

JB – Have just disappeared...

SB – or have not, or just exist as ephemera, and I think it's really important to cover those or restore them

JB – This is just my, when we ... [cuts off]